

RE-READING THE NEW RIGHT: RISK, MEDIA, AND RHETORIC IN
REPUBLICAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

by

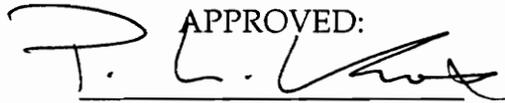
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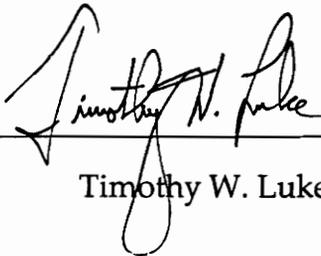
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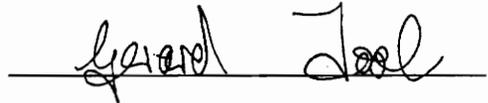
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Urban Affairs

(THE RISE OF THE NEW RIGHT IN U.S. POLITICS FROM 1994-1996 IS EXAMINED AS A PROCESS OF ASYMMETRICAL COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS OF SIGNS CONSTRUCTED TO APPEAL TO A CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL SUBCULTURE. LASH AND URRY'S ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMY OF SIGNS AND SPACE IS EMPLOYED TO TRACE THE FLOW OF THESE SIGNS AS THEY ARE "EMPTIED-OUT" AND RECOMBINED IN WAYS WHICH LEGITIMATE THE CONSERVATIVE, PRO-BUSINESS AGENDA, OR CONTRACT WITH AMERICA, UNVEILED DURING THE 1994 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION. A RE-READING OF THESE SIGNS SEEKS TO RE-PLACE THE INDIVIDUAL AS SUBJECT IN THE ROLE OF REFLEXIVE AGENT IN A PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION WHICH REJECTS THE REASSERTION OF THE NEW RIGHT'S DESIGN FOR A SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MORAL VALUES WHICH MAINTAIN THE DISTRIBUTION OF RISK. THESE RISKS, AS MANAGED BY ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, ARE ONE TARGET OF THE NEW RIGHT'S DEREGULATORY AGENDA AND AS SUCH FORM THE CENTRAL POLITICAL ISSUE EXAMINED IN THIS PAPER USING LASH AND URRY'S THEORY OF REFLEXIVE MODERNIZATION.)

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the professors and friends who have raised both my abilities and expectations in and out of the classroom. To my committee, Dr.s Knox, Luke, and Toal, who have given time and attention to my ideas and work. To my family for supporting me throughout. And especially to my wife, Jennifer, who has more patience and understanding than I deserve.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Among others, these words:

“They say things are done for the majority / Don’t believe half of what you see
and none of what you hear”

—Lou Reed, *Last Great American Whale*, 1989

“As I step and traverse this our land,
As I trek and am exposed to our master plan.

Like Children we are happy

Throwing our stones upon the water,

But this to the frogs is a storm of sand.

Is it true what they say about you?

Remember that being clever gave

the monkey a long tail...

Or was it Pinnochio and his nose...?’

Ahh... never mind, crank up the machines, tuende mbele!! (forward !)”

—Ayub Ogada, *En Mana Kuoyo*, 1993

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Chapter 1

Signs, Flows, and Conservative Agendas

I'm a controversial guy... [I'm] reshaping the entire nation through the news media¹.—Newt Gingrich

C-Span is more real than being there².—Newt Gingrich

As an elected official, I can hold a press conference and that's a source of real power³.—Newt Gingrich

TV news directors [are] *real* important. Incredibly important. That's the central nervous system. They're the ones who make the decision to put Gingrich on⁴.—Newt Gingrich

SIGN OF THE TIMES

How did Newt Gingrich go from leading the “Republican Revolution” in the 1994 congressional election, to being the “most evil man in America” in 1996? And what did the “revolution” accomplish in between? This paper examines the former question indirectly, by concentrating on the latter. More importantly, this paper examines the changes in environmental policy during the 1994-96

¹ Vanity Fair, July 1989

² The Atlanta Constitution, February 7, 1985

³ The Washington Post, January 3, 1985

⁴ The Atlantic Monthly, June 1993

Republican Congress for evidence of what Lash and Urry refer to reflexive modernization. *Specifically, this paper examines how the conservative, pro-industrial political agenda is advanced through the use of scientific rhetoric.* It also seeks to address a set of reflexive processes which “may open up possibilities for the recasting of meaning in work and leisure, for the reconstitution of the community and the particular, for the reconstruction of a transmogrified subjectivity, and for heterogenization and complexity of space and of everyday life” (Lash & Urry 1994, 3). This reflexivity, it is argued, accounts for the loss of momentum in the new right⁵ during 1996 through a process which accentuates the subjectivity of the voter or public as agent(s) of a responsive, critical examination of political maneuvering. These possibilities develop within an “economy of signs and space” which often empties out both signs and spaces. Within the practice of this emptying out, however, are new formations and interpretation by the reflexive subject: the processes of modernization creates an individualized world of subjects who are given the authority to examine and critique the modernization process itself. Thus, the de-partisan, popular political environment of the last five years in U.S. politics opens the possibility of individual political self-monitoring, self-interpreting, and outward (reflexive) alteration of the political climate.

Lash and Urry (1994) outline a process of reflexive modernization which they argue structures the spaces and practices of the core nations and, increasingly,

⁵ The term “new right” is herein used to refer to right-wing politics since the 1994 congressional and state elections when Republicans took control of the Senate, the House of Representatives, many state-houses and governorships.

the globe. These processes make the current period, the postmodern, “more modern than modernism” in a concentration upon and an acceleration of signs, both cognitive and aesthetic, in place of concrete material practices. The cognitive reflexivity comprises the increasing release of social agents from control and monitoring structures to a position of *self-monitoring* or self-reflexive being (Lash & Urry 1994, 5). Aesthetic reflexivity entails the *interpretation* of the self and “social background practices” in which the individual invests his or her imaginations of community and social membership via unarticulated practices arising from an often invisible flows of meaning and signs (Lash & Urry 1994, 5-6).

This paper argues that reflexive modernization is a process which can explain specific political flows of meaning, in this case, the rise and fall of a populist political subculture which claims the name the “new right.” This movement is affiliated with a variety of conservative thinkers and found significant financial support in industry during the 1994 congressional campaign. Central to the new right’s success with voters are two themes which are here examined as reflexive practices. The first involves the concept of “individual responsibility.” This term has come to define a stance in regards to the traditional structures of social regulation and monitoring which defies large, organized social forms in favor of individual preservation and self-interest. This practice argues that the best judge of a person’s best interests is that person. This position is synonymous with cognitive reflexivity which presupposes judgment (Lash & Urry 1994, 5) and “assumes a subject-object relationship of the self to itself and the social world” (Lash & Urry 1994, 5-6). The presupposition of judgment found in cognitive reflexivity is the condition wherein decisions are based on a foundational set of

beliefs that hold the individual to be master over him/herself. With individual responsibility, as with cognitive reflexivity, the assumption is that the self maintains an ability to distance a cognitive subject from the material self-as-object in order to determine best possible alternatives to the present position. This belief that the self is capable of obtaining such a position opens a criticism upon social structures in the mind of the "responsible individual" as limitations upon the self and self-determination. The accumulation of signs which portray responsibility and self-sufficiency is possible through the withdrawal of such signifiers from informational and communication structures (Lash & Urry 1994, 6). The movement of many detached signifiers within the informational flow makes possible a flow of political significations that accumulate with the "responsible individual." This condition of individual responsibility is not a creation of the new right, but an attempt to forge it into the conservative agenda.

This leads to the second theme of new right success: the development of a community of individual responsibility. This is not a contradictory process, per se, though the mode of self-monitoring, or cognitive reflexivity, is hardly harmonious with a social crypto-structure such as the new right. In this flow, the aesthetic reflexivity of the individual invests certain interpretations of the self into itself and lends to the creation of imagined communities or movements, however unarticulated. In this way, the flow of detached signifiers from an informational and communication structure such as mass print or television media are retained by the self who seeks to accumulate those images and narratives that reinforce, as one possible subject, the *responsible individual*. Therefore, as a background assumption, the unarticulated practice of constructing and reasserting the *responsible individual* subjectivity within the new

right movement is one which Lash and Urry's sociology make possible.

Furthermore, the unarticulated practice which lends itself to the accumulation of signs and self-reflexivity may also be self-contradictory. As such, the process of modernization which has brought the self into a world where it is released from the monitoring of social structures to recognize and construct itself where s/he is allowed to participate in and co-construct new communities is a world which requires a "custom fit" between self and community in order to maintain. The establishment of reflexive individuals (responsible or otherwise) and unarticulated practices is at once receptive and hostile to the manipulation of the economy of signs. Open, in that the control of informational and communication flows is "an asymmetric flow" (Lash & Urry 1994, 7), and hostile, in the ability for the "free" self to reject those signs which are found to be antithetical to the self-reflexive process. Thus, the emergence of the reflexive individual within an asymmetric flow of signs leads to new social patterns which indeed require a *zeitdiagnostische Soziologie* where "flows and reflexivity can be substantially contradictory and counteracting phenomena" (Lash & Urry 1994, 6)

Lash and Urry's argument also re-replaces the structural perspective of the individual-as-object with the individual-as-subject, capable and curious in determining his/her own position. Likewise, their model provides the basis for examining the asymmetrical flow of information and communication. These flows become crucial to an analysis of a phenomena such as the new right; an analysis which becomes more a play-by-play, than an excavation, in keeping with the transition from structures to flows. This chapter briefly introduces the material practices which produce the flow of signs created by the new right; it briefly provides an analysis of this flow; and finally, it introduces the analyses

which follow.

THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONSERVATIVE AGENDA

An analysis of new right policy maneuvers could encompass a broad spectrum of issues such as education, markets, language, welfare, taxes, and jobs. In order to examine more closely the emptying out of signs and the new right's ordering of symbols and policies within a conservative, pro-business agenda, this paper will focus on environmental policy. Before reading the conservative agenda, however, it is helpful to outline the friction between environmental policy and pro-business interests as they become re-ordered in policies such as the Contract with America.

After a long-standing "jobs versus owls" debate surrounding the environmental protections afforded by the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts of the 1960s and '70s, the last fifteen years saw a significant increase in environmental protections under rulemaking by the Environmental Protection Agency. Despite several highly publicized situations where environmental protections were scrutinized or condemned by local-growth advocates, U.S. environmental policy had become some of the strongest in the world (Helvarg 1995). As EPA regulation forced large industrial interests to alter their practices in favor less pollution or contamination, Republican leaders began formulating pro-business deregulatory maneuvers. Point 8 of the Contract with America, the "Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act," calls for risk-assessment and cost-benefit ratio analyses for all Federal regulations (Contract with America 1994). This act, the Republicans claimed, would reduce Federal regulations which inhibited or reduced job growth by requiring an assessment of costs (to business or jobs) and benefits (to society) via an

assessment of risks, followed by a “peer review” of industry experts and interests, concluding with a judicial review to allow business and industry to bring suit against proposed regulation before becoming practice (Blow 1995). The industry and business interests that would be involved in this process had much to do in the creation of the new right’s deregulatory agenda.

In creating the conservative agenda for the new right’s 1994 campaign, Gingrich and other conservatives hosted a number of “strategy sessions” with conservative interest groups such as Gun Owners of America, National Right to Life, Save our Schools, the Christian Coalition, National Taxpayers Union, Accuracy in Media, and Young Republicans for Freedom. These sessions were an opportunity for conservative think-tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, Leadership Institute, and the Free Enterprise Foundation, and conservative figures, such as Ralph Reed, William Bennett, Rush Limbaugh, Pat Robertson, James Davidson, and Tom Clancy to “brainstorm” election strategy and policy development (Gross & Hamilton 1989). During these sessions, environmental interests were summed up by S. Fred Singer of the Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy as “the new front of a threat to freedom and democracy around the world;” and David Horowitz’s depiction of environmentalists as “proto-totalitarians” driven by “a hatred of humans as they are” (Gross & Hamilton 1989). Addressing one of the weekend strategy sessions, Gingrich charged the conservative leadership, “if you haven’t been on the radio this week, you’re failing the conservative movement” (Gross & Hamilton 1989). While these attitudes represented the bulk of hard right interests, the interest of business leaders was expressed in cash donations to political candidates.

During the congressional campaign of 1994, majors contributors to the

Republican campaign favored a repeal of regulatory policy which they believed lowered profits (Gup 1996). Among the largest contributors was a pipe-fitting business owner, Fred Lennon, who gave over \$500,000 to the Republican Party since 1993, and during a 14-week period prior to the 1994 election, pressured many of his business' 140 distributors and their spouses to contribute more than \$234,000 (Gup 1996). Lennon's \$70,000 to \$80,000 fundraising drive for Republican Representative Steven LaTourette brought a reciprocal consideration to his request for legislation which excluded family business value from estate taxes (Gup 1996). Archer Daniels Midland chairman, Dwayne Andreas, contributed over \$300,000 to candidates willing to maintain the billions of dollars in corporate welfare which benefit the company. The agriculture company chairman writes checks to both parties (as much as \$400,000 at once) for those who represent pro-agriculture subsidies and policies (Gup 1996). Gingrich's supporters include Terry Kohler who gave \$715,457 to GOPAC, Gingrich's political action committee; Amway co-founder Richard DeVos who gave \$2.5 million to Republican candidates in the 1994 election, and; Kriebel Foundation founder, and board member of the Heritage Foundation and Free Congress Foundation Robert Kriebel donated more than \$170,000 to Gingrich and GOPAC, and claims "I'm buying the man" (Gup 1996). Kriebel is closely tied to Paul Weyrich who organized the conservative strategy sessions for the hard right.

This paper does not argue that the practice of fundraising and "vote-buying" is in any way novel, but that the demands of the contributors are fueling a conservative agenda that is informed by policy developed in hard right strategy sessions which is unapologetic in its deregulatory intentions. It is the creation of

a symbology within the right which fuses social and moral acerbation with pro-business policy changes that produce a significantly different Republican Party. The combination of hard right conservative agenda setting and a large number of wealthy, pro-business interests who are, at least in part, involved in the hard right's dogmatic policy positioning has formed a Republican Party which, under the rubric "new right," is adamantly seeking a change in governmental oversight. Whether the new right believes that, for instance, environmental deregulation is crucial to profit maximization or merely an immoral law of "proto-totalitarian" environmentalists is not important: what is important is that an extreme-conservative agenda, invested in by both the moral and money interests of the right, is the basis for a political movement. As a result of the new right's move to deregulate, congressional republicans have attempted to radically alter environmental policy. The specific changes to environmental policy are outlined in chapter 2.

WHY THE SPEAKER?

In following the creation and mobilization of signs within a political economy of signs, Newt Gingrich's presence in the informational and communication flows of print and television media is foremost in dissecting the new right community. Between the material practices of the conservative-industrial assembly and the polished image of information and communication flows is a trace, a line of evidence, which can be followed. This trace by Gingrich comprises writings, press conferences, sound-bites, editorials, and actual legislation. Because, the interest of this paper in re-reading new right policy is in determining the dynamics of flow between aesthetic and cognitive reflexivity, it is helpful to concentrate on one trace, one line of flow, within the larger new

right movement. In so doing, general themes and maneuvers of the new right become legible, and are important in understanding the intent of this political mobilization and in explaining its outcome.

Reading the trace, or between the lines, requires a concentration on those symbols of unarticulated background practices which contain as much information as the texts themselves. So in deciphering a Gingrich quote, a focus on the symbols created and launched within the space of that quote is as informative to understanding the position claimed by the Speaker as a literal reading of the quote's text. Such symbols are contained in references to mythical historical figures or narratives, or to other narratives understood by the public. Thus, George Washington, AIDS, or laziness can become unarticulated themes within a narration of "background practices." Gingrich's statement in *Mother Jones* in October 1989, "the Left in America are to blame for most of the current, major diseases which have struck this society," operates unarticulated symbols which promote a subtextual or symbolic expression of "liberals cause AIDS." "The Left," is an attempt to symbolize those persons who support a "liberal agenda," which, in the context of "major diseases," translates as homosexuality and AIDS. The words are empty, they are depleted of their literal meaning, but as symbols still maintain a residue of sympathetic meaning which, when spun, speak to a public that understands this specific construction of symbols: this is a *background practice*. These symbols are, as Lash and Urry argue, disposable: their usefulness is found in their emptiness and the ability to construct textually empty statements out of culturally charged sympathetic practice. The sympathy of the reader in trying to decipher the message is one required for understanding the accelerated texts of television viewership: messages are co-constructed with an

active viewer, if only subconsciously. Gingrich seems to understand this maneuver very well: “reshaping the entire nation through the news media.” Chapter 3 examines the sound-bite as a practice of visualizing agendas within a vocabulary of unarticulated backgrounds comprising cultural symbols. In this way, political agenda setting through informational and communication networks, Gingrich’s “central nervous system,” is akin to Lash and Urry’s culture industry: as aestheticized normalization through niche-marketing and custom-tailoring political agendas to viewer-voters.

The very real dangers in a risk society are therefore mediated through a process of aesthetic reflexivity where symbols and images replace the necessary reasoning by a subject to adequately and accurately determine the extent of these risks. This visualization of risk or crisis is the subject of chapter 4.

Chapter 2

New Right Environmental Policy

NEW RIGHT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

This paper examines the rhetorical forms present in the environmental policy positions of the new right. I argue that the mode of presentation employed by those seeking to advance conservative political agendas in the United States since the 1994 congressional election is carefully constructed around specific rhetorical devices that seek to 1) dismiss the traditional political institutions and policies of the U.S. welfare state in favor of a society of “opportunity” focused on the individual, 2) establish a reorganized political system with the primary goal of deregulation, and 3) present such arrangements as new, scientific, rational, and common-sensical. The first and second arguments are briefly reviewed to (re)acquaint the reader with new right agendas; the third comprises the balance of the chapters herein. Since the focus of this paper is on the specific manner in which new right policy is presented to the public, the following briefly outlines some of those initiatives sponsored by the Republicans since 1994.

Most of the tactics employed by the right to reduce environmental regulation have been initiated within the confines of the budget negotiations of 1996. Other tactics include the deregulation of local policies, where most of the environmental protections are enforced, as state after state reduces or cuts completely the budgets of state-level environmental enforcement agencies (Yeoman 1995, McCue 1995). The majority of such local efforts fall under the rubric of “unfunded mandates” which, the new right argues, are improper

Federal burdens upon cash-poor local, municipal, and state governments; or more directly, upon local taxpayers (Wasserman 1995, McCue 1995). Republicans are attempting to dismantle regulations in three ways: reducing funding for environmental monitoring and regulatory enforcement; eliminating or rewriting laws which contain environmental regulations or protections, and; writing new laws which offset current practice and/or judiciary interpretive practice.

A sample of programs the right seeks to dismantle through either budget or law since 1994 can be summarized briefly:

- The eliminating of air and water testing and ending the protecting endangered fisheries and are among the measures proposed in the "Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act," a part of the Contract with America (Wasserman 1995).
- Selling for revenue Federal land currently protected in the mid- and far-west. Republicans describe these lands as "dead-weight," though it provides erosion-prevention and habitat for rare species. No studies are planned to determine the impact of selling and developing such lands (New York Times 1995).
- One proposed Federal grassland sale would produce revenue that would go to purchase land threatened by development in New York and New Jersey which provides fresh drinking-water for North New Jersey and New York City. The deal is organized by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and is viewed as a political gesture to favor Governors Pataki and Whitman who face voters concerned about water supplies (Gray 1995).
- Radioactive waste handling regulations are being eliminated by the Republican-led Senate Energy Committee. The deregulated bill calls for

“low-level” dump sites to be distributed throughout the country with a “high-level” site at Nevada’s Yucca Mountain (Wasserman 1995).

- The Senate Energy Committee is also proposing to allow private oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and a removal of barriers to drilling for oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico (Wasserman 1995).
- Allowing timber sales and clear-cutting practices in national parks for private gain(Wasserman 1995).
- Dramatically loosening water pollution controls established by the 1972 Clean Water Act (Kriz 1995).
- Re-defining takings to include any Federal regulation that reduces the value of a business or property by 10 percent or more. This movement towards extreme interpretations of the Fifth Amendment clause on compensation has been privately accelerated by the legal services of the Heritage Foundation. These efforts are working to eliminate all forms of government regulation evidenced by the Supreme Court’s decision in favor of such interpretations, *Dolan v. City of Tigard*, in 1994 (Helvarg 1995).

These actions have been placed within a larger agenda and campaign by the Republican Party in its “Contract with America.” As such, the “Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act” was the eighth bill proposed under the Contract and its specific language, as mentioned above, sought to eliminate most forms of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversight, monitoring, rulemaking, and enforcement (Wasserman 1995, Helvarg 1995). The Contract claims to strengthen the Regulation Flexibility Act by reducing unfunded mandates and providing neutral cost recovery via cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment (Contract with America 1994).

Several outcomes could be expected from the proposed environmental deregulations. First, the dissolution of EPA monitoring authority in favor of cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment would severely limit the authority of EPA researchers to establish and enforce maximum levels and practices on industry. Further, it would settle claims made by the EPA in court where the opposing sides could provide contradictory expert testimony and open up consideration of “public costs” such as jobs. Second, the policies are often written to benefit specific industries and lobby groups. The proposal forwarded by Senator Slade Gorton (R) of Washington to amend and repeal the 1973 Endangered Species Act was found to have been entirely written, in its final bill form, “by business, agriculture, and other industry interests” (Kriz 1995). Other bills specifically address regulations which place limits on industry, such as the takings policies which seek to open the environment to externality benefits flowing to industry (Helvarg 1995). Third, many policies place the public interest and the public health at risk by removing mandates on clean drinking water and clean air, toxic containment, and the search for new energy sources. Though such program’s costs are argued by the new right to be too expensive, the Republicans sought to maintain a \$30 billion tax abatement in the 1996 budget for the oil industry which dates back to the 1930s (Wasserman 1995). Fourth, the geographic shuffling of these risks takes advantage of industrial or constituent interests. The specific case of the Sterling Forest buy-back on the New York-New Jersey border for “dead-weight” grassland in Oklahoma purchased during the dustbowl illustrates this tension. Sterling Forest contains a water-shed and lake which provide drinking water for North New Jersey and New York City residents. The land is among the largest undeveloped tracts in the Northeast and is a constituent issue in those

states. The trade was organized by Speaker Gingrich. Reports identify Gingrich's need for alliances with Republican Governors Pataki of New York and Whitman of New Jersey as key to prompting the deal. Local resistance in Oklahoma ended the proposed trade and forced Republicans to start considering other Federal lands. These trades are not subject to environmental impact assessment, but are decided and acted upon for the political persuasion of powerful East Coast voters (Hanley 1996, New York Times 1995, Gray 1995). This sort of geographical ambivalence highlights the lack of impact assessment or eco-system logic in new right policy, collapsing environmental conditions into instrumental categories. Fifth, and finally, the presentation of these deregulatory moves by the new right portrays environmental protection as unfunded mandates, takings, inefficient government, or limits to growth and are specific tactics to re-author regulations deemed "anti-worker." The name of the Contract's policy on the environment, the "Jobs Creation and Wage Enhancement Act," suggests that government currently has an interest in jobs second and environmental protection first. The Contract, thus, proposes to reverse this by engaging environmental policy with efficiency factors and management logic such as benefit-cost and risk-assessment analyses (Contract with America 1994). Such policy collapses cause and effect to place blame on politically strategic figures, i.e. Democrats. Likewise, the images portrayed in the presentational context of new right policy runs counter to likely outcomes of such changes: Gingrich's announcement of the proposed changes in the endangered species protection laws was made in a zoo where the speaker was surrounded by rare animals. This predilection for the speaker to present himself as friend of the animals and as wise manager of "our resources" is made again in *To Renew America* where Gingrich discusses the snakes he owns at

ZooAtlanta while claiming that “it is impossible for us to be a dynamic species and still act as if we don’t exist” (Gingrich 1995, 195). It is the turning of environmental issues through rhetorical device and context that hides so much of new right policy from both the media and the public. This paper addresses how these turns operate.

These policy initiatives are deregulatory maneuvers: They seek to end government sponsored oversight of any industrial activity. Recognizing the goals of the new right’s political agenda becomes central to critiquing its projection onto and its acceptance by the U.S. public. Because the number of issues which Republicans have targeted in recent years is so large, this paper will limit its analysis to environmental policy. This serves two purposes. First, an identifiable set of writings and policies has emerged around the matter of the environment. This is largely due to the cohesive nature of Constitutional interpretations and institutional arrangements on this issue. Since the court’s reinterpretation of environmental protection as constitutional in the early 1970s and the creation of rulemaking and enforcement via the EPA, environmental issues have centered around a small number of government agencies. Because the environment represents specific institutions rather than all of government, its consideration within public debate focuses on EPA powers. This is not simply to argue that the establishment of environmental protection as constitutional is a distinct turn in public policy, but that regulatory attempts within other agencies based on environmental consideration have been much more contentious. Part of the strategy to contain environmental issues within a separate debate outside civil and industrial considerations is evidenced in the univocality of the EPA environmental hazards are not widely discussed in the government except when

the agency gains oversight. This allows for a politically safe alternative to imbuing environmental regulation and consideration within every agency and law-making process. While policies such as environmental impact assessments have extended the EPA's regulatory oversight, this authority operates from a narrow base subject to political and budgetary editing.

Second, environmental deregulation has a very real consequence on the lives of the public. This risk has been described as an imperceptible distribution of long-term costs to the basic components of constitutional democracy, including human life and health, and natural resource availability (Beck 1992, 19-36). Environmental deregulation also emerges as a highly ambiguous topic within common narratives because of its reliance on scientific methods which maintain highly technical and poorly understood descriptions of environmental dynamics. The specific cultural formations which contribute to this confusion are examined in this paper as part of the explanation for the success of new right arguments which call upon "common sense" to understand and solve environmental crises. The rise of a risk society (Beck 1992) and a culture of technical ambiguity regarding nature (Douglas 1992) are discussed in relation to the ocular bias of western culture and the forum in which environmental policy is created. The paper argues that the format of post-textual discourse, e.g. the televisual media, is only partly contributes to silence and ambiguity on the matter of the environment. These interpretations follow Lash and Urry's *Economies of Signs and Space*.

Within this reorganization of publicly ambiguous knowledge and power, the specific manner of speaking by new right advocates, especially Newt Gingrich, is carefully disassembled to expose the rhetorical devices that deregulatory agenda-

setters use in order to amass public consent. This examination of discourse reveals the devices deployed by the right which make use of the aporia of scientifically-critical vocabulary in the American vernacular and redoubled by the rise of televisual media. Further, these speakers take advantage of existing American literacy forms, such as common cinematic or television themes, transposed from particular literary genres familiar to the public. Finally, the writing of new right agendas in these transposed genres is re-read from a critical left position, acknowledging the public's televisual literacy and technical illiteracy. Re-reading new right policy in this manner allows the public to begin asking questions in the silent wake of new right political "revolutions:" a reflexive modernization which does not tolerate the reassertion of large social structures qua the new right's conservative agenda.

Chapter 3

Visions of Crisis

TELLING STORIES

This chapter examines the manner in which new right policy is communicated in such a fashion that complex situations are reduced to dogmatic and simplified story-telling: how such narratives use empty signs of progress and science to promote the conservative agenda. It is often the tactic of new right policy to operate the language and images of the environmentalist so as to represent deregulatory policy as the best possible alternative (Didion 1995). These policy stances are conveyed to the public through the sound-bite, the news clip, and the book (as a collection of sound-bites). In the sound-bite, the speaker is heard or read collapsing the complex into the “quick and dirty” message. The format of televised news programs lend to a compression of time and space which subvert both the potential for recognizing the complexity of environmental and political issues, and the possibility for recognizing spatial distributions and flows of environmental hazards. The space of national politics is thus reduced to manageable size; national space is contained in the news. It is reduced to the sound-bite which is a misnomer since it is really a space-bite, a reduction of the complex, spatial arrangement of individuals in society into discrete, descriptive phrases. This re-scaling is made possible by the technology of the mass media, both print and visual. In appearing before the camera and the microphone, one person can reduce the entirety and complexity of messy situatedness into simple, politically-legible chunks.

In contemporary politics, this process is negotiated through the new American literacy, the televisual: the flow of signs as carriers of aesthetic, culturally-determined meaning or lack thereof; the flow of images and story-lines. The fleeting and unrecoverable nature of televised or cinematic viewing presents two problems for the person in front of the camera and for the people in front of the television. First is the problem of condensing complex situations into understandable, uneditable segments. Image consulting and public relations have in turn massaged the sound-bite to cope with corporate-sponsored televisual formats in which "time costs money"⁶ (Harris 1989, 132). In contrast, the print media has found itself at the end of international conglomeration in terms of both the number of print titles and the number of news providers (Bagdikian 1992). For print, however, the cost per reproduced word is much less than the cost of real-time human speech in the broadcast media. Because both print and television (and increasingly cinema) are dependent upon advertising revenues and this revenue source is only slightly elastic, the competition with television becomes one which reformats newspapers in the pressure to secure advertising dollars (Bagdikian 1992). This reformatting in print 1) favors the conglomeration of titles by (inter)national companies such as Hearst or Knight-Ridder, 2) reduces the number of titles in operation per geographic market area, as witnessed by the merger in many cities of afternoon and morning papers into single editions, 3) increases competition among national news providers such as

⁶ In the study of mass media and public relations, the use of common narratives or shared myths for group consensus building is called Symbolic Convergence Theory, and is a part of the professional training of public relation specialists (Harris 1989).

the Associated Press because of fewer titles subscribing to their services and the need for faster to-print demands to compete with television, and 4) forces editors to: concentrate on “timeless” news not possible on television; shorten story length to maintain reader attention; and replace text with photographs or graphics in an attempt to become more “visual” (Bagdikian 1992).

These changes are important to understanding why many critics charge that the rise of sound-bite politics was started by the television and finished by newspapers and weekly news-magazines. I argue, then, that both print and television are televisual formats, wherein print media attempts to recreate the televisual feel or to provide “complimentary” commentary on news already witnessed on television. The televisual is the high-cost, real-time space wherein short statements can be dramatized or narrated. This reduction in the time and space of narrative provision and journalistic analysis leads to the very clearly or very vague statement of policy-positions without supporting evidence or explanation: this produces an emptying-out of symbols which are in turn re-ordered for political agendas as constructed flows of images and background practices found within political subcultures, e.g. regulations are read differently by libertarians and environmentalists.

Since policy is predicated on positivist and demonstrable methodologies within the Western constitutional state, the policy-position must replace highly-technical explanations of outcomes with more legible claims to truth. Because of the cultural need for verification and the inability for the televisual media to provide the time for that level of truth-checking, the development of mini stories, or story-bites, allows the speaker to reduce space and time (and risk) into compact narratives.

This alteration of speech-text patterns leads to the development of sound-bites as story-telling. This change is marked by the loosening of policy statements built upon logical or reasoned arguments to operate within existing plots or narratives, such as the rags-to-riches or the western genres: the re-ordering of empty signs within the communication and informational flow. Re-presenting policy in this way does two things: it reduces the time needed to describe and establish facts by characterizing issues and issue mobilizations as moments within well-known televisual narratives; and it allows that narrative to extend in the viewer's mind the likely outcomes and value judgments based not on fact, but on the deployment of televisual plots. This process will be examined at length later in this chapter.

The sound-bite has become the communication skill required for public life, where public life refers to the official, the interest group, or the issue. In order to circulate ideas in the televisual world and for it to "make sense" to a majority of viewers, the sound-bite must borrow from those narratives and stories which are familiar to the viewer/reader. Story-telling becomes a highly advantageous way of avoiding the justification and perceptible truth-checking traditionally offered by the text-based, hard copy press. Rather than concentrating on the accuracy or feasibility of fact, televisual media concentrates on the visual-form: production quality. The production quality of the televisual—lighting, fades, transitions, focus, teleprompters, real-time synchronization, appearance—borrows directly from the cinematic and the act of "polished performance." This demand for quality production directly takes away from the presentation of facts and fact-checking because time, energy, and money are spent on the visuality of the moment: television gains aesthetic immediacy, and therefore reliability, in its

unedited, live format. But this appearance of quality is the veil of the sound-bite (story-telling), its host technology (television), and its economic rationality (advertising).

Each story-byte, then, can produce the effects of knowledge and authority, as well as leadership, integrity, and morality (among others). These effects are developed from the viewers' extension of story-telling so as to complete the logic deployed in the byte and to resolve the outcome along that story-line. Bytes do not produce facts nor evidence. In these ways, stories are told and retold, told and untold. The ease, need, and ability to edit, however, was a luxury, unavailable to the conventional, text-based political figure who depended upon or feared careful exegesis of written issue-positions. Televisual space, however, is repetitive and serial, it is fleeting and unrecoverable, and it is visual and narrative. At the same time it replays basic plot schemes and story lines, it mixes and re-runs character sets and problem-solving scenarios. It is not simply the space of Foucault's author where circulation, attribution, valorization, and appropriation describe the claims of author/ity; the domain of the text-based media. Instead, those maneuvers are replaced with a production-logic not from the industrial sense of "production," per se, but a transposition from film and television production, i.e. stylization. In a society where the fleeting, serial, real-time image formation has replaced the text-based popular literacy, new-verification modes and new consensus-seeking mechanisms are required. We must translate Foucault's authorial maneuvers to the projected assembly of televisual logic. In replacing the text-based, discursive assembly of constitutional politics with the projected, transmitted, uni-directional broadcast, dialogue has been replaced with monologue.

TO RENEW THE AUTHOR

This new way of seeing, the televisual or the asymmetric flow of signs in the communication and information networks, is different from the textual narrative in four ways important to this analysis. First, unlike the printed mass media, it is not a recursive discourse. Media distribution in the twentieth-century shares this common unidirectional flow of information, from speaker or author to viewer or reader. Second, the televisual is not re-viewable: it is fleeting and contextual. Real-time broadcast requires full attention from the viewer and it cannot be slowed down for careful analysis of what is said. Third, the televisual must limit the information to what can fit into the time of broadcast. Unlike the print media which can print more words per advertising dollar received, televisual media has high overhead and limited time in which to read the news, regardless of advertising revenue. There are in fact fewer words in a half-hour news broadcast than on the front page of a newspaper (Harris 1989, 135). In its place, and fourth, the televisual relies on visual portrayals of information to increase the informative capacity of the medium. These portrayals must be highly elicitive so that context and setting may be established for an economy of words. Because televisual journalist's level of expertise concentrates on image and presentation in conjunction with the "live" format of the medium, factuality and proper context are neglected.

Nevertheless, the televisual occupies an important space in understanding the world. It is the site of information flows as they are broadcast into the home, and it is the site of a new literacy constructed out of the cinematic transposition of the plot and the suspension of disbelief in order to allow the camera to capture

“reality.” The televisual is the new *landsmál*:⁷ textual arguments are replaced with the televisual plot. For the sake of time, the televisual is based upon and draws upon the cinematic or dramatic plot in order to fill in that which cannot be filmed. It is this new literacy that allows the visual use of signs to connote plot—the hooded terrorist, the strewn rubble—and to know what generally took place; all that remains is the name of the city, the name of the responsible party, and the number of dead. This, in fact, is all that is presented in the news: the viewer must voluntarily fill in the rest.

In order to analyze this transposition of authority Foucault’s discussion of authorship in “What is an Author?” is here translated to make legible the new *landsmál* (Foucault 1979, 141-60). Foucault defines the rise of individual authority within the discourses developing in the modern period as a function of the author: the identifiable person who makes claims on the authority of their position within a particular discourse. Therefore, the doctor is qualified to speak about the body and may take claim to his authority by presencing his authorship. In the presencing of authorship, the author employs four modes of scripting: circulation, the re-presenting of other texts; attribution, the affiliation with and calling forth of other texts’ authors by their reference; valorization, the amplification or dismissal of texts, and; appropriation, the incorporation of other texts, in whole or part, within one’s own text without reference. For Foucault, the notion of originality, the idea of the author as source and inventor of the text, is problematic. This recognizes the context within which the author writes: other ideas have been present and were conveyed in some manner to the author. A text

⁷ An Icelandic term for “language of the land” or the vernacular form of communication.

is therefore merely the recombination of older texts through the four “filters” described above.

To transpose the four modes of author/ity to uncover similar myths within the televisual, it is necessary to borrow from the televisual. The process of circulation is akin to the *projection* of texts into the public. The appropriation of other texts is translated as the *edit*: the process of cutting in whatever fits the plot according to its valorization of what is on screen. Valorization becomes the *filming* process itself; the lighting and camera work that effects how the viewer responds to the image-object projected. The attribution of the new post-textual-text is found in the acknowledged *references*, often made verbally by the actor/speaker. In political sound-bites, attribution is either not present or is combined with the filming to uphold/ dismiss other authorities: the solemn figure behind the podium condemning another’s efforts is a valorization of their author/ity given by the straight-ahead nature of the press conference or the photo-op. How these efforts appear on screen is the manner in which their words are understood: text summaries of such events do not account for the moment that is contained in the visual. It is a real-time, visual event.

This re-vision of the authorial process comes full circle and is now present in the print medium. Popular books are written in simple, narrative manners which do not engage facts and issues, but present, with visual words, the story which readers expect and understand. These texts are marked by their disjunctive property; an inability to construct a lengthy text. Instead, such print is highly referential: it operates like a phone-book or a TV guide. By writing short, self-contained items on a variety of subjects, the author can cover many issues without depth or full-disclosure of the complexity of those issues. Such books are

also written in simple English, not so much to make them accessible, but because they wish to present the appearance of simplicity. Their voice is read like the televisual speaker: complete with contractions and informal grammar. In a sense, such books are trying to write sound-bites, short reductions of complex issues, winking and nodding at the reader's expectations drawn from televisual, not textual, literacy: they seek a sympathetic reader to fill in the (political sub)culturally charged meanings implied in the assemblies of emptied-out sign flows.

VISION OF CRISIS

As such, Newt Gingrich's *To Renew America* is written in this manner. Twenty-nine chapters, divided into five parts cover every conservative topic from a national language to social security. Outside the three chapters on the Contract with America, presented as a "war-story" about getting through the "first one-hundred days," there are no two chapters on the same issue. Excluding the introduction and conclusion (eighteen pages), there are 230 pages of text for 27 issues: an average length of eight and one-half pages per topic. Written in simple terms which revolve around the "revolution," the book relies on inclusive passages to elicit sympathy with the right: "you know there is something wrong" (Gingrich 1995, 71) , and "we can look back at our effort" (Gingrich 1995, 195).

As something of a "new right handbook," *To Renew America* is the televisual in print as read in its short, simplistic narratives. In "Tending the Garden of the Earth: Scientifically Based Environmentalism," Gingrich opens with his testimony to an "interest in the environment:"

My interest in the environment goes back to my childhood. For some reason, I was fascinated by animals and nature long before I went to

school. My early professional dreams were of becoming a zoo director or a vertebrate paleontologist (I have a *Tyrannosaurus rex* skull in the Speaker's office). I loved stories about collecting wild animals and fossils. Whenever I could I would talk my relatives into visiting zoos and museums. I also collected animals, although my mom and dad would routinely make me release them. (Gingrich 1995, 193)

While Gingrich does present a discussion of new right policy on the environment, its complication with "ugly" politics, and his preference for bucolic "gardener-"like references precede a series of anecdotal evidence which seeks to portray "big government" as a Goliath-figure:

Many environmental regulations hatched in Washington put a ridiculous burden on small communities. Rules and regulations that make sense for a big city can bankrupt a small town. Again and again these communities complain of the rigid attitudes in Washington-and in the EPA's regional offices, which are much worse. Misdesigned [sic] programs, questionable science, and rigid bureaucratic enforcement have caused a loss of momentum to our environmental effort. (Gingrich 1995, 197)

Gingrich closes with another story which replays the stand-by plot of "American know-how," or "rags to riches:"

I have a constituent in my district, Linda Bavaro, who was bored after her children went to school. "You can only shop so long," she told me. She had been a marketing major in college, and she began looking for something to do. Recycling seemed economically and psychologically satisfying. Researching at her local library, she discovered a firm in North Carolina that was doing research on how to turn the two-liter Coke bottle into

clothing fibers. She drove to North Carolina and saw for herself that it worked. Next, she got a contract with Coca-Cola to recycle old bottles. Then she got a commitment from Disney World to sell her T-shirts. Today she has a successful company, Global Green, as a result of environmental concern, entrepreneurial courage, and a commitment to lifetime learning. Linda has a good chance of doing well financially by doing good environmentally. That is how a healthy free market in a free country ought to work. (Gingrich 1995, 199-200)

These passages produce not the linear textual argument, but *a series of images or signs*. These signs are read like excerpts from a movie, each clip connoting the larger plot within which such stories are developed. This chapter never closes its arguments, but instead presents its arguments on these images, inferring the story-line through context and sign rather than text. The speaker concludes:

From serious scientific surveys to new technologies, from recycling to commonsense management of ecosystems, we have the opportunity to launch a new era of environmentalism. We can craft an approach that is scientifically sound, economically rational, and politically popular. That is a worthy goal for the twenty-first century. (Gingrich 1995, 200)

Factually, Gingrich only provides two stories as proof of this policy-position: the first about telephone pole manufacturers facing a possible government regulation, which, as Gingrich himself points out, was turned down by OMB:

This was brought home to me about five years ago when the people who make telephone poles came to see me. They were facing a regulatory ruling that would have destroyed their entire industry. The government was going to require a change in chemical treatments even though it

would be radically more difficult and more expensive. There would be virtually no public-health gain. The Office of Management and Budget did a cost-benefit analysis and discovered that the program would spend seven trillion dollars for each life saved. The misallocation [sic] of resources was so grotesque that even the OMB rejected it. (196-7)

The presentation of such minutia in the larger environmental debate draws away reader attention from questions of real risk and potential hazards produced by industry. Likewise, the second story involves a cursory description of asbestos and Superfund projects:

New studies indicate that the asbestos program probably wasted \$5 billion without significantly improving public health. That would have been enough money to map most of the world's ecosystems. The Superfund program spent nearly 40 percent of its billions on lawyers and bureaucrats. Only one-fifth went to cleaning up waste sites. That money could have saved a lot of endangered species. (197)

Gingrich refuses to acknowledge those programs which have worked: the Clear Air and Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, or even those sites cleaned-up in the Federal Superfund program. This is not sufficient evidence to conclude that a new environmental policy is necessary, especially not one which would ultimately deregulate industry.

With such simple reductions of environmental issues, *To Renew America* presents new right environmental policy as a recovery of lost opportunities for entrepreneurs rather than a dismantling of environmental protections. In the place of serious assessments of risk, Gingrich offers a set of initiatives which have little to do with environmental protection, but instead argue for the promise of

technology in delivering instrumental and beneficial ends. Thus, Gingrich proposes a biological inventory of the earth, a mapping of species and what benefits they can provide humans. From this, he concludes:

We also need hardheaded management with regard to costs and benefits. If a billion dollars spent one way will save one species and the same amount spent in a different way will save thirty species, we should opt for the more efficient investment of our resources. (Gingrich 1995, 198)

Basic knowledge about environmental processes inform us that such a dilemma is neither likely, nor logical. The difficulty, and thus expense, of protecting a species may be due to its large presence in the environment. Species such as insects and bacteria are responsible for supporting much more of an ecosystem than the easily protected, such as wolves or birds. In fact, this *efficient placement of environmental protection* produces an outcome likely to collapse entire eco-systems simply because what is most basic to food-chains and soil preservation is that which is difficult to protect, thus undermining the protection of other species in the same eco-system.

Gingrich's policy rhetoric is not only televisual in presentation, it is visual in its truth-seeking. Repeatedly, Gingrich makes references to what the environment should be and each time they are based upon his aesthetics. Even "public health" and "new knowledge" are defined by Gingrich in visual terms. This is not merely to argue that the writing uses visual terminology, but that the arguments favor visual-checking which mask the potential (invisible) risks involved. This ocular bias is linked to our new modes of communication, the televisual. In presenting himself as pro-environment, Gingrich writes:

A planet with elephants, blue whales, and a wide variety of birds and

butterflies, plus natural beauties such as Yellowstone Park and the Grand Canyon, is far more desirable than one that is covered with parking lots and high-rise apartments. Our quality of life will be much better if we maintain wilderness areas, national parks, nature preserves, migratory bird paths, and similar *facilities* (Gingrich 1995, 195-6, emphasis added).

Furthermore, Gingrich declares aesthetics an important goal for environmental activity, along with “public health” and “new knowledge.” For Gingrich, the environment is not the basis of public health, but a technology which we use for living:

As we enter the age of molecular medicine, we may discover thousands of cures and drugs from organisms that we have not yet even identified. As we learn more about ourselves as organic beings, we are discovering more and more about the natural world that relates to how we function and what *our needs are*. We need to know more about the environment so that we can know *more about ourselves*. (197, emphasis added)

Gingrich also believes any natural phenomenon can be recreated through science and technology:

It may be possible to find ways of preserving endangered species through enhanced breeding rather than simply blocking all change in the environment. (Gingrich 1995, 198)

By confusing the terms of human life and natural processes, Gingrich erects the individual as operating within a *natural technology* which can be re-created and put to *efficient use*. The concept that nature is necessary to human life is not the basis of new right environmental policy, but that nature is useful to human endeavors. Linked together to form a complete chapter, these images are the

visualization of new right policy. The missing text which makes these stories clear is found in analyzing Gingrich's chapter as story-telling and presents the policy-position of the new right as the voice of authority in maintaining the efficient order of things.

Chapter 4

Vision, Risk, & Common Sense

POLICY & RISK

This chapter seeks to identify environmental issues in new right policy as they are portrayed within the larger policy process and in consideration of the real dangers involved with environmental deregulation. Lash and Urry outline the argument of Ulrich Beck (1992) and his discussion of a risk society which produces a new formation of reflexive modernization. The following introduces limitations of policy analysis approaches to the mediatization of risk and outlines the specific factors of a risk society that become central in producing a flow of risk-neutral signs. These signs, in regards to environmental policy, are empty of literal meaning, thus permitting their re-construction within political agendas, specifically the pro-business, conservative agenda.

In their work on public policy mobilization, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) argue that punctuated equilibrium⁸ best describe the changes in public policy and institutions in opposition to arrangements which benefit industrial interests. According to their model, pro-industrial arrangement exist first, due to either legislation or the general lack of public-risk acknowledgment. Public-risk may

⁸ The concept of punctuated equilibrium is borrowed from the study of biological adaptation and here regards the presence of policies and institutions which are favorable to industry. These arrangements remain constant until a large mobilization (pressure) of public interest seeks to place restrictions on pro-industrial policy. This mobilization occurs mainly through media portrayals.

also be dismissed in favor of technological opportunism and the stimulation of industrial sectors. Over time such practices draw public attention as risks become visible and more current in the mass media. This model posits from observations of the media and the U.S. Congress that public interest and demands regarding particular forms of regulation develop within the media and manifest change via congressional hearing and legislation. After public interest dies down, the institutions remain. In opposition, the speedy development of regulatory oversight is met with industrial resistance which attempts to reverse the regulatory regimes in place or to alter the risk-circumstance of industrial practice. Whether this counter-mobilization of bias in favor of industry-sponsored arrangements (deregulation) is successful depends upon the deployment of new valence issues: “indisputable” counter-proposals to regulation made possible through either legitimate alteration to industrial practice or the formulation of public-relation deployments of valence issues, e.g. jobs, family (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

While this model is useful in its long-term perspective regarding the “mobilization of bias” in issues of public policy, it dismisses the public as merely the receptor of media input. This does allow for a critique of the development and successful deployment of industrial or public-relation tactics, but it does not adequately explain the operation of such tactics at the individual level. For Baumgartner and Jones, the examination of valence issue creation by public-relation firms is not explored, and the viewer/reader is also theorized as a passive black-box which responds to inputs which the media provides. This model breaks down 1) when pro-industry policy becomes currency for political candidates, as it did in the 1994 Congressional Election, and 2) when voters

accept pro-industry policy arrangements offered by those candidates as intended by public-relation tactics. Baumgartner and Jones' theory opens for critique the crisis of policy analysis as positivist and determinist; such analyses become mired in deterministic conceptualizations of the actors and the individual. They are correct, however, in the importance of the media, not as the primary determination of policy change, but as the primary conduit for public information and reaction.

In chapter 3 I argued that the public's assessment of risk is a matter of mediatized tactics: a stripping away of the right to full disclosure, public debate, or legitimate counter-claims (Virilio 1995). Media attention not only relies upon the evidence of scientifically rational testimony, but collapses that paradigm into visual narratives which cannot fully explain the assumptions and limits to such evidence. This opens a national space where truth claims can be made through the use of scientific or technologically optimistic story-telling, subverting even positivism in its realist claims. In this way, industry-sponsored political reorganization is a form of advertising, as public-relations (PR) develop print and televised scenarios which forcefully present the cost of regimes of regulation to the viewer/reader. This practice is embedded in the sound-bite/story-telling practice and it is through disassembling/deconstructing this mechanism that a new policy analysis position may be established. Such a position needs to recognize the emotive and influential effect of policy discourse as it is constructed by the industrial/PR machine. In this way, the deployment of story-telling is illuminated and the possibility for new counter-narratives and factual critique is given room in which to mobilize.

The first move in disassembling the industrial/PR machine in politics is to re-

read those story-tellings as established in chapter 3. Second, the narrative of risk and risk-assessment must be re-negotiated, listening/ watching/ reading for the aporia; that which is not said. The concept of risk, furthermore, must be developed in a useful way, one which informs us both of the industrial motivation and real dangers present, and one which plays to the reader/ viewer's sense of personal well-being and logical reason.

The basic observation of Baumgartner and Jones is upheld in reviewing the data they offer as evidence of "mobilizations of bias." This evidence would "predict" that the industrial interests would reformulate a counter-mobilization against environmental regulation, and that such reformulation would be mediatized. But this is both a generous reading of their theory and the point at which their model breaks down. The policy arrangements which established environmental regulation were not merely constructed from congressional legislation: judiciary review of environmental rights facilitated much of Congress' new regulatory powers (Polyant 1994). While Love Canal, Carson's *Silent Spring*, and Warren County—as media formations—were crucial in galvanizing public opinion which led to judicial and congressional review, the work of anti-pollution and environmentalist organizations was evident throughout the pro-industrial period of non-regulation immediately preceding the new protectionary laws (Polyant 1994). Baumgartner and Jones review the change in tone within media and congressional hearings and conclude that it was the mobilization of bias caused by accounts such as *Silent Spring* and Love Canal that spurred regulatory formation. But their lack of a sufficient analysis for why such mediations work makes for a deterministic and overly positivist theory of mediation. This limitation is most notable when trying to decipher the active role

of industry in political campaigns and post-election promise-keeping. The formation of this deregulatory environment can be linked to a *political reorganization of risk* (Beck 1992) within a sign economy as is discussed below.

It would be wrong to argue that “buying politicians” is in any way a novel development. What is new, however, is the emergence of party politics and industrial interests which begin to deploy new deregulatory narratives together. Chapter 1 briefly established the orchestration of Republican party political initiatives, such as the Contract with America, with specific industry campaigns for deregulation. As an assumption, it allows the investigation of the harmonious visions of crisis and opportunity that this political-economy of signs share. These visions of crisis and opportunity are read from Newt Gingrich’s writings and sound-byte storytelling and must be considered as deployments of specific formations of risk and danger.

NATURE OF RISK

Mary Douglas (1992) discusses the cultural formations of thinking about risk and the environment. In her chapter “A Credible Biosphere,” Douglas outlines the problem present in debates about the environment: Scientific rationality is something which is dependent upon the manner in which questions are formulated, tested, and considered (Douglas 1992, 259-61). In each area of interest where science is called upon to bring-forth answers of fact, four very different schema of how nature work are in operation. These schema dictate how problems, conceptualization, methodology, and interpretation are to be defined by the researcher(s) and can drastically transform the outcomes of that research. What is most notable in Douglas’ argument is her analysis of scientific relativity where each side in a given debate can offer equally plausible, if contradictory,

statements of fact. Outside these sub-cultures of science, society is left to sort through the various claims to establish policy.

The four manners of thinking about the environment are:

- nature is capricious—impossible to determine environmental outcomes
- nature is robust—environment always recovers
- nature is fragile—environment will fall apart
- nature is robust within limits—environment will recover within limits (see

figure 4.1) (Douglas 1992, 262).

Any one of these four “myths,” as Douglas refers to them, are held by researchers within various interest groups, industry, and the public sector. These manners of thinking are myths because they rely upon unprovable, fundamental, conceptions of how nature works. However, without consensus on which of these four myths is accurate, risk and danger become assessed in different ways. Even if methodology and conceptualization are uniform, these myths inform vastly different ways of interpreting data and establishing policy. Douglas argues that these positions are bound, cultural packages and cannot be unpacked without radical social change (Douglas 1992, 265).

Douglas also labels the “nature is always robust” sub-culture of scientific rationality as the camp of the “entrepreneurial expansionists” (Douglas 1992, 264). This distinction is useful in considering her argument on risk (Douglas 1992, 22-55). Working through similar considerations as Beck (1992), Douglas argues that “dangers are being used to give automatic, self-validating legitimacy to established law and order” (Douglas 1992, 29). This is possible because of the culture of blame that accompanies risk within Western society, where risk is tied to the concept of sin and danger to taboo. The acceptance of risk, therefore, is

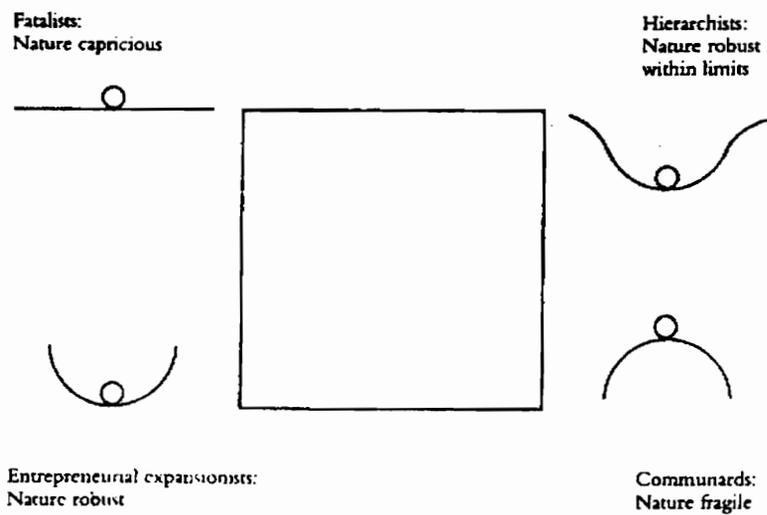


FIGURE 4.1—Douglas' model of myths of nature. Each myth is presented by a ball on a hill or plane (Douglas 1992, 263-4). These myths underlie the sub-cultures which employ scientific or positivist methodologies as evidence for policy positions and claims to truth.

sited at the individual: "a woman who has died in childbirth got what was coming to her," or the date-rape victim is to blame for entering the risk of the date. The culture of "blaming the victim" is, for Douglas, that which is in operation in the Western negotiation of sin and taboo, risk and salvation. The real danger is never to scrutinized, but those who "take the risk" are met with their "due" and thus blamed. These risks are based upon a knowledge system that is upheld and enforced by the political system in which it develops (Douglas 1992, 32). The "authority of facts" comprise not the recognition of real danger, but the cultural interpretation of that danger, in this case individual responsibility.

Considering danger as socially constructed, systems of belief informs the discussion of environmental risk. If science is the source of social fact, but is based upon bound myths about how the environment works, then no proper recognition of the source of risk is obtainable since only the imprecise and negotiable language of nature is available for proof. The flow of empty signs which are constructed to produce culturally charged meaning rectifies the "automatic, self-validating legitimacy to established law and order" (Douglas 1992, 29) of the political and social arrangement conducive to maintaining such environmental risk factors.

Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society* (1992) outlines a new pattern of modernism which is in transition from the distribution of wealth to the distribution of risk. These risks, for Beck, are environmental: air and water contamination, radioactivity, pesticides, illness or cancer-causing substances. As sidestream from the move to (industrial) modernization, these risks are often invisible and increasingly become global problems (Beck 1992, 25-30). As such, they are without public

knowledge or regulatory frameworks and pose a real danger to human and environmental life. Beck echoes Douglas:

Generally, opinions within the sciences and disciplines concerned diverge wildly anyway. *The social effect of risk definitions is therefore not dependent on their scientific validity* (Beck 1992).

Risk definitions are created within the authority of political and economic discussions and are not demanded by a public who lack the scientific sensor[ium] necessary to notice the real risks (Beck 1992, 27).

Beck furthers the placement of risk at the site of the individual by claiming that risks are a part of "fate;" "invisible... stowaways of normal consumption:" the consumer has no choice since they are invisible (Beck 1992, 40). This risk fate is common and "interwoven with the natural basis and the elementary life processes of the industrial world" (Beck 1992, 41). Likewise, these processes have global components which do not recognize class difference or national borders. Regardless, the ascription of risk is a product of our knowledge about the world and industrial processes; one which is ends-oriented and visible. This ocular bias plays a key role in the presence of risk knowledge, or its aporia, within environmental policy. On the one hand, people's "victimization is not determinable by their own cognitive means and potential experiences," but are "dependent upon external knowledge" (Beck 1992, 51). This knowledge is produced within a scientific-political society which, as stated above, does not produce facts about risk, but protects political interests by citing *economic interests, acceptable levels, causal denial, and lack of evidence* as reasons not to regulate industry (Beck 1992, 57-70).

Like Douglas, Beck is arguing that the production of knowledge and the drive towards the efficient placement of things is bolstered by the general lack of contrary statistical evidence which is the currency of the scientific-political assembly. I argue that this supports and particularizes the process of governmentality: where populations are understood through statistics and the political-economy holds first-rank. Likewise, the discussion and mediation of these risks and rights operate within the flow of the communicational and informational, asymmetric networks. Following Foucault, the governmental state, concerned with the political-economy and the convenient ends within the lives of the population, places leadership within the state; internal to the lives of the population. In this way, control and information are co-constructive elements of the scientific rationality in use at the level of institutional operation. Through mass media, these risks are dismissed for larger goals, e.g. jobs, family. This manner of speaking is bound up and complicitous with the distribution of risk. It is necessary to analyze the discussion of risk within society as spoken by the governmental state to assess how such knowledge is circulated in the population.

COMMON-SENSE

Media is, therefore, unable to keep up with the speed and wealth of images (flow) which maintain the new political arrangement of risk. The traditional value placed on the journalist's personal perspective and investigation of subjects, which required time and research to reveal untruths and which assumed the truth-attaining nature of vision, is now replaced with the journalist who must reproduce the *visual belief function*: this is truth-checking in the dromomedia (Virilio 1995). Therefore, the investigation cannot make accurate assessments of risk, since that which is not visual is not believable. The

dromomedia relies upon the personal affirmation, the up-close and personal interview, the impromptu questions and answer session, and the press release or news conference to confirm or deny truth claims. These journalistic accounts cannot develop a critical edge since both the technical expertise and the visual-checking expected of the journalist is unavailable. Thus, the rise of dromomedia, the short deadline for the complex story, and the transposition of the journalist's visual-checking of fact to the televisual report have released truth claims from verification and opened a space for empty sign flows. In this space, the rise of the public relations firm, the spokesperson, and the press release-video package⁹ replace the journalist into a professionalized world of the conference room and the news room. Facts are checked by telephone, interviews are done with props, information is passed-along in good faith. The possibility of the journalist physically occupying the space of the story is impossible. Business and politics have placed the journalist's space of visual-checking outside the realm of action. In this way, the production of invisible truths are defensible in a-visual terms. The reality available and present to the public, then, has been edited for the televised world. This fact becomes most important: the most recent development of visual truth, therefore the presence of any sign—even the interview with the professional spokesperson—is sufficient for belief. This problem is compounded when the new risks are those which are not perceptible: environmental toxins, radiation, contaminants in the food. The space of action has been segregated to

⁹ These are prepared by industry or public relation firms as ready-to-air video segments for news agencies which operate as a "visual press-release," and often are edited or incorporated without change into news broadcasts.

allow for the intensification of risk action. Risk action, the production and distribution of the risks of modernity, is thus without visual, therefore believable, components. Invisibility in a world of visual-truth makes for non-existence: imperception is dismissable.

I argue that the claim to “common sense” made by the new right is one which vision, risk, and mediatization triangulate. The appeal to some level of belief is an epistemological one: common sense is a claim to truth. The standard account of epistemological truth is that which satisfies the conditions for justified true belief (JTB). If any of these three components are not satisfied sufficiently, the claim to truth or knowledge is not accepted. In order to have knowledge, the subject must believe something, have reasonable justification (causal connection, for instance) for that belief, and that claim must indeed be true. More recent accounts have argued that the truth or the justifiability of the claim is not always necessary, since subjects are apt to act on knowledge which may not be proven or justifiable to satisfaction. Because of the difficulties with the media, the presence of imperceptible risks argued within scientific rationalist terms are not available to a JTB account of knowledge and truth. Therefore, the acceptance in the twentieth century of mere belief-claims which cannot be justified or found untrue has led to the silence of any claim to knowledge. In this way, the truth claim is always ambivalent, but acceptable within a culture which cannot determine facts outside of the scientific-political regime.

Beck argues that the difference between scientific- and social- rationality further complicates the debate over risk which is “mediated on principle through argument,” and fosters a “reorganization of power and authority” (Beck 1992). The imperceptibility of environmental contaminants, the reliance on scientific

expertise which offers its own rational negation through counter-claims, and the uneven distribution of risks in a society lend to the construction of managed-knowledge regarding that which is invisible. For Beck, this means that the public must rely on belief for what politics and business sponsored science define as safe and acceptable. From this, the hyperbole of deregulatory rhetoric is extended, though shrouded within inexperiencible claims to truth, to incorporate the maneuver of a claim to scientific truth. The falling-back upon "common sense," therefore, relies upon a *faith in scientific rationality and the perceptibility of risk*. It takes advantage of averages and maps which distribute levels of pollutants over a population which does not suffer equally and which collapse visible space into the industrial average that is scientific knowledge and population statistics.

Common sense is now the method of inducing a level of risk acceptance since risk exposure is, after Douglas, the fault of the individual. The problem of the invisibility is not discussed within risk assessments: the product of scientific sensorium is not the sense of the individual. In producing this double-bind, the scientific state now administers the distribution of risk by monitoring the level of risk within the population. Beck notes that these statistics mislead (Beck 1992, 26) and are not representative of the risk for the individual. But it is the opening provided by this double-bind that allows new right environmental policy and its agenda of deregulation the freedom to maneuver: there are no available arguments available to critique the wholesale exposure of nature and the individual to risk since both are negotiable as variables within the scientific community. On the one hand, nature is one of four packaged types per Douglas' myths (Figure 4.1). On the other hand, the individual is to blame for exposing the

self and for “taking the risks.” The space in between is then open to operation without consideration of individual risk or the ultimate outcomes of environmental policy. Common sense is the basis, therefore, for what the new right describes as a “conservative opportunity society.” The notion of opportunity can be traced, now, to the fall-back position of the state on common sense, placed as it is between an unidentifiable natural condition and the individual who “accepts” risk. Common sense is then a gesture to the visually knowable, since all other (scientific) senses are mediated.

Chapter 5

Re-reading the New(t) Right

Re-reading the new right in this manner disassembles the compact sound-bite and televisual rhetorical formations that allow the new right to surround their policy initiatives in the language of science and certainty. The diffusion of environmental deregulation “opportunity” into the state-houses is analyzed as the new organization of political and industrial maintenance of risk distribution. Deconstructing rhetorical form, the centrality of visualization, the strategy of lying, and the political reorganization around risk as specific new right policy formations opens a new dialogue for the reader/ viewer with the claims to truth made in Republican environmental policy. In re-reading new right environmental policy, an individual can engage these policies with a reflexive re-aestheticization of interpretations of their sympathetic co-construction of political sub-culturally charged flows of empty signs by the subject/ individual. This process allows for a bracketing of such story-telling and its manner of televisual complicity in order to reassess the real danger of environmental risks.

In order to deconstruct and disassemble these policies, it is necessary to engage with the rhetorical assemblies deployed by new right figures. Newt Gingrich offers a unique opportunity to re-read such policy. As the foremost, and almost univocal, speaker for the “new right revolution” during and after the election of 1994, Gingrich provides sufficient material to analyze these policies as specific forms of rhetorical construction (chapter 3). After reading Gingrich and his method of policy development as a concealment of the same Republican affinity for industrial influence as witnessed during the Reagan-Bush era, we can

re-read the Speaker in order to 1) illuminate the silences and promises, and silent-promises, made in the rhetorical style of Gingrich, 2) amplify the incongruity of new right policy, and 3) provide another version of new right environmental policy for story-telling to the mediated public. Such story-telling evokes a genre and narrative-plot sequence understood within the televisual literacy of the American public. As such, a re-reading accelerates the logical assemblies of new right policy to reveal the concealment of reason and fact within the empty symbols in the flow of the conservative agenda.

By re-reading the environmental policy of the new right as it produces a rhetoric of scientific reason, technological promise, and newness of ideas we may further a critique which highlights the risks involved in environmental deregulation. These forms are carefully deployed symbols of “Americanisms”—like opportunity, prosperity, success—and are forged with the promise of science and reason to create the skin around dead ideas. In this way, Gingrich, a doctor of history is a more like the familiar doctor in science fiction movie or the gothic novel, re-creating dead Republican agendas as his servants, sending them forth to avenge past misfortunes. The agenda of the new right is simply this, a new skin on many dead parts; a new look for an old idea. As a position of critique, the gothic genre provides reflection upon new right policy through the use of metaphor. The forms which define gothic (and science-fiction) narratives allow a critical reflection upon, new right environmental policy. In this way, Lash and Urry and Beck cite the romantic novel as a counter-text to the Enlightenment process of emptying out. Likewise, the gothic form is identified by three key themes: transgression, sublime, and excess (Botting 1996). Furthermore, the gothic novel centers around particular settings and plots which illuminate these

themes and give the reader a particular experience. This section discusses further these themes and forms and how they come to provide an experience for the reader. Examples are used from Gingrich's *To Renew America*, specifically from the chapter on the environment (Appendix A) to construct a re-reading of new right policy.

TRANSGRESSION

Transgression in gothic form is exhibited in the author's intentional violation of social interdictions. For the Victorian mind these included flirtations with what is considered diseased, dead, dark, monstrous, sexual or lustful, and unreal. It is the proscription and interdiction placed on such places and things as the sick, the perverse, or the unholy which makes the author's transgressive narrative exciting for the reader. As the twentieth century's gothic novel, the science fiction thriller also parlayed that transgression, e.g. young lovers on moonlit nights in danger. In both plots, the ultimate consequence of such transgression results in a character's eventual demise within the events which unfold around dark and forbidden places or his or her involvement in "dangerous" situations (Botting 1996). For the reader/ viewer these narratives re-establish the social proscription and find an unsympathetic burial for the foolish. Playing with social norms in this manner produces a story wherein the danger present in the dark is unknown, even invisible or spectral, to the character. Their curiosity overrides the interdiction and they proceed into the danger, naïvely unafraid. For the reader this erects social values as necessary to survival. It also places blame with the character for taking the risk, for being foolish enough to enter dark and unwelcoming terrains. The site of jeopardy may not be well marked, but some level of "common sense" is expected of the character by the

reader and therefore exposure to danger is wholly the fault of those who violate the social expectations as provided by the reader's knowledge of similar transgressions. Douglas (1992) portrays this individualization of risk and blame as central to our social understanding of danger. Likewise, Beck (1995) outlines the ways in which invisible dangers are still borne by the unexpected, and risk assessment and blame is left to the survivors. At that moment, from beyond the grave, the character is capable of assessing such risks and invites the reader to accept a vague warning against such (socially) macabre or dark situations.

Re-reading new right policy, we find that in areas such as environmental and social policy these vague warnings exist. On the need for an official "American" language (English) Gingrich attempts a feeble demonstration of what will befall the foreign-tongue; he ascribes as the likely outcome for those who do not learn English:

...the final result is an angry young man who feels that violence is the only way he can express himself, or a young girl who thinks that the only great accomplishment she can achieve in life is to have a baby. Many of the twelve- and thirteen-year-olds now filling our maternity wards cannot read their own children's birth certificates (Gingrich 1995, 160)

No evidence of this is presented, only the vague interdiction against flirtation with the ways of poverty, minorities, and otherness: that this warning comes after a discussion of African-American opportunities and the need to trade in basketballs for textbooks reveals the quiet social norms being reasserted by Gingrich.

While Gingrich is presenting the warnings about good English in society, he is

the transgressor on environmental issues. Instead of accepting the warning that human impact on the environment may be dangerous, Gingrich rationalizes the same claim (Appendix A), to make room for deregulatory maneuvers which favor industry (Chapters 1 and 3). Here, Gingrich is mimicking the interdictions against damaging the environment, "we have an absolute obligation to minimize damage to the natural world," by contradicting himself, like the curious Victorian who knew not to wander in the castle ruins, "I am not a preservationist. It is impossible for us to be a dynamic species and still act as if we don't exist" (Gingrich 1995, 195). It is this inability for Gingrich as the author to maintain clear lines of judgment that makes new right policy so hard to critique, but opens such policy to re-reading. In summing up the chapter, the Speaker argues that change is inevitable and the best things for "man" to do is "change along with it." This for Gingrich involves three things: recycling, mapping and inventorying the possible cures and uses of the rain forest, and maintaining public health. This is a different kind of warning, a warning that man should not "try to stop all change" (Gingrich 1995, 195), but instead use the environment as a "more efficient investment of our resources" (Gingrich 1995, 198). The parallel to the "efficient placement of all things" in this discussion of "species inventories and accurate maps" establishes this re-definition of environmental transgression as both the re-assertion of conservative social and political values and the maintenance of governmentality through statistical knowledge formations.

SUBLIME

Sublime attitudes in gothic fiction, and science fiction, are tied to the aesthetic judgment of Victorian values. Such values find beauty and terror within the

natural world which is considered out of proportion to human scale or social convention. As such, grand architecture, mountains, caves, cemeteries and bodies of water carry the mind to far away and unknown places outside civilization (Botting 1996). It is the experience of this beauty within the terrifying that lends to transgressive and sublime landscapes. If aesthetics is interrogated it produces an ocular bias which is what accelerates gothic settings. Thus, the need for visually aesthetic settings is valued by the Victorian mind as something in balance and keeping with the self. Once the self can “understand” and overcome such visions, the mind can maintain mastery over that landscape, reducing terror and awe (Botting 1996, 36-42).

Gingrich calls for maintenance of aesthetics in our parks and recreation areas. In these areas, the self is maintaining social norms and standards without falling prey to dangers in nature or the wild. Gingrich argues that maintaining places such as Central Park and the Kennesaw Mountain Civil War Battlefield Park represent the “new environmental policy” (Gingrich 1995, 196). The other two components of this position also provides an understanding of the Speaker’s trepidation of wild spaces: the need for public health and an inventory of the natural world are both responses of the self to the sublime. This need to set apart and comprehend offers two critiques of this policy. First, the notion that science can accurately and sufficiently chart the world’s environment in a way meaningful to environmental health requires a blind faith in scientific rationale, already the subject of some distress in this paper. Further, it reminds us of the naïve explorers who described everything with the feeble instruments available to them: needlessly, many true environmental resources have been lost by the limitation such analyses offer. Second, seeking an environmental policy centered

around new knowledge acquisition is to assume that the environment is not already responding negatively to human activity. It sets nature apart as a repository for some new resources which would benefit human existence. This assumes that human existence is primary in maintaining a stable environment. It also assumes that nature is cannable, separable, from the lives within society. This conception of nature is a particularly gothic geography: there is a social and a wild, an inside and an outside.

EXCESS

The excesses in gothic fiction are related to the indulgence of the imagination and that which remains unknown. Throughout his writing, Gingrich speaks of the unknown, such as space or unknown plants, as the keys to maintaining *our way of life*. This manner of living is excessive in view of sustainable environmental practices. What Gingrich constructs is a mediation: a transgression of environmentalist's interdictions to maintain the excess of human existence. Titillating the reader this way, Gingrich attempts to argue that the Western way of life is proper: it is a serious re-assertion of the scientific-rationalist Western state, balanced as it is upon production and consumption flows. The natural world then becomes "the best ecosystem for the buck" when "managed" with an approach that is "scientifically sound, economically rational, and politically popular" (Gingrich 1995, 196-200). As the gothic replaces the aristocratic trappings of excess with new threats, so too does Gingrich replace the analysis of sustainable practice with the desire for maintaining jobs and wages under the threat of "leftist" environmental politics (Botting 1996, Gingrich 1995).

Besides transgression, excess, and the sublime, other parallels to gothic fiction are useful in revealing the rhetorical devices employed by the speaker.

RE/COLLECTIONS

To Renew America is a collection of the stories that have informed conservative agenda-setting for several decades. Stories about welfare, the environment, education, immigration, jobs, science, health care, and a number of other issues which have for so long divided the parties are presented in such a way that the solutions seem new and based on reason. Often, Gingrich recollects, or re-collects, stories from his youth, linking him with a novel, fresh, and innocent outlook on the problems which plague us. In his chapter on the environment, Gingrich refers to a scientifically based environmentalism. In doing so, he recounts his days as a fascinated child wishing to be a zoo director; he is touched by the loss of the Dodo; he recalls his days working for the Sierra Club, the Georgia Conservancy, and the League of Conservation Voters; he intones the sadness at man's [sic] damage to the environment; quotes Genesis and Rene Dubos, articulating the need to become "Gardeners of the Earth;" he also recalls the conservationist overtures of the Bull Moose party and his own call to Republican politics; he tells of his shock that those environmental groups were "simply an extension of the left wing of the Democratic Party;" he calls for responsibility to aesthetics, public health, and new knowledge; and still has room in seven pages to dismiss the EPA and all efforts environmental (Gingrich 1995). Gingrich refuses the term preservationist, insisting: "It is impossible for us to be a dynamic species and still act as if we don't exist" (Gingrich 1995, 195). Again, this parallels a culture of risk and blame: both Douglas and Beck refer to the impossibilities of risk knowledge among a population when such risks are protected and reinforced for economic and political purposes through

governmental interdiction in the form of sign flows.

Gingrich closes the chapter:

From serious scientific surveys to new technologies, from recycling to *commonsense* management of ecosystems, we have the opportunity to launch a new era of environmentalism. We can craft an approach that is *scientifically sound, economically rational, and politically popular* (Gingrich 1995, 200, emphasis added).

This represents Gingrich's vision of a "conservative opportunity society" which, he argues, offers radically different arrangements than the "repressive liberal welfare state." (Lemann, 36). Life in the "conservative opportunity society"—a reanimation of the Horatio Alger story-line—is thus re-read as merely private investment. Stories of entrepreneurs and innovators are delivered with empty American signifiers as risk, opportunity, and sacrifice: a myth which is understood by a particular political subculture, the new right. Gingrich stitches together myths of opportunity that do not exist in the lives of most people.

BRICOLEUR/SUTURING

In stitching together the significations of the conservative subculture, Gingrich repackages the various themes and issues together in forums such as his political action committee, GOPAC, and in weekend strategy sessions as examined in chapter 1. Bringing together these parts, Gingrich claims language as a "mechanism for control:" producing a list of terms for promoting conservative agendas (opportunity, empowerment, rights, incentives, reform), and terms to be used in criticizing opponent's positions (decay, sick, liberal, sensationalist, greedy) (Bernstein & Bernstein 1995). By stitching together the various policy positions of the new right with the bailing wire of language, Gingrich constructs

a “mechanism for control” through the manipulation of signs: the images and visions of crisis and comfort.

In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss (1966, 16-36) describes a *bricoleur*, someone who throws together various parts to create an apparently functional whole. For Lévi-Strauss, the *bricoleur* is devious in his assembly available material so that it fits the more important promise of the mythical. Unlike a craftsman or engineer, the *bricoleur* is unconcerned about the material or assembly in the creation, only that it can hang together long enough, hence a *bricolage* or *bric-a-brac*, to complete the illusion that promotes the *bricoleur*'s goals. Gingrich's stitching together of disparate ideas and incorporating things that look new and unique is specific tactic within the “economy of signs and space.” What results from the *bricolage* becomes the monster of the new right's conservative agenda.

RE/ANIMATIONS

This monster operates on another level. Baudrillard's simulation, the play of signs without referent, aptly describes the *bricolage*: constructed without reference to operable or existing possibilities, but appearing as such so that it takes on a life of its own (Baudrillard 1993, 6-43). The stitched together assembly of contradictory, dead policies, e.g. a new environmentalism sans regulation, gives the appearance of something rational and unique when presented through the re/collection of facts, the *bricolage* which represents the promised “way of life,” and the movement of the living dead monster itself. When the Republican Contract with America became a living breathing thing, it worked: that is, it seemed lifelike, believable. As the leaders on the hill responded to it, so to did the village. In responding to the *bricolage*, the mythical is alive, thus the doctor is a man of science who can put opportunity into motion. The *bricolage* is performing

its function to re-assert the myths of the Reagan legacy: morality, jobs, security. When Gingrich and the new right speak of Reagan—the ideological grandfather of the monster, the last one to try the animation—they speak with reverence of that mythical quality which animates the creation. But what matters to the (campaign) investors is that the villagers believe it. The living dead walks among the living, the myth is thus verified, deregulation passes.

Likewise, the myth of the market and the promise of new technology are grafted onto the monster. The Toffler myth, like a double-feature, is stuck onto the monster that walks. Though the Toffler's distance themselves from Gingrich, the doctor has successfully imbricated their third-wave futurism right into the heart of the *bricolage* (Dreifus 1995). What is borrowed, then, when the empty mythic monster walks and makes noises like the awakening of these ideas? The Toffler's offer no references for their arguments of futurism: but they claim lineage to everyone from Drucker to McLuhan, Arrighi to Lenin to Marx, Sorel to Braudel, Weber to the *Tao of Physics*, self-help to Rousseau, Fromm to Etzioni, among others (Toffler and Toffler 1980). By working in this simulated lineage, the *bricolage* monster has a legitimated identity. It seems to become all things to all people. The myth is alive!

But the monster has thin skin, it is hard to hear it clearly when explaining itself, and has not moved quite fast enough. The monster agenda that promised scientifically based policy now wants to remove the right to community information and the clean air provisions. It wants to sell off the national parks and lands to logging and mineral industries. By 1996, the public had recognized at least some of the stitching used to animate the new right policies. Whatever re-reading of the conservative agenda is sought, the recognition among the public is

that the increased environmental risks in deregulation is not an “American value.” As such, opinion polls have reflected a mobilization against further environmental deregulation by Congress¹⁰.

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

Though the *bricolage* monster is only a re/animation of dead and empty signs, it releases its ghosts into the fields. State after state has defunded, deregulated, or hollowed legislation necessary to maintain EPA quality standards. Operating on their belief that the mythic monster will end the EPA’s oversight into state environmental quality, the legislatures, recently filled with a perhaps more efficient Republican “revolution,” are defeating everything from environmental protections to civil liberties. Oregon, long known for its environmental protections, has seen the legislature attempt a rollback of protections with some 150 deregulatory measures (Yeoman 1995). In Washington state, the Republican’s control a margin sufficient for passing eco-take bills which have completely turned around property-rights vis-à-vis the environment. There, voters killed the initiative, though it is promised to return next year (Yeoman 1995). In Virginia, the head of Environmental Quality Assurance fired a high-level professional, supposedly protected from such action, for his compliance with a legal Freedom of Information Act request by environmental groups critical of the state administration (McCue 1995). The Virginia EQA has defunded most monitoring and clean-up initiatives and have streamlined permit processes by skipping review. The governor and the EQA head are claiming to promote business and bring jobs while “giving the government back to the people” (McCue 1995). They

¹⁰ Summarized on Face the Nation, 19 May 1996, CBS.

claim that the environment belongs to everyone, not the government, so therefore everyone should replace the functions of monitoring, enforcement, and clean-up with civic groups and volunteerism. The police power mandated to the states, however, is not recoverable under the constitutional framework of democracy: even the best volunteer army of environmentalists have no power to enforce. Even if those local groups could monitor and enforce it themselves, they are asked to solve the losing equation of “jobs or environment:” that balance tips further towards industry the closer it gets to the local level. The environmental policy of the new right can make jobs and economic growth not by giving the government back to the people, but by recirculating the externalities and the risks within a society that blames the individual for exposure; for violating invisible interdictions.

Once unleashed, the operation of the *bricolage* as myth has a profound influence upon the behavior of the people: it is simply enough to believe that this is the right thing to do, and it is done. The lesson learned here becomes a slow one, one which will increasingly play out at the state and local levels. Whether the *bricolage* monster, the undead myth, is defeated depends on whether the skin is torn away, and the hollowness revealed.

CONCLUSION

Though the monster is slow moving, the interdiction broken, there is no resolution of the transgression by the left. What is necessary in this policy analysis, is that such counter-narrative forms be applied to real situations as one possible mode of resisting the difficult assessment of environmental deregulation. While pointing to the lack of benefits in the “conservative opportunity society” present in the barren fields is useful, pointing to the

transgressor of social norms is more effective. Re-naming the villain and re-establishing the risks of real danger, then, is central to telling the other story. In this way the empty signs used to encase an aging conservative agenda can be re-read from the asymmetric flow of a political-economy culture-industry. Doing so offers a movement of reflexive interpretation in a re-ordering of political signs. Such a position is useful in achieving Lash and Urry's opening up of possibilities for the "reconstruction of transmogrified subjectivity, and for heterogenization and complexity of space and of everyday life" (Lash and Urry 1994, 3). This re-reading is a reassertion of the value in contemporary society upon individual author/ity and opens a space for reflexive monitoring and interpretation of those who would re-place the subject with a social structure determined by the conservative agenda of the new right. The value of a gothic metaphor is not in its ability to entertain, but in its translation of embedded background practices, that rely upon arguably outmoded social structuration, into narratives that emphasize the social and signified economy of political movements. As such, the re-reading and re-ordering of the political-economy of signs opens a critical self-monitoring and self-interpretation of that aestheticization process which attempts to assert external, non-reflexive structures upon daily life. In so doing, the subject is afforded a reflexive position (voter) to reject those who seek to reinforce risk through the manipulation of mediatized infomatics.

Appendix A

NEWT GINGRICH, TO RENEW AMERICA:

CHAPTER 21: TENDING THE GARDENS OF THE EARTH:

SCIENTIFICALLY BASED ENVIRONMENTALISM

My interest in the environment goes back to my childhood. For some reason, I was fascinated by animals and nature long before I went to school. My early professional dreams were of becoming a zoo director or a vertebrate paleontologist (I have a *Tyrannosaurus rex* skull in the Speaker's office). I loved stories about collecting wild animals and fossils. Whenever I could I would talk my relatives into visiting zoos and museums.

I also collected animals, although my mom and dad would routinely make me release them. My mother had a particular aversion to snakes, which of course meant they interested me a lot. I finally resolved this problem in adulthood when my wife agreed I could have any snake I wanted as long as it was in ZooAtlanta. Marianne promptly gave them two emerald tree

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boas, which have since been followed by two rhinoceroses and two Komodo dragons. All are now at ZooAtlanta.

At a fairly early age, I began reading about the extinctions humans had caused around the planet. The loss of the dodo was one. Killing off the giant moa of New Zealand struck me as a particular tragedy, and the loss of the Carolina parakeet, whose numbers once darkened the sky for days, seemed incomprehensible to me.

My political orientation as a Republican reinforced this sense of conservation and the awareness that man has the potential to do terrible damage. The conservation movement was begun by Republicans. Gifford Pinchot, who personified the fight for national forests, was the progressive ally of Theodore Roosevelt. It was President Taft's firing of Pinchot that led to the split of the Republican Party and Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose campaign in 1912.

I read about William Hornaday, founder of the New York Zoological Society, who helped save the American bison-one of the first successful conservation efforts. Studying these events helped me understand the efforts made to save the natural world from man's depredations.

During my first year of teaching, I participated in the first Earth Day. In a short time, I found myself the coordinator of environmental studies at West Georgia College. This was an interdisciplinary program that included biologists, physicists, geographers, and other interested faculty For several years, we took students on field trips to the Okefenokee Swamp, Cumberland Island on the Georgia coast, and the North Georgia Mountains. I introduced students to the concept of ecosystems, the role of man in nature, and the challenges our generation faces in preserving a livable planet for our descendants. It was one of my most enjoyable faculty experiences.

When I began to run for public office, I also worked with the Georgia Conservancy, the local Sierra Club chapter, the League of Conservation Voters, and other environmental groups. I found

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most of the volunteers eager and enthusiastic-even if their emotions did

sometimes outrun their facts. After I was elected to Congress, I found that national environmental organizations were all too often simply an extension of the left wing of the Democratic Party. They wanted to defeat Republicans and elect Democrats, no matter what the substance of the issues. It was a very trying time. The more I worked with Presidents Reagan and Bush, the harder it was to find common ground with the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters. Still, I have retained, and indeed expanded, my original vision of an economically rational, scientifically based environmentalism.

After twenty-five years of experience, we are now at a point where we can look back at our effort, review what worked and what failed, and try to establish a powerful foundation for a new era of environmental success.

For me, any such effort begins with the premise that man dominates the planet and that we have an absolute obligation to minimize damage to the natural world. I am not a preservationist. It is impossible for us to be a dynamic species and still act as if we don't exist. We can't help having an impact on the environment. We should also recognize that there are a lot of natural rhythms (including weather and geologic rhythms of which we may not be aware) that guarantee the planet will be changing all the time. We should try to conserve along with this dynamic environment instead of trying to stop all change.

In Rene Dubos's term, we have to become gardeners of the Earth. As the book of Genesis says, we have an obligation to cultivate that which God has given us. Gardeners are not looters and despoilers. Neither are they Eastern holy men who refuse to kill any living thing, even if it is endangering them.

We have three basic motivations: aesthetics, public health, and new knowledge. Aesthetically, our lives are much richer if we cultivate and maintain

the Earth's diversity. A planet with elephants, blue whales, and a wide variety of birds and butterflies, plus natural beauties such as Yellowstone Park and the Grand

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Canyon, is far more desirable than one that is covered with parking lots and high-rise apartments. Our quality of life will be much better if we maintain wilderness areas, national parks, nature preserves, migratory bird paths, and similar facilities.

Getting back in touch with nature is an intrinsic pleasure we all share. We have only been an urban animal for a few thousand years. As most New Yorkers can attest, Central Park makes Manhattan an infinitely more enjoyable place. I live only three miles northwest of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Center and seven miles southeast of the Kennesaw Mountain Civil War Battlefield Park. I walk in both areas whenever I can and my outlook on life invariably improves.

Public health is another major reason for tending the environment. Bad air was a major health problem in London, New York, and Los Angeles (but has improved in all three). Toxic-waste dumps, mercury pollution, and DDT poisoning are only a few of the ways in which the public health is affected by carelessly destructive behavior. Anyone who doubts that environmental pollution can be a public health menace should visit Mexico City or any part of the former Soviet empire. The latter is also vivid proof that government-controlled economies are much worse for the environment than free-market ones.

Our third reason for caring about our environment is derived from the power

of knowledge. If we agree that human beings have a moral obligation to take care of the ecosystem, then we need to gather scientific data and make rational assessments of the costs. It is foolish to think we can spend unlimited resources solving every environmental problem. If nothing else, the funds squandered on one problem will be unavailable for others. To get the best ecosystem for our buck, we should use decentralized and entrepreneurial strategies rather than command-and-control bureaucratic efforts.

This was brought home to me about five years ago when the people who make telephone poles came to see me. They were facing a regulatory ruling that would have destroyed their entire

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industry. The government was going to require a change in chemical treatments even though it would be radically more difficult and more expensive. There would be virtually no public-health gain. The Office of Management and Budget did a cost-benefit analysis and discovered that the program would spend seven trillion dollars for each life saved. The misallocation of resources was so grotesque that even the OMB rejected it.

New studies indicate that the asbestos program probably wasted \$5 billion without significantly improving public health. That would have been enough money to map most of the world's ecosystems. The Superfund program spent nearly 40 percent of its billions on lawyers and bureaucrats. Only one-fifth went to cleaning up waste sites. That money could have saved a lot of endangered species.

Many environmental regulations hatched in Washington put a ridiculous

burden on small communities. Rules and regulations that make sense for a big city can bankrupt a small town. Again and again these communities complain of the rigid attitudes in Washington-and in the EPA's regional offices, which are much worse.

Misdesigned programs, questionable science, and rigid bureaucratic enforcement have caused a loss of momentum to our environmental effort. If the current slowdown is seen as an opportunity to reassess and rethink, it will be a good thing. If it becomes an excuse for developers and businesses to undermine a sound environmentalism, it will be a bad thing. The American public will not allow us to turn back on the environment.

Yet we need more knowledge of the natural world for deeper reasons than merely saving the environment. As we enter the age of molecular medicine, we may discover thousands of cures and drugs from organisms that we have not yet even identified. As we learn more about ourselves as organic beings, we are discovering more and more about the natural world that relates to how we function and what our needs are. We need to know more about the environment so that we can know more about ourselves.

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One starting point should be to develop a worldwide biological inventory. The simple fact is, we don't know enough about the animal and plant life on the planet. The amount we currently spend on learning about the natural world is surprisingly small. If we could agree on creating this inventory, it could establish a knowledge base that would be the foundation for a broad range of advances in human and environmental health and in our understanding of the world we live in and the way we live in it.

A second step would be to identify endangered habitats as well as endangered species and to look for practical solutions. The Endangered Species Act is often used to impose a level of regulatory interference that is not sustainable in a free society. When people are cutting down bushes and trees on their properties-as they are now doing in the West-for fear that endangered species will be attracted there, we know we are doing something wrong. Their fear is that the government will take functional control of their lands and thus having an endangered species visit becomes a frightening rather than enjoyable event. Clearly that is no way to run a free society.

It may be possible to find ways of preserving endangered species through enhanced breeding rather than simply blocking all change in the environment. All too often the legitimate environmental viewpoint is crowded out by a noisy preservationism that has no scientific basis but simply condemns all human presence in the environment.

We also need hardheaded management with regard to costs and benefits. If a billion dollars spent one way will save one species and the same amount spent in a different way will save thirty species, we should opt for the more efficient investment of our resources. We could have done so much more to maintain such a diversity of species with a fraction of the money wasted on Superfund. Part of such a commonsense approach might be to allow more flexibility at home while spending more on preservation efforts abroad.

By encouraging pro-environmental technologies, we can

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achieve bigger breakthroughs than we can get through clumsy retrofitting and

cleanup-type approaches. Congressman Bob Walker is pushing a hydrogen-fuel initiative that might produce less pollution at lower cost and limit our dependence on foreign fuels. Several oil companies have proposed establishing a trust fund in Los Angeles that would help retire heavily polluting pre-1980 cars by replacing them with newer models. The program would achieve six times the reduction in air pollution as an equally expensive set of oil-refinery regulations being pushed by the EPA. A similar innovation in the electrical generating industry—a system of tradable air-pollution permits—has produced cleaner air for one-third the anticipated costs. Wherever we can, we should adopt decentralized, market-oriented approaches. We will get much better results than are possible with the red-tape-ridden, bureaucratically controlled system in place today.

We should emphasize recycling wherever it makes sense. Shaw Industries, in Georgia, which has 38 percent of the U.S. carpet market, is developing a recycling program that will revolutionize the industry. Carpets make up 4 percent of all solid waste. Under the plan, municipal dumps will pay Shaw to take away their carpet remains. Landfill space will be saved and Shaw will recycle the material into new carpets, saving resources in the process.

I have a constituent in my district, Linda Bavaro, who was bored after her children went to school. "You can only shop so long," she told me. She had been a marketing major in college, and she began looking for something to do. Recycling seemed economically and psychologically satisfying. Researching at her local library, she discovered a firm in North Carolina that was doing research on how to turn the two-liter Coke bottle into clothing fibers. She drove to North Carolina and saw for herself that it worked. Next, she got a contract with Coca-Cola to recycle old bottles. Then she got a commitment from Disney World to sell

her T-shirts. Today she has a successful company, Global Green, as a result of environmental concern, entrepreneurial

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courage, and a commitment to lifetime learning. Linda has a good chance of doing well financially by doing good environmentally. That is how a healthy free market in a free country ought to work.

From serious scientific surveys to new technologies, from recycling to commonsense management of ecosystems, we have the opportunity to launch a new era of environmentalism. We can craft an approach that is scientifically sound, economically rational, and politically popular. That is a worthy goal for the twenty-first century.

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education

Master of Urban Affairs, Urban Affairs and Planning, *expected 11 May 1996*

Concentration: Comparative Urban Policy

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)

Blacksburg, Virginia

QCA (out of 4.0): 3.66

Thesis: Scientific rhetoric in the policies of the new right

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Bachelor of Science, Sociology, *8 May 1993*

Bachelor of Arts, Music, *26 June 1993*

Minor: Geography

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)

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QCA (out of 4.0): 3.34

other

International Summer School

Selwyn College, Cambridge University

Cambridge, England

July – August 1995

Studied British Philosophy, Legal System, Institutions, and Satire

honors & affiliations

Tech Independent Student Newspaper, Founder and Editor *1992 – 1994*

Preston Journal, Editor *1990 – 1992*

Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society

Golden Key National Honor Society

Alpha Kappa Delta International Sociology Honor Society

Gamma Theta Upsilon Geography Honor Society

research interests

Discourse of public space – the textuality of political, social, and physical space

Environment – movements and human interaction

Information technology – imagined communities, and accelerating social relations



experience

related

Graduate Assistant – Virginia Center for Housing Research
Virginia Tech Research Division, Virginia Tech
August 1994 – May 1995
Wrote and edited various publications and funding proposals for center
Developed and wrote center's World Wide Web pages [html script]

Graduate Assistant – Professor Bob Dyck
Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Virginia Tech
January 1994 – May 1994
Gave selected lectures in undergraduate course on Urban Policy
Responsible for grading / giving quizzes and tests
Conducted weekly help sessions and office hours for students' questions

Graduate Assistant – Economic Development Assistance Center
Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Virginia Tech
August 1993 – January 1994
Analyzed land use and industrial parks for local planning district
Compiled data for planning district's Quality of Living Index

Independent Study – Appalachian Culture and Music
Department of Sociology and Department of Music, Virginia Tech
May 1991 – August 1991
Conceived, researched, and wrote study of Southwest Virginia's Appalachian culture, their music and the impact of development and broadcast media on those forms

Research Volunteer – Arctic Anthropology
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
May 1990 – August 1990
Worked under Dr. William Fitzhugh, Curator of Arctic Archeology
Cleaned, sorted, and cataloged pre-Columbian Inuit artifacts
Assisted staff in preparation for four-month Canadian expedition

work

Public Relations Specialist, Publications Assistant – Alumni Association
Alumni Association, Virginia Tech
August 1995 – present
Produce publications and informational materials for Alumni Association
Assist in creation of in-house graphic design and publication standards

Principal – Huxley-Wu Design Consultants

Blacksburg, Virginia

January 1995 – present

Graphic and industrial design consulting: ad copy, publications, and photography

Manage small base of national clients in international markets

Student Building Manager – Squires Student Center

University Unions and Student Activities, Virginia Tech

January 1993 – present

Manage staff, security, and operations of 266,000 sq.ft. student center

Oversee \$500 daily cash safe and other cash transactions

Host and site-coordinate events of up to 3,000 people

Phone Representative, Office Assistant – Virginia Tech Annual Fund

Office of University Development, Virginia Tech

May 1991 – September 1991

Phoned alumni to request annual fund giving and to update records

Assisted in keeping of phone-a-thon records and in mailing of incentives

Resident Advisor – O'Shaughnessey Hall

Residential and Dining Programs, Virginia Tech

April 1990 – May 1991

Assisted and monitored a hall of 60 men in personal and academic matters

Responsible for their health, safety, and living environment

Held one or more jobs throughout undergraduate and graduate career
in addition to assistantship and extracurricular activities.

organizations

Amnesty International at Virginia Tech – Publication Volunteer

1995

Designed and disseminated successful Amnesty campaign materials

Graduate Student Assembly – Public Information Officer

Virginia Tech

1994 – 1995

Developed public information circulation policy

Provided oversight for official statements and policy decisions

Tech Independent – Virginia Tech Student Newspaper

Founder and Editor

1992 – 1994

Raised \$14,000 in grant financing

Reorganized former tabloid news-weekly into twice-weekly broadsheet

Responsible for oversight of all activities, finances, and publication

Also held positions of writer, business manager, and production editor

Preston Journal – Virginia Tech News-Weekly

Editor

1990 – 1992

Turned \$24,000 debt into a break-even operation

Trained and placed over 25 staff members into news, design, or publication fields

Also held positions of editorial editor, news writer, and photographer

Bugle – Virginia Tech Yearbook

Staff Member

1991-1992

Assisted editor in layout and design of sections

Wrote copy for features section

WUVT – Virginia Tech Student Radio, FM 90.7

Engineering Assistant 1988 – 1989

Staff member 1988 – 1991

Responsible for daily maintenance and repair of broadcast equipment

Held various FM dj slots

publications

Dahlman, Carl T. 1995. Opening-up the public space of the personal: the new direct-action campaigns in Britain. (in preparation)

Koebel, C. Theodore and Carl T. Dahlman. 1995. Housing-needs data for Virginia: a guide to CHAS data. Virginia Center for Housing Research: Virginia Tech.

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