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# Labouring Under the Lingo

ByMute Editor

Editorial

Including: Zoe Young on Polish agribusiness; Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite on America's strategic use of bilateralism; Harry Potter on the Wikipedia; Sebastian Olma on Peter Lynds' theory of time; Ruth Maclennan on television and science; Betti Marenko and Miriam Swain on art & science; Luciana Parisi on Abstract Sex; JJ King on Openness; the University of Openness' Faculty of Cartography on the Semantic Web; Artists' projects by Eyal Weizman, Dani Bauer, Anselm Franke and Rafi Segal, Emma Hedditch, and Ron Silliman

George Orwell's novel *1984* has had a good innings over the last few years: in addition to the runaway success of Endemol's Big Brother format and Reality TV in general, our current affairs are now dominated by a vocabulary that appears to come straight out of the more sinister pages of the book.

As if in readiness for last year's centenary of the author's birth, evocatively named governmental agencies (the US Department of Homeland Security), catchy think tank and policy memes (Democracy Domino, Illegal Combatant) and global military campaigns (Operation Enduring Freedom, the War on Terror) have ensured that the fictional Ministry of Truth has been granted yet another lease of life in fact. Many have commented on the similarity between Oceania's infamous Newspeak and the emerging global lexicon of 21st century security-speak now gracing a radio, terminal or television near you. But despite the obvious poetic resonance between Oceania's linguistic domain of state-enforced false consciousness and that of the new military humanists, these confident parallels have often stood in the way of closer analysis.

How exactly do our media guarantee acquiescence in the face of widespread disbelief of the 'facts' that form their core product? Truth-value continues to determine public perception of televisual and networked media but does a reliable, consistent relationship really exist between knowledge and the media environment? In this issue, Anustup Basu's 'Bombs and Bytes' (p. 64) discusses capital's role in the creation of a sovereign sphere of 'information' whose capacity to connect disparate narrative elements to imply a causal connection – for example between 9/11 and Saddam Hussein – infantilises subjects fatally, and creates the conditions for fascist forms of rule.

Ali Nobil Ahmad also focuses on the role of the press – in this case the British 'quality' variant – in 'Home Front' (p. 28), describing the emergence of a differentialist racism in the liberal broadsheets' coverage of British multicultural society.

Elsewhere, visual languages of objectivity are explored in Ruth Maclennan's 'We Saw It – Like a Flash' (p. 34), which looks at the history of science television; in Betti Marenko's 'Museum Epidemiology' (p. 50), which asks whether scientific techniques inevitably infect even the most avowedly artistic endeavours; and, comparably, in Miria Swain's 'Just Sugaring the Pill' (p. 56), which analyses artists' projects which transcend the two cultures paradigm that, in spite of itself, the art & science bonanza continues to promote.

The strategic mission of Orwell's Newspeak was the total colonisation of language and the imagination. Resistance is still demanded precisely here, even if our oppressive lingo appears less rigid than Big Brother's. Reviewing Russian poet Lev Rubinstein's collection *Here I Am in Mute's Rear/View* (p. 128), Cameron Bain points to the lacunae between cliché – language's exhaustion, in my case the previous sentence – and a nonetheless persistent necessity to speak, express, utter. Beyond

the grandstanding of more self-consciously political forms of language, unknown power lies in these cracks, whose furtive path betroths us to the dull yet brilliant magic of the everyday.

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