PART EIGHT
WEIGHING WORDS
AND VALUES

Free speech: what it is and what it isn't

John Zerilli

Tim Wilson has finally taken up his post as Human Rights Commissioner after controversy about his appointment late last year. Many questioned the suitability of a candidate without relevant legal-administrative experience and a self-proclaimed "traditional" view of human rights. At issue here is Wilson's supposedly classical conception of the rights of the citizen, built upon a certain understanding of the institution of private property.

This conception leads Wilson, along with federal Attorney-General George Brandis (who virtually hand-picked Wilson) to defend what he calls "traditional" free speech and in the process rail against section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

Before looking at this legislation, it's worthwhile setting out what's at stake and reflecting on the meaning and import of free speech in democratic societies.

A history lesson

A.V. Dicey once defended the liberties of the English citizen by observing:

> A man may with us be punished for a breach of law,
> but he can be punished for nothing else.

Dicey offered this in an essay on the meaning of the rule of law. It captures the classical libertarian notion of liberty, with which the rule of law is intimately connected, as something residual rather than positive. For Dicey and the classicists, freedom is the space left for every subject after the law has reached its limit.

In what way, then, does the common law afford citizens freedom of speech? After all, freedom of speech sounds rather more positive than residual. In some respects, it's odd that neoliberals should insist on it at all, given that the classical notion of liberty is negative.

While it's arguable that John Stuart Mill, one of the champions of free speech in the 19th century, was a classical liberal, Mill also supported worker-owned syndicates of the kind supported later by some Fabians, Marxists, socialists and anarcho-syndicalists. In any event, Dicey provided the strict and more theoretically precise sense of liberty.

Dicey's conception, although far from perfect, is properly tethered to the rule of law (by definition, in fact). There's something almost "unclassical" about free speech, if by "classical" we have in mind 19th-century aristocrats-cum-industrialists who overwhelmingly saw liberty through the prism of law and contract.

The common law: is speech special?

Now, at the risk of inviting some opprobrium, I would like to suggest what everybody already knows full well. There really is no such thing as free speech, if this just means the right to say what one wants. Even as an ideal to which our laws should aspire, it proceeds from an understanding of liberty absent restraint, which is impossible.

There is no freedom without law. One might as well go around saying that there is such a thing as the "freedom of behaviour". Have you ever heard classical liberals campaigning passionately for "freedom of behaviour"?

There are laws, and then there's the area left for the individual after the law's reach is fully extended.

There's no freedom of behaviour, or freedom to swing one's arm, or freedom to move one's elbow. There's the right for someone not to be struck in the face by a swinging arm, and only after that, and in that context, the right for a person to swing their arm.

Defending the right to free speech is in some ways just as strange as defending the freedom of behaviour. Why is speech special?

Actually, speech and action are not as different as they appear. Crying "fire" in a crowded theatre when there's no fire is more like a speech-act than plain talking. Telling someone their mother has just been run over by a bus when it isn't true, if it causes mental harm to the hearer, is better understood as an act causing harm rather than an utterance. It is treated as such by the law.

Telling someone you'll beat them to a pulp in a menacing and predatory tone may well constitute an assault, even if no punches are thrown, or were intended to be. An extremist cleric preaching suicide missions and violence against unbelievers would probably fairly be considered guilty of sedition. Speech can be deadly. Why start from the presumption that it isn't?

The law of defamation and misrepresentation protect reputation and financial interest over the right of free speech. Copyright violation and breaches of confidence are further examples where speech is not free.

Protection from harm

What brings these cases together isn't the unifying concept of free speech, or even private property, but the concept that Mill brought into focus in his essay "On Liberty" — that is, the occasioning of harm to others. This is where the critical discussion of free speech laws inevitably hovers.

How broadly do we construe this notion of harm? To mean only clear and direct dangers (as Mill would have had it)? Or, as potentially extending to causing offence among a racial minority (as the legal philosopher Joel Feinberg argued it might)?

Whatever your answer, the presumption that somehow speech is special gets us nowhere. It is misleading. It is the false premise in so much of what passes for debate about the right of individuals to believe what they want and to express their beliefs.

We want all our freedoms maximised. For any proposed law, we should be asking about the cost to freedom, per se. If the infringement of our freedom is urged in the name of preventing some questionable kind of harm (like harm to "national security" or "sovereignty"), it is the freedom lost that needs to be weighed in the balance, regardless of whether that freedom relates to words or deeds.

Too often, free speech is little more than a slogan, which the enemies of freedom use to advance the interests of the rich and powerful against the disenfranchised. If we must have slogans, what we need is a better slogan to describe the ideal/reality adverted to in the phrase "free speech".

And that is, obviously enough, freedom of opinion (the freedom to express one's opinions and beliefs). It is this freedom that is recognised and protected under international law (such as Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Perhaps even opinions, if expressed a certain way, may lead to clear and present danger. But these cases are extremely rare. It is probably just because the expression of an opinion or belief is so unlikely to lead to harm that we take the expression of opinion to be fundamental and non-negotiable.

Racial discrimination

Judging by Brandis' recent attempts to "protect" free speech, and the brief he's given to the incoming Human Rights Commissioner to prosecute the case against Section 18C, these obvious facts about free speech seem not to be getting through.

The maligned Section 18C doesn't touch upon the expression of opinions or beliefs. It fastens upon acts or communications that offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another group of

people on racial grounds. And as Section 18D makes clear, it doesn't prohibit even this where the communication is made in good faith and, for instance, where it is an accurate report in the public interest, or is otherwise a belief genuinely held.

It may be that Section 18C goes too far. There are certainly problems with the formulation of Section 18D (of a largely technical kind). But couching concerns about these provisions in the treasured argot of free speech as a way of justifying their outright repeal is to betray little genuine concern for human rights.

Someone concerned with human rights here would acknowledge the real issue posed by Section 18C, which is whether the right to offend and insult should be given priority over the right of members of an ethnic community to live free from racially inspired offences and insults.

It is this issue — about the nature of the harm caused, and whether the blow to freedom is too high a price to pay for eradicating this particular vice — rather than questions of free speech in the abstract, that is decisive.

And once you factor in that Section 18D attempts to safeguard the free expression of genuinely held beliefs, you appreciate that these provisions don't actually seek to place fetters on free speech (defined properly as the freedom of opinion). Cleaning up Section 18D must be a matter of making it work better in achieving the objectives of Section 18C. Repealing the provisions altogether is just a way of ignoring the real issue they pose under cover of whitewash and cant.

The values underpinning Section 18C, social cohesion, civility and respect, are clearly important conditions of stable social living. They're intangible, perhaps, but not much more than Ed Snowden's "harm" to state relations. Wilson acquiesced in Snowden's criminality last year (although he softened his stance when interviewed last week on ABC's *Lateline*).

Of course, arguments in these matters can go both ways. Perhaps respect and social grace should be inculcated in non-

legislative ways, left to chance, to the marketplace of ideas, so that those "with evil in their hearts" are ridiculed in turn for their racist taunts. Yet, the common law hasn't left defamatory speech to chance. Nor assault, copyright, misrepresentation and breaches of confidence. Nor wilful injury occasioning mental harm. These cover an amazing variety of circumstances.

They can only barely be understood as cases involving the protection of property, which is why your notion of "property" ends up being highly abstract and elastic when you go down that road. None of these wrongs is new (even wilful injury began life in the halcyon days of the 19th century). And none necessarily involves anything more than speech for its physical commission.

Are you monomythic? Joseph Campbell and the hero's journey

Craig Batty

When you tell someone a story, do you plan it out beforehand so that it'll sound good? Do you carefully plot what you'll say, in a specific order? Or does the story find a way of telling itself, the plot coming from within you — from an inherent understanding of story structure?

This is what American mythologist, anthropologist, writer and professor Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) was interested in. Inspired as a child by Native American culture and artefacts, he spent his life comparing myths and religions from around the world in an attempt to understand humanity and its fascination with stories.

This resulted in numerous publications, including the books *The Mythic Image* (1974), *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), and with journalist Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (1988).

Throughout his writing, Campbell draws from a range of influential historical figures, including James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Pablo Picasso, Abraham Maslow, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. This combination of writers, artists and psychologists provides not only a rich source of inspiration for Campbell's theories, but also strong responses to his work from a number of disciplines.

The most widely known application of Campbell's work, particularly his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, is to the area of film.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces

In this book, Campbell studies many hundreds of fairy tales, folk tales and legends in order to unearth a common "pattern" in the structure of stories. Campbell defines this as the "monomyth" — the typical trajectory of a story, across all cultures and religions. This monomyth is known as the "hero's journey".

Comprising three stages — separation, initiation and return — the hero's journey offers a narrative framework for understanding the progression of a character, namely the protagonist. The journey, Campbell argues, usually includes a symbolic death and rebirth of the character. The religious idea of "cleansing" is also important, giving a sense of the character transforming from old to new — the character arc.

Campbell summarises the monomythic character journey as:

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day
> into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces
> are there encountered and a decisive victory is won:
> the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure
> with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

Within this overall structure, Campbell proposes 17 story stages:

1. The Call to Adventure
2. Refusal of the Call
3. Supernatural Aid
4. Crossing the First Threshold

5. Belly of the Whale
6. The Road of Trials
7. Meeting with the Goddess/Love
8. Temptation
9. Atonement with the Hero's Father
10. Peace and Fulfilment Before the Hero's Return (Apotheosis)
11. The Ultimate Boon
12. Refusal of the Return
13. Magic Flight
14. Rescue from Without
15. Return
16. Master of Two Worlds
17. Freedom to Live.

The journey undertaken sees the character undergo both physical and emotional battles, which work together to bring them to a better understanding of their life and their place in the world. As such, the journey is full of duality — symbol and spirit; body and soul; manifest and myth; plot and story. In other words, as the character does (action), he or she becomes (character arc).

Lucas and Campbell

Hollywood filmmaker George Lucas openly declared the influence that Campbell's theories had on his work. As American philosopher John Shelton Lawrence wrote in his paper on Campbell, Lucas and the Monomyth (2006):

> In Joseph Campbell the evangelically inclined Lucas had found a kindred spirit, since the younger man also felt a mythic decline that left youth drifting without the moral anchor sensed in the heroic genre films of his own youth.

Screenwriter Keith Cunningham also talks about Campbell's influence on Lucas' work, noting more broadly that:

> The era of the blockbuster mentality was born, and a high-concept, high-stakes approach to story development was initiated.

Cunningham's comment is specifically about the development of the quest story — the hero's journey being a very useful model for this type of structure.

In 1983, Lucas invited Campbell to his Skywalker Ranch in California to share with him a viewing of the completed Star Wars trilogy. Here they discussed the mythical structure employed in the films' narratives, which led to the creation of the PBS series, *The Power of Myth* (1988), filmed at Lucas' ranch.

Campbell tells Moyers in the series that as humans we purposefully probe stories in order to extract meaning that will help us move forward in life. He says that we're seeking myths (themes; meaning) within manifestations (films; stories). For Campbell, the remnants of mythology "line the walls of our interior systems of belief, like shards of broken pottery in an archaeological site".

This series was eventually published as a book of the same name, further connecting Campbell's work with that of film.

The Writer's Journey

Some years later, in the early 1990s, screenwriting author Christopher Vogler studied Campbell's work at the University of Southern California. Vogler was already working in Hollywood as a story analyst, and began to see strong connections between the monomythic hero's journey and the piles of scripts and stories he was reading day in, day out.

Vogler decided to create a short summary document of how he saw Campbell's work in relation to Hollywood. It was intended initially for just himself and his story analyst friends working in the studios — but the response was so overwhelming that he was encouraged to turn the summary into a more official guide.

What emerged was *The Writer's Journey* (2007), one of the most successful screenwriting books of all time and still extremely popular with today's students, writers and industry professionals.

In the book, Vogler adapts Campbell's 17-stage monomyth into a 12-stage model for mapping the hero's journey in film. This translates as:

1. Ordinary World
2. Call to Adventure
3. Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting with the Mentor
5. Crossing the First Threshold
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave
8. Ordeal
9. Reward
10. The Road Back
11. Resurrection
12. Return with Elixir.

The success of *The Writer's Journey* has certainly kept the work of Campbell alive. Vogler is honest about his inspiration from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and like all scholarship his book became an extension of the original — a new way of applying prior research.

I followed this trajectory myself when I went back to Campbell's work to help expand Vogler's model, differentiating between the character's physical journey and emotional journey. This became the basis for the book *Movies That Move Us: Screenwriting and the Power of the Protagonist's Journey* (2011).

Although Joseph Campbell died more than 25 years ago, he is still heralded as one of the great story theorists and his work is studied and applied in practice around the world.

So when you next tell a story and find yourself structuring it in a particular way, think about how and why you're doing it. And

if you haven't read Campbell's work, try it and see whether you think his ideas were on the mark.

See if it's true or not that despite the story you're telling, you're always framing it in a monomythic way — as some kind of hero's journey.

Hercules, body envy and the challenge of being man

Alastair Blanshard

Who wants to be Hercules? Judging by the huge amount of internet interest in the diet and fitness regime of Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, former professional wrestler and star of the latest Hercules film, the answer seems to be almost every male from the age of 14 to 30.

Certainly, if the demographic of the audience for the *Hercules* screening that I attended is at all indicative, the appeal of the hero is broad. We were a diverse bunch. Some geeky, some sporting the latest fashions. Some thin and reedy, others looking like they could have been Dwayne's body double. As a group, we cut across ethnic and class divisions.

The only thing that we had in common was that we were almost all men.

And we were hungry. I've never been at a film where so much food was put away. It was a good thing that the soundtrack was loud enough to drown out the sound of rustling chip packets, crunching popcorn, and the crack of choc-tops. Yet it seems appropriate that the arrival of the latest incarnation of this hero should have been welcomed by a chorus of consumption because

it is through food that we have the best chance of imitating Hercules.

We live in the age of protein. Thanks to revolutions in the commercial production of meat combined with the presence of relatively cheap shakes, powders, and bars, we can now consume protein in a purity and density that is historically without parallel. The Greeks used to marvel at the thought of a hero consuming a side of beef. These days all it takes is a trip to the "health food" section of the supermarket aisle.

Looking like Hercules is now a possibility for more men than at any other point in human history. Previously, there was something freakish about bodybuilding figures. When Eugen Sandow, the father of modern bodybuilding, demonstrated his physique at West Point, cadets placed their hands on his pectorals as they "danced" in time with the music of a marching band.

They had never seen a body like it and they definitely never imagined themselves inhabiting such a torso.

Now that opportunity is within our grasp and the consequences of this profound revolution are something that we need to tackle. With the possibility of looking like Hercules comes burdens and anxieties. Incidents of body image problems among adolescent boys continue to rise. Psychiatrists are seeing increasing cases of "bigorexia", a term coined to describe the variety of psychological problems associated with the pressure to look muscular.

Teachers are reporting escalating problems with steroid abuse at schools. Ordering diet supplements seems to have replaced pornography as man's favourite illicit online activity.

All of this would have surprised and confused the Greeks. When they carved their statues, they knew they were fantasies. They represented ideals that could never be attained.

Look closely at a Greek statue and you'll see the fantasy unravel before your eyes. The muscles are often unnaturally grouped. Pectorals hang without the abdominals to support

them. Lines are carved in the marble with only a cursory attempt to replicate underlying anatomy.

Thanks to an ab-blaster, anybody with dedication and 3% body fat can look like the front of the Greek statue. But I defy anybody to achieve a back like a Greek statue, where preconceptions about symmetry all too often mean that muscles are found in impossible combinations, or abdominal lines don't fade out at the hips as they do in nature, but actually continue round to meet the spine.

We are also rather selective about how we admire Greek statues. I know a number of men who have expressed a desire to have the stomach of a Greek statue. But I know no man who has wanted to have the genitals of a Greek statue. Like Jacqui Lambie, we seem to prefer things to come in slightly bigger packages.

It is a shame that Hercules has come to represent nothing but a pile of muscles for us. The fad for imitating Hercules is not a new one. From antiquity onwards emperors, generals, Renaissance princes, and French kings have attempted to appropriate Hercules' mantle for themselves.

Yet, in all these cases, it wasn't his body they were imitating, but his virtues. It was his courage, his fortitude, his preference for a life of struggle and pain instead of an easy comfortable existence that they admired.

One of the significant advances in this latest Hercules film is that Hercules is now accorded an inner life. He is not a mindless thug. The bloodshed and carnage that he leaves in his wake comes at a cost.

He is plagued by guilt for his actions. The black dog that snaps at his heels is depression, not Cerberus. When Hercules begs the Gods to let him be a good husband and father, he touches on a profound truth.

That seems to me the real challenge of being man, not how to achieve a six-pack.

Clive James on death, dragons and writing in the home stretch

Eureka Henrich

Death is a funny thing. It creeps up on us all, or surprises us if we are unlucky (or lucky, depending on the circumstances). For a writer, especially a self-confessed solipsist such as Clive James, the impending end of creativity brings with it a fresh awareness of the self, and a new personal experience to interpret for others.

Born in the year the second world war began, James is now 74, and suffering from leukaemia and emphysema. Regular hospital visits keep him close to home in Cambridge, so his appearance at the Australia and New Zealand Festival of Literature & Arts at King's College London last Saturday was a special occasion. It was with a sense of momentous anticipation and a touch of apprehension that a packed lecture hall awaited his appearance.

But James, when he shuffled onto the stage smiling, was in his element.

As earlier reviewers have noted, he settled into his chair and joked about "another farewell appearance". So why had he decided to do it? With a rogue twinkle, he said, "Like every other red blooded Australian male, I'm doing it to impress Tony Abbott's daughters". The audience roared with laughter, and the one-man show that is Clive James began.

A London-based festival celebrating antipodean writers was a fitting event to choose for his final public hurrah. Since arriving in England from Sydney in 1961, Clive James has built a remarkably varied career as a literary and cultural critic, television personality, essayist, novelist and poet while always cherishing his Australian identity as "the kid from Kogaragh".

His first reading of the afternoon, the poem "In Town for the March", evoked his childhood memories of being taken to the Anzac Day parade in Sydney by his mother, watching the "marching men" go by: "even the men from the first world war, straight as a piece of two-by-four". His own father had died in in an airplane crash in the second world war after surviving the Japanese POW camps.

James described his younger self as "an orphan standing with the widows, wearing my father's medals". Although it happened half a world away, James says that in his older age these Sydney memories are more vivid than ever.

It was an anonymous article James penned on Edmund Wilson for *The Times Literary Supplement* while studying at Pembroke College, Cambridge, which established his literary reputation in Britain. The essay later appeared in his first collection of literary criticism, where it also provided the title, *The Metropolitan Critic* (1974).

His oeuvre is now impressive, including five volumes of memoirs, seven collections of essays, five books of verse, and his most recent labour of love, a translation of Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, which was nominated for the 2013 Costa Book Prize.

For most people, Clive James became a familiar name and face during the 1980s and 1990s, when he hosted a raft of television programs including *Clive James on Television, Saturday Night Clive* and *Clive James Postcards From …*, and later an eight-part BBC documentary, *Fame in the 20th Century*.

Name a celebrity and the odds are they've been interviewed by James — the fresh-faced Spice Girls appeared on his show in 1997, and the clip is worth a watch on YouTube, if only for the moment when Scary Spice threatens to give Clive a good spanking.

At the festival on Saturday, an audience member asked if James had any regrets about being better known for his television work than his poetry or writing. James quickly dismissed the

quandary as "inevitable". The size of the audience doesn't determine the quality of the work, and besides, "television paid for the groceries, as a poet I would have starved".

His ability to seamlessly interweave both "high" and "low" culture was, as ever, on display. Until recently, James told the rapt audience, he had been staunchly "anti-dragon" — scaly creatures were best left to mythology. He began watching season one of the HBO series *Game of Thrones* at the behest of family members, telling himself that once the dragon eggs hatched, he'd switch it off. But now, having devoured the following two seasons, he has become a convert.

From jokes about the lead characters ("the blonde who has a lot of trouble keeping her clothes on") and on staying alive until the release of season four as a box-set ("one of my ambitions at this age and in this condition"), we were introduced to the "poet's poet", U.A. Fanthorpe, and her poem "Not My Best Side", inspired by Uccello's 15th-century painting St George and the Dragon.

Fanthorpe gave a voice to each character in the painting — the dragon, the princess, and George, but it was the princess's voice that James read, revelling in another poet's words and humour (the princess resigns herself to life with George: "the dragon got himself beaten by the boy, and a girl's got to think of her future"). And from there another fire-breathing leap to his translation of *The Divine Comedy*, and the passage in which Virgil takes Dante on a ride into the depths of hell on Geryon, a dragon with a man's face.

There is no doubt that Clive James is a master storyteller, but what amazes in person is the joy he takes in finding the connections between different forms of human expression, from television, to art, to poetry and film. Since my own *Game of Thrones* conversion last year, I've heard and read countless conversations and commentaries about the show, but none as engaging, wide-reaching and downright hilarious as his.

So, how does coming face to face with the end change a writer's work? For James, the reasons for putting pen to paper haven't changed — he does it because he has to, because he couldn't do anything else, because it's a "way of belonging".

And the project of "trying to complete yourself on the page" still continues (he threatens a sixth volume of memoir, titled *The Run to the Judge*, words used by the legendary race-caller Ken "Magic Eye" Howard at the end of many a horse race).

His last reading on Saturday was a poem written only a month ago, "Sentenced to Life", about "what it's like to be on the home stretch and still wanting to write something".

Deeply moving in its simplicity and sincerity, the poem is laced with his characteristic self-deprecating wit and an enchantment with the smallest of life's pleasures. Ending the talk on such a note could easily have slipped into mawkishness, if it weren't for James' reassurance that he wasn't really leaving, and would instead be reappearing upstairs shortly, for — you guessed it — a book signing.

By the time I left the venue more than an hour later, the festival bookshop was almost sold out of Clive James titles, the queue was still a mile long, and Clive James was still doing what he loves most — meeting his readers.

Are youse using English properly – or mangling your native tongue?

Rob Pensalfini

Languages evolve and transform. If that weren't the case, the only word in the previous sentence that would be considered English is *and* (which in any case used to mean *if*). The English we speak would not be remotely comprehensible to Geoffrey Chaucer, who wrote *The Canterbury Tales* some 600 years ago.

Contemporary accents in particular would sound very foreign to Shakespeare's ears, and the grammatical structure of the language has changed in subtle ways in the 400 years since he died.

For the most part, those changes don't affect the expressiveness of the language or the ease of making certain important distinctions in speech and writing. Yet language change is not consciously guided: it's unpredictable and sometimes chaotic. So, what if language change gets it "wrong"?

Contemporary Standard Englishes (e.g., UK, USA, Australian, NZ, SA) distinguish singular from plural for all nouns and pronouns, with a few exceptions.

The few exceptions among nouns — such as "sheep" — rarely, if ever, cause confusion or lack of clarity. The problematic case is the second person pronoun "you". All the other pronouns not only vary from singular to plural, but also generally have distinct forms that vary for "case" or — put simplistically — whether the word is the subject or object of the sentence:

"I love language" versus "language fascinates me".

The second person is simply you, whether singular or plural, subject or object. But that wasn't always the situation.

You took over as the plural form for both subject and object, but then eventually also supplanted the singular forms, so that we now no longer can be certain whether sentences such as "I need you to help me" is directed to one person in a group or the whole group.

We can of course get round it by adding phrases such as "You, with the blue shirt" or "you boys", but compared to the elegant *thou* versus *you*, this is clunky, and the verbiage almost defeats the advantage of having a pronoun, a shortcut to reference, in the first place. It's a very useful distinction.

How on earth did we lose it?

My favourite hypothesis is that it fell victim to the increasing taste for formality in English-speaking society in the 17th through 19th centuries. *You* in Shakespeare's day was not only used for the plural, but could be used to address a single person in a formal context — usually if the person was of a higher social status or rank than the speaker, or if they were a stranger of presumably equal rank.

The use of *you* to a singular person indicated a kind of deference and social distance, and was formal in tone. One might say "I have brought thee a cabbage" to one's brother or friend, but "I have brought you a cabbage" to a king, bishop, or employer (unless on intimate terms).

Many languages, such as French, still do this — they maintain a distinction between singular and plural second person, but use the plural form (*vous*) to a single person to indicate politeness or formality.

When I first read *Pride and Prejudice*, I was astonished by Mr and Mrs Bennett, married for decades, alone at a breakfast table, addressing one another as Mr Bennett and Mrs Bennett. It's not outlandish as an expression of endearment (as some couples use Mum and Dad to one another), but we can presume that a writer as astute as Jane Austen would have been reflecting social concerns and trends.

From my non-expert reading of the history of these times, it seems the level of formality increased in all interactions, even the most intimate, after the Renaissance, reaching a zenith in the Regency and Victorian eras.

People would have used the formal second person you in more and more contexts, and the familiar/intimate *thou* less, until a tipping point was reached and the singular forms disappeared entirely.

Contemporary English-speaking societies have retreated from that level of formality. Even the most formal interactions, such as job interviews and audiences with dignitaries, are far more casual than they were 200 years ago. Plus, we lost our means of distinguishing with a mere word whom exactly we were addressing.

That's why, independently in many varieties of English around the world, the distinction has been reintroduced. Not by the resurrection of *thou*, but by keeping *you* as the singular, and introducing a new plural such as *youse* (Australia, NZ, SA, Ireland, Scotland), *yinz* (Pittsburgh, parts of the UK) and *y'all* (US South, West Indies, Alberta).

No committee approved it. Some folks starting using it and, because it filled a need, it spread. Once an old form such as *thou* has disappeared from a language, it is unlikely to return even if a need for it arises.

Rather, speakers will use the available resources of the living language to innovate. So *youse* (or *yous*) is simply a regular "add an 's'" plural, *y'all* is a contraction of the phrase *you all*, and *yinz* appears to be a contraction of *you ones*.

In some places the phrasal you(s) guys is used, and in Kriol, an Aboriginal language of the Northern Territory, the plural *yumob* comes from *you mob*.

So, will this very useful innovation become standard? That's impossible to predict, but we know that many people react negatively to any linguistic innovation, especially one that arises from non-Standard varieties.

The paradox of this prescriptivism is this: most prescriptivists don't want to see the attrition of a language's expressivity and nuance. But prescriptivism rarely prevents the disappearance of forms and structures. It didn't save *thou*. But what it may hamper is the arrival or spread of innovations.

Prescriptivism doesn't like to let stuff in, but it's no good at stopping stuff from falling out.

Hopefully, literally, begs the question: the three most annoying misuses in English

Baden Eunson

Atrocities in English are committed every day. Here are three of the worst. You may be surprised, but hopefully you won't literally explode with anger.

When we talk of words, even if we don't know it, we tend to divide ourselves into two schools of thought — the descriptivists and the prescriptivists. Prescriptivists tend to believe that English has hard and fast rules, and that language change, particularly when vulgar, should not be included in dictionaries. Thus, they will get very upset at split infinitives and (unlike Churchill) ending a sentence with a preposition.

When an editor rewrote Churchill's words to avoid ending a sentence with a preposition, he is said to have angrily responded, "This is the sort of English up with which I will not put."

Descriptivists, by contrast, tend to be more tolerant of language change and may feel uncomfortable laying down the law on what Correct English is.

"I, like, literally died"

So, what do you think you are? Even though you may be uncomfortable being classified as someone who lays down rules, consider how you would feel if you heard a friend say, "I literally exploded with anger!" Most of us would say that this is absurd, that your friend had confused literally with figuratively or virtually.

And yet, as *Salon Magazine* points out, a number of dictionaries (*Merriam-Webster* and *Macmillan Dictionary*) have taken the extreme descriptivist path of allowing *literally* to mean *figuratively*.

The online Dictionary.com sits slightly on the fence, seeing the new meaning as an intensifier, a word that puts emphasis on what they are saying. In this way, literally can mean "actually; without exaggeration or inaccuracy".

If you think this admission of a new meaning of literally is ridiculous, then you are on the way to being a prescriptivist.

Hopefully, I will have hope

Consider the fate of the adverb hopefully, as in the Robert Louis Stevenson quote "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive," where the verb or doing word — travel — is modified by an adverb, hopefully, telling us how we will feel about travelling. In the past 30 years or so, a new meaning has emerged, making the word hopefully a disjunct, or sentence adverb, as in "hopefully, it will be OK".

I hear this usage as code for "I don't have much hope at all — go away and don't bother me". Many dictionaries and usage books try to say it's no worse than regrettably or arguably, but they're wrong; it is: as Kingsley Amis observed, the person who uses it as a sentence adverb/disjunct:

> … can't say 'I hope' because that would imply that he has surrendered control of events; he can't really use J.F. Kennedy's favourite, "I am hopeful that'", without being J.F. Kennedy; he can't say "with luck", which is all he means; so he says "hopefully" and basks in a fraudulent glow of confidence.

It is also different from other disjuncts in that it can cause ambiguity in syntax, or sentence construction. Ernest Gowers and Bruce Fraser in *Plain Words* give this example: "our team will start their innings hopefully immediately after tea".

This is what is called a squinting modifier: are they starting hopefully, or are we speculating that it may occur at a certain time?

We can see the true workings of hopefully as a weasel word.

In other words, if an airline clerk says, "Hopefully, your luggage will turn up", you should be very afraid. How about may, with luck, or even I hope? Or even better: "Our standard procedures for locating baggage are state of the art: I think we will get them back for you quite soon."

Whoa, Nelly! Confidence AND competence. There may even be a case for saying the more incompetent an organisation or person is, the more you will hear disjuncts all over the place (well, hopefully not).

All this begs the question …

Don't get me started on begs the question: this is a logical error ("I like rock and roll because it's the best kind of music around") and not a synonym for prompts/suggests/gives rise to the question.

Perhaps people who say this imagine a dog begging for a biscuit. If they get away with it by bamboozling their listeners, perhaps it's more accurate to say that they got away with begging, borrowing or stealing the question.

These three monstrosities — the distortion of the true meanings of beg the question, hopefully and literally — need to be terminated with extreme prejudice. Prescriptivist? Grammar fascist? You bet!

Three questions not to ask about art — and four to ask instead

Kit Messham-Muir

Art raises a lot of questions. That's what it does. If an art work in a gallery or a news story has made you ask "what the …?", it has already started to do its job.

But for many who are not familiar with art, some of the most often asked questions of art just lead to a dead end. So, is art just a global conspiracy of an Emperor's robe-makers? Or are there some questions that will finally yield some answers?

A couple of years ago, I visited the Tate Modern in London. Standing near a work that consisted of two layers of bricks arranged in a rectangle on the floor, I overheard an irritated visitor asking his friend, "Why is that art?" Hands on hips, he was clearly annoyed by what must have seemed an assault on his intelligence. So, why is that art?

1. Why is that art?

Art isn't a single type of thing, just as "movies" and "music" don't just refer to Hollywood movies or pop songs. A movie can be a silent film, a home video, a documentary or a 3D Hollywood blockbuster. Music can be classical, pop, rap — the possibilities are almost endless. Art is the same.

Some art belongs to longer traditions, which are concerned with how things look, and so is easier to understand, such as a Claude Monet painting of Rouen Cathedral. Some more recent art is about other things.

Expressionist art is about visualising internal psychological and emotional states in colours and gestures. Abstract art is about creating arrangements of colour that are deliberately not drawn

from real objects in the world. Conceptual art is mostly about the idea and the art object isn't that important. Minimalist art (of the kind that annoyed the Tate visitor) is mostly about the material itself.

However, unlike mainstream movies and music, art often doesn't provide much of its own context. What do I mean by this?

Well, to understand anything, you need to know its context. If you watch any Hollywood movie, most of what you require to understand the plot line is contained within the movie, in recognisable characters, scenarios and plot devices. That's great if you just want to eat popcorn and chill out; but also, the meanings are very prescriptive and don't allow much room for alternative interpretations.

But think of a more "arty" movie, like *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch, and you're given less context. The meaning is not so obvious. You have to do more of the interpretive work yourself with the fewer clues you can find.

Art is similar in that you need context to understand it, but it also makes you do much more interpretive work. It doesn't mean that you just make up your own meaning and everyone is right, regardless of how wacky their interpretation. It means that you have to think of what was happening in the world in which the work came about, and to the artist's life, to find the clues.

Yes, it makes you do a lot of work, in the same way a crossword or Sudoku only gives you clues that you have to work with. That's really when it gets interesting.

2. What is it meant to be?

Just over 100 years ago, during the early years of the 20th century, the most experimental artists (those we think of as the avant-garde, the leading edge) were fascinated with the idea of creating a new type of visual language. The visual language that had dominated since the Renaissance was "representation" — that is, a painting was of something, like a landscape, or a vase of flowers,

or a person. Good art was that which most realistically looked like the thing it represented.

But after photography was invented in 1839, there seemed less point in spending hours trying to just copy what we see, especially when a camera could do it quicker and better.

At that point, many avant-garde artists became preoccupied with depicting what couldn't be seen: emotional and psychological states.

In a painting like The Scream (1893), Edvard Munch is attempting to portray the horror of a panic attack through his stabbing brushstrokes, red sky and the vulnerable screaming figure. Other avant-garde artists, such as Pablo Picasso or Wassily Kandinsky, also moved away from representation and towards abstraction.

Abstract artists saw creating painting or sculpture as similar to creating music. Music doesn't represent anything — its "forms" are all completely abstract. This was what abstract art was also trying to do, but with colour and line.

Abstraction rose to dominate art by the middle of the 20th century and then fell by the wayside after the 1970s. But representational art didn't just come back as though nothing had happened. Art remained more about ideas than just looking like something else.

The sculpture that provoked the ire of my fellow visitor to the Tate Modern, Carl Andre's Equivalent VIII, 1966, is 120 bricks arranged in a rectangle on the floor. It's not meant to be something else. It's about the raw materiality of the bricks themselves. That's what Andre was proposing by presenting those bricks in the context of a gallery.

3. A four-year-old could do that, couldn't they?

Picasso is often quoted as having said, "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child." He's saying that the conventions of painting that dominated art since the time of the Renaissance are, in a way, quite an easy tried and

tested formula — think here of the Mona Lisa, painted between 1503–06.

Using perspective, shading and other Renaissance rules and techniques, most artists are going to end up with similar results.

Four hundred years after the Renaissance, those rules and techniques got a bit stale and, about a century ago, avant-garde artists grew bored of just copying the world. But if you throw out those old tried and tested Renaissance rules, what do you replace them with?

Picasso went digging in a variety of other sources, such as tribal marks from Africa (which often appear in his work). Other artists, such as Jean Dubuffet, searched for alternative techniques in images made by the mentally ill. And Paul Klee was fascinated with the rawness of children's drawings. If a modern masterpiece looks like it was drawn by a four-year-old, that's probably what the artist was aiming to do.

Sure, there's a particular kind of skill in drawing a dog that looks exactly like the furry thing that barks; but then, what other ways are there of depicting a dog, new and interesting ways that haven't been done before? Now there's a challenge, and one that takes a very different kind of creative imagination than the manual skill of drawing.

Russian artist Oleg Kulik's take on this in 1997 was to spend two weeks in a New York gallery, stripped naked, living in a dog house and being led around on a leash, barking and occasionally biting people.

Okay, that seems a bit extreme, but it captures much more of what a dog is than a flat and still arrangement of graphite on a piece of paper.

Four (better) ways of looking at art

So, what are better questions to ask when confronted with a work of art that seems to make no sense? A few years ago, the Australian art academic Terry Smith suggested what he called

"Four Ways of Looking at Art". Smith's four simple questions ask of art the "what", "how", "when" and "why":

1. What can I see just by looking at this art work?

2. How was this art work actually made?

3. When was it made, and what was happening in art and broader history at that time?

4. Why did the artist create this work and what is its meaning to them, and to us now?

Each of these questions will reveal something more of the context, which will provide much of the meaning of the art work.

So, next time you're confronted by a neat arrangement of bricks on the gallery floor, a messed-up bed in a gallery, a painting that looks like it was done by a four-year-old, start by asking these four questions. You'll prise open a can full of even more questions, and the meaning might well begin to unfurl from the Emperor's robes.

We need ABS arts and sports data to understand our culture

Simon Darcy and Bronwen Dalton

Simon Darcy

Bronwen Dalton

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) last week released its 2014–2018 forward work plan. The work plan confirms the June media release that arts and sport data will disappear from the ABS-funded component of culture, sport and recreation statistics collec-

tion as part of ongoing expenditure reductions of A\$50 million over three years, started under the previous Labor government.

This includes the disbanding of the National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics that strategically directed the ABS data collection and reporting in this area. The implications are significant where, for example, the ABS General Social Survey under "social conditions" no longer makes any reference to arts or sport data.

A culture built on volunteers

Australia prides itself on its artistic capacity, sporting ability and participation, as well as the selflessness of its volunteer workforce across all sectors of civil society. The majority of arts and sport are delivered by the not-for-profit sector through volunteer workforces. It is disappointing that the ABS has had to make decisions to severely curtail data collection and reporting in these important areas of citizenship.

From grassroots sports grounds, to community arts centres, to national sport and arts organisations with their focus on excellence, all have significant contributions from their organisation's volunteer workforces.

Not-for-profit organisations that manage these volunteer workforces are, according to ABS data, one of the biggest employers in Australia. They account for some 1 million employees or 8.6% of overall employment — up from 890,000 in 2006–07.

They contributed A\$55 billion to Australia's economy in 2012–13. This was an increase of A\$22 billion on 2006–07 (up from \$34 billion, or 3.4% of GDP, in 2006–07).

The not-for-profit sector generated income of A\$107.5 billion (up from A\$76 billion in 2006–07) and has been at the forefront of developing a more innovative approach to its activities through social enterprise.

The loss of the arts and sports data is compounded by the loss of the module on volunteering, which has documented the changing nature of volunteering over time.

What is as disconcerting is that the General Social Survey has also discarded its modules on indigeneity and disability.

We know that these two groups are vulnerable, marginalised and excluded from many areas of social participation. This data source has been invaluable for monitoring improvements or setbacks to social participation over time.

While key stakeholders may choose to fill the data and reporting space left by the ABS, the likelihood of this occurring given the budgetary squeeze in Canberra is questionable. For example, the Committee of Australian Sport and Recreation Officials and its predecessor organisation co-funded with the ABS the Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey 2001–2010.

Why we need this data

The data collected by the ABS, and the General Social Survey in particular, provides the means to understanding and enhancing the economic, social and cultural impact of the not-for profit, arts and sport sectors on Australian society.

Research based on this data helps ensure evidence-based policies and educative tools that enable industry practitioners to understand and embrace best practice standards.

Without a central mechanism such as the ABS, sector-wide datasets cannot be compiled. This creates two important issues that cannot be established without the data:

- the accountability of the sectors (including parts thereof that are not-for-profits that gain tax advantages and collect funds from the public) is undermined.

- Research needed to inform policy and educate practitioners and the wider community about best practice relating to a wide range of these sectors' activities, including standards of governance, legal compliance, fundraising and reporting, cannot be generated.

More fundamentally, without data, we are not in a position to say anything meaningful about Australian sport, arts or not for

profits. We will lack answers to questions that range from the most straightforward — for example, how many sports, arts or not-for-profit organisations are there in Australia? — to more complex ones, such as how does one assess the cumulative social and economic impact of these important sectors.

Data that shapes policy

When it suits, ministers revel in Australia's sporting prowess and cultural creativity; careful development and evaluation of policies in these areas are another matter. Of the 62 policies/discussion papers that the Coalition took to the 2013 federal election, not one referred to the arts or sport. Yet, we have a Minister for the Arts in Senator George Brandis and a Minister for Sport in Peter Dutton.

The report of the 2009 government-appointed Independent Sport Panel, chaired by industrialist David Crawford, declared that there was "an extraordinary dearth of robust data on participation in sport" and that a "lack of fundamental data on most aspects of the sport sector substantially inhibits an evidence-based approach to the development of policies and strategies".

While the federal government does not have responsibility for delivery of arts and sport facilities and programs at grassroots level (since this falls largely to state/territory and local governments and the not-for-profit sector) it has been widely accepted, at least since the 1980s, that data on participation levels should be collected at national level.

It is only from independently gathered data from the ABS or other public agency stakeholders that policy-relevant information such as the following is brought to light:

- Despite the success of Australia's elite swimmers in international competition, fewer than 8% of Australian adults swim, even once, in the course of a year, and this figure is falling. It's an unbelievable figure!

- Success at Olympics does not lead to a "trickle-down effect" of increased participation in Olympic sport by the public.

- Only 25% of Australian adults visit a museum, even once, in the course of a year — while this proportion has increased since 2000, it is lower than it was in the mid-1990s.

- While Australians appear obsessed with sport, 90% of Australians receptively participated in at least one art form and 40% had creatively participated in the arts and only 7% had no artistic engagement in the last 12 months.

Now governments of all persuasions are encouraging organisations in these sectors to supplement their income from other sources, especially philanthropy.

In a 2014 speech to the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) conference, Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews outlined his vision of civil society, arguing that civil society should not be created nor controlled by the state as too much intervention denies citizens the opportunity to achieve something for themselves.

To summarise the ideas presented, civil society should stand apart and on its own two feet.

However, without information to inform a case for support, funds are unlikely to be forthcoming from a hard-nosed corporate sector that demands social returns on its investment.

This loss of data is shortsighted, ill considered and to the detriment of good governance, innovation and creativity in arts, sport and the wider not-for-profit sector, which is driven by being at the forefront of understanding social trends.

We implore the decision-makers to reconsider the loss or significant cutback or reduced reporting of such important data for understanding the size, dimensions, dynamism and contributions of Australia's civil society.

Native advertising a media credibility crisis in waiting

Jim Macnamara

UK media giant the BBC, a perceived bastion of editorial independence, this year moved to expand BBC Worldwide activities into blended advertising-editorial "client solutions". It's a sign the emerging practice now referred to as "native advertising" is becoming mainstream.

Use of "embedded" approaches to advertising and promotion have been growing for several years, and their forerunners, product placement and "advertorial", have been around since the early 20th century.

But the placement of Aston Martin cars in James Bond movies and Coca-Cola drink cups in front of judges of TV talent shows are obvious and relatively innocuous compared with the latest advertising and promotion techniques.

New embedded techniques

In case you have missed the emerging debate — and you almost certainly will have missed some of the hidden advertising and promotional content "embedded" in media content because that is the intent — advertisers and marketers are turning to new approaches to combat the effects of declining reach and impact of traditional advertising. Technologies that enable audiences to bypass traditional advertising such as TiVo and "ad blockers" are growing in popularity, and "persuasion knowledge" research shows when consumers view content as intentional commercial or political persuasion, they are less likely to be persuaded.

New advertising approaches go by 20 or more names including "native advertising", "branded content", "brand integration",

and "brand placement". What these techniques have in common is that paid advertising and promotional messages are embedded in media content so as to be at least partially hidden and sometimes invisible to media consumers. Along with renewed interest in "advertorial", which packages paid content to look like editorial, other embedded content creeping into our daily media diet includes:

- paid interviews in talk shows
- sponsored celebrities promoting products and services on talk, infotainment, lifestyle and even news programs without sponsorship disclosure
- paid online posts, comments and reviews
- digital publications that are presented to appear as independent media, but are sponsored
- advergames
- sponsored content on social media
- storylines in TV sitcoms written to promote a product or service.

In the US, *Forbes Magazine, The Atlantic* and *The Washington Post* have launched native advertising-cum-advertorial products. Forbes launched BrandVoice in 2011, and Atlantic Media followed suit with products such as its "Ideas Lab", a custom-built digital publication described as "an interactive platform around the most critical issues impacting America's economic future," which is fully sponsored by GE.

In Australia, Fairfax Media launched Brand Discover late last year and News Corporation has been publishing and broadcasting various forms of embedded advertising content for some time.

Media revenue from various forms of embedded advertising and promotion was estimated at US$8.25 billion worldwide in 2012 and is forecast to double by 2016, indicating that these emerging formats are substantial and growing.

So, what's the problem? Media companies need to find new revenue streams to address their declining fortunes and avoid collapse, which would not be good for marketers or society.

A lack of guidelines and codes

The problem, according to critics, is at least twofold. First, and foremost, journalists, media academics, and some consumer groups are concerned there are a lack of guidelines and codes of practice to preserve the important "church and state" division between advertising and editorial and maintain transparency in the source of media information.

Some media and marketing industry bodies have produced updated guidelines to protect consumers. For instance, the American Society of Magazine Editors (AMSE), which pioneered guidelines in response to concern about print media advertorials in 1982, released updated guidelines on native advertising, sponsored content and paid links in September last year. Also, the Branded Content Marketing Association has released guidelines for what it calls "advertiser funded programming" in which it states that "editorial independence is absolutely central". But this seems not to be the case in many instances.

The Atlantic's first foray into sponsored editorial content in 2013 — an article titled "David Miscavige leads Scientology to milestone year", caused reader outrage and resulted in an apology. Atlantic Digital general manager Kimberly Lau admitted the article "read like warmed-over PR".

Not surprisingly, journalists are concerned. The *New York Times* has come out publicly criticising so-called native advertising in a number of articles. Last year its media writer noted that:

> almost all of the publishers running branded content say they abide by the traditional church-and-state separation, (but)

> the sponsored content runs beside the editorial on many sites and is almost indistinguishable.

The ABC's *Media Watch* program drew critical attention to these practices in July 2013 and broadcast a second critique on April 21 this year expressing concern about the activities of Atlantic Media in the US and Fairfax Media in Australia, warning of consumer deception and corruption of journalism.

Will it work?

Along with major questions about the ethics of these forms of embedded promotional content, a further key question is whether the techniques work. Despite claims that embedded techniques will be the "salvation" of the troubled advertising industry, marketing academics have noted that most measurement still relies on impressions (the number of times a story has been accessed or viewed), with little evidence of awareness, attitudinal or behavioural outcomes.

Given still unanswered questions about its effectiveness, significant ethical questions about some embedded practices, and the risk of a further media audience backlash (not to mention potential government regulatory intervention), advertisers and marketers should pay attention to self-regulation and standards. If they don't they could see the media and advertising industries plummet further into a crisis of credibility, as well as an economic crisis.

Should the dead roll over to make room for real estate?

Patrick Stokes

As a general rule, one place you really don't want to find yourself is in between a Melburnian and a piece of real estate.

But one group of long-term city residents has been getting in the way of developers and planners for a very long time now. This is even more impressive when you consider these residents have been dead for well over a century.

The Queen Victoria Market's carpark sits atop the city's original cemetery, founded in the 1830s. Despite exhumations in the 1920s there are still thousands of bodies buried there, some at depth, others barely a foot beneath the surface.

Surveyor Robert Hoddle's understandable lack of foresight in siting the cemetery so close to the CBD grid that bears his name has meant that the use of this land has long been a sensitive and difficult matter. Works over the years have had to negotiate the competing needs of the market (in more sense than one) and the non-economic needs of human remembrance, trying to combine mercantile and sacred space in a delicate balancing act.

Recently, City of Melbourne has proposed turning most of the existing carpark into a park as a sign of respect for those buried there — a far cry from the attitude of the 1930s, when a steam shovel was used to tear through the old cemetery to build the Franklin Street stores.

And yet, questions have still been raised about whether the new plans show sufficient forbearance. The proposed extension of Franklin Street and commercial development at the southern end of the market precinct would potentially sit atop burial sites.

This clash between the call of the future and the depth of the past poses important questions for us here in the present: should the dead impede the activities of the living in this way? What, if anything, do we owe the dead?

It's too easy to say "nothing", that the dead simply don't exist any more and any responsibilities we have regarding the dead are actually duties to the living. Even the unsentimental Aristotle thought it "heartless" to claim the dead couldn't be harmed by events after their death, such as the fortunes of their descendants.

There is a real question as to how we can harm or benefit a person who no longer exists, and philosophers have tried to answer this question in a number of ways. An influential answer, first offered by Thomas Nagel, is that just as we can harm someone at a great spatial distance, say by betraying them, we can also harm them at a temporal distance as well.

So when, for instance, Colin Campbell Ross was pardoned for Melbourne's Gun Alley Murder, 86 years after he was wrongfully convicted and hanged, this was justice for Ross, not for the living.

I've argued previously that the dead persist phenomenally in our recollection — not as conscious selves, but nonetheless as the objects of loving attention they were for us while they lived — and that this gives us a responsibility to maintain that memory.

Sartre said the dead are "prey" to the living, but they are also our dependants: without our maintenance they slip away into oblivion, into what Goethe called the "second death" of being forgotten.

Yet those buried beneath the Queen Vic are beyond memory. There are no direct personal bonds between the living and the dead in this case, no personal promises left to honour or break. Whatever connections of blood or allegiance we might have to these people are lost in their anonymity. Each is, for us, simply a distinct token of humanity, and whatever we owe them, we owe them simply as human beings.

Kierkegaard declared that remembering the dead was the purest act of love, because the dead can neither repay us for our trouble nor force us to remember them. This work of love is harder when the dead are beyond human memory, stripped of their identity and decomposed into a body that can only be reconstructed, not recognised, and described only through general categories — age, height, sex.

But the sense remains that even these remains are those of distinctive persons, objects of someone's loving regard even if they remain unknowable to us.

The inscription "Known Unto God" on the gravestones of unknown soldiers picks out something like this: to us these are perhaps just bones, but someone — God, at least, for the epitaph-writers of the Great War — knew this person in their distinctive fullness. They lived. And that they lived deserves to be respected.

The reason we're horrified by the thought of a steam shovel tearing up the old cemetery is not that we're superstitious or have taken metaphors about the "resting place" of the dead too literally. It's that the dead continue to demand a respect that extends to how we treat their remains, however far removed these might be from the full, living person they once were.

The dead, in a way, have a right to be awkward. They should be an obstruction, something the living need to work around, because in doing so we refuse to quarantine them from the realm of what is.

The rights of those buried beneath the market carpark are, of course, no more absolute than those of any other Melburnians. It would be silly to deny that the living have a far greater claim on us, and the demands of the dead are easily outweighed by other considerations. But that doesn't mean the dead have no claim on us at all.

The continued sensitive management of this site isn't simply a piece of good urban planning or canny politics. It's a work of love.