

Campaign '92: A Study in Political Rhetoric

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Perhaps no election in the past several decades has prompted more interest than our 1992 presidential election. With an incumbent Republican president who had soared from the height of public popularity to the depth of public unpopularity, a Democratic governor known as "slick Willie" who spoke of change through the lyrics of Fleetwood Mac, and an independent billionaire who claimed only allegiance to the American people yet couldn't seem to decide if he really wanted to be a candidate, the political rhetoric of the 1992 campaign proved to be a veritable "feast" for the rhetorical scholar.

Since forensic competitors often characterize the events known as "Rhetorical Criticism" and "Communication Analysis" as esoteric exercises in the mundane or, as William Faulkner so aptly put it, all "sound and fury, signifying nothing," I felt it only appropriate to use this rhetoric-rich context to tap the minds of rhetorical scholars in the forensic community. To do so, I asked several notable individuals, several who have successfully competed in these events and *all* who have successfully coached competitors in these events, to share their expertise. Their task—to construct a rhetorical criticism or communication analysis of the initial rhetoric that "kicked off" this campaign. Their focus—to develop their analysis in a style that illustrates the conventions of those two competitive events. Their goal—to provide valuable insight for competitors as well as coaches into both the rhetoric analyzed and the competitive events themselves.

As such, Kathleen M. German of Miami University has analyzed the "trio" of keynote addresses given at the Democratic Convention followed by Kevin W. Dean of West Chester University who has analyzed Governor Bill Clinton's nomination acceptance speech. Next, Timothy L. Sellnow of North Dakota State University has analyzed Phil Gramm's keynote address given at the Republican Convention followed by Mary Ann Renz of Central Michigan University who has analyzed President George Bush's nomination acceptance speech. And finally, Roger C. Aden of Ohio University has assessed the rhetorical impact of independent candidate Ross Perot during this 1992 presidential campaign. Hopefully, their extensive amplification of "notes" and "references cited" will provide a helpful instructional tool for both competitors and coaches alike.

**The National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 87.

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Hitting the Key Note: A Rhetorical Trio

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The presidential campaign of 1992 has been punctuated with discordant notes—from third party candidate Ross Perot running an off-again, on-again grass roots race to a saxophone playing appearance by the Democratic front runner Bill Clinton on the Arsenio Hall Show to an attack by the Vice President Dan Quayle on fictional television character Murphy Brown. In keeping with the unusual nature of this campaign, the Democrats opened their convention in Madison Square Garden with still another departure from tradition—a trio of keynote speakers instead of the traditional single keynoter.

Exigence

The three keynoters delivered their chorus on opening night of the Democratic Convention, July 13, 1992. Their aim was, as columnist Harry Stein, put it "to sound the clarion call of a reborn Democratic Party."¹ Right on cue, the event began with prime-time lead off keynoter, Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey. The spotlight was particularly gratifying for "Dollar Bill" Bradley since he helped lead two New York Knicks teams to National Basketball Association championships in the Garden. Fiscally conservative, pro-business Georgia Governor Zell Miller served as the centerpiece speaker. The final notes resounded from Barbara Jordan, former Texas Representative and currently professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. Jordan gained national recognition as the keynote speaker at the 1976 Democratic Convention.²

Audiences. Although Republicans may have been eavesdropping, the keynoters faced two primary audiences. They needed to inspire convention floor delegates for the long campaign season. However, in this age of media politics, conventions do more than nominate a ticket and inspire the party faithful. They serve as center stage for the candidates who offer themselves and their ideas to the American voter. Television has changed the nature of the convention because it has broadened the convention audience.³ As a result, the keynoters also faced the public television audience, a larger, more diverse group certainly less committed to the Democratic cause. For this reason, it was essential that the keynoters hit the high notes early and sustain them through the broadcast.

**National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 89-100.

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Justification of speeches. It would be naive to assume that three speeches given on the first day of the convention determined the outcome of the election. However, it's easy to see the immediate effects of the convention. Clinton's sizable lead in the major public opinion polls further increased following the convention.⁴ The Democrats, many Americans felt, were the party of change, newly defined and different than the liberal losers of 1988.⁵ To some extent the keynote speeches undoubtedly contributed to this effect.

Method

Traditionally, critics have examined keynotes as single speeches.⁶ Unfortunately, many of these approaches do not show us how to examine a trio of keynotes. However, we can discover a perspective by extending the musical metaphor implied by the term "keynote." By comparing these three speeches to a musical trio, a methodology otherwise known as analog criticism, we bring a nonconventional perspective to a nonconventional speech form.⁷ Perhaps this unique perspective will reveal features otherwise hidden by a more conventional methodology.⁸

In the past, many rhetorical critics have focused on the rhetorical function of song.⁹ They noticed that music engages listeners and subsequently may influence their attitudes and behaviors. We can reverse this comparison and argue that language shares some of the characteristics of music. While there are obvious differences, some intriguing similarities exist between music and speech. Both exist chronologically, at a point in time, and while they can be repeated, the repetition also exists only at one point. Both are art forms and possess aesthetic principles and qualities, and both may use multiple channels simultaneously.

Explanation of Method. The noted American composer Aaron Copland won the Pulitzer Prize in 1945 for his score of the ballet *Appalachian Spring*. He has also written about music as art. Published for the first time in 1939, Copland's *What to Listen for in Music* provides us with a basic structure for examining musical pieces.¹⁰

Copland writes that music has four essential elements: rhythm, melody, harmony, and tone color. The combination of these four elements creates a resonance in listeners. Let's first look at what Copland meant by each element, and then apply each to the orchestration of the keynote addresses.

Rhythm. Rhythm is grounded in physical motion. It is the movement from note to note with a pattern of regularity. In music, rhythm is expressed in beats which are repeated, stressed, or accented. When repeated, rhythms can have an electrifying and almost hypnotic effect

upon listeners. For the rhetorical critic, rhythm is also repetition, not of notes, but repetition of words, phrases, or refrains.¹¹

Melody. Melody is the expression of a theme. It arouses within the listener a mental emotion. To be satisfying, it should exist in proportion, providing a sense of completeness, closure, or inevitability. It should arouse and satisfy listener expectations. For the rhetorical critic, melody is also the expression of a theme or main idea.

Harmony. Harmony, the third musical element, is the pleasing quality of sound which results when separate musical tones are played together. Harmony is the relationship of these simultaneous tones. It allows highly complex relationships to be developed among various instruments and combinations of notes. For the rhetorical critic, harmony is the relationship between ideas or, in this case, the relationship among the speakers.

Tone color. Finally, tone color concerns the quality of sound produced. In painting, color provides tone; in music, the choice of instruments expresses the meaning of the composer. For instance, stringed instruments like the violin create a lyric, singing tone while brass instruments are responsible for loud, majestic tones. Even within families, there are notable differences. Within the brass family, for example, there are easily recognized distinctions between the trumpet, the French horn, and the tuba. For the rhetorical critic, tone color is the quality of the speech effort.

Application

Just as the composer must understand the workings of rhythm, melody, harmony, and tone color, critics can examine each of these four elements, in turn, in the keynote trio to discover the effectiveness of the whole.

Rhythm. Let's turn to the first musical element, rhythm. We find movement within the speeches primarily in the use of repetition and refrain. Bradley uses the question, "What did you do about it, George Bush?" and his audience responds after the first prompting, "You waffled and wiggled and wavered." Like a background chorus, listeners picked up the rhythm by chanting the refrain. Bradley then switched the rhythm by repeating poet Langston Hughes' phrase, "Let America be America again. Let it be the dream it used to be." He reached closure by concluding with a reference to the dream as Martin Luther King envisioned it.

Minor or incidental forms also pepper the speech, serving to move it from topic to topic. The phrase, "For 12 years..." introduces a series of social ills blamed on the Republicans. And, "another politician,...another executive,...another Supreme Court Justice..." is the

series that indicts guilty Republicans. Bradley's use of refrains harmonizes the main ideas of the speech with their supporting details. For example, he develops the main theme of the American dream by referring twice to Martin Luther King and using the Hughes refrain. He reinforces the idea of the dream by repeating phrases like, "It was built on the belief..." In this way, the speech moves forward, the rhythm of the refrains and incidental repetition gives it a pulse that invigorates listeners and propels the main idea.

Zell Miller uses an identical pattern of repetition and refrain. Like Bradley, he blames Bush, stating repeatedly, "And George Bush doesn't get it," as he lists the economic woes of the country. Throughout the remainder of the speech, incidental forms dominate. Miller uses the series, "I made it because..." listing Democrats Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. Later, he departs from the rhythm of simple repetition with a series of quick inversions and verbal puns. For example, "If the 'education president' gets another term, even our kids won't be able to spell potato." He treats the topics of the law and order and the environment in the same way. Rhythm is further varied in staccato notes such as, "We've got us a race between an aristocrat, an autocrat, and a Democrat."

The rhythm abruptly changes from the old fashioned toe tapping stump speeches of Bradley and Miller to the sternly passionate hymn of Barbara Jordan. Jordan relies on subtle nuances of language to drive her speech. Her rhythm is subdued rather than punctuated by a series of applause lines or audience refrains. She asks about change and responds "from what to what?" This interplay of past and future is funnelled through the present moment. What the Democratic party has stood for and what it is becoming are refracted in the present. Jordan builds urgency by repeating that the American Dream is slipping away—slipping away from minorities, slipping away from the homeless, slipping away from children and from workers.

Throughout her speech, Jordan repeats the word "change." Unlike the repetition of words in Bradley and Miller's speeches, Jordan varies the meaning of the word "change" each time. Jordan also moves from the generic to the specific—from the idea of trickle down economics to the faces of those excluded, the black woman from the Fifth Ward in Houston and the youth in the colonias on the lower Rio Grande. And, from change in the political ideology of the Democratic Party to change in the White House. While repetition drives Jordan's speech, its rhythm is quite different from the earlier two speeches.

Melody. While refrains can surface in a speech, the main melody is the expression of the dominant speech theme. In this trio of keynotes, the theme is obvious and consistent. "Change" is the leitmotif that

dominates all three speeches. Bradley and Miller opt for change from the leadership of George Bush to that of Bill Clinton. Jordan, on the other hand, seeks change in the conception of the American dream from what it has become to what it once was—from the present Republican ideology to the Democratic administrations.

Bradley begins his speech by announcing the "campaign for change." It is time to consider our environment, the new Russia, providing help for cities convulsed with violence, and reinstating moral standards and racial justice. Bradley calls for change with phrases like "The party is over," "There is work to be done," and "We face a crisis of meaning." Of course, the prescription for change comes in the form of unity, of coming together to rebuild America. Bradley's experience on the winning Knicks team is offered as partial proof that coming together changes individuals and creates victorious teams.

Governor Zell Miller uses the changes in his own life to frame the values of the Democratic Party. He succeeded in spite of poverty because of the changes made by Democratic leaders like Truman, Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Johnson. The changes looming with the re-election of George Bush are, by contrast, frightening—inadequate education, understaffed law enforcement, a contaminated environment, and insufficient health care. Miller also calls for change in the symbolism of the presidency as he draws a contrast between the privileged life of George Bush and the poverty of Bill Clinton.

The first clue to the theme of change in Barbara Jordan's remarks is her announced title, "Change—From What to What?" The role of change is reinforced in her words. She says, "Change has become the watchword of this year's electioneering," and she makes change the watchword of her speech. She identifies the Democratic Party as the "catalyst for change" and then enumerates the conditions for change. While Jordan echoes the same list of economic and social evils as Bradley and Miller, the bases for change are different. In probably the most quoted sentence of the evening, she says, "We will change from a party with a reputation for tax and spend to one of investment and growth." Instead of citing individual gains and losses under the previous administration, Jordan establishes a philosophical underpinning and then applies it. In this way, her message diverges from Bradley and Miller. She pursues the idea of change first as an abstraction, only then applying it to specific policies.

Harmony. Harmony is the relationship among the keynote speakers. As already suggested, there are distinct differences among the keynoters. Jordan breaks from the style of Bradley and Miller. In her speech, the melody is abstract and the rhythm is subtle. In Bradley and Miller's speeches, the rhythm is repetitious and the melody is

direct. Or, from another perspective, Bradley and Miller deliver old-fashioned stump speeches arousing responses and participation from the convention floor delegates. Jordan, on the other hand, forces listeners to focus on the melody of the speech rather than simply responding to the refrain of it. Because the melody and rhythm are so different, there is a clear break in the cadence of the trio. Bradley and Miller establish a popular tune with a dominant beat and melody while Jordan delivers a reflective aria.

If you think of the harmony of the trio building to a crescendo, then clearly this trio of speeches accomplished that. It begins with a less-than-memorable speech by Bradley and is followed by a speech by Miller that commentators considered "one of his best" to the soul-searching of Jordan. The sequence ends hauntingly with "one of the most remarkable speeches delivered at a recent Democratic convention. .. profoundly and succinctly eloquent."¹² What distinguished Jordan's address is not just the rhythm and melody but the delivery. She did not merely confront the Democrats with their own past, but she commanded their attention. The result is a speech that transcends the immediate constraints to guide the Democrats into the future. In portending the future, it becomes enduring rather than simply ephemeral.¹³

Tone Color. To establish tone color, the composer selects the instruments that best express his meaning. In this case, we must determine if the speakers adequately express the meaning of the convention. The first note is sounded by Bill Bradley whose impeccable integrity and unquestionable character combine with his come-back athletic reputation. "Dollar Bill" Bradley may not be flashy, but he exhibits stamina and determination of the Democratic Party. "Give 'em Hell" Zell Miller symbolizes the New Southern Democratic leader—fiscally conservative, politically savvy, and moderate on racial issues. In addition, he represents Democratic in-roads in the traditionally Republican South. Finally, Barbara Jordan, ethics advisor for Texas Governor Ann Richards, is not only a woman but also black and handicapped. She brings the possibility of success full circle—the Democrats won in 1976 when she delivered her first keynote and they are poised to win again. As individuals, each speaker has a role—a come-back kid, a Southern governor, and a reminder of the 1976 victory—all things the Democratic ticket wants to highlight in the presidential race.

As a group, however, the speakers vary dramatically and the quality of sound produced is erratic. They sound more like soloists than a trio. Bradley gives a speech generally dismissed as forgettable. Miller and Jordan overshadow Bradley; however, they do not blend well. The combined effect of a stump speaker and a philosopher is grating. The result-

ing medley offers little apparent unity and, while diversity is a Democratic theme, it is not balanced by the second Democratic theme—unity for the fall campaign.

Rhetorical Judgment

Aaron Copland writes that every good piece of music must sustain a sense of flow—a feeling of continuity from the first note to the last.¹⁴ We can apply Copland's standard to the Democratic keynote trio on three levels: first, the function of the speeches as a unit; second, their contribution to the campaign; and finally, their impact on the tradition of convention speaking.

First, it is clear from our examination of each speech that instead of a well-harmonized trio, we heard a clash of voices that resulted in a cacophony of sound. While each speaker sang the same melody, there were dramatic differences in rhythm and tone color. As a consequence, a sense of continuity was never achieved. Instead of a trio, we heard three consecutive soloists.

In spite of this, the keynotes must also be evaluated by their contribution to the campaign. As many commentators observed, the Democrats emerged from their convention united, invigorated for the campaign ahead. It would be misleading to conclude that this fighting spirit of the New Democratic Party resulted from the three voices raised on its behalf on the first night of the convention. However, the strength of the theme of change was certainly established by the keynoters. One observer noted that Clinton was swept along by the swelling strains of the convention. After the acceptance speech, he wrote: "Clinton's got the words down and is working on the music."¹⁵

The strength of the melody has sent the Republicans scrambling to redefine themselves as the party of change. And, whether or not the Democrats win the White House, they will have come closer than in any other election since 1976. Part of the reason is that from the beginning keynotes, they have identified themselves as the party of change. The melody established by the keynotes has sustained the campaign. Perhaps then, rhythm, harmony, and tone color aren't essential in establishing a popular tune. The message of change, first heard from the keynote trio, is still resonating through our media.¹⁶

Finally, has the trio of keynotes altered the tradition of convention speaking? Clearly, the Democratic Committee's decision to use three keynoters was risky. Audiences expect conventions to remain within traditional boundaries. However, in an election season where traditional boundaries have been continually stretched, this departure from tradition was probably minor. One hardly notices three keynoters considering that most of the rules have been broken—candidates appear

on talk shows like "Good Morning America," drop in and out of the race, and attack television characters.

Perhaps the traditional boundaries of conventions have been permanently altered. If this is the case, critics must appraise their traditional perspectives and discover more creative approaches to their subjects. By changing our vantage point, as we have in this critique, we may better understand the communication process. A musical perspective like this one enables the critic to account for the seeming disharmony, yet overall success of this rhetorical trio.

Endnotes

¹Harry Stein, "Our Times: A Column About Values and TV," *TV Guide* 8 (17 July 1992): 27.

²This analysis was based on the author's transcription of videotapes of the keynotes. For published copies of these speeches see: Bill Bradley, "Keynote Address," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 21 (15 August 1992): 655-656; Zell Miller, "Excerpts," *New York Times* (14 July 1992) A12; Barbara Jordan, "Change: From What to What?" *Vital Speeches of the Day* 21 (15 August 1992): 651-652.

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⁴"A Shift in Voter Preference," *New York Times* (17 July 1992) A16; Adam Clymer, "Bush's Gains From Convention Nearly Evaporate in Latest Foil," *New York Times* (26 August 1992) A1; "Keeping the Big Mo Rolling," *Newsweek* (3 August 1992) 27; "Texas Two-Step," *Newsweek* (24 August 1992) 20; Howard Fineman and Ann McDaniel, "Bush: What Bounce?" *Newsweek* (31 August 1992): 26.

⁵Jeffrey Birnbaum and James Perry, "New Ball Game: Bidding for the Change Vote," *Wall Street Journal* (17 July 1992) A1; David Shribman and Timothy Noah, "New Challenges Hit Democrats at Convention," *Wall Street Journal* (14 July 1992) A16; Charles Madigan, "Time's Up, Democrats Tell Bush," *Chicago Tribune* (14 July 1992) A1.

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⁸As it is used here, analog criticism refers to comparisons of discourse to nondiscursive artifacts. For other examples of analog criticism, see the following: Robert L. Scott, "Diego Rivera at Rockefeller Center Fresco Painting and Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 41 (1977) 70-82; Lawrence Rosenfeld, "Case Study in Speech Criticism—Nixon-Truman Analog," *Speech Monographs* (1968) 435-450; Lawrence Rosenfeld, "George Wallace Plays Rosemary's Baby," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (1969) 36-44; Kurt Ritter, "American Political Rhetoric and the Jeremiad Tradition," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980) 153-157; Paul Campbell, "The Gorgias: Dramatic Form as Argument," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980) 1-16; John McKay, "Psycho-

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⁹Karyn Rybacki and Donald Rybacki, *Communication Criticism* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990), pp. 275-307; Cal Logue, "Transcending Coercion: Communication Strategies of Black Slaves on Antebellum Plantations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1981): 31-46; Stephen Kosokoff and Carl Carmichael, "The Rhetoric of Protest, Song, Speech and Attitude Change," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 35 (1970): 295-302; Mark Booth, "The Art of Words in Songs," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48 (1962) 242-249; John Bloodworth, "Communication in the Youth Counter Culture: Music as Expression," *Central States Speech Journal* 26 (1975) 304-309; Gerald Mohrmann and F. Eugene Scott, "Popular Music and World War II," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976) 145-156; Larry Grossberg, "Is There Rock After Punk?" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (1986) 50-74; Charles Conrad, "Work Songs, Hegemony, and Illusions of Self," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5 (1988) 179-201; James Chesebro, et al., "Popular Music as a Mode of Communication 1955-1982," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (1985) 115-135; James Irvine and Walter Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972) 272-284; Stephen Wood and Jean DeWitt, "The Inauguration of Ronald Reagan: The Great American Rhetorical Symphony," *Exetasis* 7 (1981) 3-19; Arlene Okerhind, "The Rhetoric of Love: Voice in the Amoretti and the Songs of Sonets," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982) 37-46; Mark W. Booth, *The Experience of Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) Arnold Perns, *Music as Propaganda* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985); James Lull, *Popular Music and Communication* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991) Deanna Robinson, Elizabeth Buck, and Marlene Cutbert, *Music at the Ma/gins* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991); Larry David Smith and Dan Nimmo, *Cordial Concurrence: Orchestrating National Party Conventions in the Telepolitikai Age* (New York: Praeger, 1991)

¹⁰Aaron Copland, *What to Listen For in Music* (New York: Mentor, 1939), pp. 31-67.

¹¹For further discussion of rhetorical movement or rhythm see: Jane Blankenship and Barbara Sweeney, "The Energy of Form," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 172-183; Paul Nelson, "The Fugal Form of Charles James Fox's Rejection of Bonaparte's Overtures," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 36 (1972): 9-14.

¹²Daniel Henninger, "A Woman of Substance," *Wall Street Journal* (15 July 1992), A11

¹³Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Criticism: Ephemeral and Enduring," *Communication Education* 23 (1974): 9-14.

¹⁴Copland 30.

¹⁵Jonathan Alter, "Why Bush Will Get Zapped," *Newsweek* (27 April 1992): 30.

¹⁶"Washington Wire," *Wall Street Journal* (18 September 1992): A1.

Bill Clinton's 'New Covenant': Re-Visioning an Old Vision

*Kevin W. Dean**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34.)

With these words, according to Hebrew tradition, God entered a new relationship with the chosen people of Israel. The old covenant was a relationship of mutual fidelity between God and Israel. The Mosaic laws, symbolized by the tablets of stone given to Moses, which had guided Jewish life for generations was now supplanted by a new promise. Rather than relying on an external code of laws which defined the relationship between God and Israel, God promises the prophet Jeremiah that God's chosen people will be guided by an internal, experiential understanding—written on individual hearts—that provides assurance that God has secured their present and their future.

Historian Winthrop Hudson (1981) notes that it was a similar trust in God's new covenant with the chosen that motivated John Winthrop and followers to seek to establish America as a shining "city set on a hill" (p. 20). Ernest Bormann (1985) suggests that America's self-identification as the people of the new covenant serves as the thread which weaves together the tapestry of American political rhetoric. The latest strand introduced into this American cloth is the campaign rhetoric of Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton.

In his July 16, 1992 acceptance speech for the Democratic presidential nomination, delivered at New York's Madison Square Garden before the Democratic National Convention and millions of home viewers, Clinton articulated his vision for America in terms of a "new

**National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 101-110.

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covenant."¹ Portraying himself as the clear center of the party's left wing, Clinton's new covenant calls for change in both the status quo, as defined by the incumbent Republican administration of George Bush, and the negative stigma of "liberal" which has been attached in recent years to the Democratic party. While the call for change is clear, a closer examination of text reveals that in accordance with the rhetorical form of the American understanding of covenant, the change is anchored by—and indeed gains power from—permanence. Advocacy for change is established in a base of accepted belief.

Clinton's vision for America is grounded in the permanence of the American tradition of a covenant people. His unique contribution is to validate the new covenant intrinsically by appealing to the heart felt needs of "people first" rather than emphasizing external demands of government. I will begin with a brief discussion of the Biblical notion of covenant and the rhetorical requisites of the form. I will use covenant discourse as a filter to critically analyze Clinton's rhetorical choices on July 16, 1992, and finally draw some evaluative conclusions concerning both Clinton's discourse and the rhetorical power of covenant language on an American audience.

Biblical Concept of Covenant

The thirty-nine books comprising the Old Testament provide a rich account of a dialogue between God and humans in the form of covenant discourse. The term covenant, as defined *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (1973), refers to "an agreement or compact between God and individuals or people" (p. 116). Three specific covenants between God and individuals reveal key components of the rhetorical form.

The notion of covenant is first mentioned in Genesis 2:16 where God offers a nearly perfect Eden for Adam and Eve's use. Adam and Eve are promised all the bounty of the garden but are commanded not to eat from tree of knowledge lest they perish. Herein lies the most common Biblical use of the word "covenant," the basis of a relationship between God and humankind. In this particular case, God offers continued favor on condition of obedience. The covenant is extended from a source of power, God, who offers a desirable commodity in exchange for a desirable commodity. Two important characteristics, of covenants, then, are: 1) they originate from the more powerful of two parties, and 2) they are based on an assumption of exchanged goods.

Assurance of safety is the cornerstone of the covenant God offered Noah. Angered by human wickedness, God sent a flood to destroy the world which God created. Noah and his household, who had kept faith in God, were to be spared along with two of every living species. Because of God's assurance of Noah's faith, God promised never again

to destroy the earth by flood. Genesis 9:13 recounts a unique aspect of this covenant, the presence of a rainbow, offered as a symbol of God's pledge. This narrative reveals an additional characteristic of covenants: external verification is given for their existence.

A third covenant is revealed in the Abraham narratives. Abraham, a faithful servant of God, is frustrated because he has no heirs, a fate in Jewish culture which annihilated the purpose of one's existence. In Genesis 13:5, God rewards Abraham's trust and loyalty by promising to make him the father of generations that will number more than the stars in the heavens. Additionally, God promised Abraham's descendants land (15:18-21) and God's blessing (15:13-14). The story of Abraham reveals a fourth characteristic of Biblical covenants between God and humans: covenants are extended to a "chosen" group or individuals and contain a call of manifest destiny, directing the receiver to live out a life of service to God.

From these narratives, we can ascertain four characteristics of Biblical covenant rhetoric between God and humans: 1) it originates with the higher power of the parties engaged; 2) it holds an expectation for reciprocated goods; 3) it has an external verification; and 4) it implies a future directive for a chosen people. These four conditions comprise what we may term "the old covenant." What, then, are the defining qualities of the "new covenant"?

The description of the new covenant which shaped later prophetic tradition is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Noted Biblical scholar Bernhard Anderson (1975) claims that Jeremiah's "prophecy was stamped more indelibly upon later prophetic tradition than anything else [he] said" (p. 394). Anderson suggests that the new covenant offered in Jeremiah became, in retrospect, the basis of the canon of Christian writings known as the New Testament. Anderson maintains that Jeremiah intended both a break from the traditional covenant and a distinct message for his specific audience. Anderson identifies four facets of the *new* covenant discourse (p. 394). Two of his qualities (its origination with the higher power of the parties engaged and its expectation for reciprocated goods) correspond with characteristics of the covenant described in Mosaic law. The "newness" comes in a radical alteration of the third quality of the Mosaic covenant, and an expansion of the fourth.

In old covenant dialogue, the covenant was sealed with an external symbol: the parameters of a garden, a rainbow arching over the horizon, a tablet of etched stone. In contrast, the new covenant relies on internal rather than external verification of the articulated pledge. Anderson writes:

The new covenant will... fulfill the original intention of the Sinai covenant. The meaning of the original covenant had been eclipsed by religious ceremonies and written laws, as though God intended that the Law should be written on tablets of stone deposited in the Ark. In the new covenant, however, the Torah will be written upon the heart, the inward center of the being. It will find expression in a personal response to... God (p. 394).

In short, the new covenant promises a deeper, more intimate relationship between individuals and their God. As the assurance of God's promise moves from an external to internal position, an implied sense of personal experience deepens the gratitude and commitment on the part of God's followers.

While both the old and new covenants function to define a "chosen" people and provide them a mission, the old covenant left some room for speculation as to exactly who might be included among God's "elect." A desire for superiority allowed groups or individuals in power to exclude various persons or subgroups from sporting the mantle of "chosen" because they did not meet various human imposed expectations. Contrarily, the new covenant articulated by Jeremiah broadens the notion of "chosen" to include all members of the houses of Israel and Judah, "from the least of them to the greatest" (v. 34). Jeremiah scholar Howard Kuist (1968) suggests that extending an open invitation to all removes a burden of imposed guilt and replaces it with a sense of worth. Kuist writes:

And with this sense of worth comes the desire to be really worthy. In the whole human universe, what force has greater regenerative potency? What else has such power to stir the springs of ethical action? By being grounded in God's everlasting grace to forgive, both the potency and the permanence of the new covenant are assured (p. 96).

Such a move for inclusiveness clearly enhances the individual commitment to support the covenant. Who, after all, could be certain, under the terms of the prior covenant, of his or her election to the ranks of "chosen"? The new covenant afforded an ultimate assurance of God's intent to extend benevolent grace to all.

We may now modify the definitional components of covenant discourse to fulfill the requirements of new covenant as espoused by Jeremiah to include the following: 1) it originates with the higher power of the parties engaged; 2) it assumes reciprocated goods; 3) it has a locus of internal verification; and 4) it implies a future directive for a chosen people, in which "chosen" is inclusive of the total population. The rhetorical power of this altered form to gain popular support is that the "new" or change is an outgrowth of the accepted permanence of the

"old." We can now turn attention to Clinton's use of new covenant language to shape his vision for America.

Clinton's Use of "New Covenant" Rhetoric

Clinton's official task, that of accepting the Democratic nomination for President of the United States, necessarily provided him with power differential distinct from any other person in the convention hall. Thus, the first element of new covenant discourse, that it originate with the higher of power of those parties engaged, was inherent in the context that Clinton faced in New York. Yet context alone was not enough, for Clinton needed to demonstrate that he possessed the power necessary to enact all the changes for which he called.

Clinton's rhetoric reinforces his ceremonial position of power through the use of the active voice and vows of "I can," "I do," and a resounding resolution sounded numerous times "I will." Clinton's pledges for action gain momentum particularly in the middle of the address where he juxtaposes his drive for action against the alleged inactivity of the Bush administration. Clinton claims:

George Bush talks a good game. But he has no game plan to compete and win in the world economy. *I do*. He won't take on the big insurance companies to lower costs and provide health care to all Americans. *I will* (emphasis mine)

Clinton repeatedly combines the active voice with short phrases which punctuate his commitment to action. This juxtaposition bolsters his perceived position of power at the convention to a level on par with the president himself. Clinton thus fosters the impression that he possesses the power to achieve the desired changes he calls for, and is therefore justified in inaugurating the new covenant.

Clinton deals with the second aspect of covenant, a held expectation of reciprocated goods, with another characteristic Clinton juxtaposition. A prominent rhetorical feature of Clinton's new covenant discourse is a dialectical tension between paired terms. Just as Kenneth Burke (1984) argued that purpose could be obtained through the dynamic balance between permanence and change, Clinton's rhetoric generates power from the juxtaposition of opposing concepts. Specifically, through the speech, Clinton juxtaposes the notions of "opportunity/responsibility" as central tenets of his new covenant.

Eleven times the term *new covenant* is invoked in the address and with each mention there is a promise for a better future, tempered by the realization that benefits won't merely be handed out, but rather must be achieved through responsible actions. Articulated in a variety of forms, (e.g., opportunity/responsibility; borrow/pay back; treatment/

prevention; affordable/saving; welfare/self-sufficiency; give to/give back) the common thread is a rhetoric of consensus.²

Consensus allows Clinton to maintain the support of the Democratic left while defining himself as a centrist and launching pitches toward the desperately needed moderate and independent voters he must win for election. Indeed, the "opportunity" descriptions of the new covenant are reminiscent of Roosevelt's New Deal, and designed to woo liberal Democrats. Jobs programs, educational opportunities, affordable health care, and a government that is "serving, caring, helping, and giving" are all issues and images that fueled the traditional Democratic machine. Yet he moderates the position with the repeated phrase, "but you must do your part." With the addition of this phrase even those with a traditionally conservative bent find assurance in Clinton's message. Clinton's vision is not an open palm without expectations but rather a program that demands commitment—a concept conservatives have traditionally cherished on both sides of the aisles. With appeals such as these, Clinton's pitch to the "army of patriots" who "rallied to Ross Perot" to "join us and revitalize America" had a greater chance of finding its intended audience than the more traditional line of past Democratic rhetoric would have had.

An additional observation should be made about this pairing of opposites. Burke (1984) suggests that change will result when it is articulated in a language of permanence. Posturing his desire for change in a language of accepted permanence is vital to Clinton on two levels. First, he must demonstrate that he has roots in the Democratic party so that the party faithful will imbue him with their trust to move the party in a different direction without fearing a loss of identity. Second, to moderate who are weary of traditionally liberal ideologies and programs, Clinton must develop a conservative language that will earn their confidence, assuring them that they need not fear Republican taunts of "tax and spend" and "radical liberals." Through consensus rhetoric, Clinton is able to meet both challenges.

The third defining trait of new covenant discourse is a shift from external to internal validation. For the Israelites, the Mosaic law provided verifiable proof of the validity of the God's plan for their lives. The prophecy of Jeremiah, however, provided the Israelites with a new form of validity, the movement of the locus of knowledge to an internal relationship, in which God's covenant is "written on their hearts." Such an internalization of knowledge implies an intimacy which assumes a deep level of both understanding and commitment to the cause.

Clinton's new covenant presupposes no external validation. He claims, "There is no Arkansas miracle." But he continues to suggest that "there are a lot of miraculous people." The power of Clinton's

vision must come from within, and will come to fruition only if people are willing to believe in his cause. There is good reason to have faith, if not for oneself then for progeny. Clinton returns to personal narrative to illustrate the point. The hope he embodies for the future is attributed to the moment his daughter Chelsea was born. Clinton remembers:

As I stood in the delivery room, I was overcome with the thought that God had given me a blessing my own father never knew: the chance to hold my child in my arms.

The rhetoric gains universal identification as the personal once again transcends Clinton's individual experience with the claim that "at this very moment, another child is born in America." With this stroke, Chelsea symbolizes all American children for whom Clinton envisions a happy home, health, opportunity, strength, security, family, friends, and faith. With each listener's own child in mind—born or yet to be born—Clinton concludes with an invitation to unite in a commitment to attain the vision, and renewing one's belief in *Hope*?

The fourth requisite of the new covenant is that it is inclusive of all of God's people. Biblically the invitation is extended from "the least to the greatest." So it is with Clinton's vision. As with other portions of the vision, Clinton's sensitivity to the value of inclusiveness is deeply rooted in his personal experience. Recounting his past, Clinton remembers that even in the midst of a depressed economy his grandfather offered food from his country store to those in need. From his grandfather, Clinton learned "to look up to people other folks looked down on." Once commitment has been established, Clinton moves to address the oft-mentioned campaign issue of family. Avoiding controversial particulars (non-married couples living together, homosexual unions and adoptions, etc.), Clinton transcends specificity with generalities which demonstrate unity. His family "includes every family: every traditional family and every extended family, every two-parent family, every single-parent family and every foster family. Every family." Criticism is extended to those who would be exclusive. Clinton claims:

... for too long politicians told the most of us that are doing all right that what's really wrong with America is the rest of us. Them. Them, the minorities. Them, the liberals. Them, the poor. Them, the homeless. Them, the people with disabilities. Them, the gays. We got to where we really "them'ed" ourselves to death. Them and them and them. But this is America. There is no them. There is only us.

As God promised all Israelites forgiveness for their iniquities and assurance that their sins were forgiven, Clinton's vision offers a place for all disenfranchised individuals, arguing that "we need each other. We don't have a person to waste."

Conclusions

Clinton's address achieved its aim of presenting a powerful Democratic contender to the American public, if not to American history. Press assessment of the speech itself was somewhat mixed. *The New York Times* (1992) heralded it as a "rousing acceptance speech" which already has proven to be a "pivotal moment in his campaign and career" (p. A1). *Newsweek* (1992) claimed, "The big speech was good, not great" (p. 32), and in a straight forward appraisal, Katharine Seelye (1992) of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote:

Clinton's speech may not go down in history as a hugely memorable one. But it deftly accomplished many of the specific tasks Clinton faced. And by repeating his themes from the stump, it showed a consistency, an intent of purpose and a direction in Clinton that may not have been apparent to the skeptics (p. A15).

Regardless of the personal opinion, one certainty exists: the vision Clinton spun of his ideal America, woven tightly in the promise of people first, became a consistent thread that permeated campaign discourse from the convention forward.

From the vantage point of political communication, Clinton and his rhetorical vision were also a success. Kathleen Jamieson (1992) suggests that in every campaign since 1952 the party which eventually took the White House was the party whose campaign articulated the most concise and consistent theme throughout the period of the election. The permanence of Clinton's consistent message heightened both the trust American voters had in his leadership abilities and their acceptance of his call for change.

While it is valuable to render assessment on Clinton's specific address, it is also pertinent to comment on the utility of new covenant rhetoric for an American audience. Two observations are noteworthy. First, because of its visionary quality and because of rich tradition in American culture, new covenant rhetoric is an aptly chosen form of discourse for the political arena. Particularly due to its demand for an internal locus of validation, new covenant rhetoric has the power both to engage members of an audience, and to deepen and unify their commitment to a particular cause.

Second, like any effective communicator, the rhetor who elects to use the new covenant form needs to be sensitive to the audience and their comfort level with religious images. While Clinton's themes remain fairly consistent from the Democratic Convention until election day, one change in his rhetoric during the course of the campaign is of note. While the tenets of the new covenant discourse remained, the label itself began to fade from Clinton's public vocabulary until it had totally disappeared by election eve. At this juncture, one can only spec-

ulate about its removal. One explanation may have been the cries of outrage from the religious right who assumed Clinton's new covenant rhetoric identified him to the figure of Christ. The fire from the right can be illustrated by Pat Robertson's charge the next day before the televised 700 Club that Clinton was guilty of blasphemy. My reading of Clinton's address indicates a clearer association between his use of new covenant and the new covenant language of the Old Testament. Yet since Christian theology traditionally views Christ as the fulfillment of the new covenant, the ire of Christian conservatives could be expected towards a political figure who seemed to adopt the persona of Christ who, said the night he was betrayed, "This cup *is* the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

Another possibility is that the religious overtones may have made the left wing of Clinton's own party uncomfortable. A campaign worker in the state of Maryland suggested that Clinton was urged to drop the new covenant label because its ambiguity, combined with its religious overtones, made it a liability which could be lampooned, much as "liberal" was for Dukakis and "a thousand points of light" was for Bush.

A third hypothesis combines the previous two and rests with the Biblical literacy, or lack thereof, in current American vocabulary. Joe Klein (1992) of *Newsweek* retorted, "Leave it to Bill Clinton to come up with the most complicated synonym imaginable for a simple old lunch-bucket Democrat word: *Deal*" (p. 34). Perhaps it was former Republican speech writer, Peggy Noonan (1992), who said it best, "The new covenant sounds both Biblical and, well, new. If it catches on it will be because people understand it, which so far they don't. Repetition alone won't do it" (p. 33). It is quite plausible to assume that Clinton, a Southern Baptist, accustomed to stumping in the traditional American "bible belt," would clearly understand new covenant rhetoric as articulated in the Old Testament. As Clinton's public broadened, however, and his need to identify with non-southerners increased, the level of comfort and familiarity with Biblical images decreased. The effort it would take to explain the discourse would have exacted a price too great to merit its continuation.

Whether Clinton can make his vision a reality is, of course, unknown. Whether he represents a new breed of Democrat or is merely an old prophet in new covenant garb is yet to be tested. What is certain is that Clinton's rhetoric at the Democratic convention was masterfully able to re-vision an old idea that served as the basis justifying his request for public support of his candidacy.

Notes

¹The text of Clinton's address used in this study is taken from the Reuter text and reprinted in: Nominee Clinton describes vision of 'new covenant' (1992, July 18). *Congressional Quarterly*, pp. 2128-2130.

²Elsewhere (Dean, 1991) I have argued the significance of distinguishing between consensus and transcendence:

Through transcendence, a divided audience is unified by the use of a term or concept that supersedes the points of contention existing within differing factions. Through transcendence both sides necessarily recognize that they must compromise their stance for the larger good of the whole. Alternatively, consensus does not require the introduction of a transcendent concept but relies on the position of issues as they exist in the status quo. If handled effectively, individuals supporting either side of an issue can feel that their needs/concerns have been met without compromising their position. Consensus rhetoric is an effective tactic with heterogeneous groups, since individuals on either side of a given rhetorical issue are granted something they desire (p. 536).

³Clinton was able to make an effective literary play with the use of the word hope. Not only does the term hold positive connotations for the future, it also is the surname of the Arkansas town in which Clinton was born.

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Senator Phil Gramm's 1992 Keynote Address: A Case of Strategic Ambiguity

*Timothy L. Sellnow**

When, on August 18, 1992, Texas Senator Phil Gramm reached the podium at the 35th Republican National Convention, he faced a pivotal moment in his career. As keynote speaker, Gramm was proclaimed by the media and his own party as a leading contender for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1996 (Rosenthal, 1992). Hence, this speech held the potential for much personal gain. Gramm stood poised to reap the benefits of an address broadcast nationally during prime time and delivered personally before the delegates—many of whom would play a part in selecting the 1996 Republican candidate. As he began his speech, however, Gramm was mired by several constraints. First, his keynote address was delivered a day after the live television coverage of the convention began. Gramm was bumped back a day in favor of party favorite, Ronald Reagan and former Bush rival, Pat Buchanan. Second, Gramm was asked to proclaim his support for a president who, at the start of the convention, trailed Democratic challenger, Bill Clinton, by as much as 18% in popularity polls (Fineman, 1992). Third, Gramm's task of promoting unity and enthusiasm in the convention delegates was hampered by the fact that the platform debates preceding the formal convention revealed a Republican party that seemed more divided than in past elections (Dionne, 1992). Thus, to analyze Gramm's keynote address, the salient question becomes: Was Phil Gramm able to overcome these constraints in his efforts to fulfill his role as keynote speaker?¹

To answer this question, we must first review the demands placed on a keynote speaker, and identify a method of analysis. Thompson (1979) indicates that keynoting poses several "peculiar" rhetorical problems.² He explains that "emotional partisans of a speaker's own party expect a vigorous attack on the opposition, neutrals and members of the other political party are likely to find strong attacks irritating and offensive" (p. 233). Smith (1975) supports Thompson's view that keynote speakers face multiple audiences. To cope with these diverse audiences, Smith indicates that keynote speeches may be "vague enough to permit conflicting conclusions to be drawn" and may provide "generalized solutions" that permit "auditors to add premises" (p. 37). The notion of multiple audience is particularly appropriate in analyzing

**National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 111-122.

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Gramm's keynote address. Not only was the President significantly behind in the polls, but the Republican party itself was showing signs of strain as various factions of the party emerged dissatisfied and splintered from the platform debates held only days before Gramm's speech. Consequently, Gramm faced the challenge of delivering a speech that could unite his party and criticize the opposition without losing potential votes for the President.

Clearly, the multiple perspectives of Gramm's audience posed a challenge. How, then, did Gramm seek to meet the divergent demands of his listeners? As Smith (1975) predicts, an initial review of Gramm's speech reveals that he relied predominantly upon vague and generalized claims. If one views Gramm's keynote speech from an organizational perspective, this use of general claims should not necessarily be considered inappropriate. Gramm was selected by an organization, the Republican Party, to promote identification between that organization and its membership. To do so, vague or general references can actually be more appropriate than more specific claims. Thus, the goal of this study is to evaluate Gramm's effectiveness in using ambiguous claims to meet the demands and overcome the constraints of his keynote speaking situation. Before proceeding with this evaluation, however, we must establish the method to be utilized.

Method

As mentioned above, ambiguous claims can, at times, be an effective means of promoting identification. Eisenberg (1984) offers what he labels "strategic ambiguity" as a means for achieving unity in such situations where divergent or, in Smith's (1975) terms, multiple audiences exist within an organization.³ Eisenberg claims that, "strategic ambiguity" is essential to organizing, in that it "promotes unified diversity" (p. 230). Strategic ambiguity, states Eisenberg, answers this question: "How can cohesion and coordination be promoted while at the same time maintaining sufficient individual freedom to ensure flexibility, creativity and adaptability to environmental change" (p. 230)? To effectively meet this challenge, organizational leaders can use strategic ambiguity to "manage" (p. 231) the divergent goals of an organization's membership. He suggests that speakers should address the core values that, in a general sense, bind a somewhat heterogeneous membership to an organization. Eisenberg suggests that speakers can take advantage of the fact that "the ambiguous statement of core values allows them [the organization's membership] to maintain individual interpretations while at the same time believing that they are in agreement" (p. 231). In contrast, Eisenberg argues that "When organizational goals are stated concretely, they are often strikingly ineffective" (p. 231). He insists that

it is "a political necessity to engage in strategic ambiguity so that different constituent groups may apply different interpretations to the symbol" (p. 231). Eisenberg explains that such strategic ambiguity serves a variety of functions in organizations, three of which are pertinent to this study. They include facilitating change, amplifying existing source attributions, and preserving privileged positions. In the following segment of this analysis, each of these functions will be explained and applied to Gramm's keynote address.

Facilitating Change

Promises of change were vital from the outset of the 1992 presidential campaign. Economic woes left the voting public demanding that something be done to reduce the jobless rate, expand opportunities for health care, and, at the same time, reduce the budget deficit (Cloud, 1992). For Gramm to detail the specific changes necessary for such improvement would have been inappropriate. Only the President could or should offer any detail of this nature. Still, if Gramm hoped to capture the attention of potential voters and generate unity among party delegates, he could not ignore this outcry for change. Eisenberg (1984) suggests that organizations must change when "their members change their metaphors for thinking about them" (p. 232). He emphasizes the importance of such metaphors when he states, "The organizing strength of any central metaphor lies in the way it promotes unified diversity; individuals believe they agree on what it [the central metaphor] means . . . yet their actual interpretations may remain quite different" (p. 233). Eisenberg indicates that it is not unusual, and, in fact, effective for organizations to express their goals "ambiguously to allow organizations the freedom to alter operations which have become maladaptive over time" (p. 233). Thus, for Gramm to satisfy this desire for change, Eisenberg suggests that he needed only to address central metaphors that *suggested* or created a mood of confidence that his party and the President were, in some general sense, willing to change for the benefit of American citizens.

In his speech, Gramm made direct reference to the general desire for change when he said "Democrats and Republicans agree on one thing: We both want change. The debate is not about who is for change; it's about the direction of change" (p. 6). In depicting the type of change central to the Republican philosophy, Gramm offered a sharp distinction between his party and the Democrats. He said:

Today America stands at the crossroads. It is a time for choosing—their way of more taxes or our way of more jobs, their way of more government or our way of more opportunity. The change Republicans want today is to stop the growth of government, to bring spending under control, to balance the budget and to cut taxes again. The

change Democrats want is to go back to the tax and spend policies they gave us in the 1970's, the last time there was a Democrat in the White House, (p. 6)⁴

This delineation of change offered nothing particularly new. Controlling spending, balancing the budget, and cutting taxes cannot, even in the most general sense, be considered novel approaches by the Republican party. The only change that is remotely suggested in these claims is that the Republican party is prepared to embrace such strategies with a consistency and fervor that will assure voters the "tax and spend" approach of the Democratic party will not dominate the federal government.

As evidence of such change, Gramm provided an emotional portrayal of his personal philosophy regarding federal funding. Gramm insisted that balancing the federal budget was, as he put it, "really simple. We just have to set the right standard in spending the tax payers' money, and I know that standard." The standard Gramm offered his audience was based on an emotional and vivid example of a hard working printer from his home state. Referring to the printer by name, Gramm argued that Congress needed to do as he had done—apply the "Dicky Flatt test." Gramm said:

I looked at every program in the federal government and then I thought about Dicky Flatt. And I asked one simple question, will the benefits to be derived by spending money on this program be worth taking money away from Dicky Flatt to pay for it? Let me tell you something, there are not a hell of a lot of programs that will stand up to that test. The Dicky Flatt test is the Republican test and when Congress starts using that test, we're going to lick the deficit problem once and for all. Bill Clinton does not know Dicky Flatt. (p. 9)

The themes of less government spending and lower taxes expressed by Gramm offered no clear change for the delegates and viewing audience. These themes are at the core of the Republican party. The only change that was inferred by the Gramm involved a renewed commitment by the President and the Republican party to promoting these ideals.

In referring to change, Gramm did mention the President's support for such specific measures as a spending freeze, the line item veto, a balanced budget amendment to the constitution, and health insurance and medicare reform. However, these items were mentioned by name only. Gramm offered no clear indications of what should be done differently in these areas. He simply indicated that the President was attempting to resolve problems with these issues, but that he had thus far been stifled by Congress.

Amplifying Existing Source Attributions

A second purpose of Gramm's keynote address was to praise George Bush for his accomplishments during his first term as president. Eisenberg (1984) states that strategic ambiguity can be a highly effective means of amplifying existing source attributions. In short, credible individuals can maintain or enhance their credibility through strategically ambiguous messages. Eisenberg (1984) states that "the average person would be more strikingly influenced by his own views than he would be when interpreting a non-ambiguous statement" and that such ambiguity can thus "enhance attributions of credibility." He goes on to explain that "For those who are highly credible, clarity is always risky, since it provides the receiver with new information which can result in a potentially negative reevaluation of character" (p. 235). Gramm chose to emphasize Bush's credibility through general references to his performance in international affairs.

Gramm attempted to amplify Bush's credibility by crediting him with bringing an end to the cold war. In an effort to avoid any upstaging of Ronald Reagan, however, Gramm was sensitive to include the efforts of the previous administration. Gramm said "Ronald Reagan sighted the Kremlin in the cross hairs but it was George Bush who pulled the trigger" (p. 2). After this brief mention of shared credit, Gramm launched into a commendation of Bush that portrayed his international leadership as a comfort around the world. Gramm said:

The Constitution gives the president broad, unilateral powers in defense and foreign policy. And in watching George Bush exercise those powers, the world has stood back in wonder. In any hut, in any village on the planet, one world leader is honored and loved above all others. Spoken in a thousand dialects his name is George Bush, (pp. 3-4)

Having established Bush as an international leader, Gramm extended his claim to the future. He condemned Jimmy Carter for weakening defense and offered Bush as an essential means for assuring that the new found sense of security would continue. Gramm said of Carter:

We have not forgotten that the last Democrat in the White House so decimated defense that on any given day, 50 percent of our combat planes couldn't fly and our ships couldn't sail, for lack of spare parts and mechanics. So bad was pay for the military that many enlisted personnel and their families qualified for food stamps, (p. 3)

Gramm concluded his attack on Carter's record with a general claim that Democrats, meaning Clinton, were simply unable to manage defense. He said "We must never allow Democrats to disarm America again" (p. 3).

What is absent from this segment of Gramm's speech, however, is any reference to what Bush would do in the future. Clearly, Bush had experienced a number of international successes during his first term as president. Gramm effectively reviewed these successes to enhance Bush's credibility. Gramm intimated that Bush was successful in his foreign policy in the past and he would continue that success and stability into his next term. The form that stability and success would take was not clear. Gramm only warned that Democrats had proven to be less successful in coping with foreign threats in the past. He closed this segment of his speech with a reference to a future threat from an unspecified enemy. He said:

There are tyrants in the world and there will be new tyrants in the future. And when reason and diplomacy fail, we must have an Army and a Navy and an Air Force, and a Marine corps that do not fail.

Even in a world where the lion and the lamb are about to lie down together, we Republicans are committed to the principle that the United States of America must always be the Lion. (p. 3)

Bush's success with the war against Iraq and the fact that he had been president during the fall of Communist domination in Eastern Europe made Gramm's decision to amplify Bush's record as a world leader obvious. Gramm's loose reference to international enemies, who were yet to be identified, was an emotional appeal to voters. Gramm was, in fact, endorsing Bush as a safe and reliable leader ready to defend his country against the myriad potential villains in the world.

Preserving Privileged Positions

Having credited Bush with developments abroad, Gramm chose to charge Congress with the responsibility for the nation's problems concerning crime and the economy. In doing so, Gramm did mention some of Bush's policies, but he offered no details. Instead, he portrayed the President as a man with answers that had not been tried. Eisenberg (1984) indicates that in references to "task-related" subjects such as policies, strategic ambiguity "can preserve future options" (p. 235). He argues that ambiguous messages in these situations give the speaker an "assertorial lightness" that can allow "specific interpretations of policies which might do more harm than good to be denied, should they arise" (p. 235). For Gramm, the assertorial lightness took the form of general references to tax and crime policies, proposed by Bush, that Congress had rejected. In reference to crime, Gramm said:

To fight back against drug thugs who prey on the health, happiness and lives of our children, 1,161 days ago today, the President sent to Congress the nation's toughest anti-crime, anti-drug bill. It restored the federal death penalty. Under our bill, no matter who your daddy is or how society has done you wrong, if you sell drugs to a child you are

going to jail and you are going to serve every day of 10 years in the federal penitentiary. And when you finally get out of prison, if you do it again you're going back to prison and this time you'r going back for life.

Had Congress said yes, we would have grabbed drug thugs by the throat, But the Democrats said no. (p.5)

Gramm followed the same line of attack when he referred to what was perhaps the President's most sensitive area, the economy. He said:

America's problem today is not that the President's plan to energize the economy has failed. Our problem is that it has not been tried. It is not that the President did not ask for change but that the Democrats who run Congress killed those changes. The President asked for the tools to put our people back to work. The President asked for weapons to win back our streets. And the Democrats bent them and broke them and threw them away.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill: Give us the tools and we will finish the job. Give us a Republican Congress and we will put our people back to work and we will put criminals in j ail where they belong, (p. 6)

Arguments of this nature served two important purposes. First, they countered any impression that Bush lacked a vision for what ought to be done to stabilize the economy and to counter the alarm created by continued drug traffic and the recent Los Angeles riots. Second, Gramm offered only general reference to the policies proposed and supported by the President. In fact, he referred only to punishing those who sell drugs to children and to putting America back to work—two ideas that are, in an ambiguous sense, appealing to all honest Americans. By mentioning such policies in passing, Gramm avoided the possibility of locking the President into any specific line of attack. In Eisenberg's (1984) terms, Gramm assured the President of the opportunity to deny or drop any "specific interpretations of policies" (p. 235) associated with the economy or crime that might begin to reflect negatively on his campaign.

Conclusions

This review of Gramm's speech has highlighted a host of examples where ambiguity was used strategically. As Smith (1975) suggests, a keynote speaker who attempts to satisfy multiple or divided audiences typically makes use of such general or vague claims. Thus, the fact that Gramm was ambiguous in his speech is neither surprising nor unusual. The more substantial question concerns Gramm's ability to use this strategic ambiguity to overcome the constraints he faced.

Without doubt, moving Gramm's keynote speech to the second day of the convention diminished its impact. Reagan's speech the previous

evening had created a tremendous excitement in the convention hall. The media reports of the convention were dominated by stories of how delegates had reacted to the performance of the former president. Reagan, not Gramm, benefitted from the excitement that is typical of opening night at the convention. Stories appearing in major national newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* grouped discussion of Gramm's speech into the same stories that described appearances and speeches by Barbara Bush, Housing Secretary, Jack Kemp, and California Attorney General, Dan Lungren (Rosenthal, 1992; Dionne, 1992). Losing the prized opening night spot left Gramm with a keynote speech that was simply part of an active second day of the convention. In terms of media attention, then, Gramm did not overcome the constraint of speaking behind Reagan. Had Gramm delivered a controversial or unusual speech, he may have garnered more focus from the media. Instead, his predominantly predictable and ambiguous speech did little to grasp media attention in its second day position.

Gramm's second constraint, established at the outset of this criticism, concerned his responsibility as keynote speaker to commend an unpopular president for his exceptional service. Gramm met this obligation with eloquence and wit. He extolled Bush's record on international affairs while reminding his audience of Carter's debilitating cuts in America's military might. Gramm's vague warning that future threats to world and American security were inevitable left audience members to decide whether they were comfortable replacing a tested leader with a representative from the party that, when last in office, attempted to "disarm America." In addition to this polarizing argument, Gramm generated a host of examples depicting Bush as a leader with vision whose only true flaw was that his attempts to rekindle the American economy and fight crime had been blocked by a Democratic Congress. With this approach, Gramm was able to highlight Bush's greatest strength, divert some blame for a troubled economy from the President, and diminish the credibility of Bill Clinton and the Democratic party. Gramm accomplished all three tasks with the ambiguous claims that Clinton would be another Carter, and that the economy would have never have dipped so low if Congress would have accepted Bush's mandate.

A third constraint Gramm faced concerned the divisive nature of the Republican party in the Fall of 1992. Gramm recognized the mood for change among both his party's delegates and the American people. Gramm's references to such change were, however, the most abstract and imprecise of his speech. He spoke at length about a surge of opportunity that would result from continued Republican leadership, yet no

explanations for how such opportunity would develop were offered in Gramm's speech. Gramm's decision to emphasize the central metaphor of opportunity cannot be criticized. This metaphor clearly represents the entrepreneurial and enterprising philosophy of his party. The problem with this segment of his speech, however, rests in the fact that no essence of change was introduced. Instead of communicating a vision for Republican change, Gramm reintroduced a list of interparty conflicts dating back to the Reagan era. Consequently, his speech did little to either inspire confidence that change would occur or to foster party unity in an effort to improve the status quo.

Finally, Gramm's selection as keynote speaker presented him with the opportunity to gain national exposure that could bolster his potential as a presidential candidate in 1996. Although the media coverage of Gramm's speech was somewhat diminished, he succeeded in using the keynote invitation to tell *his* story. He opened his speech with a reference to the much publicized Gramm-Rudman bill and, at several points throughout the speech, Gramm made clear his belief that a tax cut was essential. In his reference to opportunity as the driving force of the Republican party, Gramm took time to tell his personal story of rising from failure in grade school to earning a Ph.D. in Economics. Similarly, his personal story outlining the Dicky Flatt standard to government programs brought cheers from the delegates. If Gramm did not succeed in unifying his party and capturing the attention of swing voters, he did, at least, tell his story to the American people.

Was Gramm's keynote speech a success? In a limited sense, yes. His use of strategic ambiguity satisfied the general keynote demand to bolster one's candidate while deploring the opposition. This ambiguous approach failed, however, to offer his audience a comforting explanation of change. With more than half of American voters believing that things had gotten worse with crime, health care, and the economy because of Bush's policies over the last four years, a message of change was in order (Klein & McDaniel, 1992). Gramm's ambiguous references to opportunity failed to communicate any essence of change in what Eisenberg (1984) describes as core metaphors. Finally, will this exposure enhance Gramm's position as a presidential candidate? Perhaps. That answer will come in the next presidential campaign. However, one thing is for certain—the American people now know Phil Gramm's story.

Endnotes

¹By emphasizing the constraints of Gramm's speaking situation, the selection of method and structure of the analysis can be based on the content and context of the speech. In short, this approach helps to clarify the reasoning behind the selection of a method and the way it is applied to the speech.

²The references in this essay are cited in a standard APA style. If this criticism were to be presented orally, all citations of theoretical sources should include, at minimum, the first and last name of the author, the title of the article, the year of publication, and the name of the journal. Citations of supporting material should include, at minimum, the name of the resource, as well as the month and year of its publication.

³Eisenberg's article takes a rhetorical approach to the study of ambiguity in organizations. Gramm's keynote speech represents a rhetorical effort to stimulate enthusiasm and unity within the Republican Party—a major organization. Hence, a method focused on organizational rhetoric provides a reasonable approach for this criticism. Students will find that the interpretive approach to both internal and external organizational communication provides a host of methods that can be applied in contest criticisms. Those wishing to investigate potential methods from the interpretive approach to studying organizations should refer to the Appendix.

⁴I included what may appear to be rather long quotations from the speech. I have done so for two reasons. First, Gramm's style emphasizes examples. To give the reader or listener a feel for this style, longer passages are essential. Second, any communication analysis *must* provide adequate support for the claims that are made. In this case, the support must come from excerpts of the speech itself. For this reason, young critics are in a better position if they err on the side of inclusion when providing supportive examples from the text they are analyzing.

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**Appendix: Potential Resources for Analyzing Organizational
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The Stories in George Bush's Acceptance Speech

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There is a body of communication research which explores turning points in relationship development—those moments when communication partners perceive that their relationship is changing dramatically in either tone or intensity. The relationship between a political candidate and the public is also built upon a series of turning points—communication events within a campaign which have the power to alter the tone and intensity of the campaign.¹ A candidate's speech accepting the party's nomination can be such a moment. When George Herbert Walker Bush addressed the Republican Convention in Houston on August 20, 1992, Republicans hoped the speech would function as a turning point in the ritualistic campaign drama. Bush's refusal to begin his campaign before the convention heightened anticipation for the speech. The *Washington Post* reported Housing Secretary Jack Kemp's judgment that the speech "must set the tone and tenor for the fall campaign."² *USA Today* claimed that Bush needed in the speech to "recapture his aura as a leader."³ The (London) *Times* wrote that the speech needed to galvanize divided and dispirited Republican troops, and the *Wall Street Journal* predicted that it would be "the most closely listened to acceptance speech in our lifetime."⁴ Even Bush, who trailed Clinton by as much as twenty percentage points in the polls, acknowledged that the speech was the beginning of the fight of his life.⁵ Therefore, while some might argue that an acceptance speech is only a ritualistic relic, the speech Bush was to give in Houston had the potential to be powerful.⁶

Using W. Lance Bennett's 1978 article in *Quarterly Journal of Speech* entitled "Storytelling in Criminal Trials: A Model of Social Judgment" as a critical tool, I will argue that the failure of the acceptance speech to realize its potential was due to its failure to tell the necessary story—a convincing, consistent story about the Bush presidency.⁷ I will first justify my choice of critical tool and explain its assumptions, and then analyze the story told by Bush as he accepted the Republican nomination for the presidency.⁸

Some anticipated that George Bush simply faced a task of image bolstering. In the weeks prior to the convention, polls found Bush trailing his opponent by as much as twenty percentage points. Reports of his amazement at discovering price scanners in grocery stores had height-

**National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 123-134.

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ened an image of a president out of touch with the general public. Campaign success would require creation of a more positive image. Other observers anticipated that Bush's speech would fit within the genre of apologia. After all, the president who had vowed never to allow a tax increase had broken that pledge; the president who had pledged to move the nation forward presided over a nation which had slipped into a recession he had refused to acknowledge. An apology seemed in order.⁹ However, the unique challenge Bush faced was to unify image bolstering with apology to create a consistent, plausible story which explained how the events of the recent past could have occurred under the eyes of a man who was now capable of leading the nation into a more positive future. In essence, Bush was "on trial" for "crimes" against the public; the story he told about himself would constitute his defense.¹⁰ In a court of law, a prosecutor will tell jurors a story which places the defendant at the scene of the crime with both motive and means to commit the crime; the defense lawyer will tell a competing story, altering perhaps the actors or the central action. Bennett explains that in a trial, "... storytelling is the everyday communicational practice that is used to organize information, to transmit understandings among participants, and to guide judgments of jurors."¹¹ Viewing Bush's speech as a story allows us to analyze the quality of his defense.

Analysis of the story told in a trial involves, first, identification of the central action—what happened at the scene of the crime in the view of the storyteller. The central action can then be analyzed, according to Bennett, by using Burke's pentad of social action elements—scene, act, agent, agency, and purpose—as structural elements in the story. Bennett notes that listeners (jurors) have stored in their memories typical relationships among these elements, allowing them to reconstruct the story presented by a speaker (lawyer) quickly and in a way which allows them to compare the stories told within the trial. By focusing on the structural elements of the stories, listeners can judge them for completeness, consistency, and ambiguity in an effort to determine accuracy and plausibility of the explanation.¹² Stylistic elements in the story may be incorporated to encourage stereotyping of the individuals involved in the central action, affecting judgments about the accuracy and plausibility of the action. As Bennett writes, "In other words, we judge stories according to a dual standard of 'Did it happen that way?' and 'Could it have happened that way?'"¹³ Bennett notes that these judgments are not based on empirical elements but rather on the way the story fits together. How, then, did George Bush tell his story?¹⁴

Our analysis must begin by identifying the central action of the story. In a court of law, a single central action would be developed, with questions of relevance from the opposing lawyer constraining one's

freedom to deviate. Greater freedom was available in the political court on which Bush presented his case.¹⁵ His speech included two stories: the foreign policy chapter and the domestic chapter. We could also subdivide the domestic chapter into "past" and "future," keeping in mind that the depiction of Bush as an agent in both segments would need to have elements of consistency.¹⁶

Bush began his speech with the telling of his foreign policy story. Given the primary concern of the public with domestic, rather than foreign, policy, his choice might be criticized. However, for a man who viewed his victories in the foreign arena as most significant and as his best chance of regenerating support for his candidacy, the choice is certainly understandable.¹⁷ The way the story was told, however, causes some difficulty. Bush began this section of his speech by listing nine places around the world which counted as foreign policy successes: "Germany has united ... Arabs and Israelis now sit face-to-face and talk peace. And every hostage held in Lebanon is free. . . the conflict in El Salvador is over, and free elections brought democracy to Nicaragua. Black and white South Africans cheered each other at the Olympics. The Soviet Union can only be found in history books. The captive nations of Eastern Europe and the Baltics are captive no more. . . and today, on the rural streets of Poland, merchants sell cans of air labeled 'the last breath of Communism.'"¹⁸ Those are the acts described by Bush. Bush also identified the agent of change—himself: "I saw the chance to rid our children's dreams of the nuclear nightmare, and I did. . . I saw a chance to help, and I did. No apologies for that."¹⁹ Bush was careful to reject the notion that the acts were inevitable, yet at this point in the speech, he identified no agency by which he had brought the acts to completion. Earlier, however, he had described such a vehicle: the military strength of the United States—a "strong fighting force," in contrast with "a hollow army"; "peace through strength," in contrast with a nuclear freeze; "standing up for freedom," in contrast with "negotiation, deliberation, and procrastination."²⁰ The question for a listener becomes, "Did it happen that way? Is it plausible?" A show of strength may have played a role in South America, but negotiation and deliberation are more likely to have led to talks in the Middle East. While military strength has been known to deter war and to unite factions against a common enemy, the storehouse of public knowledge links the flaws of the communist economic system and the political strength of our nation, more than its military strength, with the re-unification of Germany, the demise of the Soviet Union, and the freeing of Eastern Europe. It links economic pressure, not our military strength, with the changes in South Africa. Since Bush identified no other agency than military strength through which these acts of international politi-

cal transformation had been accomplished, the credit he gave himself is questionable.²¹ Moreover, Bush hinted at forthcoming change in the international arena, saying "I look forward to being the first President to visit a free, democratic Cuba."²² Again, however, he identified no action he would take—other than visiting . . . *after* the change—an approach unlikely to create an image of him as a leader with the means to accomplish change. But at least in this case, Bush expressed a sense of vision of what might be. Earlier in the speech, just after describing the changes which have occurred on the international landscape, he had added, "If I had stood before you four years ago and described this world we would help to build, you would have said, 'George Bush, you must be smoking something, and you must have inhaled.'"²³ Obviously, Bush used this statement to take a pot-shot at his opponent—but at the expense of creating a positive story about his own leadership. The listeners who might wonder about the agency through which Bush himself changed the world now have an added doubt about Bush's role, since the President had not actually envisioned the changes which occurred. A public fitting together the pieces of the foreign policy story Bush told would be likely to judge the story as unconvincing and implausible.²⁴

The beginning of Bush's domestic chapter dealt with the development of the "economic challenge" facing the nation. Bush was clear about naming the villain: the Gridlock Democratic Congress. Congress had forced spending on wasteful, pork-barrel projects, had refused to approve a balanced budget amendment, and—most significantly, in the story Bush told—had forced the President to raise taxes. It was in telling this part of the story that Bush provided the apology which many anticipated. Specifically, he said, "Two years ago, I made a bad call on the Democrats' tax increase. I underestimated Congress's addiction to taxes. With my back against the wall, I agreed to a hard bargain: One tax increase one time, in return for the toughest spending limits ever. Well, it was a mistake to go along with the Democratic tax increase, and I admit it."²⁵ While on the face of it, Bush declared himself responsible for the tax increase, it is other actors—who force his back against the wall—who emerge as the predominant structural element. Unfortunately, that explanation raises more problems than it solves. First, Bush could be excused for being overpowered by a force he had not anticipated. He might have pointed to the scene as controlling, noting the unanticipated impact of the international recession. But four years before, in accepting his first nomination to the presidency, Bush had predicted that he would face Congressional pressure; but he had promised a different response to it. In 1988, he said, "I'm the one who won't raise taxes. . . My opponent won't rule out raising taxes. But I will. The

Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push, and I'll say no, and they'll push again. And all I can say to them is no new taxes, period."²⁶ Four years later, Bush had to report that he had broken that pledge. He might have said that he realized economic circumstances made it a pledge he would have to break. But that is not how Bush constructed his version of reality.

When Bush described himself as overwhelmed by a force he himself had predicted, he raised new questions about his ability to overcome that pressure in the future. He boxed himself into a rather small corner for the story to be told about the future. In fact, his only suggestion of how he would overcome the obstacle posed by Congress in the future was that "one hundred-fifty new members [of Congress]—from both parties—will be coming to Washington this fall."²⁷ What guarantee was there that he could provide leadership for the new Congress? He proposed to meet with them and lay out his case for change—before the new members were controlled by PACs, their congressional staffs, and the media. This image of a race to get to the new members before they could be devoured by other sources provided an indictment of the political system so massive that only the strongest of leadership could possibly overcome it. Yet "meeting" and "laying out a case" was all Bush said he would do. No stronger, more active version of his proposed leadership style emerged in the speech. And earlier, Bush had described what caused his conflict with Congress during the first four years of his presidency in this way, "I extended my hand to the Democratic leaders—and they bit it."²⁸ Most listeners would expect more from a leader than simply an extended hand.

With a clear description of leadership style absent, Bush relied on the listener to assume that all new members of Congress—whatever their party affiliation—would come to see things his way, whatever the issue. The question, "Is it plausible—could the story end this way?" does not draw an affirmative answer from the audience. Instead, it raises questions about both segments of the economic story—the past and the future. Reporters for the *Wall Street Journal* wrote that Bush's "claims to have been frustrated by the 'gridlocked Congress'... come in light of his passive approach to domestic policy."²⁹ A (London) *Times* editorial concluded that "unless he can show how he will bend a new Congress to his will, the voter's logical reaction is to vote for a president from the same party as Congress."³⁰ And an editorial in Florida's *St. Petersburg Times* charged that "Thursday night's speech began to get away from Bush when he attempted to argue that the same president who faced down Saddam Hussein could be utterly flummoxed by the Democratic leaders of Congress."³¹

It is the inconsistency of the stories Bush told about himself that raised doubts in the minds of the listeners. What emerged from the stories, instead of a forgiven president, was the image of a passive president. Stylistic features throughout the speech reinforced that image. In an effort to contrast his military service from Clinton's draft avoidance, Bush drew images of his service during the war. Near the end of the speech, Bush described himself on watch early in the morning on an American submarine:

I would stand there and look out on the blackness of the sky... And I would think about friends I lost, a country I loved and about a girl named Barbara. . . . You know, you can see things from up there that other people don't see... The first hint of the sun over the horizon. . . from where I stand, I see not America's sunset, but a sunrise. . . . America is the land where the sun is always peeking over the horizon.³²

The image is a pleasant one, a peaceful one, and a hopeful one. But it is nothing if not passive. The image of George Bush on watch, waiting for a sunrise, but not altering the nature of the day, was insufficient to confirm his claims that a second try with a gridlock Congress could work. In describing the role of stories in a court trial, W. Lance Bennett wrote that

The importance of stories in this context is that they are capsule versions of reality. They literally pick up an incident and set it down in another social context. In the process of this transition, the data can be selected, the historical frame can be specified, the situational factors can be redefined, and "missing observations" can be inferred. In short, a situation can be represented in a form consistent with an actor's perspective and interests both during and after the incident.³³

In accepting the nomination for the presidency, George Bush had a chance to re-create his presidency in a way that bolstered his image and excused errors of the past. He could have done so through telling the story of his foreign and domestic policy from his perspective. But it is important that the story be consistent if it is to be judged plausible. In the stories George Bush told when accepting the nomination for the presidency from the Republican Party in Houston, only one consistent element emerged: an image of a leadership style which was passive. The other stories—of his reconstruction of the international political scene, his role in the current economic problems, and his regaining control of Congress—could not all be accurate and plausible. For inconsistencies among the stories existed. Faced with a chance to use the speech as a turning point in the campaign, Bush failed. And now, the verdict of the American public is in, and his stories will become history.³⁴

Notes

¹I made a choice here to introduce this speech indirectly. If time were of the essence, as it often is in rhetorical criticism, I might have to eliminate (or at least condense) the reference to turning points. I used it in this example because I felt it could serve to suggest the significance of the Bush speech. Also, if we view this issue of the journal as a round, then my sample speech is in a round with several other speeches analyzing political communication. A speech with an introduction which doesn't start out talking about the campaign might be appreciated as a fresh approach. Also, my analysis of judges for forensic tournaments reveals that they are people with a background in communication, aware of research in other areas of communication, but spending their weekends hearing speeches. They may enjoy a reference which taps their broader knowledge about the communication field.

²Kemp was quoted by Ann Devroy, "Bush Promises an Across-the-Board Tax Cut," *Washington Post*, August 21, 1992, p. A29.

³Judy Keen, "'Everything' is at stake in Houston," *USA Today*, August 14, 1992, p. 2A.

⁴Both statements are found in Martin Fletcher, "Divided and dispirited party awaits salvation," *The Times* (London), August 21, 1992, p. 8.

⁵Judy Keen, "Bush faces '92 moment of truth," *USA Today*, August 20, 1992, p. 2A.

⁶This paragraph functions as a justification of the choice of artifact. The artifact chosen should have some significance. It might have been a message with great impact, or a representative message from a significant campaign or movement. In this case, since I will argue that the speech failed to accomplish what was necessary, my justification relates to the potential for the speech to be significant. I have also included reference to date and place, putting the speech in context. I had access to two texts of the speech: eventually, I was able to find one in *Facts on File*, printed sometime after the convention; I also obtained one printed in the *New York Times* the day after the speech was given. (My university library had an edition of the paper without the speech, since the speech was delivered after the deadline for printing the paper for distribution around the country and the Bush campaign hadn't provided reporters with an early release of the text. Luckily, I have a friend in New York who saves newspapers and was able to send me a copy when I became frustrated with my search for a speech text.) If my analysis had focused more closely on the style of the speech, it would be important for me to mention which text I was using, since variations between texts occur. In this case, the two texts are virtually identical, except that the *Facts on File* version omits some of the nonfluencies in Bush's delivery which the *New York Times* text reproduces.

⁷Contest rhetorical criticism typically involves the selection of a single critical tool to guide the analysis of the rhetorical artifact. This paragraph identifies the tool and provides the listener with an oral footnote. The complete citation is W. Lance Bennett, "Storytelling in Criminal Trials: A Model of Social Judgment," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 64 (February 1978), pp. 1-22. In addition to identifying the critical tool, this paragraph also states the thesis of the speech. The thesis is stated as an argument because a good rhetorical criticism presents an argument; that is, it makes a claim which is developed through the use of

evidence and reasoning. In this case, the argument will develop by identifying the qualities Bennett says characterize good stories and contrasting those with judgments about the stories Bush told in his convention address.

⁸I have provided a preview of the speech so that listeners are prepared to identify the major segments of the speech. My natural inclination in other cases has been to view the description of the critical tool as part of the introduction, which would delay the preview until after the critical approach has been described. However, I have learned from coaching rhetorical criticism that the judges who time various sections of the speech become frustrated by a preview delayed such a long time. Particularly in this case, it makes sense to move the preview earlier, since in addition to describing the tool, I need to justify using a tool which appears to pertain to legal communication for an analysis of political communication; therefore, the justification and description of the critical tool do function as part of the body of this speech.

⁹In this section I have identified other critical approaches which might have been used to analyze the speech. I did so for two reasons: first, because I assumed that a listener might have a preconception of how the speech should be criticized. If I had not acknowledged the legitimacy of other approaches and then indicated the grounds for my choice, then I might have had an audience member who would be focusing on the preconceptions rather than paying attention to my speech. However, with the greater time constraints I would have if this were delivered in competition, I would probably have to condense this section. The second reason I included this section in this sample speech was that it reflects the time I spent stewing over which critical approach to take in analyzing the speech. Before the speech was given, I began to think about what approach I might take. There are dangers in that approach for a competitor, because a critic may end up selecting a critical tool which does not have a good "fit" with the speech actually given. The criticism which results from such a choice would be forced; it might ignore the most important elements in a speech and focus only on those which the tool says should be there. Cognizant of the potential for difficulties, I still began to consider the options, reading or rereading a number of journal articles and chapters of books in the process. I knew that the speech would fit within the realm of campaign rhetoric, specifically as an example of an acceptance of the nomination. Sources on political rhetoric and acceptance speeches occurred to me. [I read David B. Valley, "Significant Characteristics of Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speeches," *Central States Speech Journal*, 25 (Spring 1974) 56-62; Kurt W. Ritter, "American Political Rhetoric and the Jeremiad Tradition: Presidential Nomination Acceptance Addresses, 1960-1976," *Central States Speech Journal*, 31 (Fall 1990), 153-171; Thomas D. Clark, "An Exploration of Generic Aspects of Contemporary American Campaign Orations," *Central States Speech Journal*, 30 (Summer 1979), 122-133; and Henry Z. Scheele, "Ronald Reagan's 1980 Acceptance Address: A Focus on American Values," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 48 (Winter 1984), 51-61. I skimmed through Theodore Windt and Beth Ingold, eds. *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric* (rev. printing, Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1984) and Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs, *Mediated Political Realities* (NY: Longman, 1983).] I knew that Bush's image was suffering and would need rebuilding, so I considered looking at possibilities which would explain that process. [For instance,

Robert O. Anderson, "The Characterization Model for Rhetorical Criticism of Political Image Campaigns," *Western Speech*, 37 (Spring 1973), 75-86 was a possibility; I also read Barry Brummett, "Burkean Scapegoating, Mortification, and Transcendence in Presidential Campaign Rhetoric," *Central States Speech Journal*, 32 (Winter 1981), 254-264; and Martin J. Medhurst, "Postponing the Social Agenda: Reagan's Strategy and Tactics," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 48 (Summer 1984), 262-276.] It occurred to me that Bush might need to create an "apology" to the public. (I dismissed that approach when I saw a newspaper article headline some time before the convention asserting that Bush would need to apologize to the public in his acceptance speech; the idea seemed too obvious at that point, although the fit would have been a good one, obviously.) [Nonetheless, I explored some of the apologia possibilities; a good listing of those (and other genre approaches) is found in Walter R. Fisher, "Genre: Concepts and Applications in Rhetorical Criticism," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 44 (Fall 1980), 288-299. An additional possibility is Judith D. Hoover, "Big Boys Don't Cry: The Values Constraint in Apologia," *Southern Communication Journal*, 54 (Spring 1989), 235-252. If I had not abandoned this approach, I probably would have used as a tool the "summarized model" for defensive communication found in W. L. Benoit, P. Gullifor, and D. A. Panici, "President Reagan's Defensive Discourse on the Iran-Contra Affair," *Communication Studies*, 42 (Fall 1991), 272-294.] Since I knew that the elements of the situation would call forth and constrain the rhetorical response, I considered analyzing the rhetorical situation. [The sources I reread were Lloyd E. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 1 (Winter 1968), 1-14; and Lloyd F. Bitzer, "Intentionality in the Rhetorical Process," in *Rhetoric in Transition*, ed. by Eugene E. White (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980).] I knew that it would be logical to compare this speech with either Bush's 1988 speech or Clinton's acceptance speech, so I considered doing an analog criticism. Ultimately, I chose looking at the speech as an example of storytelling, not only for the reasons expressed in the sample speech, but also because I thought the approach would be less expected (thus creating a more positive response from a judge) and because the method seemed to me to allow some freedom in my analysis. It does not force a critic into a "cookie cutter" approach. With the freedom to identify the central action and judge its completeness, consistency, and plausibility, however, come greater responsibilities for the critic. It could well be that a beginning competitor in rhetorical criticism might prefer a more structured model for criticism; when a critic feels more comfortable making evaluative judgments about the speech (rather than simply describing it), a tool which allows the critic greater freedom might be preferred.

¹⁰In many cases, justifying the critical tool can be done with a line or two. In this case, since Bennett describes the role of stories in criminal trials, I needed to develop the analogy to suggest the relevance of this approach.

¹¹Bennett, p. 1. This quotation helps to set forth the general concept of the critical approach. I believe that students should blend explanations in their own words with direct quotations from the author whose approach they are borrowing. The direct quotations help a listener who has never read the original text to be more certain the student's interpretation is correct; the paraphrased explana-

tions allow the listener to judge whether students are able to explain the ideas themselves.

¹²This section completes the explanation of the critical tool. It is possible for a speech to segment the explanation of the critical approach, introducing a part of it and then applying that part before going on to the next point. The decision should be made on the basis of which approach is clearer and more efficient

¹³Bennett, p. 21.

¹⁴This rhetorical question functions as a transition from the explanation of the tool to its application in the analysis of Bush's speech. Some listeners categorically reject rhetorical questions as transitional devices; I don't share their concern.

¹⁵Since my use of this tool requires acceptance of the analogy between Bush's situation and that of a criminal on trial, I felt it was necessary to honestly acknowledge points at which the analogy isn't a complete fit.

¹⁶This section serves to provide an internal preview for the rest of the speech. It uses language which will extend the story metaphor. It also identifies the standards of judgment which will be used in the evaluation of Bush's speech.

¹⁷I might have argued that Bush made a bad choice to begin by discussing foreign policy. I did not want to take the time necessary to make that strong an argument; instead, I felt it would be useful to acknowledge that this is an issue on which disagreement is legitimate. Acknowledging the legitimacy of either choice functions, once again, to refocus the attention of a listener who might have had preconceptions about the choice Bush made so that the listener doesn't spend time mentally arguing the point with me; I want the listener instead to attend to the rest of my speech.

¹⁸Text of the speech in *Facts on File*, p. 606. Just as it is important to use occasional quotations from the author whose critical approach a student is using, it is also important to quote directly from the rhetorical artifact. This allows listeners to be sure that the judgments of the student critic can be supported by the message being analyzed.

¹⁹Text of the speech in *Facts on File*, p. 606.

²⁰This is a paraphrase from the text of the speech, p. 606. To quote directly here would be cumbersome and lengthy.

²¹This section develops a claim about the judgments audience members would make about Bush's explanation. Notice that I have nothing aside from my own reasoning to support my claim. If I found that judges were unconvinced by my argument, I could extend the development both by closer references to Bennett's article which would explain how listeners rely on standard stories to judge the plausibility of a new story and by comments from those who heard the speech and judged his story implausible. That would take time that competitors in rhetorical criticism have in short supply, so I would test this explanation at a few tournaments to see whether expansion or alteration of it would be necessary.

²²Text of speech in *Facts on File*, p. 606.

²³Text of speech in *Facts on File*, p. 606.

²⁴It should be apparent that this criticism is developing an argument. There is some description of the speech, but an evaluation is made, too, which uses the standards Bennett identified for judging the speech. One of the most frequent

criticisms made of competitors in this event is that they merely describe the speech and fail to analyze it. Students need to be willing to accept the risk involved in making judgments about the speech; of course, the judgment becomes less risky if there is good evidence to support it.

²⁵Text of speech in *Facts on File*, p. 607.

²⁶George Bush, "Acceptance Speech," *Vital Speeches*, 55 (October 15, 1988), p. 4.

²⁷Text of speech in *Facts on File*, p. 607.

²⁸Text of speech in *Facts on File*, p. 607.

²⁹D. Shribman and J. Harwood, "As Campaign Nears Traditional Labor Day Start, A Bitter Struggle for Electorate Looms," *Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 1992, p. A10.

³⁰"Bush's Thin Ice," *Times* (London), August 21, 1992, p. 11.

³¹"St. Petersburg Times," *Editorials on File*, August 15-31, 1992, p. 1002. I recommend use of *Editorials on File* for gathering reactions to a current speech. Although it takes several weeks after an event for editorials about it to be published in this source, their compilation there saves a terrific amount of research time. It took me hours to search through the national and international newspapers my school library had for relevant articles; in much less time, I found many more relevant editorials from newspapers across the country in *Editorials on File*.

³²Text of speech in *Facts on File*, p. 607.

³³Bennett, p. 21

³⁴This conclusion attempts to summarize the argument of the speech, return to the turning point image presented in the introduction in order to create a sense of unity for the speech, and provide closure. I would probably want to experiment with this exit line; it may be that it is too corny to work for long, but at least it has a sound of being final.

The Rhetorical Functions of H. Ross Perot's Political Apologia

Roger C. Aden*

The caller from Jefferson City, Missouri was blunt: "This is the 'Show Me' state. Mr. Perot, I'm sorry, but I think you're all dough, and no show. You made a promise and you didn't keep your word" (Larry 13). This comment, made by a one-time H. Ross Perot supporter on the 17 July 1992, installment of *Larry King Live* on CNN, reflected the sentiment of many Americans. Tabbed as something of a front-runner by *Newsweek* of June 15,¹ only one month later Perot had announced his withdrawal from the presidential campaign. Then, only 10 weeks later, Perot pulled an October surprise by re-entering the campaign. Ultimately, Perot ended his campaign both richer and poorer: he gained a great deal of attention, but spent a great deal of money to receive 16% less of the popular vote than polls showed he could receive in early June.²

In July, though, Perot's abrupt withdrawal from the campaign caused both his supporters and detractors to question his character; after all, Bill Clinton had endured far closer scrutiny than Perot yet remained in the race. So great was the backlash against Perot that *Newsweek* of July 27 responded with a controversial cover featuring a picture of Perot under the headline, "The Quitter." As if to emphasize the point, *Newsweek* headlined its story on Perot's withdrawal, "The Quitter: Why Perot Bowed Out." Not surprisingly, *Newsweek's* portrayal of Perot was less than flattering, using words such as "hurt," "confused," "frightened," and "never comfortable" to describe Perot's feelings about continuing the campaign—hardly an image of the tough, no-nonsense leader Perot had presented throughout the early portion of his campaign. Similarly, John Mintz and David Von Drehle of the *Washington Post National Weekly Edition* stated simply: "Ross Perot quit because he could not stomach politics" (9). The unflattering portraits of Perot painted by the media generally reflected the sentiments of his one-time supporters. A Time/CNN poll completed after Perot's withdrawal showed that nearly two-thirds of his supporters (62%) felt Perot "had let them down" (Barrett 33).

Within this hurricane of disapproval H. Ross Perot returned to the place where it had all started, CNN's *Larry King Live* where, on July 17, he attempted to rehabilitate his character while explaining in more

**National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 135-146.

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detail his reasons for dropping out of the campaign for the presidency. While any number of Perot's rhetorical musings between his February pseudo-announcement of candidacy on *Larry King Live* and his election night swan song provide texts ripe for analysis, the importance of looking at this particular rhetorical artifact is three-fold. Initially, it represents Perot's first detailed response to an action which seemingly contradicted his months of prior activity. Second, Perot needed to pre-empt the forthcoming media shots described above. As Ellen Reid Gold explains in her November 1978 *Communication Monographs* article, "Political Apologia: The Ritual of Self-Defense," the media's insistence upon discussing candidate weaknesses increases the challenge of effectively responding to character charges. Third, hindsight has demonstrated that Perot fully intended to re-enter the presidential campaign, announcing the day after his withdrawal that he would allow his name to stay on the ballot ("Perot") and dropping hints of his return in September (Apple; "Bush"); thus, this rhetorical text can also be viewed as the first salvo of the renewed campaign, for without it, his character may have been irreparably damaged. And, as Gold points out, several presidential candidates have been derailed by ineffective responses to questions about their character.

Perspective. Since Perot's chief aim was to rehabilitate his image and character, an appropriate perspective for analysis is the genre of apologia, or a speech of self-defense. An apologia is demanded in "any rhetorical situation that calls into question the reputation, moral qualities, behaviors, motives, or character of an individual or an organization ... (Rybacki and Rybacki 165). Perot's appearance on *Larry King Live* quite clearly responds to the situational characteristics of an apologia. As Noreen Wales Kruse explains: "It should be specified that discourses can only be defined as apologiae if the rhetors' actions have led to public criticism of their characters or if the rhetors believe their behaviors have caused people to consider them immoral or unethical" (280). Probably the best known perspective on apologia is provided by B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel in their October 1973 *Quarterly Journal of Speech* article, "The Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia."³ However, many other scholars have also utilized the generic framework of apologia and I will refer frequently to their ideas in the remainder of this essay.

Ware and Linkugel identify two general types of strategies available to speakers engaged in rhetorical self-defense. Reformatory strategies, they write, "do not attempt to change the audience's meaning or affect for whatever is in question" (275). On the other hand, transformative strategies influence "the meaning which the audience attaches to the manipulated attribute" (280). In short, reformatory strategies do

not attempt to change the meaning of the action and/or statement that hurt the speaker's reputation while transformative strategies do make such an attempt.

Two types of each strategy are outlined by Ware and Linkugel. Reformative techniques include denial and bolstering. Denial may involved flat disavowal of the problem or denial of malicious intent. Bolstering, according to Ware and Linkugel (277) "is best thought of as being the obverse of denial" in that it attempts to reinforce the speaker's connection with something viewed positively by the audience. Transformative techniques include differentiation and transcendence. Differentiation involves separating the context of the problem and locating it in the more positive context. Transcendence techniques, on the other hand, place the problem in a larger, more abstract context. Differentiation and transcendence differ in that the former splits the context of the problem in two while the latter combines the context of the problem with another context.

Once the critic isolates the specific techniques employed by the speaker, Ware and Linkugel suggest that the next step is to ascertain what they call the rhetorical posture of the speaker. Postures, they write, are created through the heavy reliance upon one reformative and one transformative technique. I argue that Perot employs an explanatory posture, which combines the techniques of bolstering and differentiation. In this posture, note Ware and Linkugel, "the speaker assumes that if the audience understands his motives, actions, beliefs, or whatever, they will be unable to condemn him" (283). The suddenness of Perot's departure from the campaign and his brief statement at the news conference announcing his withdrawal left the national audience waiting for an explanation. In the following paragraphs, I analyze just how Perot tried to explain himself.

Bolstering. This strategy, as Ware and Linkugel explain, is designed to reinforce sentiments already held by the audience; it is reformative because "the speaker does not totally invent the identification" (277). Perot's rhetoric reflects a bolstering technique that reminds his audience of his initial reason for entering the race: the people's crusade to take back their government. By framing his withdrawal with the crusade, Perot simultaneously accomplishes three tasks. First, he shifts attention away from his actions and on to the future actions of his followers; in other words, the crusade, if not his campaign, will continue. Second, he presents his actions as part of the group's noble crusade rather than as an individual gesture of defeat. Third, he activates a powerful American myth that imbues the group's continued efforts with a sense of optimism rather than failure. Overall, by linking his actions with the actions of his "army of patriots," Perot makes it difficult for his

audience members to impugn his character, for to do so would be to impugn their own character.

Perot attempts to bolster his character by frequently referring to the work of "the people" in taking back their government. He presents his campaign not so much as a billionaire's eccentric adventure but as a quest propelled by individual citizens. Perot proclaims: "My only interest was to do this job for the American people" and that "I was incidental" to the enthusiasm generated by his campaign (*Larry 3*). In short, Perot suggests that his status as a competitive candidate in mid-July was due not to his efforts but to the work of his volunteers. Although Perot's framing of this issue as an either/or—the people or the candidate—oversimplifies his rise in popularity, this tactic does allow him to suggest that the focus of his audience should not rest solely on the candidate. Thus, Perot accomplishes what might be called the first step of bolstering: distancing oneself from the negatively viewed action or trait.

Next, then, Perot engages in an effort to attach himself to an item viewed more positively by the audience: the powering of his campaign by previously disillusioned voters. When this group effort is invoked, Perot's withdrawal as an individual becomes somewhat incidental, ala Edward Kennedy's claim at the 1980 Democratic National Convention that, though he lost the nomination, "the cause endures." As Perot claims: "I have said I don't believe that the proper course of action is to have me run as President. I do believe the proper course of action is to take all of these talented, creative people that have mobilized themselves across the country, and use that to correct the problems inside the tent" (*Larry 4*). As a group of individuals acting together, Perot says, his volunteers can make major impacts on politics at every level around the country. In fact, he resuscitates the notion of more individual involvement with politics by harkening back to the nation's infancy: "Now, I love the volunteers. The volunteers are exactly what de Tocqueville was talking about when he said, 'America is great because her people are good.' This huge organized movement has a very important place in this country's present and future, and I hope we can talk about that tonight" (*Larry 3*). By telling his audience that America's "people are good," Perot encourages forgiveness for his withdrawal since good people are forgiving people. More importantly, he also suggests that his withdrawal is not the end but the beginning of even more action in the future. After meeting with his state coordinators, Perot says, "the people will put together what they feel is important to the future of this country" (*Larry 14*). With these statements, Perot does not attempt to transform his image, he cannot deny that he has withdrawn from the race. Instead, he engages in a campaign of reformation, claiming that he will remain involved with the fundamen-

tal force behind his campaign: the people's desire for more control over their government. In essence, "the cause endures."

Perot's rhetorical shift from his own actions to those of "the people" likely works as a bolstering technique because it is not so much "a description of *reality*, but rather a political *myth*" (McGee 241; emphasis original). As Michael McGee explains in his 1975 *Quarterly Journal of Speech* essay, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," individuals are what they believe. He writes: "'the people' are the social and political myths they accept" (247; emphasis original). Consequently, Perot's frequent references to "the people" imbue his actions with the traditional American myth that individual citizens control the nation's destiny. Before explaining how Perot's rhetoric activates this myth, though, a brief word about the function of myth as a perspective for rhetorical analysis is necessary.

Initially, it is important to note that a rhetorical myth is not necessarily the "false" construction that the popular usage of the term implies. In fact, "myths are the truths about society that are taken for granted" (Bennett 167). In this sense, a rhetorical myth is a narrative construction, generally based upon "real world" happenings in times past, that people find true. For instance, the myths of the frontier and the revolution are prominent in American discourse (e.g., Bass & Cherwitz; Ritter). Myths may also appear in ostensibly non-political rhetoric and may draw upon anthropological as well as political influences, as Janice Hocker Rushing and Martha Solomon have respectively demonstrated. No matter what influences shape the construction of a myth, perhaps its chief rhetorical function is to create an identification between an audience and a rhetor (Braden).

Conceptualizations of myth are far from universal. Tudor, for instance, focuses solely on political myths; Doty examines the repeated enactment of myths through rituals; Sykes attempts to isolate myth's function in communication. More recently, Rowland generated a storm of controversy with his claim that myth is defined too broadly by rhetorical scholars. While Rowland's demarcation of what parts a myth must possess to be considered a full-blown myth provide a helpful structural conceptualization, Osborn and others note that his conceptualization of myth possesses a number of limitations on critical insights.

In any case, "Perot's elicitation of the myth of "the people" allows him to reinforce a bond with his supporters as well as an American tradition of citizen governance. Frequently, Perot invokes the phrase "the people" to refer to only his supporters. For instance: "Now, I would go do the nastiest dirtiest job in the world in a minute for the American people" (*Larry* 9); "Having the people have a voice was a threat to the establishment" (*Larry* 9); "See, again, this thing works when it comes

from the people" (*Larry* 12); "Well, basically, I was determined to run a campaign that came from the people" (*Larry* 13). These frequent references to "the people" may appear self-effacing on the surface, but they function to enhance Perot's image as a leader since he is the reason for the emergence of the people. As McGee explains, if a rhetor successfully convinces an audience that there is a voice of the people, "he (the focal point for collective identity) is transformed by their faith in him and his ideas into a *Leader*, an image or mirror of collective forces" (242; emphasis original). Thus, Perot's insistence on perpetuating the idea of "the people"—even suggesting that he will help to increase their influence at all levels of politics—reminds his audience of his status as leader of the movement, bolstering his image.

In addition, by packaging his entry into the campaign, the campaign itself, and re-entry into the campaign as events forced upon him by the will of the people, Perot activates another American myth: the humble American, reluctantly but ably agreeing to do the job that only he can do. This myth, embodied in George Washington and, to some extent, Abraham Lincoln, reinforces Perot's initial bolstering tactic of disengagement from the scene. Importantly, Perot's status as a non-politician enhances the believability of this myth, for—as Mario Cuomo has discovered through the years—an elected politician is not as likely to receive the call of the people, even if it is for higher office. "After all, one of Perot's strongest appeals was the sense that he was being called to serve, unlike a groveling politician" (Mintz and Von Drehle 10).

In summary, Perot employs rhetorical tactics which bolster his identification with a movement already viewed favorably by much of his audience, for it is their own movement. That the movement is symbolically energized by myth makes the bolstering even more effective. Finally, Perot's status as the leader of the group movement at once reaffirms his image as a person tackling tough problems yet, since the group is most important, mitigates his individual action of withdrawal. "The cause," he suggests, will endure regardless of his individual actions.

Differentiation. Perot's espousal of the cause of the people supplements his rhetorical techniques that create differentiation in that he separates himself from the business of politics. Differentiation, Ware and Linkugel note, involves a division of one "old context into two or more new constructions of reality" with different meaning(s) (278). Moreover, this division is designed to particularize "the charge at hand; the psychological movement on the part of the audience is toward the less abstract" (Ware and Linkugel 278). Perot attempts to divide the context of his actions—a political campaign—into two contexts: professional politics and grass-roots politics. In so doing, he transforms his

withdrawal from a the abstract act of quitting to the more particular act of political involvement: a professional politician who quits a campaign quits his/her job, while a grass-roots politician takes on a different role in the movement. Perot creates a two-step process that reflects differentiation: first, he routinely bemoans professional politics; second, he praises the possibilities of the movement's kind of politics.

First, Perot explains his disgruntlement with the process of presidential politics. "Let's stop mud-wrestling in the political process. Let's have a more dignified process. . . . It is a process now that guarantees that the people you would really like to have as the leaders of your country would never go near it, because it is so demeaning" (*Larry* 15). In particular, Perot claims that the attacking of opponents that occurs in presidential campaigns is "dirty politics" (*Larry* 15)—a kind of politics he does not practice. "We have never had a single person working on anything like that; never would. The American people hate it" (*Larry* 15). Perot is always careful to distinguish between his operation and those of traditional campaigns. "See, the people I've been dealing with out at grassroots America—there is no viciousness, there is no pettiness. They love their country. They're patriots. You get inside the tent, and the in-fighting and the viciousness wand what-have-you is just unique" (*Larry* 4).

Not only does Perot claim that his campaign is different, he also implies that he is a different type of candidate. Both Bill Clinton and George Bush, for instance, allowed their campaign staff to tell the press what Perot said in supposedly private conversations with the two other candidates: "then they both issued press releases. I just—I thought they were private conversations, but no problem. That's the way politics—[King interrupts with a new question]" (*Larry* 8). Thus, Perot rhetorically creates two contexts: politics as usual and politics the Perot way. The implication is that he should not be judged by the abstract standard of quitting a job because he is not a professional politician.

Moreover, Perot still plans to participate in the "new" context he creates. Since he is "officially" just one of "the people," Perot will engage the politics-as-usual system as much as will his supporters. "Now, then, if we stay together, we can force the Democrats and Republicans to do the right thing for the country, and we can make a contribution that will be unique in the history of this country" (*Larry* 8). Perot's status as an equal among equals is important in this new context, for it limits the degree to which his supporters can chastise him; after all, he will still be "one of them" putting in as much work as they do. This new context, then, is crucial to differentiation in that it casts

Perot's decision to assume a different role as a decision different than quitting.

Overall, Perot's rhetorical construction of two contexts allows him to differentiate between his withdrawal from the race and the character stain of "The Quitter" label applied by *Newsweek* among others. People quit jobs, while Perot implies that he never had a job because he is not a professional politician. Instead, he insists that he operates in the sphere of grass-roots politics, a sphere where people serve in a variety of capacities. Since the cause will endure, Perot suggests, so will his commitment.

Lessons. Assessing the impact of Perot's apologia is difficult, given the multiple influences affecting a candidate's standing. For instance, his appearance on *Larry King Live* could be labeled a long-term success because of his strong showing (for an independent) in the popular vote totals. Yet, many other factors also influenced Perot's popular support, not the least of which was his strong showing in the debates. Thus, rather than attempting to find a causal link between Perot's popularity in November and his apologia in July, I will heed the advice of McGee: "So the analysis of rhetorical documents should not turn inward, to an appreciation of persuasive, manipulative techniques, but outward to *functions* of rhetoric... rather than to myopic questions of causation so common in contemporary historical methods" (248; emphasis original).

The first lesson, then, must address the function of Perot's apologia as part of the campaign process. During a campaign featuring heavy voter alienation with the political process, a candidate must avoid looking like a typical candidate. As Ellen Reid Gold explains, alienated voters are jaded voters, and they view traditional rhetorical appeals with suspicion. Consequently, candidates seeking forgiveness in an atmosphere of voter alienation are more likely to use "communication settings which appeared to be controlled by others—governmental bodies or the press" (Gold 311). Perot's appearance on *Larry King Live* features a communication setting controlled by a talk show host *and* by individual voters who call in their questions. As a result, Perot's apologia functioned to make his campaign seem less like a campaign, which, in turn, reinforced his message of differentiation that he was not a professional politician.

Second, and ironically, other functions of Perot's rhetoric reinforce rather than resolve voter alienation. For instance, through differentiation he distances himself from the political process. More specifically, his insistence on avoiding responsibility for his decision to withdraw from the race—initially saying that he wasn't really withdrawing and that the Democrats were addressing his issues, then shifting to the alleged Republican conspiracy to ruin his daughter's wedding—reflects

a disturbing social function of an apologia: shifting the burden from the individual's actions to the suffering he/she has endured as a result of his/her character flaw. As Robert L. King explains, most apologists draw "on a widely-accepted, popular sense of *tragedy*, one which nicely serves the politician who must defend behavior he would prefer to ignore. This meaning shifts the burden from a responsible agent to his suffering... the politician works the metaphor of *tragedy* to posture as an active agent with an admirable *ethos*" (290; emphasis original). Perot, like most political leaders, ultimately perpetuates voter alienation by refusing to accept responsibility for his actions and by suggesting that he is not part of the political process. Considering the degree of support Perot received on Election Day, we could assume that voters conspired with Perot's description of the process. Thus, we could add to King's lament that the producer of the apologia "is not an agent who produces an act; he does not learn or grow spiritually or ethically" (299). The fact is that the voters do not grow either.

Finally, Perot's use of "the people," while a powerful symbolic device, also functions to reinforce voter alienation. Rather than giving voice to individuals, the myth of "the people" translates individuality into collective anonymity. As McGee illustrates with a reference to Hitler: "When in Hitler's vision a champion offers individuals group identity as a 'people,' therefore, the invitation is to assume an anonymous mask, the kind of face that a timid storekeeper might don to lynch an alleged criminal, to kill an enemy in war, or simply to confront a dominant personality in group discussion" (242). This kind of rhetoric engenders a lack of personal responsibility, ultimately disempowering individuals in favor of the leader who has rhetorically constructed the collective group. When that leader fails to be personally responsible himself/herself, voters can grow disenchanted with the possibilities of individual power in the political process. So, after Perot's run, voters are left just as dissatisfied with their abilities to make a difference in politics.

Conclusion

Perot's successful resuscitation of his campaign may well have been influenced by his apologia on *Larry King Live*. That question, however, is unlikely to be adequately answered even in years to come. What we do know is that Perot apparently filled a void for voters seeking political empowerment, yet much of his rhetoric actually functioned to perpetuate voter alienation. By bolstering through the myth of "the people" and differentiating to remove himself from the political process, Perot effectively told voters—though he may not have intended to—that

individual action in the political arena is not desirable. For that, he and other politicians, should apologize.

Notes

¹*Newsweek* of June 15, 1992 (Mathews), notes that in an early June poll Perot was the choice of 35% of the respondents, Bush 33%, and Clinton 25%.

²Perot's final total of 19% represents a 16% drop from the 35% figure listed in the previous note.

³For more specific applications of apologia, see: Dorgan; Harrell et al., and Katula. Other general perspectives on apologia will be explained later in the essay.

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REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Jack Kay, Editor

Political Campaign Communication, 2d edition (1991). **Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg**. New York: Praeger.

Political Campaign Communication, 2nd edition, is an important asset to anyone who wants to understand political campaigns as "communication phenomena." Trent and Friedenberg examine the communication principles and practices believed to be central to election campaigns. To that end, they focus on a variety of rich examples to illustrate the communication choices available to candidates.

The book is broken down into two major sections. The first half looks at certain principles and theory inherent to political campaign communication. The second half of the book addresses important practices of contemporary campaigns. Trent and Friedenberg agree that theory and practice will necessarily blend together, but they make this distinction so the reader may better understand the communication phenomenon.

An introductory chapter on the changing nature of political campaigns provides useful historical grounding for understanding how campaigns have evolved over time. Following this chapter, the next four narrow the focus of political communication to the campaign process. The authors argue that the campaign process is the root of all forms of political communication. To illustrate this importance, the remainder of this section considers the basic principles important to campaigning. For example, the first chapter looks at the stages of a political campaign and the communication functions important to each stage. Moving from the pre-primary or surfacing stage to the general election, the authors contend that each stage has unique communication requirements and that the candidate must be aware of these in order to succeed. Trent and Friedenberg then define "campaign strategies and styles" noting the differences and similarities between the rhetorical choices available to challengers and incumbents. The next chapter provides a thorough discussion of mass media theories which relate to political campaigning. Here the authors trace some of the most significant theories, from the early "bullet theory" and social influence models to a contemporary focus on agenda setting. A final chapter in this part is devoted to understanding the various types and functions of political advertising. By the end of this section, the reader should have a good understanding of the theoretical basis of political campaign communication and the principles which found it.

The second half of the book turns to specific campaign practices and discusses five of the most common communication events. Trent and Friedenbergr first analyze the role of public speaking and identify several issues important to this practice. The discussion on speech modules, speech writing, and surrogate speakers is particularly useful for understanding the role of speech making in campaigns. The following chapter outlines specific forms such as acceptance and announcement speeches, identifying the unique responsibilities of each. Of interest in this section is the discussion of how candidates handle press conferences. The next chapter examines political debate by providing an historical focus on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and then turning to the constraints of contemporary debating. The last two chapters in this section address interpersonal communication situations in campaigns and explore the variety of media choices available to candidates.

Political Campaign Communication, 2d., has three major strengths. First, it is replete with examples from historical and contemporary campaigns. Students find the stories to be engaging and illuminating, the examples keep their attention where other texts might not. Second, each chapter is well-outlined and structured to make the reading easy to follow and, once again, keep the reader's attention. Third, because of its focus on campaign communication, it is, by far, the leading text in the field. Any professor wanting to teach about the political campaign process should at least consult this book. Additionally, it is useful for anyone seeking to work in a campaign or run for an office.

There are two major weaknesses of the text which should be mentioned. First, while the bifurcation between theory and practice makes sense, the distinction seems superflous at times. In using this text for class, chapters from both sections were assigned together, and it was sometimes difficult to understand the clear distinction between the two parts. The authors readily agree that in reality the distinction is not always there; the question then becomes why this organizational framework is really necessary from a pedagogical standpoint. While this may be a convenient organizational framework, it might not be the most useful one.

Second, there is a lack of attention given to certain aspects of campaign practices such as political action committees and political consulting. Only a few pages address each of these areas. Given the proliferation of special interest groups and the high costs of campaigning in today's society, more information needs to be provided regarding the impact that PACs have on campaign strategies. Additionally, since the nature of political campaigning has so dramatically changed, shifting focus from party-centered to candidate-centered campaigns, it would seem that much more emphasis needs to be devoted to the strat-

egists behind the scene. We can not underestimate the power of the Lee Atwaters and James Carvilles who carry on important functions behind the candidates. More discussion about the "packaging" aspects of campaigns would be a useful and necessary addition.

The second edition of *Political Campaign Communication* is a definite improvement over the first. Examples of Reagan's campaign and speech-making style, and discussions about the 1988 campaign and the Willie Horton issue, provide a contemporary focus with which students can identify. I look forward to reading the third edition of this book. Perhaps we can anticipate a full chapter on women candidates and the specific constraints they must deal with in the campaign process. Hopefully, we can also look forward to understanding more about the nature of third party candidates and the unique communication constraints they must address, and more about the emerging technologies and the impact of talk shows, electronic town halls, and computers. The authors are committed to understanding the campaign process and this commitment is evident in the quality and detail of their writing. Anyone interested in understanding the communication dynamics of political campaigns should read this book. It is an important contribution to the area of political communication.

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Greg Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century*. New York: Random House, 1992.

The Campaign of the Century, written by Greg Mitchell, is a detailed, almost day-by-day, account of the 1934 gubernatorial campaign of Upton Sinclair. The book begins with the unexpected Democratic primary victory of avowed socialist Upton Sinclair, and ends shortly after his defeat. In between, readers are treated to a very readable, insightful political and social history of America in the early 1930s. Mitchell also introduces the reader to the End Poverty in California (EPIC) movement, which Sinclair helped found. The socialistic EPIC advocated that the state should "supervise" manufacturing and farming interests in California, guaranteeing employment for all who wanted jobs, and instituting a bartering system of labor in exchange for food and products. The core assumption of EPIC was that land and factories should be *for use* rather than *for profit*. The funding for this system would be generated by taxing the major California corporations. EPIC's leaders claimed that once the plan succeeded in California, it would spread quickly to the rest of the nation.

Unfortunately for both Sinclair and EPIC, the very institutions that the movement wanted to tax also held great power to defeat it—the media. Mitchell documents how the media—newspapers, radio and interestingly, the film industry—formed a loose coalition to defeat Sinclair and EPIC. In the final pages, Mitchell provides an (all too brief) epilogue which tracks the demise of the EPIC movement and Sinclair's political career.

There are a number of real strengths to this book. First, Mitchell is exceedingly thorough in his research, especially in terms of Sinclair and his movement. The reader is provided with an up-close view of Sinclair, his strengths, and his shortcomings. Mitchell does not spare Sinclair the candidate, portraying him as a man who was a better critic of the political system than an operative within it. For example, Mitchell documents a number of Sinclair campaign blunders, including his misread of what he thought was support from both Father Coughlin and FDR, neither of whom ultimately supported him.

From the perspective of the political communication scholar, the major strength of the book is that it chronicles the first use of contemporary negative campaigning. Hollywood, fearing that Sinclair would impose onerous taxes on the motion picture industry, mobilized its personnel to defeat the candidate. In addition to major campaign contributions, the film studios also produced "news shorts" of the campaign. These shorts, entitled "California Election News," purportedly consisted of interviews of "real" people, but as Mitchell convincingly illustrates, they were actually dramatizations that employed movie actors and actresses. These shorts played on the public's fears of Sinclair's economic reforms, such as depicting how if EPIC's plans were adopted, "bums" from all over the country would swarm to California. While these shorts may not have changed the final outcome of the election, they did help stall momentum in Sinclair's campaign.

The book also demonstrates the power of an unchecked and unbalanced media in the political process. California's media, dominated by the *Los Angeles Times* in the south and the Hearst chain in the north, helped wound Sinclair through a combination of distortions in the reporting of Sinclair's positions on the issues, or a lack of coverage of his campaign at all.

The major shortcoming of this book from the perspective of the political communication scholar is that it does not put the political communication tactics employed in the 1934 gubernatorial campaign in historical context. The reader does not know, for example, whether similar campaign tactics were being used in other campaigns across the country. Nor does the reader know if the negative campaign of 1934 was just

part of an evolutionary process, or merely an aberration. Mitchell leaves these questions unanswered.

Mitchell also misses a number of opportunities to make contemporary parallels with the Sinclair campaign. Mitchell fails to note, for example, that the broadcast media in California were able to effectively ignore Sinclair because there was no Fairness Doctrine yet in place that would have enforced radio stations to cover the campaign in a fair and balanced manner. Had Mitchell made this observation, he would have had the opportunity to extend his analysis to today's political scene, which has been without a Fairness Doctrine since 1987.

In another instance, Mitchell documents that the Republicans were able to hurt Sinclair considerably by using his own writings against him. That strategy sounds suspiciously reminiscent of the campaign waged against Robert Bork in his unsuccessful bid to become an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, yet Mitchell does not draw the parallel.

Another possible shortcoming of this book is one of perspective. While Mitchell clearly laments the one-sided view of the Sinclair campaign presented in the California media, overall, Mitchell is similarly one-sided. Mitchell presents the campaign from the Sinclair camp's point of view, and appears to convey the notion that somehow Sinclair had the key to economic truth that was snuffed out by the "forces of evil." It is just as likely that had Sinclair won and been able to get EPIC's reforms passed (an unlikely prospect), that California would have existed as an island in the sea of America, one largely cut off from the existing economic system.

Still, this is an excellent book, one that would be useful for both scholars and students alike to read in terms of the history of political movements and early political advertising tactics.

Rod Carvath
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EDITOR'S FORUM

A Final Note of Thanks

*Sheryl A. Friedley**

After serving as Editor for eleven issues of the *National Forensic Journal*, it is now time to "pass the torch" to both a new Editor, Deborah Geisler, and a new editorial staff. In doing so, I would be remiss if I did not take a few moments to express my appreciation to those who have assisted and supported my efforts for over five years.

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the National Forensic Association for their philosophical and financial support of the Journal. Begun just ten years ago, *NFJ* was created as an outlet to serve both debate and individual events in the broader forensic community. As I recall the breadth of topics explored in the Journal over the past ten years, I truly believe *NFJ* has served that purpose. Hopefully, *NFJ* has come to represent a valuable outlet that explores a variety of issues from various perspectives. By doing so, I believe that *NFJ* has also encouraged research and writing from a new generation of forensic scholars.

Second, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Jack Kay, Professional Resources Editor, and my staff of Associate Editors. Many of these individuals served with me throughout the publication of all eleven issues, and without their conscientious review of manuscripts and resource materials, there would have been no Journal. I value their expertise, and I am grateful for their willingness to share that expertise with the greater forensic community.

I would also be remiss if I didn't single out one individual, Kevin Dean, who not only served as an Associate Editor, but served as a guest Editor for one issue and enthusiastically compiled a ten-year index for the Journal. Kevin's commitment to forensic scholarship is clearly evidenced through his own writings, his conscientious review of manuscripts, his thought-provoking ideas for development of the Journal, and the quality of competitors he has produced over the years. Above all, Kevin has served as a valuable "sounding board" for me both as a colleague and in my role as Editor.

Third, I would like to thank a two colleagues at my own university. Don Boileau, Chair of the Department of Communication at George Mason University, is one of those rare administrators with a back-

**The National Forensic Journal*, X (Fall, 1992), pp. 153-154.
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ground in forensics who wholeheartedly supports the activity and its value to students. Though I know he often wished it could have been more, I appreciate his willingness to find resources to assist me with computing services, xeroxing costs, and mailing expenses. Also, I wish to extend a "special thanks" to Sandy Slater in Computing Support Services at George Mason University. Sandy composed all eleven issues of the Journal beginning with hard copy or disks, and she tirelessly saw them through to completion as they were placed in the hands of the printer. Next to me, I know Sandy is most grateful that this project is coming to a close.

And finally, I wish to thank Bruce Manchester, Director of Forensics at George Mason University, for his assistance and support from beginning to end. As both a mentor and a colleague for sixteen years, Bruce has always encouraged me to "carve out" my own identity and offer my own unique contributions to the forensic community. Though he might have selfishly discouraged me from taking on this task, given the demands of coaching and travel in an active program, he selflessly carried an extra portion of the load at times so that I might enjoy this truly unique opportunity. Above all, I am grateful for his insight, experience, enthusiasm, commitment, humor, and enduring friendship.

To Deborah Geisler and her staff, I applaud their commitment to the *National Forensic Journal* and wish them only the best as they create their vision for its success. I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as Editor, and I look forward with great anticipation to the continued growth and development of the *National Forensic Journal* during the coming decade.

Sheryl A. Friedley
Editor