Towards a methodology for tracking culturally recurrent type-of-person related ways of meaning
- the linguistic performance of identity/ persona

Peter R. R. White, University of New South Wales
Forget the first koel; the shrill screaming scourge of spring and summer interrupts. Mechanical blowers are mindlessly bludgeoning leaves. Whining-wailing whippersnippers are razoring shrubs and grass borders to horticultural exactitudes. Lawns are being cut to dust by rigid schedules and trees brutally truncated.

For century-old interpretations of horticultural aesthetics we are doltishly and selfishly shattering the peaceful panacea of bird calls and day with an ever-increasing clamorous industrial aural assault. Vast public and private spaces are being wantonly screech-manicured and blasted. The insidious and growing destruction of peaceful public amenity by individuals and private and public institutions is out of control.

The Protection of the Environment Operations (Noise Control) Regulation 2008 is clearly out of date. And how can we rely on councils when they are responsible for the management of noise yet one of the worst offenders? Inge Close Manly
Forget the first koel; the shrill screaming scourge of spring and summer interrupts. Mechanical blowers are mindlessly bludgeoning leaves. Whining-wailing whippersnappers are razoring shrubs and grass borders to horticultural exactitudes. Lawns are being cut to dust by rigid schedules and trees brutally truncated.

I know this person
I recognise this type of person; I have encountered other people (other letter-to-the-editor writers) who present themselves linguistically/come across in similar ways

A recurrent “way of meaning” (recurrent syndrome of co-articulated, intersecting meanings) which I relate to

- a recurrent way of being human (or at least a recurrent way of being a letter-to-the-editor writer);
- a recurrent way of “coming across” as a person;
- a recurrent “personhood”;
- a type-of-person category
Forget the first koel; the shrill screaming scourge of spring and summer interrupts. Mechanical blowers are mindlessly bludgeoning leaves. Whining-wailing whippersnippers are razoring shrubs and grass borders to horticultural exactitudes. Lawns are being cut to dust by rigid schedules and trees brutally truncated.

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Someone who lives in a “leafy suburb”
A lover of nature and tranquillity
Someone at odds with lovers of mowing and horticultural mechanicals
Someone happy to put their opinions out there and strongly criticise others, but in a “good natured”, or “light-hearted” manner
Forget the first koel; the shrill screaming scourge of spring and summer interrupts. Mechanical blowers are mindlessly bludgeoning leaves. Whining-wailing whippersnappers are razoring shrubs and grass borders to horticultural exactitudes. Lawns are being cut to dust by rigid schedules and trees brutally truncated.

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Someone who lives in a “leafy suburb”
A lover of nature and tranquillity
Someone at odds with lovers of mowing and horticultural mechanicals
Someone happy to put their opinions out there and strongly criticise others, but in a “good natured”, or “light-hearted” manner
“Educated”: someone very much in command of the genre and register - to the extent that they play with the language; draw attention to the expression plane
Someone who doesn’t take themselves entirely seriously – parodical turn of phrase
Keep your randy cat in your Own place. Bloody cat pisses all over my cat. Get it desexed. Female cats everywhere in Marian St and lane. Your cat should be kept indoors at night. I intend to inform the council.

You cat is all black and with some white on it. I have a cat cage from the council. We intend trapping the cat.
On Monday (06.07.98) we received this anonymous note in our letterbox (see below).

It is true we do have a small black and white cat - his name is Nigel. As responsible cat owners we had him desexed (over a year ago) at the correct age to ensure he does not 'spray'. Nigel is a very shy and timid little cat and spends most of his time indoors. He certainly stays in the house at night. We believe he should not be the target of such threats.

...

Yours sincerely, Simon, Bec (and Nigel) 13 Marian Street. Enmore
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Yours sincerely, Simon, Bec (and Nigel) 13 Marian Street.
JUST hours after our Consul-General and two dozen other people were murdered in Istanbul on Thursday, an idiotic, self-indulgent rabble of wreckers went to demonstrate in London's Trafalgar Square. As part of their 'fun', they imitated the fall of the genocidal maniac Saddam Hussein by toppling a Saddam-style effigy of President Bush. Every American should be told that this insult to an honoured guest and strong ally of this country was not carried out in the names of most of the British people. It was committed by a group of morons who have no idea how dangerous this world is, and how essential it is that every step is taken to make it safer. (continues…) [Simon Heffer, The Daily Mail, November 22, 2003]

My neighbour recently asked me, on behalf of her friend Julie Christie, to sign a petition against a war on Iraq. Many of those approached - the Great and the Good and assorted thespians (many of whom are friends of mine), all decent, caring and humanitarian people - did sign.

And their illustrious names were duly printed in full-page ads.

Indeed many of you decent, caring and humanitarian Mail readers will have signed similar petitions - and some of you may even be marching today with my neighbour's friends against 'Bush's and Blair's War'.

But I could not sign. And I cannot join this march… I reluctantly believe (whatever Hans Blix or the U.N. Security Council say) that war is probably the only answer. [Ann Lesley, The Daily Mail, Feb, 15, 2003]
a notion of textual persona

Drawing on work by Hasan, Poynton, Martin, Don, Knight, Zappavigna, Cléirigh, Bakar, Caldwell, others

Speakers/writers come across as a certain “type of person” according to how they speak/mean (there are recurrent communicative styles/ways of meaning which we recognise when we encounter them in a text)

Persona (the “personhood” or type-of-person category being construed) an effect of certain ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings operating in a given communication – but particularly influenced by interpersonal positionings, especially the attitudinal and dialogistic stances adopted by the speaker/writer

Question:

Just which are the meanings/combinations of meaning which are persona-constitutive: recurrent in the culture and functional in a speaker/writer coming across as a certain “type of person”? How do they operate communicatively?

Is it possible/useful to come up with a global model which will be relevant/appropriate for all instances of persona-performance analysis or do we need a more localised approach (different analytical categories; different parameters of possible variation)?
dico ergo sum
I speak therefore I am
What are the bases for “type-of-person” taxonomies?
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

• What is it that might be influential/determinative in causing different people to favour similar “ways of meaning” and by this to come across as instances of the same “type-of-person” category, while at the same time causing other people to favour different “ways of meaning”

• One proposition
  – A person’s communicative behaviour (ways of meaning) may be conditioned by their membership in macro, demographically-determined social groupings such as those of “class”, “gender”, “sexual orientation”, “age”, “ethnicity”, etc
  – The social conditioning common to people who have membership in a given demographic grouping results in significant commonalities in the ways-of-meaning deployed by those people
  – Particular ways of meaning become associated with a particular macro social grouping and hence may “index” that grouping
    • a speaker/writer may self-consciously deploy a given way-of-meaning so as to “perform” membership in a given macro demographic grouping
Evidence of culturally-recurrent, macro-category associated ways-of-meaning

- Work by Hasan, Cloran and Williams
- Whether mothers in what they termed “low autonomy families” (working class) consistently conversed with their young children in different way was from mothers from “high autonomy families” (middle class) [Hasan 2009, p.393]
- Discovered different recurrent “semantic orientations”
  - Middle class: “individual autonomy style”
  - Working class: “interpersonal trust style”
- Echoing Bernstein’s proposals re “elaborated” and “restricted” code.
“interpersonal trust style”: indicating a person (a persona) who “takes for granted a principle of togetherness” and who conveys the sense that verbal interaction is not needed “for access to a knowledge of others minds”

“individual autonomy style”: indicating a person (a persona) who “maximises the separation of minds” and who “relies criterially on certain qualities of verbal communication to bridge the gap”.
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

• Relatively stable role/hierarchy related: teacher/student, parent/child, doctor/patient, real estate agent/vendor; judge/prosecutor/defendant

• Speakers learn, or may be constrained by others, to take on recurrent role-related ways-of-meaning in institutional settings
Making meaning like a “good” teacher

“This chapter demonstrates how identity is constituted through the language resources called upon by two participants, the interviewer/researcher and the interviewee/teacher, in a research interview. Specifically, aspects of ethnomethodological and conversational analysis are used to examine a lengthy interview transcript and reveal that initially the identity work is done by the interviewer as she positions the teacher to take up the identities of critically reflective teacher and excellent research participant.

Further analysis shows how the teacher accepts the interviewer’s positioning... She shifts from a dilemmatic discourse to a more positive construction of how her teaching practices help students to fulfill parental expectations, therefore positioning herself as a good practitioner.”

Candidates for type-of-person classifications

• Contextually emergent, communicative-purpose driven, contingent cultural positions which give rise to recurrency in ways-of-meaning/semantic orientation

  – Research focusses on recurrent patterns of evaluative positioning – the attitudinal position put at stake and the ways in which the speaker/writer negotiates these positions:
...textual persona is a function of the acts of positioning that each contributor makes to a discussion, in the co-text of a whole text - or during a series of texts created in similar contexts - and generally with a specific audience in mind. As such, this conception of textual persona can be distinguished from other concepts of identity which often depend on the notion of a stable individual self-image, or on an individual’s social role ascriptions (such as woman, teacher, mother, English, etc), or on wider ethnic, cultural, or other social groupings with whom individuals may identify, such as America, Church of England, Manchester Football Club, etc.

The construal of textual persona .. could be described as concerned with the performed, as opposed to an ascribed identity. (Don, in preparation)

Cléirigh (in preparation) distinction between the instantiation of persona and the potential meaner in a social context
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

- Contextually emergent, communicative-purpose driven, contingent cultural positions which give rise to recurrency in ways-of-meaning/semantic orientation
  - journalist commentator/correspondent (Feez, Iedema, White, White, Martin and White)
Journalistic personae: commentator/ correspondent

Commentator
Employs full range of Judgement sub-types, with an emphasis on Social Sanction – presents as authorised/able to judge people’s behaviour in ethical terms

Correspondent
Limit their assessments to Social Esteem – presents as authorised/able to pass judgements of Tenacity, Capacity, Normality but not the ethical assessments of Propriety and Veracity
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

- Contextually emergent, contingent cultural positions which give rise to recurrency in ways-of-meaning/semantic orientation
  - journalist commentator/correspondent (Feez, Iedema, White, White, Martin and White)
  - film buff personae: aesthete/ sentimentalist (White 2008)
Cinema buff personae: aesthete v. sentimentalist

**Aesthete**
Strong preference for Appreciation – aesthetic assessments of the film’s style, appearance, form etc.

**Sentimentalist**
Strong preference for Affect – personal emotional responses to various aspects of the movie and also to what it lacked
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

- Contextually emergent, contingent cultural positions which give rise to recurrency in ways-of-meaning/semantic orientation:
  - journalist commentator/correspondent (Feez, Iedema, White, White, Martin and White)
  - film buff personae: aesthete/sentimentalist (White 2008)
  - candidates for political office: incumbent/ challenger (Benoit)
  - young offenders personae (“prodigal”, “redeemed”, etc) in NSW Youth Justice Conferences (Martin, Zappavigna, Chlérigh)
Youth Justice Conferencing: Young Persons

forthcoming but unremorseful YP ('guilty' as charged, but inclined to blame others for what went wrong)

forthcoming, contrite 'redeemed' persona (ideal celebrated as far as the enactment of restorative justice is concerned)

-ER

guilty

redeemed

+SR

accused

prodigal

mundane 'small target' reality, namely an 'accused' (unforthcoming, reluctantly remorseful) YP

remorseful but unforthcoming 'prodigal' YP (common enough where the YP is sorry but was too intoxicated by drugs or alcohol for example to remember much of what went on)
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

- Contextually emergent, contingent cultural positions which give rise to recurrency in ways-of-meaning/semantic orientation
  - journalist commentator/correspondent (Feez, Iedema, White, White, Martin and White)
  - film buff personae: aesthete/sentimentalist (White 2008)
  - candidates for political office: incumbent/challenger (Benoit)
  - young offenders personae (“prodigal”, “redeemed”, etc) in NSW Youth Justice Conferences (Martin, Zappavigna, Chlérigh);
  - microblogging personae - e.g the “deviant”, “addicted”, “frazzled” “#bad mother” (Zappavigna)
#badmother persona

Microblog post (tweet)

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Need. Wine.
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- What a spectacularly horrendous night. Max awake for 3 hours, wanting "iPad! IPAD!!" I think NOT baby. Then twins snuck into bed @ 4am. Ugh

- Just spilt wine on son’s homework diary. #badmother

“deviant” “addicted” “frazzled”

- from Zappavigna, 2013
Candidates for type-of-person classifications

- journalist commentator/correspondent (Feez, Iedema, White, White, Martin and White)
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- microblogging personae – e.g the “deviant”, “addicted”, “frazzled” “#bad mother” (Zappavigna)
- email-list “poster” personae: e.g. the affectually self-absorbed poster identity (Don 2008, “Analysis of textual identity through profiles of evaluative disposition”)
- “trickster/enforcer” personae of rap music (Caldwell 2010, 2014)
- the Malaysian “simple person” identity in Malaysian English personal advertisements (Bakar 2013)

- etc, etc (type-of-person categories not derived in advance but on the basis of observed recurrent “ways of meaning”)
aestimare ergo sum
I evaluate therefore I am
Foci of identity/persona scholarship

• Formulating identity/persona categories: speaking about
  – ascribed identity

• Performing identity/persona
  – speaking as (habitual)
    • typical context: spontaneous, synchronous, face-to-face/embodied, interactive
  – speaking as if (premeditated, conscious)
    • typical context: non-spontaneous, asynchronous, one-to-many/one-to-unknown, un-embodied, non-interactive
Persona in staged, asynchronous, one-to-many/unknown (typically disembodied/written) communications

- A proposed methodology for discovering, describing and analysing “type-of-person” related recurrent semantic orientations/ways of meaning
- The particular culturally-recurrent language options (semantic orientations/ways of meaning) which are persona-constitutive/persona-sensitive
- Lines of possible type-of-person conditioned similarity according to
  - [standing] the writer’s social standing (empowerment) as construed in the text(s)
  - [affinity] the writer’s relations of social affinity with the putative addressee, as construed in the text(s)
  - [value positioning] the nature of the value positions which the writer puts at risk and the terms under which they negotiate rapport with the putative addressee over these value positions
Halliday’s (2002: 14) intersection of stratification and instantiation.
Halliday's (2002: 14) intersection of stratification and instantiation

- All possible types of "person"
- Sub-type of "person"
- "person" as instance of sub-type
- Particular reweightings of the probabilities of occurrence/co-occurrence of meanings
- All possible semantic orientations
- Commonalities as to semantic orientation
- A particular semantic orientation
Affinity/Solidarity: contact(affiliation) v. alignment

After Don 2010, 2013
power/ social standing issues

- **field** *(expertise and classification)*
- **tenor** *(status in a social hierarchy)*
- **mode** *(prominence – how mass communicative discourses construct public figures)*
- **genre** *(control – as participants direct others to do things)*

Martin 1992: 527

- **experiential** *(expertise - use of language indicating ability to construe the categories and relations of a given experiential domain, notable in the context of specialist domains)*
- **interpersonal** *(authority - use of language demonstrating or implying ability – lack of ability - to control or influence others; membership in a hierarchically positioned social grouping)*
- **textual** *(elocution - use of language demonstrating ability to control or manipulate the discourse/communicative exchange)*

[Based on a poorly remembered chat with Sue Hood]
Table 7.10. Aspects of the realisation of unequal status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unequal status</th>
<th>dominate</th>
<th>defer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NON-RECIROCITY</td>
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<td>(grammar foregrounded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHONOLOGY</td>
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<tr>
<td>tone certain (1,5)</td>
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<td>tone uncertain (2,4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>establish rhythm</td>
<td></td>
<td>follow rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standard accent</td>
<td></td>
<td>non-standard accent</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRAMMAR</td>
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<td>Residue ellipsis</td>
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<td>comment: presented</td>
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<td>vocation: respectful</td>
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<td>person: 2nd</td>
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<td>tagging: checking;</td>
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<td>agency: I/Agent</td>
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<td>LEXIS</td>
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<td>explicit bodily functions</td>
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<td>elaborate chains</td>
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<td>initiate strings</td>
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<td>(repetition)</td>
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<td>congruence</td>
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<td>metaphor</td>
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</table>
Affiliation (contact/ social distance)

Fig. 7.14. Tenor — contact systems

Martin 1992 (English Text),: 531
## Contact/ social distance (affiliation)

### Table 7.12. Tenor — aspects of the realisation of contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact/ proliferation/ contraction</th>
<th>involved</th>
<th>uninvolved</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>phonology</td>
<td>Pre-tonic delicacy</td>
<td>basic tone</td>
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<td>marked tonality</td>
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<td>marked tonicity</td>
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<td>varied rhythm</td>
<td>constant rhythm</td>
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<td>reduction processes</td>
<td>full syllables</td>
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<td>native accent</td>
<td>standard accent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range of accents</td>
<td>single accent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acronym</td>
<td>full form</td>
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<td>minor clauses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mood contraction</td>
<td>no contraction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vocation</td>
<td>no vocation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>range of names</td>
<td>single name</td>
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<td>nick-name</td>
<td>full name</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>semantics</td>
<td>/ homophoric</td>
<td>endophoric</td>
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<td></td>
<td>/ implicit conjunction</td>
<td>explicit conjunction</td>
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<td>interaction patterns</td>
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<td>experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>metaphor</td>
<td>congruence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Construed social standing** (the language such as to construe...)

**Balance**
- **Balanced**: the speaker and addressee/some other presented as having equal social standing?
- **Imbalanced**: the speaker and addressee/some other presented as having unequal social standing

**Empowerment**
- **Empowered**: speaker presented as having higher standing with respect to expertise, authority and/or elocution
- **Deselected**: speaker presented as having lower standing with respect to expertise, authority and/or elocution

**Affiliation**
- **Close**: addresser-addressee presented as more affiliated (*sharing of common experiences, knowledge*)
- **Distant**: less affiliated

**Alignment**
- **Aligned**: addresser-addressee presented as *sharing values and beliefs*
- **Disaligned**
value positioning

axiological orientation

epistemic

valency

positive
negative

diversified (mixed attitudinally)

focus

weighted

affectual

judgemental

appreciative

explicitness

inscribed

implied

volume

loud

muted

attitudinal

attitudinal complexion

self

singer

plural

other

2nd person

3rd person

targeting

sphere (ideological charge)

private (ideologically inconsequential “Vanilla is the best ice cream flavour.” “It was Tom who ate the cake.”)

public/political (ideologically consequential; puts at issue membership in a social significant community of shared value)

communality (how demanding the speaker is of axiological concurrence)

broad (speaker open to diversity of voices)

narrow (speaker closed to a diversity of voices)
Communality

- White 2005, 2008. How “conditioning” is the speaker/writer with respect to axiological conjunction?
  - To what degree does that speaker/writer assume the addressee shares their beliefs, values, tastes or feeling?
  - What allowance does the speaker/writer make for alternative viewpoints?

- **Narrow communality** - assumes axiological commonality, admits only those who share the author’s views, puts rapport at risk with those who don’t hold the beliefs and/or values being advanced

- **Broad communality** - makes fewer assumptions as to axiological commonality; allows for the possibility that the addressee may not share the speaker/writer’s beliefs and/or values; wider scope for rapport.

- Realised typically via the resources of Engagement
- Narrow – monoglossic utterances which ignore the possibility of alternative positions.
- Broad – heteroglossic and particularly dialogically expansive utterances, those which actively engage with and recognised the legitimacy of alternative positions.
Forget the first koel; the shrill screaming scourge of spring and summer interrupts. Mechanical blowers are mindlessly bludgeoning leaves. Whining-wailing whippersnippers are razoring shrubs and grass borders to horticultural exactitudes. Lawns are being cut to dust by rigid schedules and trees brutally truncated.

For century-old interpretations of horticultural aesthetics WE are doltishly and selfishly shattering the peaceful panacea of bird calls and day with an ever-increasing clamorous industrial aural assault. Vast public and private spaces are being wantonly screech-manicured and blasted. The insidious and growing destruction of peaceful public amenity by individuals and private and public institutions is out of control.
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Keep your Randy cat in your own place. Bloody cat pisses all over my cat. Get it desexed. Female cats everywhere in Marian St and lane. Your cat should be kept indoors at night. I intend to inform the council.

You cat is all black and with some white on it. I have a cat cage from the council. We intend trapping the cat.
It is true we do have a small black and white cat - his name is Nigel. As responsible cat owners we had him desexed (over a year ago) at the correct age to ensure he does not 'spray'. Nigel is a very shy and timid little cat and spends most of his time indoors. He certainly stays in the house at night. We believe he should not be the target of such threats.

Yours sincerely, Simon, Bec (and Nigel) 13 Marian Street.
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Keep your randy cat

construed social standing
(the language such as to construe...)

balance

balanced

imbalance

empowerment

empowered

???

disempowered

affiliation

close

affinity

alignment

aligned

disaligned

It is true....

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Keep your randy cat

It is true....
JUST hours after our Consul-General and two dozen other people were murdered in Istanbul on Thursday, an idiotic, self-indulgent rabble of wreckers went to demonstrate in London's Trafalgar Square. As part of their 'fun', they imitated the fall of the genocidal maniac Saddam Hussein by toppling a Saddam-style effigy of President Bush. Every American should be told that this insult to an honoured guest and strong ally of this country was not carried out in the names of most of the British people. It was committed by a group of morons who have no idea how dangerous this world is, and how essential it is that every step is taken to make it safer. (continues…)

[Simon Heffer, The Daily Mail, November 22, 2003]

My neighbour recently asked me, on behalf of her friend Julie Christie, to sign a petition against a war on Iraq. Many of those approached - the Great and the Good and assorted thespians (many of whom are friends of mine), all decent, caring and humanitarian people - did sign.

And their illustrious names were duly printed in full-page ads. Indeed many of you decent, caring and humanitarian Mail readers will have signed similar petitions - and some of you may even be marching today with my neighbour's friends against 'Bush's and Blair's War'.

But I could not sign. And I cannot join this march…I reluctantly believe (whatever Hans Blix or the U.N. Security Council say) that war is probably the only answer.

[Ann Lesley, The Daily Mail, Feb, 15, 2003]
For a copy of the slides and for references email me at

prrwhite@verbosity.org