the weekly Standard

AUGUST 20 / AUGUST 27, 2001

$3.95

LITERARY GREATNESS
HOLLANDER'S DANTE,
GREENBLATT'S SHAKESPEARE, FISH'S MILTON

The Impresario

Karl Rove, Orchestrator of the Bush White House

By Fred Barnes

PLUS

The Science and Politics of Stem Cells

Charles Krauthammer • William Kristol

THIS IS A COMBINED ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD WILL APPEAR IN TWO WEEKS.

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August 20 / August 27, 2001 • Volume 6, Number 46

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the weekly Standard

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the last week in April, the second week in July, the first week in September, and the second week in January) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7653 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. For a copy of THE WEEKLY STANDARD Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Ian Slatter 1-202-496-3354.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The *New York Times*'s Fairy Tale

Slurs involving people's sexual orientation are strictly off-limits at The Weekly Standard. So The Scrapbook wants it clearly understood that nothing pejorative is intended by the headline on this item. Perish the thought. The phrase "fairy tale" refers, instead, to a most peculiar "editor's note" by means of which the *New York Times* recently reiterated its own ostensible policy against such slurs. Smirky jokes about men and women of the homosexual persuasion, the paper announced on Sunday, August 5, are "a violation of the *Times*'s standards." And . . . why exactly was it now necessary for the *Times*'s standard-bearers to say so?

It seems that "a few readers" privileged to peek at advance copies of that same edition's magazine supplement had "said they perceived allusions to gay life" in—of all places—the crossword puzzle. But the *Times* had looked into this. And it had concluded that those readers were very much mistaken: "The newspaper has requested and received assurances from the puzzle editor and the puzzle creator, a veteran *Times* contributor, that no . . . suggestions about anyone's sexual orientation" had been hidden in the clues or answers.

What's an eight-letter barnyard epithet for "nonsense on stilts"?

The puzzle in question, titled—believe it or not—"Homonames," boasted innumerable clues like this: "add more lubricant," "tiny openings," and "scratched-up leather straps." What's more, myriad of its answers turned out to be homonyms (get it?) for the names of celebrities commonly associated with gay culture—or rumored to be gay themselves. For instance, 113 across asked for an eleven-letter phrase meaning "people who live next to a Y." Solution: "gymneighbors," i.e., that fellow who played Gomer Pyle on television back in the 1960s.

Clever, no? We wonder why the *Times* felt obliged to lie about it. ♦

More Olympic Spirit

Following last month's selection of Beijing as host city for the 2008 Olympic summer games, secretary of state Colin Powell predicted that the Chinese would henceforth receive "seven years of supervision by the international community to make sure that the Olympic spirit is kept very much in mind." As our readers know, The Scrapbook is determined and eager to support Secretary Powell in this mission. Unfortunately, though, so much Olympic spirit has burst out in the People's Republic this past week or so that we've hardly been able to keep track of it all. What follows, then, is just a partial update on what happens when an enormous Communist dictatorship is "welcomed into the community of nations."

Organ Harvesting. Two months ago, Wang Guoqi, a former Tianjin province police-department physician, told a congressional committee in Washington that he'd personally assisted in the extraction of black-market-destined human organs—corneas and skin, specifically—from more than 100 executed prisoners. The Chinese Foreign Ministry immediately denounced Wang's testimony as a "vicious slander" based on "sensational lies." But according to a July 31 story by John Pomfret of the *Washington Post*, proof of the practice had already appeared in a Jiangxi province newspaper, *Today Family Weekly*, which had investigated the sale of convicted murderer Fu Xinrong's kidneys—by officers of the trial court that ordered him executed. That report, slipping past the censors, has lately been posted on the website of China's leading journal, *People's Daily*.

Suppression of the Falun Gong. On the front page of the August 5 *Washington Post*, Pomfret and his colleague Philip Pan had this to report about Beijing's ongoing war against unauthorized breathing exercises: "Expanding its use of torture and high-pressure indoctrination, China's Communist party has gained the upper hand . . . according to government sources and Falun Gong practitioners. . . . [T]he government for the first time this year sanctioned the systematic use of violence against the group, established a network of brainwashing classes and embarked on a painstaking effort to weed out followers neighborhood by neighborhood and workplace by workplace, the sources said. . . . They told of believers being beaten, shocked with electric truncheons and forced to undergo unbearable physical pressure." The *Post* exposé remains available at *www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A33055-2001Aug4.html*. We recommend it to our readers.

Forced Abortion. The August 5 *London Sunday Telegraph* reported that officials in Guangdong province have ordered the impoverished mountain county of Huaiji to perform 20,000 more abortions and sterilizations before the end of this year. Employees of the Huaiji government have had their salaries halved—to something like $35 per month—in order to pay for the purchase of new ultrasound equipment.

The machines will be used to test female villagers for unauthorized pregnancies. Attending doctors will order any such pregnancy terminated on the spot.

Censorship. Lee Kuan Yew, longtime autocrat of Singapore and pro-China ideologist for the "Asian way" of single-party rule, is lately out with a second volume of memoirs, *The Singapore Story*. But the book has not yet been published by his friends in Beijing—because they haven't finished unilaterally rewriting it. Lee's version is insufficiently sycophantic towards the Chinese Communist party, apparently. So the mainland press that will be distributing the book is altering the text and doesn't see any reason to consult the author. "I am sure Mr. Lee will understand that," his Singapore publisher explains. "Taiwan did not delete anything," this man allows, "but Taiwan is very democratic so they don't care about anything."

Nuclear Proliferation. In the August 6 *Washington Times*, Defense Department correspondent Bill Gertz confirmed another recent Chinese ballistic-missile-component sale to Pakistan—in violation of multiple nonproliferation treaties Beijing has signed with Washington. The Gertz report came just days after Colin Powell concluded a series of high-level talks in Beijing—and announced himself satisfied that bilateral cooperation on such subjects, interrupted by the spy-plane incident earlier this year, was finally back on track.

Speaking of that Spy-Plane Incident. Last Thursday, the Pentagon announced that it had forwarded a check to Beijing, in the amount of $34,576, as compensation for "some of the support that they provided to us during that period of time."

And in Other Appeasement News. Last Wednesday, August 9, hours before a Senate delegation led by Foreign Relations Committee chairman Joseph Biden was to meet with Jiang Zemin in Beijing, Chinese police finally released permanent U.S. resident Liu Yaping from prison confinement on trumped-up tax evasion charges. Liu used his first hours of freedom in five months to get a haircut and have dinner with some of his relatives. Then—after Biden's photo-op with Jiang was done—Liu was rearrested. His wife and son in Connecticut, both American citizens, haven't heard from him since, and still have no idea whether he is receiving proper treatment for the life-threatening aneurysm he's developed while in custody. Senator Biden says he's surprised to hear of Liu's reincarceration: "We had been told that he had been released." Biden also says he "totally and completely rejects" the notion that conflict between the United States and China is inevitable. "Why couldn't we become friends?" the senator asks.

Word in Washington, incidentally, is that the Bush administration intends to appoint Biden's staff expert on China, Frank Jannuzi, to the National Intelligence Council, where he will serve as the nation's senior analyst on security issues related to Asia. Jannuzi is best known on Capitol Hill for opposing—as too provocative—a 1999 resolution commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. ♦

Casual

The Last Days of Disco Fries

I have often prayed that one day an authentic Jersey diner would spring up in Washington, D.C. It's the only thing missing in a city full of trendy bars and expensive restaurants. When all the clubs close down at 2 A.M. (quite embarrassing when friends from New York visit), there's nowhere to go. Typically, the crowds pour out into the street, cops arrive to disperse them, and that's that. Not so in New Jersey.

After a serious bender, my friends and I usually retreat to the Crystal Diner in Toms River for sustenance and relief from the deafening rhythms of some dance club (usually in Seaside Heights, derisively called "Sleazide"). It is where we have always gone, since we were old enough to drive—so beloved is this place that we call it, simply, Diner. At Diner, the plastic chandeliers shine brightly. With tabletop jukeboxes perennially out of order, there is almost never music, just the clinking of silverware and random chatter. The service is unfailingly friendly.

Best of all is the food. There are those who equate diner cuisine to that of a grease truck. But at 3 A.M., it's Emeril Lagasse and Alain Ducasse rolled into one. The selections range from bagels and lox to fried clam strips and steak. And though the laminated menu is several pages long, I need look no further than page one—breakfast. I order either the western omelet or the corned beef hash and eggs, depending on my mood. You get half a plate of homefries and a side of buttered toast. All for under $7. Another popular item is the disco fries: medium-cut french fries slathered in thick, brown gravy and two slices of melted American cheese on top. Just thinking about it makes my mouth water.

There have only been good times at Diner. All the friends sitting around, recapping the evening, drinking frothy milkshakes, or biting into fluffy omelets. In the background, tempting us, is a revolving multilayer dessert rack. There are coconut cream pies, chocolate eclairs, and strawberry shortcake.

It's a motley crowd at Diner—truckers, women with high hair, teenage dirtbags, off-duty cops, wiseguys—but very Jersey. (A celebrity even came in once: Ed O'Neill of *Married . . . with Children*. His autographed photo hangs above the register.) But everyone minds his own business. I've never once heard so much as an argument break out at Diner. It's the ideal place.

The problem is, no such place exists in Washington, D.C. Yes, there are a handful of eateries open 24 hours. But none of them is a diner—not even close. One locale in Georgetown is constantly blaring techno-music from loudspeakers. It's a Euro-trash hangout, and you can go without water for a good ten minutes. Sure, you can order a coq au vin, but there's no corned beef hash and eggs. (On a recent foray there, one of my Jersey friends asked for disco fries and drew a blank stare from the waitress.)

There are diners in Northern Virginia, too, like the Silver Diner. But the Silver Diner is in fact part of a chain. The great diners of New Jersey have always been individually operated, predominantly by Greeks, each with its own identity: the Golden Bell, the Silver Bell, the Park Place, Victory Diner, and Queen Nefertiti. Even worse, the Silver Diner isn't open 24 hours.

Imagine my surprise, then, when a recent issue of the *Washington Post Magazine* reviewed a place called, simply, The Diner. Oh really? I said to myself, half eager to find out that my dream had come true, and half offended at the sheer audacity of the name. Located in hip Adams Morgan, The Diner has set out to be the after-hours spot for a hearty meal. With each paragraph of the review, I grew more excited. They serve milkshakes, western omelets, and "eggy French toast." But most important, they're open 24 hours. At last, I thought, a place I can call my own.

And then I looked at the fine print: "Full dinner with wine or beer, tax and tip $20 to $25 per person." Excuse me? I thought we were talking about The Diner, not The Restaurant. No one, to my certain knowledge, has ever come close to spending $20 at Diner. Theoretically, you could: There is a section in the menu called "For the Seafood Lover" that lists twin lobster tails. But no honest patron has ever ordered that. Ever.

So until a real diner makes its grand entrance in the District, it's back to braving the din of techno-music and flagging down waiters for a glass of water. And making monthly pilgrimages to Diner, my Mecca, where there's a luscious corned beef hash and eggs that's got my name written all over it.

Victorino Matus

Sex, Lies, and Satcher

Andrew Ferguson's cynical and misleading article on the surgeon general's sexual health report, "Sex Talk" (August 6), does a great disservice to the field of public health and to Satcher's sincere attempt (which failed, unfortunately) to defuse the politicized and highly controversial issue of reproductive and sexual health policy.

Instead, Ferguson and The Weekly Standard should concern themselves with how the Bush administration missed an excellent opportunity to end this nationally controversial policy issue.

As reported by the *Washington Post* on July 30 in "Administration Promoting Abstinence: Family Planning Efforts Are Being Scaled Back," the Bush administration is expanding the troublesome dominance of conservative religious dogma and right-wing political ideology as the cornerstone for national public policy on reproductive and sexual health, especially unintended teen pregnancy prevention, as well as prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and prevention of coercive or violent sexual behavior.

Instead of promoting what works, namely comprehensive sex education and family planning through proven, effective programs that include increasing adolescent (and adult) access to and use of contraceptives, the Bush administration is promoting what doesn't work. Namely, the highly charged and controversial policy of funding programs that limit themselves to the abstinence-only-until-marriage approach.

Not only is Bush's policy inappropriate for addressing the public health problems of teen pregnancy and STD prevention, it is also extreme, divisive, misleading, and definitely unhealthy for the American public, especially American women.

Unfortunately, the surgeon general's recent sexual health report failed to influence Bush administration policy. In fact, as Ferguson pointed out, the report was ignored, even denigrated, by administration officials. As usual, the national media downgraded and politicized it. The report's conciliatory tone and fair reporting could have helped end the controversy over policies relating to reproductive and sexual health. Administration health officials missed a golden opportunity to help bring reason and solid research into the sexual health policymaking process.

Rick Kropp
Clearlake, CA

The New Republicans

I enjoyed David Brooks's article "Permanent Defense" (August 6).

Instead of pursuing libertarian fantasies that government in our complex, heterogeneous society can be smaller than it is now, conservatives should congratulate themselves that they are winning most of the political arguments, in principle and to a large extent in practice, save the insoluble ones about sex and religion.

On sex and religion let's just try for a draw between the dogmatic left and the neo-Taliban right. The average Joe and Jane are willing to try to split the difference, and Brooks eloquently describes the direction that conservatism should take.

On the state and local levels, Republicans like Tommy Thompson, Rudy Giuliani, and John Engler have made progress on issues important to conservatives. It is self-contradictory for a conservative to think that the federal government can dramatically improve, say, education. That has to be done on the state level.

Even the Democratic governor of California and the liberal legislature are taking a fairly tough conservative line on school testing. The pro-testing, pro-school choice impetus has to come from the grass roots. On the national level, the unions and the educrats are just too powerful. Progress might be slow, but change is possible. When my liberal friends defend the Democratic party line on public education, I point out to them that they don't send their kids to bad urban schools. They can afford to be "liberal." Real change will come only when the parents of children in failing schools demand it.

As Brooks indicates, compassionate conservative programs cost at least as much as liberal programs. Tommy Thompson welfare is more expensive than the bad, old, liberal kind. School vouchers aren't cheap.

There is, of course, a lot of pork in the federal budget. But that isn't going to change—it is built into the structure of democratic governance. There aren't really any feasible big savings in government spending. Compassionate conservatism needs to be also rational conservatism and face that reality.

Bush's problem is that he talks about compassionate conservatism but seems to spend his time designing corporate welfare for the energy industry. His best issue is education. But his lack of skill at the bully pulpit and the fact that education is not primarily a federal issue limit what he can achieve in that department.

Robert Novak is free to indulge himself in the delusion that the average working stiff believes in his heart in the *Weltanschauung* of Steve Forbes. Those of us who live in the real world should take a different tack and discuss compassionate conservative and intelligent neoliberal solutions to the problems facing our society.

Joe Willingham
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China Games

Do William Kristol and Robert Kagan really want war with China ("Imprisonment and Other 'Irritations,'"

August 6)? They essentially accuse Bush of an escalating show of weakness toward China. But imagine how our feminized legions would do against those tigers from Peking. Consider the recent episode of a female officer's complaining that always finishing last in the company run humiliated and embarassed her. What did the army do? Tell her to run faster? No, it cancelled the run.

Bush is playing with a weak hand. The United States is in no mood for war—the military is unprepared for it. The Chinese don't cancel military exercises for light and transient reasons, and our vast nuclear edge seems of little use since we have no intention of using it.

JOHN J. CARRIGG
Kettering, OH

USAMA AND COUNTRY

REUEL MARC GERECHT'S call for war against Usama bin Laden ("A Cowering Superpower," July 30) is good as far as it goes—but that's nowhere far enough. Gerecht is himself a prisoner of the concept he debunks, namely, that terrorism is a law enforcement issue.

The notion that bin Laden—unassisted by any state—is waging war against the United States is a Clinton administration claim. After each bombing attack against the United States, Clinton vowed to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice. By defining terrorism as a law enforcement problem and deploying a law enforcement agency, the FBI, to address it, Clinton guaranteed that he would get the answer he wanted: Individuals, not states, were responsible.

Almost certainly bin Laden is working with a state. The just-completed trial for the 1998 African embassy bombings made clear that bin Laden was tied to Sudanese intelligence. Indeed, the prosecution's star witness—who defected from bin Laden's organization, Al Qaeda, in 1996—also worked for Sudanese intelligence. Little wonder that following those bombings, Clinton included the Sudan in our retaliatory strikes.

Yet the role of states rarely comes out in the trials, and if it does, it is treated as a secondary matter, presumably because a prosecutor cannot bring a state into the courtroom and convict it, at least not so easily. Sudanese intelligence was also involved in the 1993 New York bombing conspiracy for which Shaykh Omar was convicted. During that trial, the Sudanese intelligence agents who participated in the plot (and who had diplomatic immunity) were described merely as "employees" of Sudan's U.N. mission and otherwise depicted as peripheral.

Yet states are far more important than individuals. States control territory and maintain embassies abroad. They often have large intelligence agencies and significant and dangerous unconventional weapons programs. To ignore the role of states in terrorism is to invite more of it.

And another question exists: Was Sudanese intelligence fronting for a third party? Sudan supported Iraq during the Gulf War.

Subsequently, Iraqi intelligence established Khartoum as a major base for its operations. It's a little hard to understand why Sudan would carry out terrorism against the United States on a scale so large it was tantamount to war; it's easy to understand why Iraq would.

The idea developed by the Clinton administration—that a new form of terrorism exists that does not involve states—is dubious on its face.

It needs to be carefully examined before we launch any war against bin Laden, lest that war provide cover for yet more terrorism—including unconventional terrorism—conducted by the hostile power that is, at least arguably, using Al Qaeda as a front organization.

LAURIE MYLROIE
Washington, DC

BLURRED THINKING

STEVE CHAPMAN'S ASSERTION ("Keep the Drinking Age at 21," July 30) that a policy which is "contradictory, less than satisfying, and, in some sense, unfair" is "far preferable to an approach . . . that is wrong" is unassailable, but he fails to prove that lowering the drinking age would be wrong.

If anything, he offers proof that the voting age should be raised. A cohort that overwhelmingly supports a high age limit for drinking, while doing its darnedest to circumvent the issue, seems not quite ready for discussion.

His strongest argument is that "drinking and driving is no longer the leading cause of death for teenagers," saying, "the number of youngsters killed in crashes involving a drunken teenage driver has plunged by 63 percent." But how much of a decline has there been in overall teenage crash fatalities? Sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds still drive the least and crash the most.

Any study of crash fatalities since the 1970s must consider the vast improvements in automobile and highway safety features, increased law enforcement, stricter penalties, and more pervasive and sophisticated anti-drunk driving and driver safety education and training. Another factor was the deadly mix of pot and booze common in the '70s.

Chapman says the drinking age is different from other age limits, arguing that "lowering the voting age to 18 didn't cause a mass outbreak of illegal voting by 15-year-olds." (Nor has it caused a mass outbreak of voting by 18-year-olds.) But his "page of history" says nothing about lower drinking ages in the '70s resulting in a mass outbreak of drunken 16- and 17-year-old drivers.

Even the Wisconsin-Illinois "blood border" is open to other interpretations. If Illinois had allowed it, those 18-year-old drinking drivers could have stayed home or with friends or gone to a local tavern and learned to drink responsibly.

WILLIAM J. DURR
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the weekly Standard

Stemming the Tide

On Thursday evening, August 9, George W. Bush delivered the first prime-time special presidential address of the twenty-first century. No one would have predicted a few months ago—way back in the twentieth century—that a decision on federal funding of embryonic stem cell research would have been the occasion for the forty-third president's first televised, issue-specific speech. After all, the subject had gone unmentioned in last fall's campaign debates. Nor was it discussed in Bush's Inaugural or State of the Union addresses. August 9 marked a new moment in our political history.

And, on the whole, an auspicious one. Bush's speech was both morally and intellectually serious. One could even say that it made a major contribution to the health of American public discourse. The president refused to indulge in cheap emotional appeals or glib rhetorical devices. Instead, he laid out the competing arguments fairly and intelligently. He explained what was at stake, and how to think about it. It was altogether an admirable performance.

Bush's speech may ultimately prove more important than his decision, reopening issues that deserve serious public debate.

We say this although we must disagree in part with his decision. The president would permit funding of research only on existing embryonic stem cell lines. We are inclined to think that not even that research should be funded. But the president's position is defensible. All other embryonic stem cell research requires the harvesting of the stem cells from an embryo, which is destroyed. Research on existing stem cell lines requires no harvesting of new stem cells, and thus no further destruction of embryos. As the president put it, with existing stem cell lines, "the life and death decision has already been made."

Our worry is that the president may have drawn a distinction that will be difficult to sustain. Future stem cell lines will be created in the private sector, and scientists will claim that research on them is needed for further medical progress—and therefore deserves funding. Then they will seek federal funding for the creation and destruction of embryos themselves, claiming that this will provide higher quality stem cells. Slippery slope arguments are generally a substitute for serious thought. But in this case, the slope really is extraordinarily slippery, and moral seriousness requires taking that slipperiness into consideration.

On the other hand, we are already on that slope, and have been for quite some time. After two decades of unregulated in vitro fertilization clinics, with some 100,000 frozen embryos in warehouses, with no legal bar to their disposal, and with very little public agitation from pro-lifers (like ourselves) to do anything about it, it may be a little late to become so fastidious about those embryos, or about funding stem cell lines derived from them.

Or is it? Could Bush's decision—and just as important, his speech—have the effect of reopening some issues that deserve serious public debate? Here, Bush's speech may ultimately prove more important than his decision. Its respect for the intelligence of its listeners; its manifest willingness to take seriously the "ethical minefields" and "moral concerns" raised by the new genetics; its articulation of the principle that there are "fundamental moral lines" that cannot be crossed and that "embryonic stem cell research is at the leading edge of a series of moral hazards"; its recognition that there will have to be public guidance, regulation, and limitation of scientific and, yes, medical progress—these are no small contributions to the possibility of a serious conversation on this topic among the American people.

Having started such a conversation, of course, the president has an obligation to continue it. And having laid down a moral limitation, the president will have to defend it. For this speech can only finally be judged in the context of the president's later actions. Will he fight in a committed and serious way in Congress in defense of his position? If he doesn't, then the concession he has made is bound to be the first of many, and the president will have started our descent toward an appalling commodification and manufacture of human beings. And if he is unwilling to continue making public arguments, if he doesn't treat his August 9 speech as the beginning, not the end, of his responsibilities, then the speech will be a mere footnote in the history of his presidency. But after August 9, we are entitled to hope—and, yes, to expect—that President Bush understands his obligations in this defining moment, on this defining issue, of the twenty-first century.

—William Kristol

The Great Stem Cell Hoax

The research promises results—about a half century from now. BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

SANITY AND PRUDENCE combined to produce a great victory on July 31 when the House of Representatives overwhelmingly defeated—the margin was over 100 votes—the legalization of early human embryonic cloning. But the fight is not over. The Senate needs to act as well.

Before it does, however, it is worth preparing oneself for the gale-force hype that Senate advocates will unleash in defense of the indefensible. One has only to look at the debate on the floor of the House to see the extraordinary lengths to which the biotech industry and its allies in Congress will go to sell the deliberate creation of embryo factories for the sole purpose of exploiting and then destroying them.

While the media have been snooping under Gary Condit's bed, they have missed the real scandal of the season, the unconscionable deployment of fantasy and false hopes by advocates of "therapeutic" cloning for the production of stem cells. The basic premise—cure of the incurable—was stated by a *Newsweek* cover a month ago: "There's Hope for Alzheimer's, Heart Disease, Parkinson's and Diabetes. But Will Bush Cut Off the Money?" The theme has been echoed and reechoed nowhere more than in Congress.

The cosponsor of a permissive cloning bill, Peter Deutsch (D-FL), said this about the opposing bill totally banning cloning: "No one knows who is going to get Alzheimer's or Parkinson's or cancer. . . . What this legislation would do would be to stop the research . . . so that you could survive, so that someone who is a quadriplegic could walk, so that someone who has Alzheimer's . . ." He trailed away. You get the drift. The lion will lie down with the lamb.

Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), with characteristic subtlety: "Mr. Speaker, the National Institutes of Health and Science hold the biblical power of a cure for us."

Zoe Lofgren (D-CA): "If your religious beliefs will not let you accept a cure for your child's cancer, so be it. But do not expect the rest of America to let their loved ones suffer without cure."

Jerrold Nadler (D-NY): "We must not say to millions of sick or injured human beings, 'go ahead and die, stay paralyzed, because we believe the blastocyst, the clump of cells, is more important than you are.' . . . It is a sentence of death to millions of Americans."

Anna Eshoo (D-CA): "As we stand on the brink of finding the cures to diseases that have plagued so many millions of Americans, unfortunately, the Congress today in my view is on the brink of prohibiting this critical research."

Eshoo gets the prize. The brink? The claim that cloning, and the stem cells it might produce, is on the verge of bringing a cure to your sick father with Alzheimer's or your debilitated mother with Parkinson's is a scandal. It is a cruel deception perpetrated by cynical scientists and ignorant politicians. Its purpose is clear: to exploit the desperation of the sick to garner political support for ethically problematic biotechnology.

The brink? Cloning animals, let alone humans, is so imperfect and difficult that it took 277 attempts before Dolly the sheep was cloned. Scientists estimate that the overall failure rate for cloning farm animals is 95 percent or greater. New experiments with cloned mice have shown gross deformities. And here is the worst part. We have no idea why. We understand little about how reprogrammed genes work. Scientists don't even know how to screen with any test for epigenetic abnormality.

In other words: Even if you could grow embryonic stem cells out of grandma's skin cells, we have no idea yet how to regulate and control these cells in a way to effect a cure. Just growing them in tissue culture is difficult enough. Then you have to tweak them to make precisely the kind of cells grandma needs. Then you have to inject them and hope to God that you don't kill her.

We have already had one such experience, a human stem cell experiment in China. Embryonic stem cells were injected into a suffering Parkinson's patient. The results were horrific. Because we don't yet know how to control stem cells, they grew wildly and developed into one of the most primitive and terrifying cancers, a "teratoma." When finally autopsied—the cure killed the poor soul—they found at the brain site of the injection a tumor full of hair, bone and skin.

Let's have a little honesty in both the cloning and stem cell debates. Stem cell research does hold promise for clinical cures in the far future. But right now we're at the stage of basic science: We don't understand how these cells work, and we don't know how to control them. Because their power is so extraordinary, they are very dangerous. Elementary considerations of safety make the prospect of real clinical application distant.

Stem cells are the cure of the mid 21st century. Stem cell research deserves support because the basic research needs to be done and we might as well get started now. But the cure is for future generations. The cynical appeal to curing grandma is

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raw exploitation of misery. Nothing of the sort is about to happen. Those who claim it ought to be ashamed.

But rather than exhibit shame, the scientific community is rallying—in the name of retaining their autonomy from the ignorant dictates of lay society—to sugarcoat the news. Most notorious is the case of the research article on embryonic stem cells published in July in the journal *Science*, one of the most respected scientific publications in the world. The research showed that embryonic stem cells of mice are genetically unstable. Yes, you can make them grow over and over again, but we don't know how or why some genes are turned on and off. You can make a million copies of a stem cell. They may be genetically identical. But if different genes are turned on in the various cells, the results—the properties of the tissue or organism they develop into—can be wildly different.

Now the really bad news. The authors of that study initially had a sentence at the end of the paper stating the obvious conclusion that this research might put in question the clinical applicability of stem cell research.

But that cannot be said publicly. In a highly unusual move, the authors withdrew the phrase that the genetic instability of stem cells "might limit their use in clinical applications" just a few days before publication. They instead emphasized that this mouse study ought not hold back stem cell research.

This change in text represents a corruption of science that mirrors the corruption of language in the congressional debate. It is corrupting because this study might have helped to undermine the extravagant claims made by stem cell advocates that a cure for Parkinson's or spinal cord injury or Alzheimer's is in the laboratory and just around the corner, if only those right-wing, antiabortion nuts would let it go forward.

In reviewing a book on Parkinson's disease, Nina King, associate editor of *Washington Post Book World*, noted that when she was diagnosed with the disease 15 years ago, she was told that a cure was 5 or 10 years away. She has heard that ever since. A cure in 5 to 10 years "is like a mirage on the horizon, glowing with promise but ever receding."

The other scandalous myth being perpetrated, besides imminence, is inevitability. It goes like this:

The march of science will go on. Legislators can try to contain the growth of knowledge, but it is futile. Somebody somewhere will work on stem cells or cloning. So let us at least take it out of the closet and keep it in the public eye.

What this mantra does not take into account is the radical effect a ban on anything in science has on the quality and quantity of people working on it. Cloning has not even been banned, but because it is societally disapproved of, it is generally shunned by serious researchers. Look at the cloning conference called by the National Academy of Sciences on August 7 in Washington. A vast majority of researchers there view with horror the cloning of a human child—except for three researchers who declared their determination to do it. Three in the whole world.

One looked less stable than the other. Dr. Boisselier recently closed her "Clonaid" laboratory in the United States and is supposedly opening one offshore. When she spoke to the gathered about the right to do what one wants with one's genes, she did not inspire great confidence, possibly because she is a member of the Raelian sect, a cult founded by a former French race car driver after being visited by aliens in 1973. Seeing how marginalized cloning researchers are today even before a legal ban, one can imagine how much more marginalized they will be after one.

A ban works by robbing outlawed research of the best and the brightest. They are not going to devote their lives to a career where they must work in the shadows, ostracized, and under threat of arrest. That ought to encourage legislators to believe that society can indeed influence the direction of science.

Yes, in the very long run some science will break through. But one must not underestimate the efficacy of political restraint. If you can restrain for decades something that promises a cure, imagine how many other, less morally repulsive, substitute cures will present themselves in the meantime. You cannot stop evil science, but you can delay it, and thus possibly supplant it.

That is why the House action banning all cloning was so important. The Senate must demonstrate its seriousness, too. Now that the president has permitted only research from existing stem cell lines, the Democratic Senate is sure to try to loosen that standard and permit stem cell research from discarded fertility clinic embryos as well. But until Congress has demonstrated its seriousness about preventing the creation of embryo factories for exploitation by banning cloning completely, it cannot be trusted on any question regarding human manufacture. ♦

Dr. Lefty

The American Medical Association embraces social activism. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

FOR DECADES, the relationship between congressional Republicans and the American Medical Association was healthy, even robust. Lately, though, the two seem to make each other sick.

Much to the chagrin of Republicans, over the past five years, the AMA has drifted to the left. The animosity has grown this year in the battle over the patients' bill of rights. The dispute reached fever pitch in late July, when Senate minority leader Trent Lott urged the Bush administration to reconsider an exclusive government contract that is worth at least $18 million to the AMA. The head of the AMA fired back last week, suggesting Lott's effort was about political payback, not taxpayer money.

"I guess it may be in reaction to something else," says AMA chairman Tim Flaherty, of Lott's request. That something else would be the AMA's opposition to the GOP on the patients' bill of rights.

Some say the escalating battle between congressional Republicans and the AMA highlights the organization's evolution from a simple association of physicians to just another liberal lobbying group. For decades one of the most intensely Republican interest groups on Capitol Hill, the AMA this year has given most of its political money to Democrats. Recently, it has involved itself in tobacco lawsuits, gun control, and even the battle over gay Boy Scout leaders. This, critics say, puts it out of step not only with Republican leaders, but with its own Republican-leaning constituency.

"I think you can say there's a trend," says Dr. Jerald Schenken, of the AMA's recent political activity. "There's no question about it."

Schenken, who served as an AMA trustee from 1985 to 1994 and as chairman of the Nebraska GOP from 1991 to 1995, is troubled by the changes. "The activity right now is quite a bit different than the nine years when I was on the board," he says. "I don't know that we're yet able to say whether it's a long-term, sustainable trend, or whether it's just related to the [leadership] mix that we have now. As you know, in organizations it often doesn't take too many people to change these things."

Dr. Richard Corlin

AP / Wide World Photos

Indeed, examples abound of professional groups politicized from within—the American Bar Association, the PTA, even the American Library Association. In the nonprofit world, the Pew Foundation and the Ford Foundation are just two of many institutions founded by conservatives and gradually pulled left.

One AMA physician from California offers an explanation: "The kind of people who gravitate to the leadership in groups like the AMA generally have an expansive view of social activism." Whatever the reason, the AMA has stepped up its public presence on a wide range of social issues, and its president, Richard Corlin, is leading the charge.

In his inaugural address in late June, Dr. Corlin, like AMA presidents before him, called attention to important public issues. Unlike his predecessors, however, he spoke not of patient advocacy or service to the community or the patient-physician relationship or professional standards in medicine—but about guns.

"We don't regulate guns in America. We do regulate other dangerous products like cars and prescription drugs and tobacco and alcohol—but not guns," Corlin lamented. "No federal agency is allowed to exercise oversight over the gun industry to ensure consumer safety. In fact, no other consumer industry in the United States—not even the tobacco industry—has been allowed to so totally evade accountability for the harm their products cause to human beings. Just the gun industry."

Corlin gave the game away with a preemptive plea that his speech was "not a polemic" and "not even about gun control." This, one minute after lamenting, "It's as if guns have replaced fists as the playground weapon of choice."

Corlin's crusade has, predictably, stoked the anger of the National Rifle Association and other gun-rights groups. The current issue of the NRA magazine features a cover story blasting the AMA.

"Dr. Corlin is selling the same old gun control snake oil under the AMA label," says Dr. Timothy Wheeler, head of Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership. "The AMA has a long record of advocacy on gun control and Dr. Corlin is trying to revive this." Wheeler points to a survey reported last fall in *Medical Economics* magazine that shows 45 percent of physicians own a firearm and says the

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AMA leadership is out of touch with its own members on the issue.

But AMA board chairman Flaherty defends Corlin. "The things he said in his speech are AMA policy."

Flaherty is right. Since the late 1980s, the AMA has warned that "uncontrolled ownership and use of firearms, especially handguns, is a serious threat to the public's health." In the same spirit of social reform, the AMA House of Delegates this summer passed a resolution encouraging the Boy Scouts to allow gay troop leaders.

Meanwhile, some issues of real professional concern go unaddressed. In his speech, Corlin didn't mention the issue AMA members named as the most important, according to a recent poll by the American Association of Health Plans—namely, malpractice reform. And not only was malpractice reform absent from Corlin's speech, it does not even figure among the AMA's "legislative and regulatory priorities" for the 107th Congress.

The AMA's political contributions mirror the organization's leftward drift. In the 1996 political cycle, more than 80 percent of the AMA's political giving went to Republicans. Four years later, the split was almost 50-50. But as of June 1, Democrats had received two-thirds of the AMA's political money for this election cycle.

The AMA's Flaherty says those figures give "a false sense of the general direction of the AMA." Since the June 1 reporting date, he adds, the giving has leveled out considerably.

But Schenken, the former AMA trustee, argues that there is a reason more money is going to Democrats: The AMA has become more centralized. It used to conduct its political activity as a federation: AMA national leaders deferred to the state medical associations on endorsement and contribution decisions. Even when a state group supported a challenger with no chance of winning, Schenken recalls, the national AMA followed suit.

"And that's the way it worked, I would say, until the last three or four years, and it was an absolute. If [a position] didn't come from the grass roots, the AMA wouldn't support it," he says.

But Schenken says things are very different today. "The AMA has begun to pressure states from the top down with their political activity contributions."

Whatever the reasons for the changes, and no matter how much the AMA downplays them, congressional Republicans are not happy.

"Speaker Hastert has been incredibly frustrated in that the AMA [national leadership] has lost touch with its members from coast to coast," says Pete Jeffries, a spokesman for the House speaker. "The dues-paying doctors in Congress are afraid . . . the lobbying shop in D.C. isn't fighting for the interests of doctors in the hinterlands."

Though Hastert, Lott, and other top GOP leaders have become increasingly vocal in their criticism of the AMA, the group's chairman isn't worried.

"I don't think we've fractured our relationship with the Republicans," Flaherty says. To be sure, on the patients' bill of rights, the AMA supported the proposal preferred by Democrats, but that legislation was also championed by Republicans Greg Ganske in the House and John McCain in the Senate. "There were real issue differences between the AMA and the Republican leadership," says Flaherty, "but that's politics. Politicians don't like to make decisions, and the patients' bill of rights was a hard decision."

"As far as leadership, it depends who you consider leaders," Flaherty adds. "Ganske and McCain are leaders too." ♦

Character, the Old-Fashioned Way

Kids don't need a federal program to form character.

BY WILLIAM J. BENNETT & EDWIN J. DELATTRE

"TO EDUCATE A PERSON in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." A century ago Teddy Roosevelt reminded Americans of this ancient truth, and sometime in the past half-century we started to forget it. Students must be left free, it was said, to choose their own morals. The clarification of values, not the imposition of them, was the task of schools. After Columbine and too many similar incidents, however, such words ring hollow. The education of character is once again recognized as a fundamental responsibility of our schools.

How, though, should schools educate character? Several pieces of legislation pending in Congress, including the education package now in conference committee, embrace a mechanized, three-point plan: "initiatives," "dissemination," and "research." Curricula and methods are to be devised, along with professional development for teachers. These initiatives are to be replicated and made available to the public, and research is to be conducted to assess their effectiveness. All of this is high-minded and well-intentioned—and utterly wrongheaded.

To conceive of character education as an initiative is to suggest it is a responsibility a school chooses to take on. This is to confuse teaching *about* character with *forming* character. The first is elective, the second ineluctable. Teaching about character can take the form of specific curricula and methods; forming character occurs quietly and steadily through the ordinary workings of schools. And it is forming character, not teaching about it, that makes the critical difference. Learning about generosity, for example, does not make one generous, does not engender the habit of feeling that issues in generous actions. Indeed, one might say that only if one has become generous—only if one is moved by what moves a generous person—can one truly understand generosity.

Schools cultivate moral sensibilities every day. Students notice whether teachers go about their work conscientiously or lazily or begrudgingly.

Schools are helping to cultivate moral sensibilities, to shape character, every day. Students notice whether teachers go about their work conscientiously or lazily, enthusiastically or begrudgingly. They see how the adults in the school address one another, the students, and their parents. They see with what care (or lack thereof) the school building and grounds are maintained. And they learn, too, from the assignments they are given and the evaluations they receive. In all these ways, habits of feeling, thought, and action are being cultivated: Character is being formed.

And then there are all the rules, formal and informal, that teachers and schools establish and apply. In general, a rule serves not only to require or prohibit a particular type of action, but also, in so doing, to engender the relevant habit of feeling and action, i.e., the relevant virtue. This is especially true in schools. In its explicit code of conduct and in its shared understandings, a school is not only establishing the conditions of education; it is, at the same time, educating—that is to say, forming—character.

There are, of course, occasions for teaching *about* character. But these will arise on their own, through the study of literature and history, and through incidents in the everyday life of the school—in the classroom, on the playing fields, in the cafeteria, and in the hallways. No seperate curriculum is required. Indeed, insofar as character lessons are grafted onto the course load, and have no meaningful connection to the core curriculum, they make ethical concerns appear artificial—something reserved for particular occasions, rather than part of the warp and woof of everyday life. That is not a lesson we want students to absorb. Translated into the conduct of adults, it becomes the attitude of the individual who writes out large checks to charities in the evening, after spending the day trampling over other human beings—for after all, business is business.

With initiatives comes "dissemination." If character education takes the form of a special curriculum, then, the thinking goes, it can be efficiently packaged and transmitted from one school to another. But if character education is understood to occur through the ordinary workings of a school, then there is nothing special to disseminate. A school that educates character well does so because it is steadily attentive to the ways in which its practices contribute to the formation of character—and other schools would do well to pay heed to this example. But that example can-

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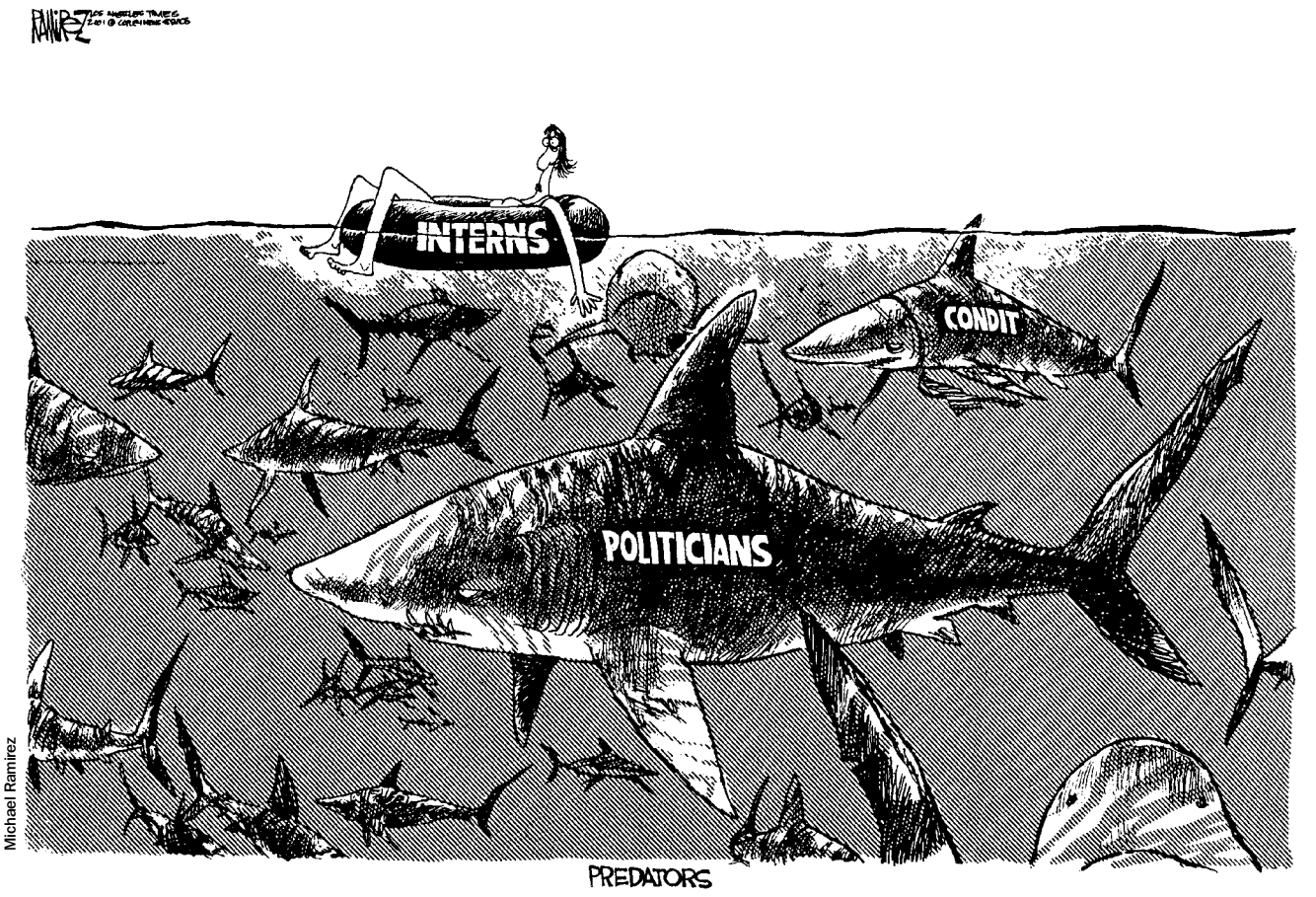
not be captured in a set program, to be passed on to other schools.

Dissemination of character education programs can easily become a false substitute for the ethical constancy and intelligence that create and sustain the ethos of a school. Character education is reduced to a mere set piece—a lesson with its accompanying video and worksheet—which fulfills the school's "character component." Meanwhile, life in the school goes on as before, quietly influencing character—for better or for worse—in ways unexamined.

Some programs in character education are, of course, better than others. But the problem is not simply that the particular program adopted by a school may be facile and shallow. The problem is the very notion of a "program" as the means of engaging in character education. What is needed, rather, is reflection and conversation among teachers and administrators on the qualities of character to be cultivated, and on the ways in which the quotidian practices of the school contribute to or impede that end. This helps teachers and administrators recognize the significance of their practices for the formation of character, and modify those practices—or retain them, with conviction—accordingly.

And then there is research into the effectiveness of character education. The subjects of such research are character education programs, and the question is whether particular programs have an impact on character. But if character education is understood to occur inexorably through the ordinary workings of schools, then the salient question is not whether schools have an influence on character, but what kind of influence it is—i.e., what qualities of character a school is helping to form. To answer this question, one must look closely at the particular ways a school goes about its daily business, apart from any formal programs of character education.

Ultimately, research cannot tell us how to educate our children morally. To answer that question, we must make judgments about the kind of people we want them to become and the kind of schooling this requires. The quality of character education depends on the quality of those judgments, and on our steadfastness in acting on them. Formal programs in character education are no substitute for this. The lure of federal money to create such programs in schools will only distract from the necessary work of moral examination and judgment. Congress can best serve the renewal of character education in America by practicing what it preaches, exhibiting the moral virtues at work in the work that it does. After all, citizens of all ages are watching and learning. ♦



Michael Ramirez

What She Saw at the Revolution

Youqin Wang's struggle to memorialize the victims of the Cultural Revolution. **BY JAY NORDLINGER**

YOUQIN WANG is a remarkable woman, engaged in a remarkable life's project. She is a lecturer in Chinese at the University of Chicago, but her true work goes far beyond. She has set herself the task of uncovering and documenting the depravity and crimes of the Cultural Revolution, that outbreak of evil in China that lasted from 1966 to 1977.

To this end, Dr. Wang has interviewed close to a thousand people: survivors, victims, relatives of the murdered, those with memories who can bear to speak. She has also determined to gather every scrap of paper related to the Cultural Revolution, for the Communist authorities have tried to suppress or destroy every vestige of it. In this, they have been alarmingly successful. But Dr. Wang is surrounded, in her Chicago apartment, with boxes that contain newspaper clippings, Red Guard fliers and posters, notebooks, "self-criticisms," and photos. She is resolved that the truth of this period will not be lost.

Dr. Wang first felt her "calling"—no other word seems as appropriate—years ago, when she was a teenager. Even as the Cultural Revolution was in progress, she read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a book that inspired her to record what was happening around her. It was impermissible to speak of the daily horrors; so she confided what she saw and heard to a diary, addressing it as "Kitty," as Anne had. But unlike Anne, she destroyed her pages shortly after she had written them. You could be killed for what you said in your diary; many were.

Jay Nordlinger is managing editor of National Review.

While a student at Beijing University, Youqin Wang found Solzhenitsyn, a discovery that set the course of her life. She read *Cancer Ward*, a book that seemed to be speaking directly to her, telling the story of her own country. Even the smallest details seemed right. She was so excited that she could not sleep. Then she managed to get a hold of *The Gulag Archipelago*, of which there were very few copies in China. Hers came from a contact in the English department. When she read it, she realized she was bound to do something similar. "I had the idea that I shouldn't waste my life," she says. "I had to make it useful."

Dr. Wang has read every word of Solzhenitsyn, up to the latest essays. Chinese dissidents and others have long complained that China has had no Solzhenitsyn—and no Robert Conquest, really—and that this has made a terrible difference. The West has little understanding, and the Chinese have no chronicler, or defender. The government, of course, has repudiated the Cultural Revolution, but it permits no study of it, no teaching of it, no remembrance of it. Indeed, it has arrested and imprisoned those who have dared to investigate.

Over the years, the authorities have published the names of about 70 victims of the Cultural Revolution: high-ranking cadres or other prominent figures. It has therefore acknowledged dozens, not the thousands or millions. This is what has spurred Dr. Wang. She burns to memorialize ordinary people.

She knows she may not be able to do the work of Solzhenitsyn, but figures she can do a slice. Chinese scholars must band together, she says, to approximate the work of Solzhenitsyn on the history of modern Russia. Dr. Wang came to the United States in 1988, and had been returning to China each summer to carry on her researches. Lately, however, it has been too dangerous, with the government rounding on scholars such as herself. Thus far, she has concentrated on one horrible aspect of the Cultural Revolution: the attacks of students on their teachers. Her findings—meticulous, unrelenting—are collected on her website, *www.chinese-memorial.org*. It bears the message, "We Will Never Forget You."

The anti-teachers campaign started in the "Red August" of 1966, when Mao gave the go-ahead to treat teachers as "class enemies." At first, the students' abuse was merely verbal: They began to address their teachers disrespectfully, and to denounce them in "big-letter posters." This was shocking and unnatural in China, where reverence for teachers had been the norm. With frightening speed—a matter of weeks—the abuse turned physical. Students began to torture and murder their teachers in a mad frenzy. It was as though someone had thrown a switch, unleashing all that savagery. In a sense, someone had: Mao Zedong.

To read Dr. Wang's documentation is to descend into hell. The sheer invention of torture boggles the imagination: nail-spiked clubs, boiling water, hot cinders, drownings in fountains, the forced swallowing of chemicals, and nails, and excrement, and the beating, always the beatings—the students even beat the corpses, not wanting to stop. They painted slogans in their victims' blood. And all the while they were cheered on by their government, which held them up as revolutionary examples.

Red Guard students—"little suns," Mao's wife called them—were sent from Beijing into the countryside, to instruct their fellow students in the brutalization of their teachers. Initially, the Red Guards themselves had to do the beating and killing, but once the psychological barrier was broken, the local students were happy to com-

Girls perform a ballad criticizing Confucius at the Hsiangyang Commune in Kiangsu Province on March 4, 1974, during the Cultural Revolution.

mit the deeds themselves. The atmosphere was gleeful, giddy. Any teacher or administrator was liable to be "struggled against" (the party euphemism for this violence). Children of teachers were made to join in attacks on their own parents. More than a few went insane as a result. Eventually, individual students—particularly those from the "wrong" families—were turned on as well.

Before the campaign was over, thousands of teachers and others, in Beijing alone, were murdered. Many committed suicide, unable to bear either further torture or the humiliation. For the most part, none of them breathed a word. Some tried to defend themselves, to save their lives, but to no avail—the students killed not only their principal targets, but their families, too. The teachers could do nothing. As Dr. Wang says, the majority were not cowards; they simply had no recourse.

Many of the survivors of the period have been willing to talk to Dr. Wang, obviously, but many others have not. The trauma lasts, and the fear can be choking. So strong is the party's hold on the minds of its subjects that some say, "I will not speak of it—I don't want to damage China's reputation." Even in America, some Chinese are afraid to speak over the phone, believing that someone will be listening, that there will be a price to pay. Dr. Wang bought an expensive video camera, hoping to tape some of the testimonies. Of the hundreds, only three consented; fear governed the rest.

The work of this memorialization takes a toll on the memorializer herself, needless to say. Dr. Wang spends every spare minute in the company of evil: drawing it out of people, thinking about it, writing it down. This often leaves her depressed, and like Solzhenitsyn, she says, "I would rather not—but I must." Many of her countrymen encourage her, aware that she is rendering a service to them all. Dr. Wang says it gives her a thrill simply to list the names of victims on her website. These names were intended for oblivion; but she has rescued them.

For now, Dr. Wang is interested only in fact-gathering, not theorizing. "The facts have to be established," she says, "and any conclusions must come later." Much of the theorizing that does go on about the Cultural Revolution disgusts her. Many scholars dismiss crimes such as the anti-teachers campaign as the work of a few "idealists and radicals." Some say, "It's just like parents who beat their children. The party is our parents, and sometimes our parents beat us children without reason, but still, they are our parents, and we must not oppose them."

Sooner or later, says Youqin Wang, the Chinese people will have to take possession of their history and their consciousness, deciding that they do not have to be ruled by lies and fear and a false obedience. In the meantime, she will continue her labors, learning such truth as she can, and telling it, in the hope that this truth may, in some way, prove freeing. ♦

The Impresario

Karl Rove, Orchestrator of the Bush White House

By Fred Barnes

In late July, Bill Bennett, the former education secretary and drug czar, got a telephone call from the White House. Would he be interested in serving as special presidential envoy on Sudan, where Christians are persecuted and slavery thrives? The caller wasn't Clay Johnson, President Bush's personnel director, or a State Department official. It was Karl Rove, senior counselor to Bush and political adviser. Bennett thought about the offer, then said no.

Weeks earlier, a senior Republican congressman recommended to the White House a nominee to serve on the part-time oversight board of a quasi-governmental corporation. The job paid $20,000. Johnson said there would be no problem. But the nomination never came about, and the congressman later discovered what had happened. Rove had substituted another choice for the post.

That Rove plays a major role in staffing the Bush administration—every appointment, even the most insignificant, crosses his desk—is startling enough. He's a campaign consultant by trade, and his line authority at the White House is limited to political operations, strategic planning, and public liaison. What's more startling is that personnel matters and his official duties are only a tiny part of what Rove does.

Cocksure, decisive, feared in Washington and inside the national political community, Rove is first among supposed equals in advising Bush, cabinet members included. His ideas animate the Bush presidency. His political maneuvering propels Bush's agenda. Rarely has a president's success depended so much on the skill of a single adviser. It's only a slight exaggeration to say: As Rove goes, so goes Bush.

Rove is the conceptualizer of Bush as a "different kind of Republican," whose presidency transforms the GOP into a majority party by adding new constituencies (Latinos, Catholics, wired workers) to a conservative base. Rove charts the long-term (90-day) White House schedule, including which issues Bush will stress. This, in effect, makes him both Bush's chief congressional strategist and the man behind Bush's message. For the fall, Rove's scheme calls for Bush to play up his "compassionate conservative" side, emphasizing education and conservative values. The aim is to counteract Bush's image as a conventional Republican, which Rove believes was created by the president's stress on tax cuts during his first six months in the White House.

There's still more, much more, to Rove's vast portfolio. He's both policy adviser and policy implementer. He took over the simmering issue of U.S. Navy bombing practice on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques and engineered the decision to terminate it (against the Navy's wishes). He became the leading White House expert on stem cell research and arranged for a stream of outsiders to meet with Bush, including Leon Kass, the University of Chicago professor whom the president tapped last week to head his council on the ethics of biomedical research. When Bush's faith-based initiative stalled this spring, Rove stepped in at the president's behest and, along with faith-based director John DiIulio, rejuvenated the effort and won House approval. He's a major force behind the president's plan to reform Social Security with personal investment accounts. He lobbied critical Republican House members from New Jersey to back Bush on a patients' bill of rights (most did).

Then there are Rove's more mundane political chores. He picks out prospective Republican candidates and encourages them to run. "That's my job," Rove says. The latest: congressman John Thune of South Dakota, who now appears likely to challenge Democratic senator Tim Johnson. When Tom Davis, head of the House GOP campaign committee, told Rove that Randy Forbes, not the candidate favored by governor Jim Gilmore, offered the best chance to pick up a Democratic House seat in a special election in Virginia in June, Rove responded, "I know." Rove dispatched a spate of Bush administration officials to stump for Forbes, who won.

A balding 50-year-old with glasses, Rove has become the hottest speaker on the Republican circuit. When he addressed the Midwest Republican Leadership Conference in Minneapolis in July, he drew a

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more enthusiastic response than Vice President Dick Cheney. "He's a hero to Republicans," says former congressman Vin Weber, who attended the conference. That same weekend he spoke at a fund-raiser for Kentucky representative Ann Northup in Louisville and a Republican National Committee event in San Francisco. In Virginia in June, he addressed both the state party convention and a gathering of well-heeled Republican donors hosted by Gilmore. Rove, by the way, negotiated the selection of Gilmore as RNC chairman last winter with the governor's chief of staff, Boyd Marcus. Gilmore had balked at being "general chairman" with little authority. He got the full chairman's job, but Rove assigned Bush loyalist Jack Oliver to the committee in the newly created post of deputy chairman.

Rove assigned himself one of the most important tasks at the White House: keeping the Republican party's conservative base solidly behind Bush. This is virtually a full-time job. He stays in almost daily contact, by phone or e-mail, with important conservative players in Washington, like National Rifle Association lobbyist Chuck Cunningham. He meets regularly with a group of conservative intellectuals in Washington, listening to their ideas and saying little himself. He talks to conservative journalists. He attends conservative gatherings. When attorney general John Ashcroft balked at addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference last February, Rove volunteered, though his family was moving from Austin to Washington that weekend. On August 1, he briefed the weekly meeting of Washington activists hosted by Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform on congressional reapportionment. As Rove spoke, House GOP whip Tom DeLay entered the meeting, and Rove gently poked fun at him. Rove's appearance was warmly received.

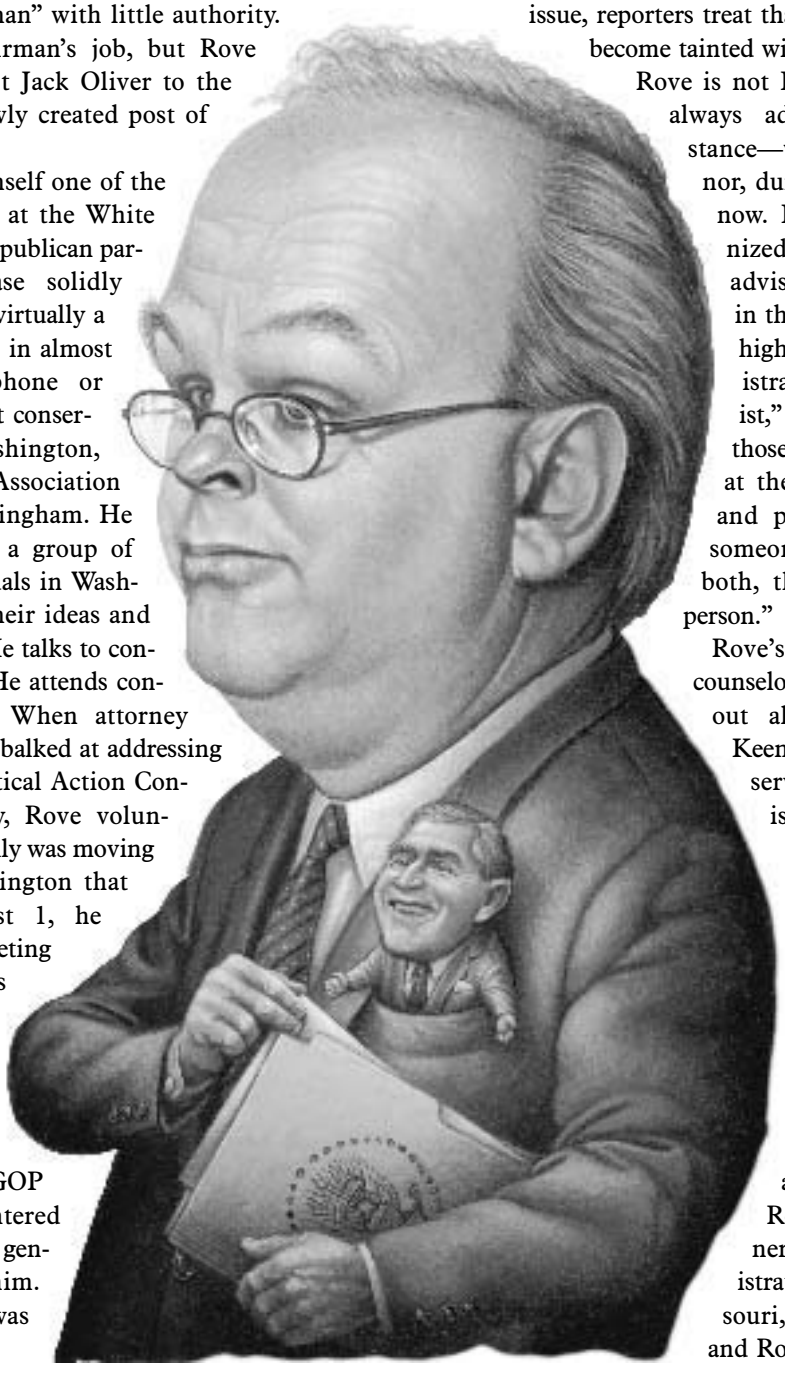


Illustration by Joseph Salina

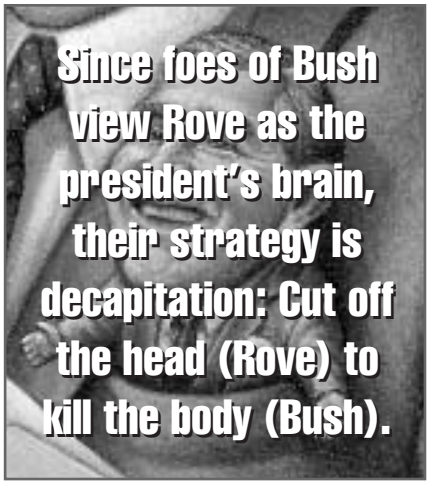
All this activity, plus Rove's long and trusting relationship with Bush, has made him not only the most influential adviser to Bush, but one of the most powerful presidential aides since the advent of the modern White House under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The media, however, tend to treat Rove as a top adviser whose duties are purely about gaining popularity and winning elections. As reporters see it, to use an analogy from the Clinton era, it's as if campaign consultant James Carville had joined the president's top staff and begun to throw his weight around. When Rove gets involved substantively in an issue, reporters treat that as proof the issue has become tainted with politics. But in truth, Rove is not Bush's Carville. He has always advised Bush on substance—while Bush was governor, during the campaign, and now. It was Rove who organized the teams of policy advisers who prepped Bush in the campaign and now fill high-level jobs in his administration. "Rove's a generalist," says Weber. "He's one of those rare people who operate at the intersection of policy and politics. When you get someone who's really good at both, that's the indispensable person."

Rove's official title is "senior counselor," but he refuses to spell out all that entails. David Keene of the American Conservative Union says Rove is the "central point" in an otherwise compartmentalized White House. Norquist calls him the "Grand Central Station where everything switches through." Marshall Wittmann of the Hudson Institute, an ally of senator John McCain and critic of Bush, says Rove is "perceived as the nerve center of the administration." Roy Blunt of Missouri, the deputy GOP whip and Rove's chief contact in the

House, says of him: "He's everywhere."

The aides from earlier White Houses who rivaled Rove in influence had a distinct advantage: They served as chiefs of staff. But neither John Sununu in Bush's father's White House nor James Baker in Ronald Reagan's had the long personal relationship with the president that Rove has with Bush. And neither had devised the themes and masterminded the campaign of the president he served, as Rove has. "We're used to a White House that's not built on a long-term relationship," says Blunt. One like Clinton's or Richard Nixon's. In the Nixon White House, only the combination of H.R. Haldeman, the chief of staff, and domestic adviser John Ehrlichman matched Rove's clout. Perhaps Harry Hopkins in FDR's White House was more influential. And Sherman Adams, Dwight Eisenhower's chief, probably was.

The case of Adams is instructive. He exemplifies the peril of being a highly visible White House aide in a partisan environment. With Eisenhower immune from attacks as a war hero, Adams became the target for political foes and reporters and was forced to resign for improperly accepting gifts. And now Rove is under attack from Democrats and the media. "It's dawned on people he's the leading conservative in the administration and he's the leading policy adviser to Bush," says Republican consultant Jeffrey Bell. "The press and the non-Republican institutions in this town have found out how important he is to Bush's success," says Charles Black, a Washington lobbyist and Bush campaign adviser. That alone makes him subject to scrutiny, and he's all the more a target because criticism of Bush as a lightweight or a radical conservative hasn't caught on. Since foes of Bush view Rove as the president's brain, their strategy is decapitation: Cut off the head (Rove) to kill the body (Bush).



From all appearances, Rove doesn't take the attacks very seriously. Some he shouldn't, such as the barbs of Democratic national chairman Terry McAuliffe, who routinely zings Rove in his speeches and TV interviews. At a Los Angeles fund-raiser in July, he indicated that Rove was getting away with unethical conduct and that Democrats would increasingly go after him. He cited a meeting Rove had at the White House with corporate officials of Intel, who were seeking approval of the merger of a supplier and a Dutch company. "Isn't it a shame that's come to light," McAuliffe said sarcastically.

McAuliffe has no credibility, especially on ethical issues, but Henry Waxman, ranking Democrat on the House Government Reform Committee, does. Waxman is a fierce partisan, but he's also smart, relentless, and taken seriously by the press. On the basis of media accounts of Rove's meetings at the White House with executives of companies in which Rove owned stock, Waxman has sought a congressional inquiry. White House counsel Alberto Gonzales informed Waxman that conflict-of-interest rules don't apply to those meetings. Waxman responded that even if there's merely an appearance of conflict, the question must be turned over to the Justice Department for investigation.

There the matter stands, but only for now. Waxman has been stymied by the White House in seeking related documents and a full list of those with whom Rove has conferred. And Dan Burton, the Republican who chairs the House Government Reform Committee, has refused to conduct an investigation. Waxman, however, does not give up easily. His recourse is the Senate, controlled by Democrats. Majority leader Tom Daschle has said he doesn't favor a Rove probe. But Waxman aides insist, after talking to Daschle's office, that he was referring only to an investigation to retaliate against Republicans for badgering the Clinton White House, not a legitimate inquiry into Rove's dealings.

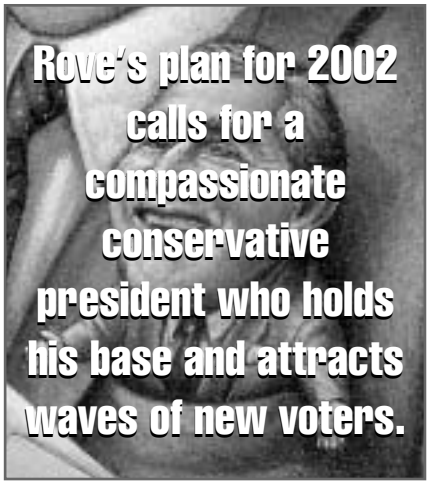
Should the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, headed by Joe Lieberman, take up the matter, that could be trouble for Rove. He could be interviewed under oath by committee investigators, forced to turn over documents, and pressed into testifying at a public hearing. All that may sound far-fetched, but it's not implausible. Democrats have always been good at "oversight" hearings that turn into gotcha sessions with a partisan payoff. And for the moment, Rove is the biggest game in town.

The outside advisers who talk to Rove every other week—Washington veterans Weber, Black, Ed Gillespie, Haley Barbour, and Bill Paxon—are worried about the attacks. Rove, who says the attacks are "part of the political game" in Washington, may be more concerned than he lets on. He says he's finicky on ethical matters. He told me he walked out of a session with New York governor George Pataki when the topic of dredging the Hudson River came up. That issue specifically involved General Electric, another company in which he held stock. The

other meetings, including several with John Chambers, the CEO of Cisco Systems, consisted only of general policy discussions or friendly chats, not matters that directly affected any company. Thus, he and Gonzales insist no conflict of interest arose.

Rove has not been accused of exploiting his office to boost his stocks. In a June 15 letter to Rove, Waxman said: "I am writing not to make accusations about your conduct but to seek more information about your involvement in policy matters that may involve your holdings." In fact, Rove sacrificed millions in earnings by selling his political consulting firm and joining the Bush campaign in 1999 and now the White House staff. (Carville *made* millions by *not* joining Clinton's staff.) As an outside adviser, he could have collected lucrative fees for placing Bush campaign ads. With Bush as president, he could have signed a consulting contract with the RNC and worked for other clients, political and corporate, as well. Instead, Rove makes $140,000 a year as a government employee.

Absent White House dawdling, the trouble over Rove's stock would have been avoided. Rove says he offered to sell all his stock (worth $1.6 million at the time) before joining the administration but was told to wait for a certificate of divestiture to be issued by the counsel's office. He badgered White House lawyers, Rove says, but they didn't produce the document until June 6. He sold his stock the next day. In the interim, he'd met with Intel and other corporate executives. The delay in selling his stock proved costly to Rove. A Bloomberg News analysis found his stocks dropped 8.6 percent from January 20 to June 6, a loss of roughly $138,000.



Besides Democrats, Rove has the press gunning for him. When James Jeffords of Vermont quit the GOP in May and Democrats took control of the Senate, Rove was widely criticized for heavy-handedness in dealing with Jeffords. Howard Fineman of *Newsweek* said Bush would have to "rein in Rove" to recover politically. Actually, Rove had little to do with Jeffords's defection. Rove's attachment to conservatives is particularly annoying to the Washington press corps, which believes Bush must move to the center ideologically. Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* has gotten on Rove's case, hyping his minimal role in a bid by the Salvation Army for an exemption from anti-discrimination laws, then reporting he'd become the focus of critical attention.

There's another potential trouble spot for Rove: the White House staff. Rove says he was leery of signing up because internal feuds are chronic in Washington. "I'm not good at internecine warfare," he says. As things have turned out, Bush's staff is famously collegial. But the organizational structure is a recipe for competition, envy, and backbiting. At the top are four generalists—chief of staff Andy Card, deputy Josh Bolten, communications chief Karen Hughes, and Rove—plus an active vice president. Rove dwarfs Card in influence. He and Hughes worked together for Bush in Texas and during the presidential campaign, and are close. But they also compete for Bush's favor—with a lot at stake. Rove urged Bush to vow to veto a liberal patients' bill of rights. Hughes argued against the use of the word "veto." She lost and Rove was vindicated, as the veto threat aided Bush in getting a patients' bill more to his liking through the House. Rove and Hughes also disagreed on embryonic stem cell research. She was for it. He made sure that Bush heard the concerns of pro-lifers and social conservatives. In the end, the compromise Bush announced last week was one Rove had floated months before.

On the Navy's bombing of Vieques, Rove took control of an issue that initially had been under Card's supervision. A binding referendum loomed, in which Vieques residents were likely to bar the Navy. Bush was already irritated at protests over the bombing. Rove persuaded him to call a halt to bombing runs. Rove has insisted he didn't force the Navy to go along, but what a participant in Vieques deliberations calls the "ultimate-decision meeting" was held in his office. Rove, of course, has as a top priority luring Latino voters. Bombing a Puerto Rican island wasn't helping.

Rove didn't have to grab the faith-based initiative. Bush handed it to him—and not to Card or Bolten or a White House aide with less on his plate. The president had chatted with Michael Joyce, the ex-president of the Bradley Foundation, about it during a White House ceremony in May. Bush was fearful the issue was languishing. He called Rove, instructed him to talk to Joyce, and told him to get the issue moving again. Joyce, on his own, was ready to start an outside lobbying effort to assist John DiIulio, the college professor who runs the program. Rove helped energize GOP leaders in Congress. The initiative, watered down, defied expectations and passed the House

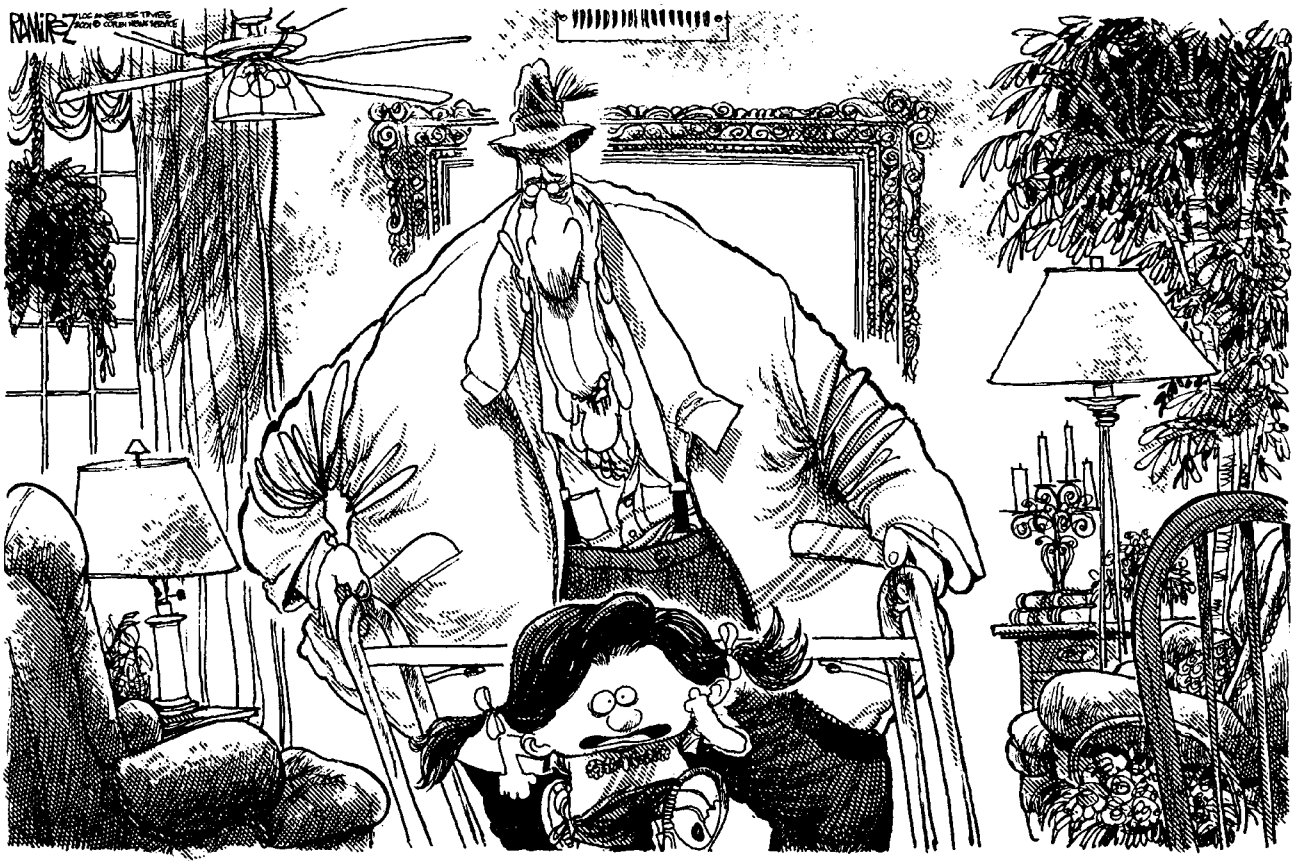
in July, beginning a winning streak for Bush proposals.

So what's the problem in all this? Nothing yet, and maybe nothing ever. But Rove's remarkable ascendancy in Washington brings expectations. If they aren't met, Rove will be held accountable inside the administration, on Capitol Hill, and by the media. White House aides won't blame the president. They'll finger Rove. Some congressional Republicans are squeamish about Bush's insistence on pressing ahead with Social Security reform. Rove thinks the issue is no longer an effective club for beating up Republican candidates. Tom Davis, the House campaign chief, isn't so sure. Young voters like the idea of investment accounts funded by payroll taxes, Davis says, but "the intensity is with older voters." If the issue polarizes seniors against Republicans, "it kills us." Davis frets this could occur in congressional elections next year.

The 2002 race is the next big test of Rove's skill. He is the man with the plan. It calls for a "compassionate conservative" president who holds his conservative base while attracting a wave of new voters to his party. One of Rove's specific duties is outreach—to Latinos, new economy workers, Catholics, suburban women, union households, and what he dubs "resource dependent communities," where coal mining or farming is dominant. His goal is to reproduce what President William McKinley and his adviser Mark Hanna achieved at the turn of the 20th century, namely a broadly based, majority party.

It's a dazzling vision, more appealing and perhaps more realistic than anyone else's. The first test was whether Bush could emerge as a successful president. He has. Another is to shape Bush's image to woo non-traditional Republicans. "I think he is viewed as being more conventionally conservative than he is," says Rove. So Bush will now stress education and values, not taxes and defense, and hope to be seen as an unconventional conservative. If Republicans hold their own in the 2002 elections, Rove will deserve at least a small measure of credit. If they suffer badly, he'll face cries for his ouster.

Finally, there's the reelection test in 2004. Never before have a president and a party had so much riding on a single person whose name won't be on any ballot. Rove could wind up as one of the greatest political strategists in the past century. But it's a risky business and there's little margin for error. ♦



Michael Ramirez

Race to Conclusions

What the activists don't tell you about racial profiling.

By Katherine Kersten

Minneapolis

Five years ago, Minneapolis was nationally notorious as "Murderopolis." The murder rate was soaring, and many citizens walked in fear, especially in poor neighborhoods. A few short years later, there's been an astonishing turnaround. Today, thanks partly to a new initiative by local police, crime in Minneapolis has plummeted to its lowest level since 1966—and, in an added benefit, citizen complaints about the police are down 40 percent, though arrests have risen rapidly. Apparently, officers have managed to bring crime under control while dealing correctly with those they encounter when enforcing the law.

Yet instead of congratulations, police are catching brickbats. The department is under siege in the media, accused of making racial bigotry a standard operating procedure. The outcry began in January 2001, with the release of demographic data suggesting that officers who made traffic stops were pulling over proportionately more black drivers than white, and taking black drivers into custody more often. Activist groups quickly charged that police were targeting minorities because of their race, not their illegal conduct, and branded the department with the scarlet letter of racial profiling.

Like the decline in crime, the rancor over racial profiling is a national phenomenon. And as in Minneapolis, so in dozens of cities, studies of police stops by race are fueling the debate. Already, traffic-stop studies have been completed or are proceeding in locales as disparate as San Jose, California, and Volusia County, Florida. At least 10 states have passed laws requiring studies of traffic stops, and many others are considering legislation. At the federal level, representative John Conyers and senator Russ Feingold have introduced legislation that would require the Department of Justice to conduct a nationwide study of traffic stops.

The cost of these studies is often significant, both in dollars and officer time. But their chief drawback is something deeper. Though ostensibly undertaken to diagnose the problem, these studies to date don't begin to support the conclusions that the media and activist groups are drawing from them. The crusaders against racial profiling would have us believe that their findings rip the veil off a widespread abuse of civil liberties, and prove that police are targeting minorities because of their race. But the studies do nothing of the kind. To conclude from traffic-stop numbers like those gathered in Minneapolis that the police are racist is about as justified as it would be to conclude from the fact that 95 percent of Minnesota's prison inmates are men that police are sexist. A closer look at the Minneapolis experience makes this plain.

Though ostensibly undertaken to diagnose the problem, traffic-stop studies don't begin to support the conclusions being drawn from them.

For six months beginning in May 2000, the Minneapolis police department gathered information on every traffic stop, noting the driver's race, the date, the location, and whether the driver was warned, ticketed, or taken into custody. The raw data—released under pressure from a local newspaper—appeared disturbing at first glance. Though blacks make up 18 percent of Minneapolis's population, they accounted for 37 percent of traffic stops, while whites, 65 percent of the population, accounted for only 43 percent of stops. No significant disparities turned up in the rates at which different racial groups received tickets, but black, Hispanic, and Indian drivers were more than twice as likely as whites to be taken into custody. And these figures are only the beginning: Minneapolis is now conducting a more detailed two-year study. More challenging is to determine what the figures mean.

Here's the problem: To analyze raw traffic-stop numbers accurately, one must have an appropriate benchmark

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against which to measure them. But no one knows what the proper benchmark is. In the above example of prisoners' sex, to determine whether Minnesota has "too many" male inmates, we must compare the proportion of males in the prison population with the proportion of males in the *criminal* population, not the population at large, since in Minnesota, as elsewhere, men commit the vast majority of imprisonable offenses. Where traffic stops are concerned, however, no one has devised an appropriate benchmark, since the factors affecting who gets pulled over are numerous and complex.

Lacking a meaningful basis for comparison, study proponents usually take the easy way out: They compare the racial breakdown of traffic stops to the racial breakdown of the general population of, say, the relevant county or metropolitan area. Then they attribute to racism any deviation that appears to "favor" whites. But this simplistic approach merely gives a patina of science to what is essentially an ideological project.

So what would a meaningful benchmark be? Obviously, to determine whether an officer is stopping "too many" minority drivers, we must first know the racial breakdown of the motorists *on the roads he patrols*. For instance, suppose that over six months, an officer who patrols Minneapolis's heavily poor and minority Phillips neighborhood stops 80 percent black drivers, while another officer who works the swank Lake Harriet beat, where investment bankers jog, stops only 15 percent black drivers. Can one conclude that the first officer is a racist, while the other isn't? Of course not.

To learn whether either cop has stopped "too many" minority drivers, we need a street census of the neighborhoods in question—something few studies include. The time of day that the stops occurred is also likely to be crucial. Thus, between 4 P.M. and 6 P.M., traffic on Minneapolis's Portland Avenue, a major artery in Phillips, is made up largely of white suburban commuters. But between 9:00 P.M. and 3:00 A.M., when most enforcement takes place, drivers on Portland are far more heavily minority. Since most stops occur when suburban motorists have left the area, traffic stops on Portland are likely to include a disproportionately high share of minority drivers.

But knowing who was on the roads when stops took place is only one requirement for meaningful analysis. We must also know whether some racial groups commit more traffic violations than others; if so, their stop numbers should reflect this.

For example, traffic stops often involve cars with faulty equipment, like broken tail lights, loud mufflers, or cracked windshields. Motorists who drive older cars—which tend to be in relatively poor repair—are more likely than other drivers to be stopped for such violations. Presumably, black drivers in Minneapolis drive older cars, on average, than white drivers do. (According to 1990 Census data, the per capita income of the city's black residents is less than half that of white residents.) Under these circumstances, one would expect proportionately more black than white drivers to be pulled over for equipment violations.

The story may be similar with moving traffic violations, though data are hard to come by. Writing in *City Journal*, journalist Heather Mac Donald points out that random national surveys of drivers on weekend nights have found that blacks were more likely to fail breathalyzer tests than whites. Likewise, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has found that blacks were 10 percent of drivers nationally, 13 percent of drivers in fatal accidents, and 16 percent of drivers in injury accidents. (Mac Donald notes that lower rates of seat-belt use may contribute to these figures.)

Age is another important variable. Young drivers are more likely than older drivers to violate traffic laws, and to drive negligently or recklessly, as any parent knows who's footed a teenager's insurance bill. Minneapolis's black population is significantly younger than its white population, and thus presumably includes a larger proportion of young drivers. (While blacks are only 18 percent of the city's total population, they are 31 percent of residents under 18.) This racial age disparity reflects a national pattern. In Chicago, for example, blacks are 34 percent of residents over 18, but 44 percent of those under 18; in Boston, the figures are 22 percent and 40 percent. Most likely, this sizable age disparity contributes significantly to the black-white difference in traffic stops.

Clearly, many factors can explain *legitimate* racial disparities in traffic stops. But one factor appears to dwarf all the others: the extraordinary disparities in the rates at which various racial groups commit crimes. Nationally, blacks commit murder at seven times the rate whites do. Likewise, though blacks are 13 percent of the population, they commit 46 percent of all robberies. In Minneapolis, the disparity is even starker. Blacks are 18 percent of the population, but crime victims report that blacks commit 66 percent of serious offenses, like murder, rape, and robbery, and 58 percent of "quality of life" crimes, like prostitution and vandalism. The implication is tragic, but undeniable: If police are to curtail crime, they will inevitably interact more with some racial groups than others.

Racial crime rates affect traffic-stop disparities most directly by shaping patterns of police deployment. If the police concentrate their activity in a rela-

tively small number of neighborhoods, drivers there will have a higher chance of being stopped for traffic violations than drivers in less heavily policed areas. If these neighborhoods have relatively large minority populations, the share of minority drivers pulled over will be relatively high.

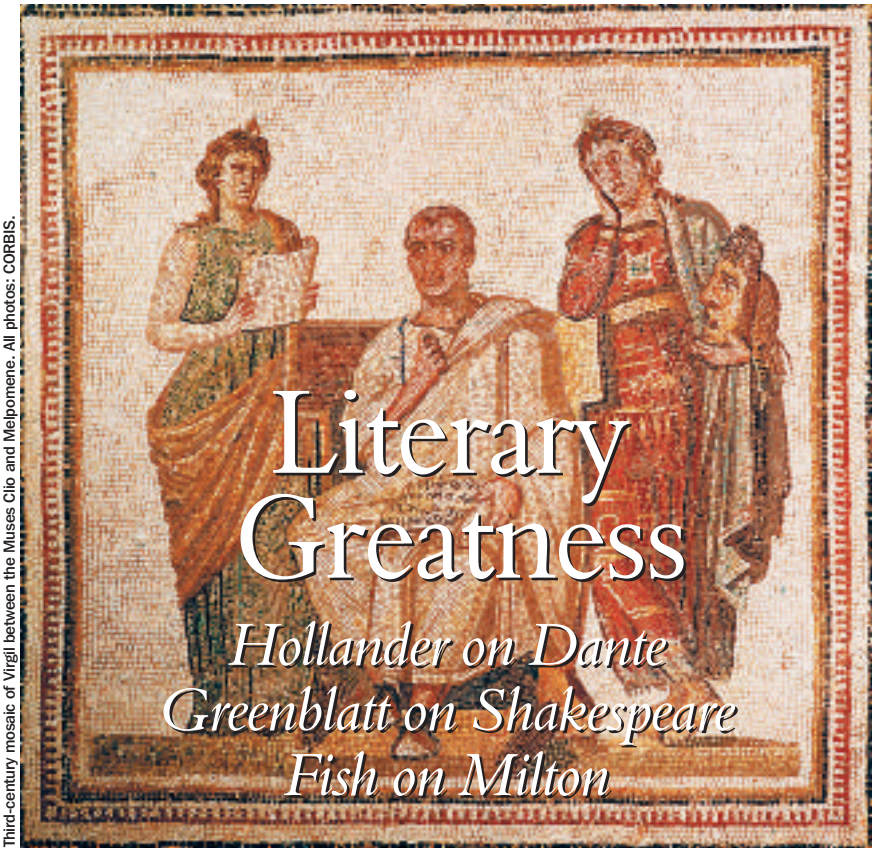
Minneapolis police do precisely this. The city is divided into 84 residential neighborhoods for purposes of law enforcement and administration. During the traffic-stop study, 12 of these neighborhoods accounted for 50 percent of the city's crime, while a mere 5 neighborhoods—home to one-quarter of the city's black population—accounted for one-third of its crime. (These figures reflect calls for police assistance, a proxy for crime.) Under CODEFOR, the computerized crime-fighting strategy launched in January 1998 by police chief Robert Olson and mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, officers and squad cars are concentrated in high-crime neighborhoods, and traffic stops there are important to maintaining order. The stops assist officers in their effort to get guns and drugs off the street, discourage robberies, find stolen cars, and find people wanted for arrest.

In April 2001, an independent agency under contract with the Minneapolis Police Department released an analysis of the city's raw traffic-stop data. The report found that stops of black drivers were heavily concentrated in the city's five highest-crime neighborhoods. It also found strong evidence that racial disparities in stops were due to more intensive overall policing in such neighborhoods, rather than to a tendency on the part of officers there to conduct more traffic stops than their peers patrolling elsewhere. However, the report also cited a need for additional data. Its findings were largely ignored. Despite this evidence that neighborhood crime rates are the chief explanation for racial disparities in traffic stops, Minnesota's media and activist groups continue to point to police bias as the culprit, portraying it as a serious civil liberties problem that requires urgent countermeasures.

One real and very negative consequence of the irresponsible, ideologically driven use of traffic-stop studies—and they are likely to remain the preferred tools of police critics for some time to come—is the growing public belief that police bias is widespread. Among minorities, the perception of bias is undermining police authority and dissuading young citizens from joining police forces they insist harbor racist thugs. Defense attorneys, too, seek to discredit police actions by routinely invoking racial profiling in court. This ploy appears to be increasingly successful, especially in drug-related cases.

Most seriously, however, the perception of police bias is generating pressure for de facto racial quotas in all law enforcement activities, from traffic stops to searches to arrests. A Clinton-era law compounds the problem by giving the Justice Department power to sue local police departments for tolerating "a pattern and practice" of misconduct in racial matters. (The feds are unlikely to suspect such a pattern, of course, if de facto racial quotas govern stops and arrests.) In the last few years, both Pittsburgh and Los Angeles have sought to avoid action under this law by agreeing to federal oversight of their law enforcement activities. Currently, the spotlight is on racially troubled Cincinnati, where the American Civil Liberties Union has filed suit alleging a 30-year pattern of racial profiling. Together, the trends toward racial quotas and federal oversight threaten to undermine local control of law enforcement and roll back the nation's recent striking gains in public safety.

By their nature, quotas are contrary to the fair, responsible exercise of professional judgment on the part of police, which alone can build confidence in law enforcement over the long haul. The rhetoric of racial profiling and the pseudo-science of traffic-stop studies, though deployed in the name of justice, actually inflame mistrust between police and citizens. Regrettably, they are driving the agenda of the activists further from the agenda of the people, who crave more than anything the right to walk safe streets. ♦



Third-century mosaic of Virgil between the Muses Clio and Melpomene. All photos: CORBIS.

Ferocious Beauty

Robert Hollander and the burden of Dante's Inferno. **BY ALGIS VALIUNAS**

In Dante's Hell, one sees every ingenious turn that can be given to human agony. The place is encyclopedic in its cruelty, as only the work of divine wisdom, or the most inventive of poets, can be. Those who were lustful in life find themselves driven ceaselessly by tempestuous winds in death. Unrelenting rain, snow, and hail fall upon gluttons, who don't have a bite to eat. The angry tear at one another, while the sullen, who failed to appreciate life *in the sweet air that in the sun rejoices*, now have reason to be miserable, plunged beneath the foul swamp waters of the Styx. Heretics lie in sepulchers so hot they glow. Great tyrants steep in Phlegethon, the river of boiling blood.

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Meanwhile, suicides are transformed into thorn bushes, which bleed when their branches are broken off. Blasphemers and homosexuals try helplessly to evade flakes of fire that drop from above and set the sand ablaze underfoot: *Not otherwise do dogs in summer gnaw and scratch*. Flatterers stew in a ditch of excrement. Soothsayers have their heads turned backwards. Grafters are submerged in seething pitch, and when they dare to poke their heads out, devils rip at them with hooks—*in just the same way cooks command their scullions / to take their skewers and prod the meat down / in the cauldron, lest it float back up.*

Hypocrites wear gilded capes lined with lead and trudge endlessly with their heavy burden; they walk across the body of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas, who advised the Pharisees to sacrifice Christ for the people's sake. Thieves run naked through swarms of snakes, whose bite makes the sinners burn down to a pile of ash, after which their bodies reconstitute themselves so the routine may start over again. Schismatics are cleft in two, while sowers of secular discord are forced to walk with severed head in hand. Alchemists are covered from head to toe in vile sores, *and their nails tore off scabs / as a knife strips scales from bream / or other fish with even larger scales*. The treacherous are sunk to the neck in eternal ice, and one gnaws at another in undying hate: *As a famished man will bite into his bread, / the one above had set his teeth into the other / just where the brains stem leaves the spinal cord*. And in the uttermost depths of Hell, Lucifer stands frozen, weeping icy tears. He has three faces, and each mouth chews on the foulest of traitors: Judas, Brutus, and Cassius.

Poetry does not get any more frightening than Dante's *Inferno*. It is a cornucopia of horrors, and, just when you think you have seen the worst, Dante pulls out another torture to top it. Although certain of the punishments are fiendishly novel, in most cases what makes them so terrifying is their familiarity. Hellish mayhem is not without earthly precedent. These are sufferings of the sort that nature casually inflicts on men, or that men, just as casually, inflict on each other. Fire burns, ice freezes, serpents bite, and diseases make the body loathsome. The torments of the damned are drawn from life, even in their most grotesque or bizarre manifestations. One leaves Dante's Hell with the macerating awareness of how fearsome a place the earth is; the *Inferno* contains the worst of earthly life in ceaseless and concentrated doses.

It used to be a rare human being who did not wonder acutely about what became of us after death. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) knew this fundamental need—and presented himself as the authority who would settle the point. With a visionary intensity, he turned his mind to the world beyond this one; the most remarkable of mental adventurers, he staked a claim to the undiscovered country. *The Divine Comedy* (actually *Commedia*; the adjective *div-*

ina was the addition of a fifteenth-century commentator, and it stuck) is Dante's poetic rendition of the privileged excursion he took through the afterlife while still alive.

English translations of *The Divine Comedy* have been attempted many times. The latest, in free verse by the medievalist Robert Hollander and his wife, the poet Jean Hollander, promises to rank at the top when complete, although so far we have only the *Inferno*. The Hollanders' version—like the 1939 prose rendering by John D. Sinclair, but far too few others—has the Italian text on the facing page. Robert Hollander has also written the notes to this edition: some of them valuable to general readers, but rather too many pitched to those who are professionally obliged to be up on the latest academic scuttlebutt.

The same flaw mars Robert Hollander's recent intellectual biography *Dante: A Life in Works*, which aims to introduce readers to Dante's lesser-known works of poetry, philosophy, and philology. The mind of a formidable scholar can be like a Christmas goose stuffed not only with fruits, nuts, and breadcrumbs, but also with used-shoeshine cloths, old watchsprings, and congealed motor oil—which is to say that the accumulated erudition of a scholarly lifetime can be unpalatable to the average reader. Hollander's strengths are seen to better effect in his introduction to the *Inferno* and his 1999 essay "Dante: A Party of One" in the journal *First Things*.

The Divine Comedy consists of three books: the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso*, the first of thirty-four cantos, the other two of thirty-three each. The cantos run to over a hundred lines, each of eleven syllables, arranged in *terza rima* (with the rhyme scheme aba, bcb, cdc, and so forth). The poem tells the story of Dante himself, middle-aged and spiritually desolate, who is vouchsafed a saving journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. The Roman poet Virgil serves as his guide through Hell and most of Purgatory, after which the sainted Beatrice, whom he loved in his youth, takes over and initiates him into the delights of Paradise.

For the damned he meets on the first third of his journey, earthly life still compels allegiance. Whenever their pain lets up sufficiently, they think about the life they have left behind. That is part of both their sin and their punishment: What the world thinks of them is the fretful preoccupation of their spare moments; they are pathologically sensible of their reputations, as though their damned condition were not the last word on their character.

The Inferno
translated by Robert Hollander
and Jean Hollander
Doubleday, 634 pp., $35

Dante
A Life in Works
by Robert Hollander
Yale University Press, 222 pp., $25

So, for instance, Farinata, a heretic who did not believe in Christ's resurrection and a Florentine political eminence, raises himself from his searing tomb *as though he held all Hell in utter scorn*, and the first thing he does is ask Dante who his ancestors were. There is an undeniable grandeur to Farinata—Dante calls him "magnanimo," great-souled—but his steely hauteur also betrays the sinful pride of mind that defied Church teaching and caused his damnation for heresy.

To Guido da Montefeltro, a great soldier who renounced the active life to become a Franciscan friar and who is in Hell for secretly giving Pope Boniface VIII evil advice about politics, Dante uses his best coaxing manner, exhorting him to speak of himself, *so may your name continue in the world*. Although Guido repented of his career—he was not a lion but a fox—while he was still alive, he cannot bite back the thrill of pride at the glory his vulpine prowess won him: *My fame rang out to the far confines of the earth*. What he takes most pride in, however, is his reputation for sanctity; it is a rare warrior who casts aside the life of manly glory and puts on the mendicant's robe, and Guido wants the world to honor him. To be esteemed as holy by the living is the desire he cannot renounce, even though he has been cast down among the unholy by the only justice that matters.

Dante shows how empty the concern with honor, a passion that outlives death, can be under the aspect of eternity. And yet, his attitude toward the ambition to leave a lasting name in the world cannot simply be reduced to disdainful mockery. Back in the fifth century, St. Augustine put, in his preface to *The City of God*, a pair of opposed quotations—one from the New Testament, the other from Virgil's *Aeneid*. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," Scripture says. Virgil writes that it is the character of Roman martial virtue to "show pity to the humbled soul and crush the sons of pride." The statements look similar, but Augustine finds the second to be insufferable arrogance, "the inflated ambition of a proud spirit," which ascribes to itself a prerogative belonging to God alone. The earthly city of Rome was "itself ruled by its lust for rule." And the ultimate end of Roman dominion was not wealth or power but glory: "Glory they most ardently loved: for it they wished to live, for it they did not hesitate to die."

Dante uses Virgil with far greater reverence. When Virgil appears before Dante and introduces himself in the first canto of the *Inferno*, Dante acknowledges him as his beloved mas-

ter: *O glory* [honore] *and light of all other poets*. When Virgil tells Dante that he shall conduct him through Hell and Purgatory, and that then *a soul more fit to lead than I* shall show him Paradise, Dante trembles at his own inadequacy: *I am not Aeneas, nor am I Paul*. Aeneas, the founder of Rome, visited the underworld, and Paul had a look around Heaven, while still alive; Dante equates the pagan hero with the Christian saint, and treats Roman legend as though it were as true as Biblical revelation.

This is not exactly orthodox. Dante honors Aeneas as the founder of Rome, an indispensable agent in the providential design that makes Rome the Eternal City, the center of the Christian world. In Canto VI of the *Paradiso*, the Emperor Justinian recounts the illustrious advance of the Roman standard in its mission to bring peace, justice, and unity to the world; there is no imperial undertaking more estimable than this: *See what valor has made [the Roman standard] most worthy of reverence*. Roman martial virtue, which Augustine despised, has acquired a godly luster, and Justinian presides over the planet Mars, eternal home to the great warriors. To risk one's life for honor's sake may not be the purest virtue, Justinian suggests, but it is nevertheless deserving of everlasting bliss—provided, of course, that one is not fighting for the wrong cause. The thirst for glory, the desire to shine in the admiring eyes of men, can be quite a good thing.

That is true for poets as for soldiers. In the first circle of Hell, where the virtuous pagans are found, Virgil introduces Dante to the other supreme poets of antiquity: Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. The word *onore* and its derivatives ring out six times in thirty lines, to make sure we get the point; and the highlight of the passage comes with Dante's acceptance into this most exclusive confraternity: *And they showed me greater honor still, / for they made me one of their company, / so that I became the sixth amid such wisdom*. With such distinction comes grave responsibility. There is a stretch of especially hard climbing in the infernal neighborhood called the Malebolge, and the exhausted Dante sinks to the ground. Virgil is quick to remind his companion of the calling that brought him to this hard place. Dante gets up and keeps walking.

In a philosophical work called the *Convivio*, Dante lays down the fundamental distinction between necessary wisdom and irreparable error: "I say that of all follies the most foolish, the basest, and the most pernicious is the belief that beyond this life there is no other." To live as though this world were all there is effectively assures the soul's ruin, for the earth abounds in pleasures that seem to be all we could want, when in fact they are fatal snares or delusions or distractions that keep us from our true good.

Yet Dante does not draw a simple dichotomy between the moral ignominy of earthly glory and the incomparable splendor of eternal blessedness. He does believe eternal blessedness is incomparably splendid, but that does not mean he conceives of mortal ambitions and pleasures as merely the futile graspings of sin-raddled, worm-fodder humanity. The very existence of his poem proves otherwise. Writing *The Divine Comedy* is Dante's effort to secure immortal glory in both senses of that phrase: He intends that his fame will last on earth for as long as such things do last, which will not be forever but should be a good long while, and that he will earn a place in Heaven for his efforts to lead other souls toward the everlasting truth. These are not small ambitions, and we know that at least one of them has been satisfied.

Still, Dante does teach that what men commonly regard as the real world is only a small fragment of creation. That part of the universe made specifically for human souls is vaster by far than the surface of the earth, and men must live accordingly. This lesson does not always go down easily. In the first canto of the *Purgatorio*, the great Roman statesman Cato stands guard at the foot of the purgatorial mountain; his unrivaled love of liberty has merited him this place, although as a pagan, an enemy of Julius Caesar, and a suicide he ought by all rights to be among the damned. Virgil tells him the reason for Dante's journey, and entreats him, by the love of his wife, Marcia, who in Hell prays that Cato still loves her, to let the two poets proceed on their way. Cato's reply is ceremoniously frosty: While on earth he loved Marcia so much that he did anything she asked, now that she is in Hell her power to move him is gone, *by the law which was made when I came forth from thence*. Marcia's undying love is part of her infernal suffering; Cato's indifference is the token of his spiritual superiority.

Cato's implacable severity instructs the poets and the other new purgatorial arrivals in how they should conduct themselves. In the second canto of the *Purgatorio*, a spirit approaches Dante with such eager affection that the poet attempts to return his embrace; but spirits have no bodies to embrace with, and three times Dante's arms pass right through the shade he is trying to hold close. The spirit turns out to be that of

the musician Casella, who tells him, *Even as I loved thee in my mortal flesh, so do I love thee freed*. Dante asks him to sing *the songs of love which used to quiet all my longings*, and Casella responds with a setting of one of Dante's own youthful poems. All the gathered spirits are rapt with pleasure in this beautiful song of earthly love—all but Cato, who with a chill censoriousness reminds them this is a diversion from the task appointed them: *What is this, laggard spirits? What negligence, what delay is this? Haste to the mountain to strip you of the slough that allows not God to be manifest to you*.

It is hard to learn the inconsequence of the earthly things one cherished most, and the *Purgatorio* beautifully renders that middling state of the soul between attachment to transient worldly goods and attainment of spiritual perfection. The love of what one is leaving behind yields, not without a sharp sadness, to the divine love that will fill one's entire being forevermore. So it is that when Virgil departs, unable to lead on into Heaven, Dante cannot hold back his sorrow, however much Paradise might beckon. Dante weeps, and tears stain his cheeks, which had been cleaned with dew when he had emerged from Hell; one recalls that it was Virgil who had lovingly wiped Dante's face then, and one sees why Dante would call Virgil his "sweetest father." But then Beatrice appears and tells him not to mourn the loss of Virgil, for Paradise is a place where people are happy.

This happiness doesn't take much getting used to. Already in Canto XXIX of the *Purgatorio*, Dante has been treated to the pageant of revelation, which features a procession of marvels; he is especially taken with a triumphal car drawn by a multi-colored griffin: *Not only did Rome not gladden Africanus or Augustus himself with a car so splendid, but that of the sun would be poor beside it*. In Heaven glory comes piled on glory, there is always some new marvel to be disclosed, and Dante wants more and more. He wants to see, to know, to love—and his every desire shall be satisfied. In Paradise, the divine love takes the form of dazzling light, the contemplation of which constitutes the soul's ultimate rapture; with this light goes abstruse but exhilarating talk, which also tends to dazzle.

Where the souls in Hell knew God only as the impediment to their own desires, in Heaven souls joyfully apprehend the divine order that oversees all earthly fate. The human mind, one discovers, is made to grasp the world's perfection, as Dante declares in the opening lines of the *Paradiso*'s tenth canto: *Looking on His Son with the Love which the One and the Other eternally breathe forth, the primal and ineffable Power made with such order all that revolves in mind or space that he who contemplates it cannot but taste of Him*. Understanding is pure joy: The best of theologians, who appear as "burning suns," sing, and a mind attuned to the divine harmonies makes

music more splendid than any heard on earth. God has fashioned Heaven for the appreciation of human souls, so that the best part of the virtuous soul's existence is only beginning with death.

Still, Dante's Heaven is not to everyone's taste. Certain of the most advanced modern minds regard it with outright revulsion. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche, with characteristic wild bravado, overturns Dante's eternal order, for the sake of a higher human good:

> Dante, I think, committed a crude blunder when, with a terror-inspiring ingenuity, he placed above the gateway of his Hell the inscription "I too was created by eternal love"—at any rate, there would be more justification for placing above the gateway to the Christian Paradise and its "eternal bliss" the inscription "I too was created by eternal hate"—provided a truth may be placed above the gateway to a lie! For what is it that constitutes the bliss of this Paradise?

Nietzsche goes on to cite Aquinas, briefly, and Tertullian, at some length, on the notion that part of the bliss Heaven will be the sight of the torments of Hell. Nietzsche finds this emblematic of the long struggle between the ancient pagans and the Bible, which continues to be waged in the spirits of the highest modern natures: "There has hitherto been no greater event than *this* struggle, *this* question, *this* deadly contradiction." Nietzsche sees Rome as Virgil saw it: "For the Romans were the strong and noble, and nobody stronger and nobler has yet existed on earth or even been dreamed of." The Jews and the Christians represent the weak and ignoble, whose triumph made Roman virtue seem damnable.

Nietzsche doesn't mention Dante's effort to rehabilitate select worthy Romans as the ancestors of Christianity, but one suspects that he would find it good only for a bitter laugh at Christians' preposterous condescension to their obvious superiors.

Nietzsche is the modern figure who preaches the most fervid defiance of Christianity. Exhorting men to forget their fears of Hell and their fantasies of Heaven, instructing them to love life on earth as though it were to be repeated throughout eternity, he contrives an exuberantly godless mythology to rival Dante's divine order, and he professes to do so out of true love for mankind.

A capacious sub-basement would have to be dug in Hell to accommodate the souls incited to monstrosity by Nietzschean inspiration. One will have to do better than Nietzsche if one wishes to supplant Christian love with some nobler sentiment.

That is not to say that Dante's is the last word on Christian love. Pope John Paul II (echoing the speculations of the twentieth-century theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar) has observed that, although he is quite certain there is a Hell, he retains the hope that there are no human souls in it.

Still, it is hard to resist the conviction that some people definitely belong in Hell, and in the foulest depths thereof: Lucifer would need several more mouths to do justice to the likes of Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot. Of course, the real trick is to ensure that one doesn't join them in perdition. And to help one steer clear of Hell and direct one's steps toward Paradise, there is no handbook to the afterlife—and therefore to life itself—more ferocious, beautiful, and compelling than Dante's *Divine Comedy*. ♦

BCA

Fathers and Sons

Why the ghost of Hamlet still haunts Stephen Greenblatt. BY PETER KANELOS

Stephen Greenblatt prefaces *Hamlet in Purgatory* with an extremely personal anecdote. He tells of his father who, obsessed with death his entire life, feared that his sons would not perform the Kaddish, the traditional Jewish prayers for the dead, after his death. So, in his will, he set aside a sum of money to ensure that an organization that provides such services for a fee would carry out the ritual. When he discovered this bequest, Greenblatt felt slighted: His father had not trusted him to meet his filial duty. He recited the prayers, nonetheless, with, as he describes, a mixture of love and spite.

Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me, implores the Ghost of Hamlet's father after revealing that he has been murdered and urging the prince to hasten to his revenge. Yet Hamlet fixes his attention not on vengeance, but on remembrance:

Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain
Unmixed with baser matter.

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The Ghost has a clear sense of how he would like to be remembered—through swift and lethal retribution. But Hamlet does not take immediate action; he is distracted by his own thoughts. The uneasy spirit must find a way to push him forward if he is to gain any rest.

Hamlet in Purgatory is concerned first and foremost with the power that the dead exercise over the living. This is not new territory for Stephen Greenblatt, Cogan University Professor at Harvard and editor of the influential Norton edition of Shakespeare's works. As a founder of the "new historicism," he has for years been promoting a literary criticism that puts in the foreground the social and historical nature of representation—and with the ascendancy of this method of interpretation, Greenblatt has emerged as the preeminent American figure in Renaissance studies.

Hamlet in Purgatory
by Stephen Greenblatt
Princeton University Press,
322 pp., $29.95

The new historicism sprouted in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A group of young academics, uncomfortable with the New Criticism then dominant, met on a regular basis, with subversive intentions. Influential for most of the mid-century, the New Criticism, typified in Shakespeare studies by G. Wilson Knight, approached literature as if it housed eternal truths, which could be accessed only through close study of the symbols and images found in the text. The younger generation of scholars found this approach elitist and distorted: It presumed that there were universal truths applicable to all cultures, and it suggested that there was an upward progress in history—human beings, gradually enlightened, moving ever closer towards these truths.

The new historicists sought to undermine all this by looking at literature in light of the historical circumstances of its production. Where the New Critics had found the triumphant and transcendent, they uncovered oppression and discord. Strongly influenced by Foucault and Lacan, Marxist aesthetics and feminist theory, the new historicists questioned the legitimacy of the canonical voices. As a corrective, they searched out an alternative history in the tangential, marginal, and what had hitherto been thought of as minor.

The work that first brought widespread attention to new historicism was Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, published in 1980. Jacob Burckhardt, in his famous study *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, had presented the Renaissance, in Hegelian manner, as the period in which the autonomous individual, no longer encumbered by Medieval faith and superstition, and reinvigorated by the principles of humanism, began to emerge in Western culture. Seizing on a claim made by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Greenblatt asserted, "Self-fashioning is in effect the Renaissance version of these control mechanisms, the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment." The individual evaporates into the haze of history.

Of course, that leaves unanswered the question of how individual voices of writers separated from us by time, circumstance, and culture, nonetheless retain over us their powerful hold. This question is almost certainly unanswerable by the new historicism. But the death of his father seems to have pushed the question of Shakespeare's power to explain and suggest universal human experiences back into the forefront of Greenblatt's mind—for *Hamlet* is, at

last, not just a Renaissance artifact, but an eternal presentation of sons who have lost fathers.

In *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Greenblatt contends that the Catholic Church of the Renaissance had a vested interest in the preservation of ghosts. By advertising Purgatory, a middle state between Heaven and Hell, where souls are scoured clean of their inveterate sins, Rome secured its grip over the faithful. According to this doctrine, one could reduce one's sentence in Purgatory only through the mediation of the clergy. Indulgences could be purchased or masses said for the deceased. Very few souls advanced directly to their final destination in the afterlife. Thus, the Church held, the dead did not disappear; they lingered on as shades, pleading for intercession, hoping to be remembered by the living.

Protestant polemicists—Tyndale, Latimer, Donne—rallied against this belief. Purgatory, they declared, was a fiction, a vast poem crafted to transfer wealth into the coffers of the clergy. It was the worst sort of Papist propaganda, profiting off superstition and ignorance. Christians, the reformers argued, went straight to Heaven or Hell. Prayers for the deceased were pointless, even blasphemous. To give credence to ghosts was decidedly un-Protestant.

As the Reformation took hold in England, the belief in Purgatory inevitably waned. Yet, Greenblatt maintains, ghosts were not so easily dispelled. The doctrine of Purgatory had been effective because it met a genuine human need. The succor given to the departed rebounded back upon the living. It was for the benefit of the living that the dead were remembered. However progressive their theology, not all Englishmen were prepared to forget those who had passed on.

Thus even Henry VIII, who dissolved the monasteries and chanceries that made a brisk business off the sale of prayers for the departed, commanded upon his own death that a large sum be paid out to the poor, on the condition that they pray for his relief in the afterlife. Although he would not negotiate with Rome for the privilege, Henry also

wanted to hurry his soul past the sufferings of Purgatory. He could not entirely divest himself of the belief in ghosts.

The new Protestant faith had by Shakespeare's day forced the old ways underground. Yet they remained there, under pressure, welling up at times, often violently. Shakespeare knew well that the past might be suppressed, but is never dispelled. Stephen Greenblatt reads *Hamlet* as elucidating this tension:

> With the doctrine of Purgatory and the elaborate practices that grew up around it, the Church had provided a powerful method of negotiating with the dead, or, rather, with those who were at once dead and yet, since they could still speak, appeal, and appall, not completely dead. The Protestant attack on the "middle state of souls" and the middle place those souls inhabited destroyed this method for most people in England, but could not destroy the longings and fears that Catholic doctrine had focused and exploited. Instead . . . the space of Purgatory becomes the space of the stage where old Hamlet's Ghost is doomed for a certain period to walk the night.

The Ghost in *Hamlet*, Greenblatt insists, rising from the "middle state," is a Catholic ghost, while the prince, educated at Wittenberg, obsessed with literacy and language, is distinctly Protestant. The pair thus represent two worldviews in conflict with one another. Yet they, as father and son, are irrevocably conjoined: They share name and blood, a mutual hatred for Claudius and a mutual concern for the queen. However distasteful or repellent the Ghost's call for revenge is to Hamlet, he cannot put it out of mind. That which haunts him charges the play with its enigmatic, yet undeniable energy.

A document found in 1757 behind the tiles of the house in which the playwright was born (though since lost) has suggested to many scholars that his father, John, was a recusant Catholic. Greenblatt surmises from this that Shakespeare, who outwardly conformed to the Anglican creed, may have invested in *Hamlet* his own ambiguous feelings towards the faith of his father; moreover, by representing a ghost and Purgatory on stage, he registered, perhaps not consciously, his dismay upon seeing the older structures dismantled. Yet even as he posits this, Greenblatt backs away, as if having admitted there are evident general truths about human nature in *Hamlet*, he has said enough.

It seems fairer to say that the jagged progression from a Catholic to a Protestant England forms the topography of *Hamlet*. The play itself is concerned with the broader question of transition—from one husband to the next, one king to another, from life to death. It is for this reason that the play is populated by so many dead fathers and their sons: old Norway and young Fortinbras, Polonius and Laertes, King Hamlet and Prince Hamlet. Stephen Greenblatt rightly situates memory at the heart of this matter. There is a sliding scale in *Hamlet*: At the one end, to remember is to surrender oneself to the obligations imposed by family, society, and history; and at the other end, to remember entails, simply and exclusively, what Claudius describes as the "remembrance of ourselves." As *Hamlet in Purgatory* gracefully expresses, it is our perpetual challenge to find a balance between these extremes. ♦

Against the Law

Stanley Fish's explanation of how Milton works.

BY JASON P. ROSENBLATT

It's been thirty-four years, and you haven't changed at all—flattering if exclaimed immediately by a friend one hasn't seen in all that time, less so if blurted out after fifteen minutes of conversation. It's true in both senses of Stanley Fish, whose latest book, *How Milton Works*, contains pages of still-youthful exuberance that match the verve, insight, and persuasive force of *Surprised by Sin*, his indispensable 1967 book on *Paradise Lost*. Yet at times in his new book—mostly a collection of previously published articles on Milton—two overlapping essays on the same Miltonic text, written decades apart, sitting cheek by jowl, create in the reader a sense of unease, as if the stranger sitting next to you at a bar has just told you a perfectly wonderful story and then, after you have registered your delight, followed it by repeating the same story.

How Milton Works
by Stanley Fish
Harvard University Press, 616 pp., $35

In the 1970s, a series of book ads, designed to resemble post-office posters, described Fish as "the most wanted" person in American literary criticism. This is truer than Fish's publicist realized. As a reader, he has always been thoroughly antinomian, that is, one who opposes the obligations of the Hebrew Bible's moral law, including the Ten Commandments—and that makes him something of an outlaw.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton hints at the connection between the prohibition against the forbidden fruit in paradise and the Ten Commandments when, just after the Fall, sinful Adam tells Eve: *if such pleasure be / In things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd, / For this one Tree had been forbidden ten.* In *How Milton Works*—and despite much Miltonic evidence to the contrary—Fish repeats incessantly that all authority is internalized and that all external forms, even the Ten Commandments, are examples of idolatrous temptation. In his radical interiority, Fish would make Milton's readers spiritually blind to the beauties of the world, though the blind poet Milton himself, compressing the six days of creation into three short lines, complains of the beauty lost to him: *the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn, / Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summer's Rose, / Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine*.

Theology is of crucial importance to Fish, and ultimately his most important authority is St. Paul. Paul, as John Drury has noted, had difficulty in being remotely positive about material matters, most notoriously marriage and sex. His headlong concentration on Christ crucified—"nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified," as First Corinthians puts it—had, in this reading, bankrupted the world.

The assumptions behind all of Stanley Fish's hyper-Pauline criticism derive from the writings in the 1930s and 1940s of A.S.P. Woodhouse and Arthur Barker on Milton and the Pauline doctrine of Christian liberty. Paul is the ultimate guilty reader "surprised by sin," and the Hebrew Bible is literature's supreme example of the self-consuming artifact, "the vehicle of its own abandonment." In a brilliantly seductive early essay, "Discovery as Form"—the blueprint for most of his work on Milton—Fish argues that *Paradise Lost* operates in a way "analogous to that of the Mosaic Law, which, we are told in [Milton's] *The Christian Doctrine*, calls forth 'our natural depravity, that by this means it might bring us to the righteousness of Christ.'"

Substituting *Paradise Lost* for the Hebrew Bible, Fish rejects the epic's literal narrative, "whose temporal structure, as many have observed, is confused." Fish asks about *Paradise Lost* "the obvious question" that Paul asks about the Hebrew Bible read merely as law: If "the action is interior, taking place inside the reader's mind, what is the function of the exterior form? Why is it there?" The answer to Fish's question, and to Paul's, is the same: to provoke an awareness of sin. Once that happens, the Hebrew Bible and *Paradise Lost* can be rejected: "The outer form of the poem is a 'scaffolding' which 'so soon as the building is finished' is but a 'troublesome disfigurement' that is to be cast aside."

This turns Milton's great epic into one more seventeenth-century tract on the relations of law and gospel. Although Fish's rhetoric is bold and often dazzling, one wonders if his rejection of the great epic as an independent entity would have been received so eagerly by Milton scholars in 1967 if Woodhouse and Barker had not prepared the way. In *How Milton Works*, Fish extends and complicates his argument, as when he declares, about the problem of authorship, "It is the letter (of the law, of aesthetics, of prayer, of right action) from which Milton . . . wishes to drive us, yet it is only by means of the letter that living and writing can proceed." The damned seem able to do nothing right, while the elect of God can do no wrong—and this is a "component of Milton's antinomianism, his reserving to the godly (self- or internally identified) the privilege of breaking laws others . . . are obliged to keep," justified by the purity of one's intention, which cannot be evaluated by external criteria.

Fish is often completely persuasive about individual passages. *How Milton Works* applies his antinomian readings brilliantly and outrageously to Milton's prose works, in particular the *Areopagitica* and *The Doctrine and Discipline of*

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Divorce. Yeats once said that out of our quarrels with others we make rhetoric; out of our quarrels with ourselves we make poetry. Perhaps this is the reason that Fish, a professor of rhetoric at Berkeley early in his career, is more successful in his relentless analyses of Milton's rhetorical prose than he is with Milton's poetry, whose ambiguities can never be exactly regulated even by the poet's own moral intention. (Two critics who actually understand poetry's rich ambiguity are Frank Kermode, whose elegant essay "Adam Unparadised" points out the difference between doctrine and poetry in Milton, and William Empson, whose *Milton's God* argues that *Paradise Lost* is great *because* of its moral confusions.)

In a splendidly wrongheaded essay on the *Areopagitica*, generally read as an argument for a free press, Fish claims that books for Milton are "a thing indifferent." His Milton is virtually an obscurantist who holds that no book, not even the Bible, can teach a fool, while "whatever we make available to a wise man will not be essential to his wisdom." Indeed, the Bible itself is an example of an external form, and "truth is not the property of any external form, even of a form that proclaims the truth."

There are individual sentences in Milton's tract that do seem to support Fish's reading. When Fish encounters a passage that doesn't—such as the famous encomium to books, which proclaims that to kill a book is to slay "an immortality rather than a life"—he peremptorily declares it "unMiltonic." Yet in the *Areopagitica* books are of capital importance. Milton adapts and extends the Reformation's argument that abolishes distinctions between clergy and laity, and he insists on the right of all people to search the scriptures. Indeed, he widens the freedom to read the Bible to include the freedom to read any text. Quite Miltonically, he defines "the true warfaring Christian" as one who "can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain." For us, in 2001, it seems impossible to know "the utmost that vice promises to her followers" and at the same time to abstain. But for Milton the power of culture, and particularly of books, to convey experience would have made explanation unnecessary. It is he, after all, who defines poetry as "simple, sensuous, and passionate." And who better understands the attractions of evil, Milton or a flat-eyed serial killer?

In his zeal to oppose the true doctrine of the inner light to "the false authority of some external and imposed rule," even that of the gospel, Fish misquotes a famous passage from the *Areopagitica*. Where Milton writes, "Truth indeed came once into the world *with* her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on," Fish reads, "truth 'indeed came once *into* her divine Master.'" Truth, in Milton's actual quotation, is an external entity separate from Christ her Master. If, as Milton has it, "a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life," then the New Testament is the good book that contains the essence of Christ, the master-spirit whose lifeblood was spilled on the Cross and whom Joseph of Arimathea entombed with myrrh and aloes.

John Milton

Fish applies his interpretive ingenuity most impressively in an essay on Milton's own most ingenious and impressive treatise, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. Arguing for divorce on grounds of incompatibility—a radical idea in 1644—this Puritan poet whose personal behavior met the highest ethical standards was accused by his contemporaries of libertinism. (*The Oxford English Dictionary* still defines "Miltonist" as "a follower of Milton in his views on divorce.") Fish recognizes that Milton's real enemies in the treatise—unacknowledged, of course—are the New Testament's clear pronouncements against divorce. Most biblical interpreters hold that Jesus dissociated himself directly from a regulation of the Torah on only one occasion, when, in Matthew 19:3-9, he rejected explicitly and categorically the right of divorce pronounced in Deuteronomy 24:1-2.

Fish argues that Milton neutralizes the New Testament verses against divorce by submitting them to the judgment of charity. Instead of deducing the Bible's position from its own words, Milton begins with a "preunderstanding" that gives him privileged access to an authorial intention independent of the words of the text that are universally used to establish that intention: "Once words have been dislodged as the repository of meaning in favor of intention, no amount of them will suffice to establish an intention, since the value they have will always depend on that which they presume to establish."

Fish's description of Milton seems, in fact, better as a description of Fish's own interpretive strategy. Milton "supplies the essence of God by specifying for him an intention for which there is no evidence save the persuasiveness of its own assertion." God wants to provide divorce as an escape from a bad marriage, and therefore biblical verses must be wrestled into compliance with that intention. The Bible is not a self-reading text—no text is—and centuries of supplementary readings in the form of biblical commentary have created the "orig-

inal" scriptural text. Fish loves to play with relationships and to reverse them, and his examples are always provocative. In *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, we infer the meaning of the text from the author's intention, instead of the other way around.

Readers of Fish's 1980 work *Is There a Text in This Class?* will recognize this as a version of the idea that the text isn't the *object* of interpretation, but the *product*. Explaining what makes a text literature, he argues that readers are not autonomous but always act as members of an interpretive community that governs their choices: "It is not that literature exhibits certain formal properties that compel a certain kind of attention; rather, paying a certain kind of attention (as defined by what literature is understood to be) results in the emergence into noticeability of the properties we know in advance to be literary."

The limitation of Fish's otherwise compelling reading of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* is that it underestimates the range and complexity of its arguments by providing only one interpretive key. In thirty-six short chapters, each with its own head note, Milton employs many different rhetorical strategies. What is suppressed in Fish's antinomian reading is that this is the poet's most Hebraic treatise. Milton forces Christ's words into compliance with the deuteronomic right to divorce and thus becomes in effect a defender of the entire Mosaic law.

For Milton, in this instance, it is the Hebrew Bible that is clear and charitable, the Gospel obscure and ostensibly rigid. He reverses typology by insisting, "If we examine over all [Christ's] sayings, we shall find him not so much interpreting the Law with his words, as referring his own words to be interpreted by the Law." One of the central arguments in the treatise is that divorce must be permitted since the law cannot be more charitable than the Gospel.

Fish's antinomian reading of *Samson Agonistes*, Milton's most Hebraic poem, similarly betrays a hostile and limiting conception of the law. But the law in this work is less monolithic than Fish suggests, and it is broad enough to permit Hebraic Samson to take Dalila back or not, to enter the temple of Dagon or not.

Fish's antinomianism provides continuity throughout *How Milton Works*, but there are times when different essays betray different attitudes toward divine epistemology: There is one truth about God, and it can be known, or there is one truth, and it can't. Early in the book, human freedom and separation from the divine are bad, indeed Satanic: Satan's "words display the false freedom of irresponsibility—the freedom that comes with not being tethered to anything but the emptiness within." The desired state is the annihilation of personality and absorption in the divine. The joy of such union is so complete that "one who inhabits that condition can be said to have nothing to do, nowhere to go, no goal to achieve."

But late in *How Milton Works* the failure to achieve such union is *desired*: "What is fortunate about the Fall, about not being in the optimum place, is that there is somewhere for you to go and something for you to do." It's not that Fish is unaware that union is both a promise and a threat; a great deal of his book is about the tension between the desires for self-assertion and a self-transcendence that entails anonymity. Rather, it's that his attitude toward these desires switches abruptly.

Fish loves Milton, and in *How Milton Works*, he graciously observes the scholarly courtesies and writes as a member of a community of Milton scholars. Those scholars will find readings of individual passages to be cherished. Anyone who teaches Milton should be grateful for the way Fish illuminates the *Nativity Ode*'s last line, *Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable*, every word underscoring angelic obedience. He gives the definitive reading of "At a Solemn Music," and he explains why the "pensive Nun" in *Il Penseroso* is "held in holy passion still," where the word "still" has "the triple meaning of quietly, without movement, and with duration." Fish's reading of the "parching wind" that turns the drowned body of Lycidas into *parch*ment, effacing its distinguishing features, is affecting—although less so after one reads something similar later on about Manoa's

desire to wash the body of his dead son Samson. (Similarly, the threat of castration facing the Miltonic bard in the invocation of book seven of *Paradise Lost* is reprised in an essay on Samson.)

The most serious problem with *How Milton Works* is simply its master-simile, Fish's antinomian reading of the world as evil and virtue as renunciation. One would never know from Fish that Milton was a great *public* poet and secretary for foreign tongues in Oliver Cromwell's Council of State. For students of Milton, the most important publishing event of 2001 is the appearance of Barbara K. Lewalski's magisterial *The Life of John Milton*. To read Lewalski's incisive scholarship and criticism after reading *How Milton Works* is to emerge from a musty, shuttered room into an open lawn on a breezy day in May. It's to turn the cliché that "There's a big world out there" into reality. The great poet of interiority is not John Milton, but John Milton's Satan, whose manifesto Fish does not quote: *The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.* ♦

Former president Bill Clinton agreed to sell the worldwide rights to publish his memoirs to Alfred A. Knopf Inc. for a record advance of more than $10 million.

—News item

Alfred A. Knopf  **Publishers, Inc.**

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 19, 2009

To: Mort Janklow, Literary Agent

From: Sonny Mehta, Knopf Publishing

I understand you are upset that we are unable to offer your client, George W. Bush, the same size advance we offered Bill Clinton eight years ago. Yes, I agree they both had impressive eight-year runs in the White House, and they both left quite popular. But this is not a case of political bias. To try to prove that, I've compared excerpts from the Clinton memoir, Inside the Beltline: An Oral History, with passages from the Bush proposal. I hope you will see why we concluded that the Clinton book had more commercial possibilities than the Bush book.

Clinton	Bush
"Paula, I love the way your hair falls down around your shoulders."	"Mr. Putin, I really like your soul."
"Eleanor, I told you never to wear a bra in the Oval Office."	"Karl, I told you never to wear a pager in the Oval Office."
"Hillary, I have to tell you something you're not going to want to hear."	"Mr. Defense Secretary, I'm going to have to tell you something you're not going to want to hear."
When I heard Streisand breathing in the Lincoln Bedroom, I got out my video cam and crawled up to the keyhole.	When I heard Cheney breathing in the Treaty Room, I blew up a paper bag and snuck up behind him.
There's nothing more fun than four babes lathered in McDonald's special Big Mac sauce.	There's nothing more fun than thirty days in Crawford, Texas.

I could go on, but I think you catch my drift. So, on the whole, I think our offer of $3,500 is quite generous.