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'The Single Greatest Cause of Domestic Housefires': On the Hole in Hegel's Aesthetics

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Problematising the opposition Hegel makes in his *Aesthetics* between art and science, an opposition which is of course not just Hegel's, this article attempts to theorise the aesthetics of non-fiction. From considering Wittgenstein and Peirce's views on the logic and aesthetics of being, it turns to consider its author's own writing practice. For I am producing all this, and sending it out into the world in this fashion, as part of my literature search for *The 14th Floor*, an experimental novel. And this article is actually a letter to my supervisor. Conceived literally as a science experiment, *The 14th Floor*, and the resultant prac report I will produce about the process of its writing, will aim to undermine something of the illusory divide between art and science, fiction and non-fiction, novelty and knowledge. The article also constitutes a consideration of how we might use the new doctorates in creative arts to stage collisions between traditional knowledges and contemporary creative practices, and so generate the new. I plant a series of autobiographical disruptions into the above, in the form of descriptions of Moscow in late Soviet *perestroika*, where I lived and first learnt that life blows up, sometimes. And that realities, facts and fictions, follow in its wake.

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Introduction

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The following text was produced in the course of a Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Technology, Sydney. It constitutes a critique of Hegel's *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. I was drawn to Hegel because for Hegel, creativity and technology – in his terms, art and science – are mutually exclusive. The same applies for Heidegger, and the major philosophies and theories that have resulted from their works. In other words, the general tenor of modern philosophy is to deny the very possibility of a degree like mine. The degree persists nonetheless.

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In fact, departments of creative writing are expanding their disciplinary reach throughout the Australian university system, and beginning to affect those institutions' research profiles as well. One of the motor forces behind this is clearly the commodification of academic teaching, a result of the neo-liberal 'policy' that has gripped the country these last 20 years. For creative degrees are very popular; students are willing to pay, or rather incur debt, to obtain them. The curious thing about this consumer-led rise in creative writing is that it has even less to do with job placement than the older analytic degrees (as any artist knows). Latin enrolments have increased also. Maybe students don't actually want jobs? Don't tell our government. At any rate, we're in a

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68 situation where creativity and technology are supposed not merely to co-exist,
69 but to produce research.

70 The philosophical difficulty of a research doctorate in creative arts leads to
71 some interesting paradoxes, for those who are happy to fall into them – like
72 ficto-criticism, which must be aesthetically satisfying and scientifically rigor-
73 ous if it is to gain anything more than a lip-service readership. But then, isn't
74 that true of scientific work also? Perhaps these are not really paradoxes at all.
75 Perhaps it is our models of science and technology that are at fault. The follow-
76 ing piece is the text of a letter to my then supervisor, which sought to explore
77 just this possibility. It can be seen as an attempt to derive new thoughts and
78 forms from the paradoxical emergence of creative arts within the brick-bound
79 world of institutionalised knowledge at UTS, the University of Technology,
80 Sydney.

81 It's All Introduction

82 27th March 2000

83 Dear Martin,

84 The single greatest cause of domestic house fires in Moscow in the early 1990s
85 was the random and periodic explosion of Soviet-made TV sets. Moscow in
86 full blown *perestroika* – watching the news could be a strange enough experi-
87 ence: exploding TV sets, brilliantly burning hi-rise buildings, smog stained
88 skies and

89 Where was I?

90 I've been playing with introductions a lot lately. I think you have already seen
91 this **the TV's on** one, from my ³√book:

92 1728. This book takes the form of a spiral. We begin in outer space. A
93 nineteenth century theory of the giant spiral nebulae that form in the
94 heavens attributes their whirlpool shape to a prior collision of stellar
95 bodies. As the energy unleashed by the collision diminishes, the particles
96 released tend to drift toward an ever more rapidly spiralling centre. So
97 they maintain their original momentum, much as the reader of a new
98 book, gaining familiarity with the mind of its author, reads faster and
99 faster to maintain the excitement of first contact. A new universe of dis-
100 parate phenomena steadily contracts into a reading, a set of characteris-
101 ations, a body even, albeit of data. What prior collision?

102 The next is Hegel's *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (1993) in which I found
103 gratifying confirmation of what I had been getting at in paragraph 1728 above.
104 The following five paragraphs will follow Hegel's thinking. I will be in search
105 of an aesthetic that can leap into a rich and strange experimental novel. For
106 that is where this letter is heading: *The 14th Floor*.

107 1. Hegel: A certain common sense claims that art is aimed at the imitation,
108 in full or near verisimilitude, of reality. Yet the moment you compare the
109 products of scenic painting, poetry and music to the natural landscapes they
110 represent, it is clear that these '*one-sided* deceptions' deceive nobody. So why,

111 if the verisimilitude criterion is correct, does one not simply prefer the real
 112 thing (1993: 30)? On the contrary, the role of art is not to imitate, but to pretend
 113 to imitate reality. No artist really wants to deceive his or her audience, for
 114 the power of art lies precisely in its insufficiently veridical status. Recognised
 115 as semblance, the work 'points beyond itself, and refers us away from itself
 116 to something spiritual which it is meant to bring before the mind's eye' (1993:
 117 29). It points to the existence and actions of a creative consciousness, as that
 118 consciousness works through a given set of symbols to express its truth.
 119 'Beyond itself', the artist's work allows one 'to feel the whole range of what
 120 man's soul in its inmost and secret corners has power to experience and to
 121 create' (1993: 33). Aesthetic pleasure arises from the spectator's encounter with
 122 both the work and the authorial agency imagined behind it, with both the
 123 sensuous materiality of the text, and the mind (our intimations thereof) whose
 124 hands have shaped it.

125 2. Hegel poses the 'beyond' of the work as the 'soul that the external appear-
 126 ance indicates' (1993: 23). Yet Hegel is no spiritualist. He eschews any idea
 127 of an abstract or trans-human essence. We 'must understand this idea more
 128 profoundly and more in the concrete' (1993: 25). Transcendence is inherent to
 129 all representation: 'every *word* points to a meaning and has no value in itself'
 130 (1993: 23). The specificity of art lies in the way it wields this movement of
 131 meaning to elicit aesthetic pleasure. Yet in doing so it acts all the more to
 132 evoke Plato's divine, for the beyond evoked in language, however impossible
 133 its claim to presence, is necessarily *personified*. Which is why it appears as a
 134 soul. In this sense all representation is of God. Or whoever we put in His place.
 135 For the Other is not simply semantic, but spiritual; i.e. He / She manifests in
 136 the concrete / phantom contours of an alien / self-same consciousness. In
 137 terms, once more, of art, the hands we glimpse beyond the diegetic frame are
 138 integral to both the meaning and the pleasure which the work affords. For
 139 one reads literature to revel in the mind and desires one imputes to the author,
 140 as much as for the story the text spirals into. In fact, they are inseparable.

141 3. The formal experimentation of so much philosophical work pushes the
 142 boundaries of traditional writing precisely so as to impress upon the text the
 143 novel workings of the mind in question. Witness Heidegger's slow hand
 144 wrenching of language, Kierkegaard's drag shows, Husserl's dramatisation
 145 of the Cartesian meditations. By hollowing out and re-performing the *cogito*
 146 phenomenologically, Husserl shows a consciousness reworking the very sym-
 147 bols of its given world (Husserl, 1988). This is the point of the equation I was
 148 making to you in Sydney between Joyce's *Ulysses* and **the TV's on the blink**
 149 Wittgenstein's two published books. Both open up their author's minds. I
 150 think reading philosophy – as much as reading Milton, looking at Bacon, list-
 151 ening to Ives – is all about meeting people. On their own, often rather
 152 twisted, terrain.

153 4. Literary experimentation, when hypothesised to rupture textual expect-
 154 ations at the right moments, has the paradoxical effect of bringing more of
 155 the author's voices into play. That is, in 'breaking the automatism of the poetic
 156 "I"' (Perelman, 1996: 13), one floods the work with the creatures of the uncon-
 157 scious. Yet to showcase such otherness, the devices must be explicit. The more
 158 the texts in *The Marginalization of Poetry* play with explicit formal devices, the

159 more the pleasure and interest they afford me. I would say this of Hejinian's
 160 work in particular, as also Perelman's six-word-per-line introduction. The
 161 twisted titles of many of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing works he cites –
 162 given the highly formalised function of titling, and as opposed to the multi-
 163 purpose sentence – have an estranging effect that far outshines that of the
 164 supposedly new 'New Sentence'. The magazine *This* had me thinking of Heg-
 165 el's spinning mirror meditations on the *This* and the *That* in the opening pages
 166 of the *Phenomenology* (Hegel, 1977: 58–66). Then there is Silliman's *What*. And
 167 Perelman's *A.K.A.*, which leads me into just the right room of mirrors (also
 168 known as what? a me? a not-me? an and/or not?), that is the edge of literature,
 169 a play of appearances, and half-staged, half-uncontrolled authorial presences,
 170 a science which turns me into

171 5. Where was I? evokes the intersubjective register of language, that indel-
 172 ible second person presence to whose acquaintance a reading ultimately spir-
 173 als. So, on to *The 14th Floor, a Hypothesis*, the hi-rise novel I am trying – through
 174 these various beginnings, concepts and collisions – to introduce. That with no
 175 middle flight intends

176 From Poetry to Science

177 I have been rethinking the scaffolding of my *14th Floor*, since beginning Martí-
 178 nez' *Santa Evita* (1996) which recounts the bizarre life-after-death of Eva Per-
 179 ón's embalmed corpse. I started reading this book, relishing all the while the
 180 thought of encountering a life (or rather death) lived in the drag queen genre
 181 (consumption and early death too! Reality *does* have the structure of a fiction!).
 182 Yet after only a few pages, I was annoyed to find the author slipping into
 183 magic realism, making up words to put into Evita's mouth, not allowing me
 184 to enjoy the bizarreness of reality itself. This made me think – because I often
 185 enjoy reading historical writing, at present Yovel's beautiful *Spinoza and Other*
 186 *Heretics* (1989) – that there is a pleasure in reading work which claims veridical
 187 status, just as much as there is in reading fiction. Is the former also an aes-
 188 thetic pleasure?

189 This question is of direct relevance to my novel – a work set in its entirety
 190 on the 14th floor of various buildings across a city like Sydney or Melbourne,
 191 or both. For I have planned the novel – the hi-rises, the characters therein, the
 192 themes of love, death, psychosis and suicide – to begin as a poetic fictional
 193 work that steadily turns into a work of scientific, logical and even mathemat-
 194 ical prose. None of the TV sets in any of these 14th floor rooms work. Every
 195 time you enter a room, there is just a box, whose screen is awash with static,
 196 with electronic as-if-it-were wallpaper. Where was I? Valery speaks some-
 197 where of poetry as 'a language within a language'. Well, I want to show this
 198 by beginning in poetry and moving out to the scientifically reachable world
 199 from within which poetry is generated. For the world is poetic in the play of
 200 appearances (the language within) but – and here I move beyond Hegel to
 201 Spinoza – logico-mathematical in essence (the language without). Which is
 202 why a mathematically generated book should start backwards, as poetry.

203 In other words, I want to follow Martínez' magic realist method, but back-
 204 wards: from poetry to science. Reading a text of Jakobson's backward will
 205 help characterise the fiction to fact strategy I have in mind. At the end of one

206 of his *Sound and Meaning* lectures, Jakobson describes a character from a story
207 by Odoevsky, a character who received the malevolent gift of

208 being able to see everything and to hear everything: 'Everything in nature
209 became fragmented before him, and nothing formed into a whole in
210 his mind', and for this unfortunate man the sounds of speech became
211 transformed into a torrent of innumerable articulatory motions and of
212 mechanical vibrations, aimless and without meaning. (Jakobson, 1978:
213 20)

214 In the course of the lectures, this vignette serves to characterise the intellectual
215 'nightmare' that was 'the victory of naive empiricism' in linguistics, and to
216 show that phonemes not only exist, but that they exist to import principles
217 of distinction to otherwise overwhelming motor and acoustic phenomena
218 (1978: 21). With this example, Jakobson illustrates, summarises and concludes,
219 his first lecture. Myself, I want to start with the example – a world extreme,
220 fictional and particular, on the 14th floor – and from there to build up to the
221 science which explains it:

222 The two liquids *r* and *l* have such clearly distinct functions in our languages
223 (cf. *ray-lay*, *fur-full*) that it seems strange to us that in some other
224 languages they are simply two combinatory variants of a single phoneme.
225 Thus in Korean this phoneme is represented by *l* at the beginning
226 and *r* at the end of a syllable . . . It is natural that a Korean who is trying
227 to learn English will at first pronounce *round* with an initial *l*, *sell* with
228 an *r* at the end, and will reverse the order of the two liquids in *rule*
229 which will then be confused with *lure*. (Jakobson, 1978: 31).

230 So my text will move from poetry to linguistics, art to science, by turning
231 a hi-rise world of characters, confusions and pronunciations into a scientific
232 presentation of the principles which generate them. Which are ultimately
233 mathematical. Let me introduce **the TV's on the blink of an I** Robert Recorde,
234 whose 'Preface to the gentle reader' of his 1557 mathematics text book opens
235 as follows:

236 Although number be infinite in increasyng: so that there in not in all the
237 worlde anything that can excede the quantitie of it: nother the grasse on
238 the ground, nother the droppes of water in the sea, no not the small
239 graines of sande through the whole masse of the yearth... And if any-
240 thing doe or maie excede the whole worlde, it is number, whiche so
241 farre surmounteth the measure of the worlde, that if there were infinite
242 worldes, it would at the full comprehend them all. (Recorde, cited in
243 Midonick, 1965: 125)

244 Recorde's numbers will comprehend the imagined universe of my *14th Floor*,
245 443 years prior to its creation.

246 I now turn back to Hegel, whose philosophy of aesthetics seems to allow
247 little place to the sort delight I experience when reading of acoustic excess,
248 phonematic variation and timeless infinities of number. So, are these aes-
249 thetic pleasures?

250 My theory is that there is a pleasure in knowledge which partakes of the

251 same pleasure one derives from art. The attempt to expound this will help
252 me further to construct the scaffolding of *The 14th Floor*.

253 Hegel once more lays the foundations. He wants to show that art, e.g. scenic
254 painting, presents its viewers with a mental landscape, a world beyond. This
255 landscape beyond the painting arises from the dialectic between the inad-
256 equacy of any given representation and the creative mind glimpsed through
257 that representation's very lacunae. Nature has no such spiritual quality. Hegel
258 gives the following example:

259 The sun, for instance, appears to us to be an absolutely necessary factor
260 in the universe, while a blundering notion passes away as accidental and
261 transient; but yet, in its own being, a natural existence such as the sun
262 is indifferent, is not free or self-conscious, while if we consider it in its
263 necessary connection with other things we are not regarding it by itself
264 or for its own sake, and therefore, not as beautiful. (Hegel, 1993: 4)

265 In support of this claim, Hegel adduces the fact that, in contrast to fine art,
266 there has never been a science to determine the beauty of natural objects.
267 Nature, bereft of spirit, is not only lacking in discriminative beauty, it is
268 inferior to art, 'for everything spiritual is better than anything natural' (1993:
269 34). I think Hegel is in many ways correct, though I disagree with his valoris-
270 ations.

271 For scientifically inflected philosophers like Spinoza, or Peirce, it is precisely
272 the indifference of natural phenomena, their 'necessary connection' with all
273 the other component parts of the universe, which provides the cause for won-
274 der and joy. Regardless of what we do or say, the Earth will round the Sun,
275 bees will generate offspring in male-female ratios identical to that of the Fibon-
276 acci number series, every triangle will comprise 180°. Recall Recorde's won-
277 der at the infinity of the number series: 'if there were infinite worldes, it would
278 at the full comprehend them all'. Hegel has no such crystalline vision, a fact
279 which doubtless contributes to his relative dullness to music, that most math-
280 ematical of **the TV's on the blink of an eye can't hear** the fine arts. For Hegel,
281 music constitutes a form of 'feeling without thought'; it 'needs little or no
282 spiritual content to be present in consciousness' (1993: 32). Hegel had Beethov-
283 en's deafness, without the ability to sight read (to sight read works like Gauss'
284 contemporaneous *Theory of the Motion of the Heavenly Bodies Moving about the*
285 *Sun in Conic Sections* (1963)).

286 Above I queried whether, in the light of Hegel's aesthetics, art should be
287 considered a spiritual phenomenon. In the place of such a Platonic presence
288 beyond, Hegel locates the spectator's intimation of an extra-diegetic creative
289 consciousness. The manifestation of such an Other is at once showcased in
290 art, and yet innate to all representation (including talking to yourself). As I
291 have claimed, the 'beyond' evoked in art, and indeed all language, however
292 impossible its claim to presence, is necessarily *personified*. Now I want to claim
293 that this ineradicable intersubjectivity informs the pleasure of scientific knowl-
294 edge. In a very particular way. 'The mystical thing', as Wittgenstein wrote,
295 'is not *how* the world is, but *that* it is' (Wittgenstein, 1981: 187). The universe
296 of 'states of affairs' depicted in his *Tractatus* is characterised by the fact that
297 each one of its components have a truth-functional, logical form (1981: 31).

298 Every thing in the world, as every sentence, 'speaks' its being, as if it were a
 299 product of the mind. That this is the case – the simple fact *that it is* – is both
 300 concrete and profound. So too with Recorde's infinite number series, or
 301 Cantor's \aleph . Numbers exist, wherever they come from, and regardless of our
 302 finite ability to enumerate them. It is *as if* they were the products of a conscious
 303 creator. Or rather an unconscious creator. Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* ('God,
 304 or Nature') is as unreflective as the science of optics itself. The ordered laws
 305 by which rays of light diffract and refract offer no meaning, and yet have a
 306 logical, even semiotic, status all the same. God, or Nature, speaks its laws
 307 through the very being of Spinoza's world, even though 'neither intellect nor
 308 will pertain to God's nature' (Spinoza, 1994:14). For God, as Lacan adds, has
 309 no soul. I hold, in sum, that the pleasure of knowledge partakes of Hegel's
 310 Other beyond representation, yet it does so in an immanentist way far
 311 removed from human artifice. In Science, the pleasure of knowing is the bliss
 312 of encountering an alien consciousness that has no self, that has no soul.

313 This is why I want to follow Gauss to the window, and to have my ant-
 314 and protagonists follow me there, as the novel proceeds – remembering that
 315 there are no ground shots in this book, it's all hi-rise – and some of them even
 316 think of jumping, where they can just bliss out on the pure '*that it is*' of the
 317 universe. It was something like this that first made me want, as a child, to
 318 become an astronomer. For looking into outer space is a form of temporal
 319 regression. When you consider the distance it takes for light to travel, the
 320 galaxies present us with a picture of all of time to date. The further you peer
 321 into them, the further back you go in cosmic natural history, as if the heavens
 322 were a concave painting, of infinite horizons, which bears the successive stellar
 323 traces of Time itself. This is the artwork of an alien consciousness that has no
 324 self, that has no soul and yet exists, *Deus sive Natura*, as if it were speaking
 325 to us in stars. Since the beginning of the universe. 'To believe in a God at all',
 326 claimed Peirce, expounding his own cosmology, 'is not that to believe that
 327 man's reason is allied to the originating principle of the universe?' (Peirce,
 328 cited in Shariff, 1994: 16). One can read this claim commutatively too: to
 329 believe our science can see so far into both space *and* time is in effect to read
 330 a Spinozist consciousness, as subject to logic and number as a hypotenuse
 331 triangle, into the heavens themselves. For if you have any belief in scientific
 332 knowledge at all – and it is seriously hard not to – you can only but see the
 333 heavens as subject to the same logic and mathematics that we use to under-
 334 stand them. Turning back to the telly, the **the TV's on the blink of an I can't**
 335 **hear deaf** static on any given TV set registers not random interference, but
 336 rather the presence of the anti-matter released into our galaxies at the moment
 337 of the Big Bang itself! Looking into a broken TV set you are looking right
 338 back into the exploding moment of Time's very origin. Where was

339 Through these sciences of sight and insight, I want to telescope in and out
 340 of the window of my novel, uniting all in Dantesque conclusion into that *amor*
 341 *intellectualis dei* (the 'intellectual love of God', i.e. knowledge) above. In this
 342 way I will turn my poetry-to-prose, fiction-to-fact, novel into a pure mirror
 343 of itself. A science of literature. For if the art of Hegel's aesthetic offers a
 344 glimpse of authorial manipulations behind and of the diegetic frame, the plea-

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sure of a scientific vision must be something like the world of those famous Escher hands, drawing each other in right there on the page.

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The Science of Experience Literature

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So is Escher an artist or, as I seem to be suggesting and the TV set that runs a wormhole through this letter exploding in Moscow where I lived for 10 insane hi-rise months at the end of an adolescence that moved like a labyrinth in and out of my sister's insanity I remember minding her till the police could arrive in front of the television set which she knew had been programmed to spy on us in glass walls around a room as fragile as breaking waves all at sea she held me a sea of static change the channels to see her like Evita cast herself off the balcony and into a passing train leaving me in Moscow as mad as a whole Soviet Union exploding out of 70 years of nightmares and Hegelian dreams an artist or as I seem to be suggesting here, a scientist?

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14. What happens when the scientist puts himself in the picture? Thirteen paragraphs follow. Looking below, the writing will now plummet, like one of Galileo's experimental objects, down 13 storeys, simply to see what happens. This should cast up a rather different model of the fourteen-flights-up mental landscape in question.

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13. Hegel once more lays the foundations. His opposition between art and science soon slides into an opposition between artist and scientist. The move is logical, given the authorial presence which, Hegel argues, the aesthetic requires: 'In poetry all depends on the representation – which must be full of matter and thought – of man, of his profounder interests, and of the powers that move him'. Hegel advances this picture of the inner depths of poetry to show its superiority over that 'feeling without thought' that sings through musical composition, a showcase for 'expertness' and 'execution', but little experience or spirit (Hegel, 1993: 32–33). Yet if music is all too dumbly sensuous, poetry by no means leaves such realms. However universalising the representation of man and his powers, the poet cannot be wholly of the universal, for he needs to communicate through the sensual materials of art. The thought which 'abstracts . . . from all that is natural' belongs, on the contrary, to the scientist, a dry creature of 'The Understanding', almost a non-person in comparison. There is a curious meeting here of these two experts, the musician, all-too-natural, and the scientist, all-too-abstract. Whereas the poet impresses us with his dialectical control of both the profound and the concrete, the power and movement of his mind.

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12. Leaving music aside for the moment, the opposition between scientist and artist is clearly important to Hegel. To put the fine arts beyond the realm of scientific repeatability, he claims that art 'unquestionably rests on natural gifts', and even goes so far as to introduce 'talent', that most un-Hegelian of categories, to characterise them (1993: 45). Talents, as the Gospels remind us, are God-given, that is contingent, pre-destined, natural. Here they are directed toward the communication, via the work, of the alien contours of the artist's mind. Yet again, compare the scientist:

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It is true that we speak in the same way of scientific 'talent', but the sciences only presuppose the universal capacity of thought, which has

391 not, like Fancy, a natural mode (as well as an intellectual one), but
 392 abstracts just precisely from all that is natural (or native) in an activity.
 393 (Hegel, 1993: 45)

394 It is through his talent – his natural birthright – that the artist puts himself
 395 into the picture.

396 **11.** This is very interesting, for in effect Hegel indulges the artist with an
 397 indelible mental trait, something he would by no means suffer Self-Conscious-
 398 ness to claim for itself. Witness Hegel's critique of phrenology, some 20 years
 399 before, which is crowned with the derisive assertion that, for the phrenologist,
 400 who would detect character and intelligence from one's physical features:
 401 'Spirit is a bone' (Hegel, 1977: 208). So how should one treat this bone-like
 402 concept of 'talent'? Is Hegel simply painting with a broad brush here, in
 403 accordance with the needs of a set of introductory lectures? I think not. Hegel
 404 claims that his thinking on the aesthetic unfolds, as all true philosophy must,
 405 from the necessity of the object itself (1977: 14). I think he should be read at
 406 face value here, however un-Hegelian his claims might seem. The fact is that
 407 the object of his inquiry, the aesthetic, is ultimately recalcitrant to the claims
 408 of Spirit, and Hegel knows it. He deals with this impasse by taking it to its
 409 logical conclusion: death. The artist, Hegel famously asserts, is fated to disap-
 410 pear. This is a socio-historical postulate, founded in Hegel's reading of the
 411 changes occurring all around him: the French Revolution, the rise of mod-
 412 ernity, the birth of civil society. As civil society becomes ever more modern
 413 and spiritual, as it approaches the status of philosophy itself, art will disap-
 414 pear. For if the arts allow us access to a dialectical encounter with the artist's
 415 own consciousness, there is something in that artistic consciousness which is
 416 fundamentally alien to civil society. There is something in the artist's psychic
 417 make-up, something akin to a brand, a proper name, or a birthmark, which
 418 will never be reconciled to the claims of Spirit, that free-flowing entity whose
 419 end is to attain the 'I that is We, We that is I' of reciprocal and communing
 420 self-consciousnesses (1977: 110). Art is just not democratic enough to make it
 421 into the future. Compare Perelman, on the critics of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E
 422 Writing:

423 The conventional reproach, 'I could do that', should actually be taken as
 424 a good sign, as a response a writer might seek rather than fear. A better
 425 sign might be, 'I could do something a bit different than that'. (Perelman,
 426 1996: 36)

427 For Hegel such responses are no longer actually aesthetic. Art is aristocratic;
 428 it requires God-given talent. Hence it is destined to vanish before the higher
 429 reconciliation of universal and particular that will characterise the modern.
 430 Soviet Man would be glad to know it. Higher reconciliation high rise living
 431 is all about such

432 **10.** I expressed certain reservations about Hegel's thinking above, where I
 433 tried to focus upon the aesthetic pleasure attainable from knowledge, the *amor*
 434 to which my novel will aspire. In science, the pleasure of knowing is the bliss
 435 of encountering (*exempli gratia* in the endlessly recurring Fibonacci series, a
 436 numerical model of differential calculus which one can discover in the seed
 437 arrangements on sun-flower heads, the diffraction ratios of multiple mirrors,

438 even the spiral nebulae above) an alien consciousness that has no self, that
 439 has no soul. A thinking without a thinker. I agree with Hegel that a certain
 440 impress of the artist's mind need necessarily rise to the surface, or offer itself
 441 behind the veil, of the artistic text. Further, the artist needs talent to convey
 442 this through the materials at hand. What of the scientist? Is he simply the
 443 dead skin of 'The Understanding,' a consciousness ever absent from the
 444 abstract realm of laws and facts he nonetheless works upon? Is there no such
 445 thing as scientific talent? Can there be talent in the timeless universe of
 446 numbers?

447 9. A legend about the brilliant mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss, a con-
 448 temporary of Hegel's (and fellow primary school student at the time, though
 449 not place, too) suggests otherwise. It is said that Gauss' 18th century school-
 450 master once asked the class, simply so as to shut them up for a while, to find
 451 the sum obtained by adding together all of the numbers from 1 to 100. Within
 452 45 seconds Gauss called out 2550. He reasoned as follows:

453

454 Here interpose paragraph – out of the blue

455 And more: I have come to realise that the voice informing my plans for the
 456 *14th Floor* is a resonance from the time when I did live in a 14-storey building,
 457 in Moscow, for 10 months over 1990–91. Something cracked in my mind at
 458 the time, as if the sheer lunacy of a society exploding out of 70 years of facades,
 459 lip-service and sham civic virtue served to trigger in me the trauma of the
 460 insanity I had experienced at rather closer range in a nice suburb of Melbourne
 461 the decade before. I had met my macrocosm. There is a strangely Hegelian
 462 aspect to all of this, for in a sense I became one of the 'I that is We, We that
 463 is Y' in that severely fucked-up city – only in my case the reconciliation of
 464 universal and particular seemed like a very cracked mirror indeed. My initial
 465 plan for *The 14th Floor* was to take one of those so Hegelian *Imagined Communi-*
 466 *ties* of contemporary social theory, and twist its perfectly syllogistic socioscape
 467 into a dizzy and deranged model of mental representation. I think now I
 468 realise that I was still trying to come to terms with Moscow, which is to say
 469 with the fact that the master-slave dialectic I had to pass through to get there
 470 was shared with a psychotic. So that is where I am in some sense coming from.

471 start with words swallowed – history of my Soviet Union and this as other
 472 scene recalled by all these materials; modernity and anonymity and Hegelian
 473 depression . . .

474 This doesn't reconcile with my theme nor this paragraph – another scene
 475 which will end here

476

477 continue with Gauss [t]ake to find the sum obtained by adding together all
 478 the numbers from 1 to 100 two horizontal columns and draw them. In one
 479 write 49, 48, 47, 46, 45, 46 . . . to 1. In the one below write 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 . . .

480 to 49. Add vertically and down and you will get 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50 . . .
 481 to 50 = $49 \times 50 = 2450$. Add 100 = 2550. Within a minute Gauss called out
 482 2550. He reasoned as follows:

483 then shape of a mind – same in Einstein!

484 And then there is sex, something it is hard to imagine Escher having.

485 With one foot nailed to the floor two three four five six

486 **Find within material at hand its inner necessities patterns and shapes...**

487 within 75 seconds Gauss called out 2550. He reasoned as follows:

488 4) read this commutatively:

489 Shakespeare and flow chart

490 – Hamlet and m.p.d (multiple personality disorder): in Lacan's reading

491 is not a mask you peel back from a moving mind which moves with it. A
 492 grimace. The face is a talent to be adored and loved and kissed and made a
 493 mirror of mine, you're darling, you're mine I'm now writing

494 Jakobson 74 – performance on page : in multiple significations – p.119 in
 495 absentia; projected onto plane. formula p.78. stressed to the full in Jakobson
 496 own futurist poem *расеянность* 279 ff . . . as merger of scientist and poet, his
 497 'poetic laboratory'

498 [here begin writing]

499 About the end of my analysis which some 4 weeks ago after 4 years of Lacan-
 500 ian head reading and I feel well and truly spun out. Which ended.

501 This is where was I.

502 Within a minute and a half Gauss called out Chaucer's lovely *Treatise on the*
 503 *Astrolabe* was written 'in plain English words' in 1391, for the instruction of
 504 his 'littell son Lowys' (Chaucer in Midonick, 1965: 77). Directions on the usage
 505 of the instrument, its zodiacal register, its circle of days and so forth are inter-
 506 spersed, in Chaucer's text, with comments like 'Forget not this, little Lewis',
 507 while the line 'and for more explanation, lo here the figure' recurs time and
 508 again, ushering in the pictures which transpose these wonders into a graphical
 509 register (1965: 84). There is a real beauty in this, as if one were witnessing all
 510 of a father's tenderness, wonder and delight at the joy of trying to communi-
 511 cate those very qualities to a 10-year-old consciousness, as little Lewis seeks
 512 to make his way among the stars.

513 And so my analysis ended. How do you die?

514 Coming back to Earth, Carl Friedrich had been asked to find the sum obtained
 515 by adding together all the numbers from 1 to 100. Within 45 seconds Gauss
 516 called out 2550. He reasoned as follows: that is, 49 of these 50s which
 517 will equal 2450. Add 100 to 2450 (for the two 50s you forgot to count at the
 518 start and end respectively of each of the columns; 50 + 50) and you will
 519 have 2550.

520 8. The beauty of Gauss's thought process, which has a certain theatric, even

521 Shakespearean, quality to its measured resolutions, renders dubious Hegel's
 522 claims as to the inexistence of scientific talent. For Hegel, the scientist is funda-
 523 mentally bereft of 'Fancy'. A 'natural mode' of perception and creation,
 524 Fancy is

525 manifested in the impelling restlessness that busies itself, with vivacity
 526 and industry, in creating shapes in some particular sensuous medium . . .
 527 A sculptor finds everything transmute itself into shapes, and he soon
 528 begins to take up the clay and model it. (Hegel, 1993: 46)

529 The artist is possessed of a natural genius for impressing mind upon, that is
 530 speaking through, the materials at hand. Yet when a Gauss alights upon a
 531 perfectly coherent, indeed ideational, pattern in the materials at hand, is he
 532 not performing a similar task? Finding a way to make numbers speak; or
 533 rather . . .

534 7.

535 6.

536 5. . . like the mathematician, the artist must discover patterns within the
 537 semiotic materials at hand. This takes us far from Hegel's insistence on the
 538 vital nature of artistic consciousness (the artist, whose breed will die out in the
 539 near future) with all its 'impelling restlessness', Vitality, for Hegel, reproduces
 540 vitality, for the work 'is a work of art only in as far as, being the offspring of
 541 mind, it continues to belong to the realm of mind, has received the baptism
 542 of the spiritual' (Hegel, 1993: 46). Yet is there not a certain refusal in these
 543 lines?, an avoidance, in the artwork-equals-child equation they advance, of
 544 the fact that the artist, as scientist, works with inert materials, to arrive at that
 545 other so natural phenomenon, there in the very words on the page: a beautiful
 546 death. Right now in the present. The redemptive lead of . . .

547 4. Hegel himself constructs the scaffolding for such a theory through the
 548 double-edged category of 'natural talent'. As an 'unconscious operation', tal-
 549 ent like Hegel's 'must belong to the natural element in man', which is to say
 550 it belongs, like the Sun and the stars, to the realm of 'absolutely necessary
 551 being', that which is 'indifferent, is not free or self-conscious'. Hegel wants to
 552 claim that it is the labour of the artist's mind which redeems nature and makes
 553 it an object of beauty. So we commune, through the work, and with another
 554 consciousness. For the power of art is, at all costs, to be seen as the power of
 555 a group of living beings, albeit ones fated to die out soon. Of course, 200 years
 556 on, and all that history in between, they still haven't done so. Isn't it rather
 557 that this is the closest that Hegel can get to the fact that to die is their job?
 558 For if the artist's talent is so much a part of his or her nature, and as such is
 559 'indifferent, not-free or self-conscious', surely this makes it closer to death. I
 560 am suggesting, still looking up, that the reader's appreciation of the artist's
 561 mind, as glimpsed beyond the text, is more like the bliss of encountering a
 562 consciousness that has no self, that has no soul. A thinking without a thinker.
 563 Hegel is Dead. Like all authors.

564 3.

565 2. It is curious to think that this absence might well have impressed itself
566 upon him, had Hegel not been blind to music.567 1. Sing **exploding TV sets** Heaven'ly Muse

568 0.

569 **Correspondence**570 Any correspondence should be directed to Paul Magee, 4/91 Moray St, New
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