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Grove-White, Robin, "Afterword: On 'Sound Science', the Environment, and Political Authority"

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The articles in this special issue of Environmental Values have a shared significance. In one way or another, all of them reflect contemporary concerns about issues of trust, risk, uncertainty, and the cultural shaping of science.
These are matters of mounting significance for the politics of the environment in countries like Britain, and indeed for politics more generally, as we have seen in a succession of recent controversies. The Brent Spar oil platform farrago (1996), the hugely costly BSE-CJD upsets (1997), the continuing uproars around genetically modified (GM) plants and foods (1998/99) central in all of these have been challenges to the political authority of official patterns of scientifically-backed reassurance, concerning the impacts of deep and open-ended trajectories of technological transformation.
To understand what is likely to be at stake in such matters for the politics of industrial democracies in the 21st century, there is now an urgent need to develop richer pictures than those currently dominant, of the cultural and epistemological architecture on which our regulatory institutions have been coming to rely. The contributions to this special issue can be pictured as building blocks in such a process. The present article offers a complementary perspective one grounded in a degree of more hands-on personal experience of related matters.
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