

# *Understanding or Truth?*

by Elizabeth Donovan

Often, reading the beginning over after the end brings about a rightness of understanding of what has come before. All is not always clear at the beginning, all is not always the same at the end as when we began, and the journey is not always the only way to get there. Skipping to the end, and then back to the beginning, may be a way around the journey, but then again, does this constitute in itself a journey of concentration, a willful rearranging of importance from the means to the ends and back again?

In order to be understood, it is best to find a way to present the facts (in reference to Professor Miller's argument in his essay "Is Bad Writing Necessary? George Orwell, Theodor Adorno, and The Politics of Language" [*Lingua Franca*, December/January 2000]) in a way that allows the reader to view the situation, as mediated by me, in a number of ways according to their own particular influences and desires. This is not a dumbing-down of the material, but an attempt to reach people in order to get some inference of meaning—albeit one very different from that

intended, or rather, conceptualized, by the writer (me).

The ideas ascribed respectively to Adorno and Orwell—that language be either an exaltation to "God" or to the self, or be a "transparent frame" on which to hang ideas—seem to me to beg the question of whether we are communicating something at all. If, like Adorno, we seek to have only thoughts independent of commerce, common-sense understanding, or order, then we are working on the idea that our thoughts will not be widely understood. At that point, these thoughts are imbued with a value all their own. From the outset, they are commodities rarified into another currency, one of close reading and inner circles. On the other hand, if everything is to be understood the same way by everyone, without regard for

