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Fear v Hope: The battle for language

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Abstract

These poems have been written in response to the many articles focusing on the 'War on Terror' that have appeared in Australian newspapers over the past six years. I have been disturbed by the use of language in many of these articles, which have been produced by the mass media to be consumed by the reader, as opposed to pondered, interrogated, challenged and engaged with on a critical and creative level. The complexities and nuances of language use have been overlooked in the widespread acceptance of terms such as 'war', 'terror', 'insurgent', 'freedom', etc.

Fear v Hope: The battle for language

Christine Howe

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The poems, each of which begins with a title taken from a newspaper headline, are an attempt to respond to these articles by reclaiming and celebrating those aspects of language that have been either rudely overlooked or cynically used to further certain political agendas. A sense of playfulness is central to this celebration of the creative and ambiguous aspects of language.

These poems are intended as an offering of one tool that can be employed in the reading of newspaper articles that allows us to become co-creators, rather than consumers, of the news. The creative, critical reinterpretation of what we read restores to language a sense of mystery, individual agency and possibility. Australian philosopher Mary Zournazi believes hope to be found in a 'spirit of dialogue, where generosity and laughter break open a space to keep spontaneity and freedom alive ...' (2002: 12). These poems offer one contribution to an ongoing dialogue between readers and writers (as opposed to producers and consumers) that continues to create spaces of possibility and hope.

Reference

Zournazi M 2002 *Hope: New Philosophies for Change* Pluto Press Annandale

Howe

U.S. Flicks Switch on Missile Alert

U.S. flicks switch on missile alert

U.S. missile flicks alert switch on

Missile flicks on U.S. alert switch

Alert missile flicks switch on U.S.

U.S. = us = we = you and me

Who flicks which switch?

Terrorism Readiness Reports to Stay Secret

Terrorism secret

Secretes terror

Terror secretion

Secretes terrorism

Terrorism secretes terror

So: you'd better

secrete your secrets

somewhere on your person

you never know who might

tap your phone

No Easy Answers in a Time of Fear

Easy answers "No!" in a time of fear
Fear answers "Easy!" in no time
Time answers "Fear easy –
mystery is your birthright
and your destiny."

PM Lays Path for Nuclear Future

PM lays path for Nuclear future
Nuclear future lays path for PM
For future path, PM lays Nuclear
PM lays Nuclear, Nuclear lays PM
and our future is caught
with its pants down
stuck in the shrinking
space between
NuclearPathandPM