CREATIVITY EXPLAINED

From Music and Art to Innovation in Business

By

David Priilaid

Creativity and imagination are key catalysts to unlocking potential in the 21st century. While those in business and civil society are generally aware of the challenges of the modern age, few seem able to understand or apply the creativity necessary to meet them. Creativity Explained suggests that the most direct route to imaginative insight lies in understanding how genuinely creative people develop their big ideas. Focusing on the lives of contemporary writers, musicians and artists, David Priilaid examines the elements of the creative process to provide readers with a better appreciation of creativity in practice. Through exploring the creative lives of figures such as Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, Bill Evans, Jackson Pollock, J.K. Rowling and the iconic Steve Jobs, Priilaid shows how artists are typically outsiders, marked variously by the extent of their suffering, resilience and love for the work they do. Creativity Explained offers an insightful overview of the imaginative mindset and disciplines crucial to the formulation of great ideas.

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PETER
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DEDICATION

To Anne
Who first showed me the magic, and still does.

What is this face, less clear and clearer
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger –
Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than the eye
Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet
Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

"MARINA", T.S. ELIOT

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Preface

Context: the need for creativity

Within the span of a generation, the world has changed irrevocably and it is changing still. The change is relentless, dangerous even, seeking to overthrow all before it. Never before has business and civil society been so challenged to deal with the problems of change. For so many reasons, however, we are failing in this task. Though we see and sometimes comprehend the threats of change, corporately and individually, many seem unable to adapt to the times, incapable of reinvigoration.

Stagnation in the status quo

Take business, for example. In the last decade, concepts such as imagination, creativity, innovation and inspiration have become commercial buzz words. Ironically, while advertisements employ these hot-button terms to the point of hyperbole, most so-called cutting-edge products and services are merely incremental repeats riding out the S curve. This is not creativity. Confounded by the problems of our age, in many cases, corporate innovation appears incapable of producing anything more than bigger screens and larger hard drives. This problem has nothing to do with money. The great corporations are sitting on piles of investment cash. New ideas are simply not happening fast enough and in the right areas. Innovation in the US is "somewhere between dire straits and dead",[1] said Peter Thiel, cofounder of PayPal and the first external investor in Facebook. Citing transport as an example, Thiel pointed out that travel speeds peaked with the Concorde in the '70s but since then have declined to norms reminiscent of the '60s. "If you look outside the computer and the internet, there has been 40 years of stagnation," he concluded.[2] While anticipating some Elon Musk-driven advances in solar energy and space travel, and acknowledging progress in health and biomedicine (such as the Human Genome Project completed in 2003), in this our "second Renaissance"[3] of intellectual endeavour, we remain beset by problems imposed by the overshoot of the earth's carrying capacity. These include population expansion, food and water security, global warming, animal extinctions, pollution, health care and poverty. Racial prejudice and religious intolerance - spurred by waves of refugee migration - are on the rise. Conflict and war are rife, replete with an expanding arsenal of sophisticated weaponry. Computer technology has increased exponentially, advancing to the second half of the metaphorical chessboard and driving concerns around data security, cyber warfare and artificial intelligence. The list goes on. With so many problems, it seems there are no meaningful means of

solving them; this despite all the cash, R&D departments and corporate goodwill capitalism can muster. What is going on?

Four main factors explain this dynamic: (1) outmoded organisational practices, (2) relentless technological change, (3) compliance-driven work competencies, and (4) a debasement of art and creativity disciplines in schools and universities. Let's briefly examine each.

1. Outmoded Business Practices

   For more than a hundred years the structures and practices of business have been designed to protect and entrench existing business models. Unchecked, business will therefore naturally gravitate towards areas of monopoly and do whatever it can to drive out competition. Rightly or wrongly, capital's instinct is to seek out exclusive zones of profit and to extract margin as efficiently as possible. With proficiency of mass production, management techniques developed around the time of Henry Ford excelled at maintaining optimum rates of output. As part of a mechanistic mindset, a culture of compliance prevails, along with a zero tolerance of failure. All this has worked incredibly well for a long time. But no longer.

2. Seditious change

   Since World War II, the changes wrought through technology have rocked the status quo. This is clearly witnessed in the ever-decreasing shelf life of companies listed on the S&P 500. According to a 2012 study, in 1958, firms listed on this index could expect to remain there for 61 years. Shooting forward 22 years, by 1980 this figure had declined to approximately 25 years and, by 2012, to just 18. At this rate, the study concluded, 75 per cent of those companies on the 2012 list could expect to be replaced by 2027.[4] The lesson offered by these statistics is clear: business models are increasingly under threat from gales of “creative destruction” that wipe out the old to make room for the new. Predictive techniques aimed at mitigating the storms of change have proven impotent. The incidence and impact of random “black swan” events is increasing, with scholars such as Nassim Taleb[5] suggesting that history will increasingly pivot on moments of random havoc. This is no longer business as usual.[6]

3. Work competencies

   To survive in a changing world, existing businesses must therefore reinvigorate their ways of being, seeking to supplement and replace outmoded revenue streams before it is too late. “Imagination!” is now the clarion call, “creativity!” the

catchword. With the hunt for new ideas now truly on, increasingly, innovation consultants are summoned, creativity workshops convened, and new brainstorming techniques developed. Despite the incessant busyness, studies indicate that the majority of the workforce remains bored, unfulfilled and indifferent. In a 2017 study of 1300 white-collar professionals, 74 per cent of those canvassed declared their work boring.[7] Those in desk jobs seem to find imagination and creativity elusive and, arguably, the cause is the very organisational practices prescribed by business in the first place. For, as much as top-down authoritarian structures have bred compliance, competence and a modicum of intelligence, they have also stultified more desirable qualities such as passion, initiative, creativity and vocation - the very skills required right now. In short, the traditional practice of business has effectively suffocated any possibility of free thought and imagination.

4. Debasement of art in education

   Business is not solely responsible for this destruction of creative instinct. Education systems must share the blame. Collectively, junior, secondary and tertiary institutions of education have connived to systematically devalue the creative arts in favour of the sciences. While not denying the power of the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines, this debasement has dispossessed young people of their creative faculties.[8] SpaceX and Tesla CEO Elon Musk agrees, saying: “I think there are probably too many smart people pursuing Internet stuff, finance, and law ... That is part of the reason why we haven't seen as much innovation.”[9]

In light of the four factors above - and taking into account that to be more innovative we need to be more creative - it is imperative for those in enterprise and business to ask how they can properly pursue the development of creative ideas.

INTRODUCTION

> How does art function? It is an unnecessary,
> useless activity that is vital.
> WILLIAM KENTRIDGE[1]

> Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end
> of the Western Spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded
> yellow sun. Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-two
> million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue-green planet
> whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that
> they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea.
> *THE HITCH HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*, DOUGLAS ADAMS[2]

> O great creator of being
> Grant us one more hour to
> Perform our art and perfect our lives.
> "AN AMERICAN PRAYER", JIM MORRISON[3]

Courting creativity

In certain important ways the composing of a brilliant song or poem can be likened to coming up with an idea for a new product. In both instances the definition of creativity is the use of imagination to produce something new and valuable. This being so, perhaps the best way of understanding the dynamics of creativity is by analysing how creative people develop their ideas. This is what I intend to do in this book. For the record, most creative people are not business types. They are almost exclusively artists: novelists, poets, songwriters, composers, musicians, painters, sculptors, singers, dancers, actors or designers. Sometimes, however, they do come from business, and here I am thinking especially of the late Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Inc., who was, in many respects, a genuine artist.

Formally therefore, through an examination of the critical components of artistry, this book's purpose is to help people be more creative about creativity. This cannot be rendered by means of a recipe or formula. Creativity is not a science in the

sense that it can be replicated by way of prescription. In its higher forms, creativity come from a very different place. This volume should therefore not be construed as a "how to" book or a "self-help guide". Instead, its intent is to help people to be more creative, either through developing an appreciation of the requisite mindset or, perhaps better, by adopting some of the practical methods that nurture this mindset - and hopefully both.

My own creative crucible

As a child of the late '60s I was caught up in the wonder of The Beatles and Simon and Garfunkel. Later, my student rites of passage included discovering Dylan's Blonde on Blonde and Desire, and absorbing Robert Shelton's seismic Dylan biography, No Direction Home. And then there were the simultaneous ecstasies of finding Van Morrison and Jackson Browne, and also of moving inwards to unearth the rudiments of my own poetic voice when the muse came to call. At the time I honestly thought the world was going to explode. And then of course there was that other continent that was jazz.

Looking back through the telescope of the intervening years, I see now that the world was indeed exploding. There was an artistic uprising. Communism was falling and laissez-faire capitalism was stumbling in. It was a moment, our moment; the spirit of the age. The world was ripe for the plucking. But of course it never was plucked. With all this artistry, all this stellar insight and shimmering brilliance, the world was not beguiled by the beauty once promised in Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock", the myriad brilliant butterflies radiant aflame above an expectant nation. It was stultified and boxed up and commoditised. Amazon arrived to sell its digital watches. And somehow the world capitulated.[4]

Seeking the Holy Grail

The artistry, however, has not disappeared. Those who wrote the magic music are now committed to writing their stories, recalling the facts and the circumstances. For the insight they offer, I have drawn heavily on these. Self-penned examples include those of singer-songwriters Bob Dylan: Chronicles, Volume One; Keith Richards: Life; Donald Fagen: Eminent Hipsters; and, most recently, Bruce Springsteen's superb Born to Run. Equally authoritative biographies include those on the lives of jazz musician Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings by Peter Pettinger; singer-songwriter Neil Young: Shakey by Jimmy McDonough; and Steve Jobs: Steve Jobs, by Walter Isaacson. Less specific information also exists in musical compendia and sundry news feeds – both online and in hard copy. In total, therefore, we have a multitude of sources offering

previously unavailable insights into the lives of contemporary artists. Arguably, we are in an unprecedented artistic sweet spot of direct and anecdotal account. The task, therefore, is one of synthesising this information into a coherent framework.

As already implied, and as a visit to any bookshop will show, the majority of creative biographies appear in the music section. This is for good reason. Those artists who pioneered the development of contemporary music - rock 'n' roll, folk and R&B - are at the end of their full and productive lives. Some have already passed on. It is the end of an era, though few of us have tumbled to its significance. While we celebrate the individual lives of those who have recently died, such as Michael Jackson, Leonard Cohen, David Bowie and Prince, the broader narrative of what this era of art represents as a whole has yet to be properly considered. So many stories wait to be told. The '50s, which saw the birth of rock music and its roll-out through radio, featured legends such as Muddy Waters, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry and Elvis. The '60s witnessed the rise of social awareness: music rich with political ferment. The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan remain enduring icons of this passing age. The '70s and '80s, too, rode out the storm of a generation, grappling with war, drugs and ideological repression. Songwriters dominated the charts: Paul Simon, the Eagles, Leonard Cohen, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young. It was a time well before the fax machine. Technology was in its infancy. There was no internet and no digitisation. Music was analogue and days were spent curating the mix tapes that became the soundtracks to our lives.

I was part of a generation raised on radio, with a connection to the Billboard Top 20 verging on primal. It was the music that formed me, along with millions of kids growing up in the second half of the last century. This point is not flippantly made and should not be easily dismissed. For the uninitiated, understanding creativity and imagination through the lens of sculpture or ballet is hard work. Too many of us glaze over when confronted with room after room of 19th-century landscape art, and opera is an acquired taste, to put it mildly. Cognisant of this, I'm convinced that, for the majority of us, songs and the songwriting process offer a familiar point of entry into the broader tenets of the creative world.

Over the last 50 years, especially in America, much of what we would call “contemporary” art has taken shape around songwriting. Through the likes of Robert Johnson and Woody Guthrie, it became celebrated in the early parts of the 20th century, thereafter finding full force and articulation from the '60s and '70s onwards. Here are just three examples to illustrate my point on the primacy of songwriting as a mode of art. (1) The late Leonard Cohen began his working life as a poet, and it was only in his thirties, and no doubt on some reflection, that he converted to writing songs - an occupation that was for Cohen of an equal calling to, if not higher than,

the writing of verse. In 2011 he received the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature. (2) In 1981, at the height of his powers, folk musician Dan Fogelberg released his double album The Innocent Age. In an epigraph attached to the album's lyric sheet, Fogelberg quoted a text from the classic US novel Of Time and the River by Thomas Wolfe: “Man's youth is a wonderful thing: It is so full of anguish and of magic and he never comes to know it as it is, until it has gone from him forever.”[5] In his review of the album entitled “Dan Fogelberg's time has arrived”, Stephen Holden of the New York Times picked up on this reference and suggested that if Wolfe had been alive now, he too would have taken up with songwriting and not novels, such was the overwhelming spirit of music. Fogelberg succumbed to prostate cancer in 2007, but his music continues to attract interest. In 2013, Texas State University, San Marcos, awarded a master's in music degree to Laura Jones for her analysis of the album's artistic attainment in a thesis entitled Dan Fogelberg's The Innocent Age: Poetics, Analysis, and Reception History.[6] (3) Perhaps the most obvious example of “songwriter as artist” is Bob Dylan, who received the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature. “He's a great poet in the English tradition,” explained Professor Sara Danius, permanent secretary at the Swedish Academy, which awards the prize. She also compared him with the poets of Ancient Greece: “Homer and Sappho - they wrote poetic texts that were meant to be performed with instruments - it's the same with Bob Dylan,” said Danius. Professor Seamus Perry of Oxford University was equally emphatic about Dylan: “He is, more than any other, the poet of our times, as Tennyson was of his, representative and yet wholly individual, humane, angry, funny, and tender by turn; really, wholly himself, one of the greats.”[7] But what about those from a previous era; creative people whose work still touches our lives today? Finding out how they developed their ideas is virtually impossible. The true geniuses of the Enlightenment - Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Shakespeare - left little to account for the sources of their creativity. The same can be said of many driving the ensuing periods of art. Though well described as generalised epochs of creativity, the truth is that there remain precious few direct accounts describing the process by which those central protagonists went about their lives as artists. Given the dearth of information about pre-1945 artists, and the plethora about more recent ones, rolling it all into a cohesive narrative has been no easy task. As with almost all works of this nature, my artistic selections have not been driven by scientific or political considerations. They are deeply subjective, for my reading of the topic has been neither exhaustive nor objectively balanced, whatever that means. Let me state upfront, therefore, that in writing this book my wish has not been to offend, either by inclusion or by omission. Rather - and on the basis of my perspective as a business academic, a graduate with a major in English literature and a fan of music, writing and painting - my aim has been

to seek out something of a broader encompassing truth about creativity and its implications for the world today. If anything, I would suggest that the approach of this book is analogous to published wine guides such as Wine Spectator and Decanter. The reason for their popularity is hardly the unerring accuracy of their assessments but rather that discerning consumers have neither the time nor the budget, much less the livers, to wade through what is currently available on the market. Because the knowledge of wine professionals is difficult to acquire without serious time and investment, guides such as Wine Spectator and Decanter thus serve as proxies to the market. Moving to creativity, this book is similarly written, serving as a "market" synthesis to interested, though not necessarily specialist, readers who do not have the time or wherewithal to actively make the links between art and enterprise, but would willingly seek out a text that performs this task. This then is that book.

Who should read *Creativity Explained?*

The obvious answer is anyone interested in creativity. Certainly men and women in business would find it helpful. So, too, would the entrepreneur or university student studying business, or a change agent with enterprise in mind. Maybe you're someone looking to expand your existing skill set, or perhaps you're just wondering what it takes to be creative. As a project designed to provoke thought on creativity and suggesting possible ways of being more creative, this book may be helpful to you too.

But what do we mean by creativity? For artists, creativity is the practical outpouring of imagination. So, while imagination is largely a passive and often silent antecedent, creativity represents its consequent application. As practised by artists, creativity can thus be interpreted as the practical route by which original and valuable ideas are developed. The additional action of taking creatively crafted ideas and putting them into practice may be considered as innovation, which, in this sense, can be viewed as the latest "hot" product or service on offer. Innovation, then, is the final element in the idea process. Imagination leads to creativity, which in turn leads to innovation.

Those serious about innovation should follow these linkages backwards: from innovation to creativity and from creativity back to the development of imagination itself. Starting with basic principles, those in enterprise need first to think practically about how creativity actually works: under what conditions it tends to flourish and how it may be nurtured. Properly understood, these principles may, in turn, be applied to areas of innovation specific to each business discipline. For those businesses and enterprises genuinely seeking to reinvent themselves, this is what is required.

This book should not, however, be taken as a substitute for strategy. Mindful that each business is different and should reserve the right to develop approaches that suit

their strategic plans and needs, I recommend that aspects of this book be incorporated into pre-existing operational plans. In this sense, you might want to consider just one or two of the creative approaches suggested here. If these work, perhaps consider a few more. An incremental method would be far wiser than the unconditional conversion of existing practices into what is outlined here.

Book construction:

Section One: AN ARTISTIC OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: The Artistic Sensibility - We begin with a broad-spectrum overview of the general process of creativity. Regardless of the technology available, ideas are usually derived from a willingness to observe closely, to listen intently and to recognise emerging patterns. Properly marshalled, these aspects may be twinned with an ability to shed the inner critic, to find solitude and, when the moment is right, to act with fluency and integrity.

Following the first chapter, the book splits into an examination of the creative components relating to mindset and disciplines (Sections Two and Three respectively).

Section Two: THE ARTISTIC MINDSET

Chapter 2: Artistic Grit - Two aspects of grit are explored: (1) the strength to persevere coupled with the ability to push on regardless of the odds, and (2) moral integrity. The chapter closes with a look at the relationship of grit to the potentially compromising influences of political and economic power.

Chapter 3: Passion - Here, I look at how passion expresses itself through creativity and thereby acts as a catalyst for art. Considered are the questions of "artistic vocation" and the romantic concept of báraka or the lightning strike of supernatural inspiration many refer to as "the muse". The theme of inspiration is picked up later as a key component of artistic practice.

Chapter 4: The Exiled Child - This chapter explores the concept of the "inner child": a sense of self characterised by innocence, simplicity and a willingness to make mistakes. These qualities are not typically adult because they are split off and exiled at an early age. Artists such as Bruce Springsteen speak about the struggle to locate and articulate the child's inner voice. Finally, although there are some examples of artistic collaboration, we see that in the realms of deep-end creativity, individual insight appears to be more prominent than genuine teamwork.

Chapter 5: Depression, Madness & Addiction - These markers of suffering have been shown to correlate significantly with creative output. Along with artists, some of the great entrepreneur-businessmen also appear to exhibit traits of instability and pathology. The effects of alcohol and drugs are assessed, with the fatal addictions of Bill Evans and Ernest Hemingway acting as examples.

Section Three: THE ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES

Chapter 6: Proactivity- Here I look at why proactivity is the engine of productivity and creative energy, and consider which factors may serve to undermine it. Through the lives of Steve Jobs, Marvin Gaye, Sting and James Taylor, I review the debilitating influence of genetic disposition, psychological make-up and the social environment.

Chapter 7: Practice - I examine the contentious role of practice in the development of art, reviewing, especially, Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000-hour rule - the practice time required to attain a level of world-class mastery. Recent research has found that the importance of 10,000 hours will vary, depending on the structural stability of the discipline and the level of cognitive complexity. This chapter looks at both.

Chapter 8: Perspective - Here I turn to the issue of perspective and its contribution to artistic invention, examining also why good artists resist forced interpretation through the use of multiple perspectives. The critical art periods - Impressionism, Cubism and Surrealism - are introduced, together with insights from Steve Jobs and Bruce Springsteen.

Chapter 9: Instinct, Intuition, the Unconscious & Still Water - The spotlight is on the role of the unconscious as I consider how artists tend to approach their work instinctively, exploring specifically the concept of the muse through looking at intuitive aspects that framed the art of greats such as Bill Evans and Jackson Pollock. This chapter also looks at the importance of an unhurried life, demonstrating that the best artists act on ideas from a space of "less hurry", so as to "control the burn", as Neil Young once put it. Many creative insights have emerged from periods of sleep or quiet contemplation; this chapter lists a few to illustrate.

Section Four: FATE

Chapter 10: Success = Talent + Luck - The final section considers the role of luck versus ability in determining success, examining the business instincts of artists such as Charles Dickens, Andy Warhol and Bruce Springsteen. As some showed less business savvy than others, to what extent can we attribute success to chance? Also considered is whether it is more useful to think of luck as that place where preparedness meets opportunity. In other words, without the necessary preparation, even the greatest talent risks being squandered.

section **one**

AN ARTISTIC OVERVIEW

chapter one

The Artistic Sensibility

HOW DO ARTISTS COME UP WITH THEIR IDEAS? Regardless of the technology available, ideas are usually derived from an artistic disposition and a willingness to observe and listen intently. This chapter shows how moments of artistic greatness are further underpinned by an ability to find solitude, to shed the inner critic and, when the moment is right, to act with fluency and integrity. Through the lens of work by Rainer Maria Rilke, Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Leonard Cohen and Bill Evans, this introductory chapter explores each of these aspects.

> I want to extol the crucial importance of imagination.
> JK ROWLING[1]

> The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.
> ALBERT EINSTEIN

> I read an article about Jean Sibelius. He couldn't have the window open when he was composing 'cause if he did he would hear birds in the trees and they'd get into the composition. So his family used to go and have to chase the birds.
> ELVIS COSTELLO[2]

> Steve Allen used to take the telephone line, and then when different birds would sit at different places on the wire, he would write it out and look at the lines of the telephone wires as a staff, and he would put the notes where the birds would be and he would play it.
> TOM WAITS[3]

While artistic creativity preceded capitalism by a long chalk, their genesis is the same: imagination being the wellspring, and innovation its expression. Cast your mind back to childhood, when the best games and adventures were hatched by an unfettered and fertile imagination that produced something new, different and exciting. Such childlike imaginings may be said to characterise any range of creative expressions,

spanning works of art as well as acts of entrepreneurship. The common thread is actualised innovation that seeks to change things (for the better), be it social, green or profit making. To help define the characteristics that go hand in hand with creativity, the primal ground of artistic imagination thus provides us with a relevant foundation from which to do so.

There are so many great artists, so many paths to the destination, but let us begin by probing what it means to be an artist and what constitutes that something we call art. Illustrious minds have acknowledged that it complements almost all other disciplines and offers a unique way of seeing things. Friedrich Nietzsche the 19th-century Existentialist philosopher observed, for example, that it would be best if science could be viewed from the perspective of the artist and art from the viewpoint of life.[4] The 1922 Nobel Prize-winning Danish scientist Niels Bohr concurred, explaining to Werner Heisenberg, his friend and fellow scientist, that "when it comes to atoms, language can be used only as poetry". Poetry, he maintained, is not nearly so concerned with describing facts as with creating images. The image is all-important and what lies below or beyond the visible world is always imaginary. Poetry, maintained Bohr, is the only way to talk about the invisible, whether it be in nature, art or science.[5]

Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Inc., was equally clear about this, stating that Apple's DNA encompassed the view that technology by itself was not enough. It was only when technology was married with the humanities that magic could happen, he said.[6] Jobs suggested that the reason Apple connected so well with people was the pervading sense of humanity within their innovative products. Great artists and great engineers are similar he said, in that they both seek self-expression. Looking back on the early days of Apple, Jobs observed that, in the '70s, computers became a way for people to express their creativity. This view resonates strongly with the work of Isambard Brunel and other engineers in the 19th century who used steel as a new form of artistry in the vast bridges they helped design and build. "In fact," insisted Jobs, "some of the best people working on the original Mac were poets and musicians on the side ... Great artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were also great at science. Michelangelo knew a lot about how to quarry stone, not just how to be a sculptor."[7]

In his definition of art, contemporary artist Damien Hirst was equally expansive. He is on record as stating that anything clone "super-well" is art, including, in his view, a splendid meal or even a great meeting or event. "Artists make art from what's around them", he said.[8] Ernest Hemingway, winner of the 1954 Nobel Prize in Literature, however, took exception to this view on the common universality of art. Writing about how Degas had captured the true colours of a misty dawn, Hemingway

was struck by how the Impressionist had managed to depict the light in such a way that it appeared truer on his canvas than what was ordinarily visible. This form of depiction, he declared, was the role of the artist. “On canvas or on the printed page, he must capture the thing so truly that its magnification will endure. That is the difference between journalism and literature. There is very little literature. Much less than we think.”[9] Between the views of Hirst and Hemingway lies something of the truth.

This said, how best should we proceed with the actual making of art? What do we need to acquire or shed, revert to or become, in order to be artists? Former Police frontman and subsequent solo artist Sting acknowledged the extent to which his songs seldom carry with them a unique conceptual pedigree and that the art of his writing is about synthesis. “I think that what we do in pop music is collate. It's like folk music. It makes copyright a bit interesting and difficult. I'm a good collator,” he owned.[10] This falls in line with the view of 20th-century composer Igor Stravinsky, who is quoted as saying, half-jokingly: “A good composer does not imitate, he steals.”[11]

Steve Jobs once took his Apple design team to see an exhibition of Tiffany glass at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan. Jobs believed that they could learn from Louis Tiffany's example of creating great art that could be produced in volume. As a result, one of the Apple team members, Bud Tribble, recalled the designers agreeing that, if they were going to make things that would permeate our lives, they should at least make them as beautiful as possible.[12] Although Jobs’ line was computers, he is widely acknowledged as a genuine artist. In 1983, he confessed to former Apple CEO John Sculley that had he not been working in IT he'd be in Paris writing poetry.[13] He railed against sterile business meetings and sterile thinking, stating that he hated the way people employed slide presentations as a proxy for genuine thinking. People tend to challenge an issue by creating a presentation, complained Jobs, who preferred hashing things out on a whiteboard to sitting passively through “a bunch of slides”.[14]

About the craft of songwriting, singer and songwriter Tom Waits' suggestion is a practical one: listen to what the world has to say. In 1976, reflecting on his formative nights as a doorman in a Los Angeles nightclub, Waits recalled how he would listen to all the acts from the door, hearing bluegrass, comics, folk ~ingers, and string bands. At the same time, he was picking up people's conversations in all-night coffee shops - ambulance drivers, cabdrivers, street sweepers. “I did research there as an evening curator, and I started writing, gingerly,” said Waits. “I thought at some point I'd like to forge it all into something meaningful, and give it dignity.”[15] A year

later he was elaborating to Rolling Stone: “I listened to all kinds of music there. All kinds of stuff from rock to jazz to folk to anything else that happened to walk in. One night I saw a local guy onstage playing his own material. I don't know why, but at that moment I knew that I wanted to live or die on the strength of my own music. I finally played a gig there. Then I started writing down people's conversations as they sat around the bar. When I put them together I found some music hiding in there.”[16] Just on a decade later, in 1985, Waits served up an equivalent idea: to go to New York. In such a vast and restless city all you then had to do was get into a cab, ask the driver to show you around the city, and start writing down the shops and happenings that you saw through the window: typically the dry cleaners, dog parlours, tyre fitment centres, hot dog stands, drugstores, estate agents, and so on. The assignment was to compose a song using all these words.[17] It seems Waits was a man for all seasons, sometime later advising yet another creative strategy: “break windows, smoke cigars, and stay up late”. Hoodlum behaviour would definitely lead to wealth and riches, he maintained.[18]

As wry and paradoxical as these disparate forms of counsel appear; in all instances Waits is correct: at base he is requiring us to he fully aware, fully immersed and fully alive. Being engaged in the raw sensuality of existence implies a state devoid of any internal or external criticism, especially when you're serving as a doorman or breaking windows. He resembles something of the fool in King Lear, making nonsensical utterances that, on closer inspection, make absolute sense. Shedding responsibility and observing an oblique twilight world of few obligations enables you to find a space within you that is seldom accessed. It is a carefree place, a place to take risks and not care about the consequences: hangovers, cancers, run-ins with the law, whatever. In some respects, this represents a slightly older, more adolescent version of the uninhibited spaces of children.

Pablo Picasso, who maintained that children arc horn artists, would have agreed, as would film director David Lynch, who commented that while we think we understand the rules when we become adults, what we actually experience is a narrowing of imagination. This being moot, the obvious question is where all the art goes when we grow up and the inner child is ushered out of our adult lives. How do we re-acquire our potential for artistry in a world of adult artifice and indifference - and is there a process that describes this?

The best response to this critical question, 1 believe, comes from the founding head of the Santa Fe Institute economic think-tank, W. Brian Arthur, who maintains that all true innovation is based on a sense of inner knowing. Arthur describes a three part creative process[19] that, as you will read further in this book, dovetails with many of the insights offered by artists in practice.

1. The first phase of this process is acute observation. By this, Arthur meant that we must arrest the orthodox style of information downloading and, instead, simply start listening. This, according to Arthur, implies forsaking our ingrained styles of functioning and, instead, immersing ourselves in situations that offer us the most potential creative leverage. (More on this shortly.)

2. The second part involves sufficient withdrawal and reflection to allow an innate sense of understanding to surface. Withdrawal cannot be hurried or forced. It requires time and discipline, with revelation often emerging serendipitously, in moments of what I shall later term "still water": a Zen-like place embracing both immobility and action, with a degree of inactivity above the surface and yet, deep beneath, a great stirring. Still-water moments typically arrive unannounced and on their own terms, often when we are not actively searching. We are merely waiting, watching and listening: sometimes contemplatively, in meditation, or even prayerfully in enduring periods of silence. Van Morrison is one of the great singer-songwriters who understand and speak of this yielding of self to greater forces of creativity and insight.

3. The third part of this process is about inspired action: seizing the moment when it finally arrives, and acting immediately and as completely as possible. David Crosby, former member of the Byrds, and later the '70s super-group Crosby, Stills and Nash, said that when the muse struck there was no holding back, no deliberating. "I didn't have control over what came out of my pen," he confessed.[20] This is a process of letting go, of outpouring, of finally getting on and expressing in unhindered fashion the essence of what you've acquired during observation and withdrawal. This is no longer about holding back. It's a moment of ignition and release.

   Though each of these components is more fully described in the chapters that follow, for now let's briefly examine just two: namely the first phase of observation and the third phase of inspired action.

Observation

Cognitive theorists such as Daniel Kahneman[21] argue that the role of attentive mastery is crucial to real observation, as it enables pattern recognition, allowing older hands to join the dots where the lesser experienced might not see the dots at all. This ability to sense even without necessarily knowing and understanding why explains how an

experienced fireman can sense when a fire is about to become seriously dangerous, allowing him to give the order to evacuate. Juniors would struggle to make the call because they can't read the signs.[22] Similarly, in the opening chapter of his book Blink, Malcolm Gladwell tells the story of how a museum expert was able to call an allegedly 2500-year-old Greek artefact a fake, though without being able to say why.[23] It boiled down to intuition, a cognitive process that, according to the respected researcher-psychologist Seymour Epstein, reduces directly to pattern recognition.[24]

My own research has shown how this process of pattern recognition improves with age. Using blind and sighted paired tastings of products such as cheese, wine, orange juice and coffee, I have shown how older, more experienced tasters tend to use price as a proxy for quality, rating expensive products more highly than cheaper ones, regardless of intrinsic quality.[25] This form of pattern recognition is an unconscious process of course; we are unaware of the effect of the price cue when we sip an expensive wine or taste a cheaply priced Cheddar.

So what is it about innovative people that enables them to spot the pattern of creative opportunities where the rest of us do not? Over time, we all increasingly make use of pattern recognition cues, but in some this skill is undoubtedly sharper than in others. Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees was a genius at this. Before he died, Gibb recalled how his ear had become so attuned to the environment that he composed the melody for "I Started a Joke" after hearing the pitch of a British Airways Vickers Viscount plane engine. "If the bells of that church over there went now I could hear a melody in that that other people couldn't, the harmonics for instance, and my ears will pick it out, only because I've been doing it for so long," explained Gibb. "The extraordinary thing is that you can hear melody if you've got your antennae up. The ear gets an extra sense to it. It's like playing Scrabble: you're constantly looking for seven-letter words."[26] Of course it's difficult to predict which people will be better at this but, with artists, we can observe through their writings and reflections how they have come to produce the work they have. There are certainly learnings here.

Take contemporary British playwright Roy Williams, for instance. As his dad had disappeared when he was two years old and his mom worked nightshifts, as a young boy, Williams was left at home with a babysitter and the telly. Such was his situation that, to this day, he can recall arbitrary episodes of Bergerac from 1978, the names of actors and their respective roles. "[I]t's quite scary," he says. "I don't let on a lot about that. I was just that kind of kid. I absorbed everything."[27]

Artists from the 19th-century Impressionism school were also profound practitioners of absorption: of watching and then watching some more. Vincent van Gogh is renowned for his paintings of sunflowers. Displayed in Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum are numerous versions of the same theme; he was fixated on drawing

out the fundamental nature of the sunflower. Claude Monet, in his attempt to capture the play of fading light on a set of haystacks, painted a sequence of canvasses depicting the same scene, each rendering different colorations as the sun set to the west. Pierre-Auguste Renoir painted five versions of his two girls at the piano, and Paul Cézanne painted repetitive scenes of apples and also a set of mountains near the town of Aix, in the south of France. On a visit to the Musée de l'Orangerie art museum in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris, the audio guide informed me that few models were ever prepared to sit for him for the lengthy periods he required. Such was the acute and painstaking process of Cézanne's observation of his subjects that the pace of his painting was simply too slow for most models to endure, and this is why, it was said, that Cezanne could only ever paint apples and landscapes.

On the topic of deep, deep, observation, Hemingway gave Cezanne much credit: "I learned how to make a landscape from Mr Paul Cezanne by viewing his painting at the Luxembourg Museum a thousand times on an empty gut, and I'm pretty sure that if Mr Paul was around, he would like the way I write them and be happy that I learned from him."[28]

As a poet in training, the then young German poet Rainer Maria Rilke asked of the aged Cezanne how to write great poetry. His advice, not too dissimilar from Torn Waits', was to sit in front of one's intended subject matter and observe it over a prolonged period. Thus, after a week's scrutiny in the Paris Zoo, Rilke came to write "The Panther". (Entrepreneurs in training, too, would do well to take note of the advice.)

The Panther
His gaze those bars keep passing is so misted
with tiredness, it can take in nothing more.
He feels as though a thousand bars existed,
and no more world beyond them than before.

Those supply-powerful paddings, turning there
in the tiniest of circles, well might be
the dance of forces round a centre where
some mighty will stands paralyticly.

Just now and then the pupil's noiseless shutter
is lifted. Then an image will indart,
down through the limbs' intensive stillness flutter
and end its being in the heart.

Translation: J.B. Leishman

Rilke would go on to develop a particularly spiritual sensibility and his work is still much revered today. When I read his work, I am always amazed how it prompts me to think: that's so true, why haven't I thought of that? Of course this is what makes him such a great poet: his ability to express complex ideas so simply that commoners feel the words speak to them too.

The British sculptor Henry Moore maintained that acute feats of observation were critical in the search for new perspectives. “The observation of nature is part of an artist's life,” he wrote in 1934. “It enlarges his form-knowledge, keeps him fresh and from working only by formula, and feeds inspiration.”[29] This describes songwriter and rhythm guitarist of The Rolling Stones, Keith Richards, to a T. In his autobiography Life, Richards speaks of the exacting requirements of Rilke-like observation and of how these skills have juiced his powers of creativity. Through reading about his music career, which dates back to the early '60s, the extent to which he dominated the Stones' songwriting process becomes clear. So while he and Mick Jagger share credit for most of the Stones' songs, it was in fact Richards who would first develop each song's architectural “riff”, firing up the initial tune and a basic raft of words, which he would then pass on to Jagger for lyrical development. Richards was, as he puts it in Life, the butcher, carving off slabs of musical meat, which Jagger would then refine and embellish. About observation, Richards writes that when you realise you are a songwriter, in order to provide the material you need, you have to become an observer first and then, within this process, two things happen. Firstly, you distance yourself and, secondly, you are constantly on the alert. In time, that sense of alertness becomes ingrained within you as you observe people and how they interact. Observation, he writes, makes you oddly distant, a voyeur of sorts. “You shouldn't really be doing it,” says Richards. “It's a little of Peeping Tom to be a songwriter. You start looking around, and everything's a subject for a song. The banal phrase, which is the one that makes it. And you say, I can't believe nobody hooked up on that one before! Luckily there are more phrases than songwriters, just about.”[30]

Glenn Frey, major-league songwriter of the Eagles, was also a composer-voyeur of note. In a documentary tracing the roots of the Eagles' phenomenal success in the '70s, Frey related the tale of how he stumbled upon one of the key tracks off their 1976 Hotel California album: “Life in the Fast Lane”. “I was riding shotgun in a Corvette with a drug dealer on the way to a poker game,” said Frey, “and the next thing I knew we were going at 90 miles an hour, holding [presumably drugs] big time. And I said: ‘Hey man, what are you doing?’ You know and he looked at me and goes: ‘Life in the fast lane.’ And I thought immediately: now there's a song title.”[31] A song

about the rancid L.A. high-life, “Life in the Fast Lane” would become the third single off Hotel California, peaking at no 11 on the Billboard 100.[32]

The observational skills of the great American abstract painter Jackson Pollock were also remarkable. As his friend Nick Carone recalled: “When Jackson looked at something, it was as if he were getting into the pores of it, the most minute molecular structure of it; the level at which even the most insignificant thing, like c1n ashtray, has a life and is constantly moving.”[33] A similar tale of observation arises in the case of singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, who in 1974 met a 73-year-old art teacher, Norman Raeben, who had no idea who Dylan was. The old man was a demanding teacher and would not tolerate shoddy work. Dylan is reported to have enjoyed the anonymity and the possibility of being treated as an ordinary equal. He enrolled to do some lessons. One of the first things the old man required of his class was to sketch a vase. Raeben is reported to have placed the vase on a table, exclaiming: “Draw this!” then promptly removed it. His pupils were left to draw the vase from memory. It was an observational discipline that Dylan never forgot.[34]

The work of the late British abstract artist Howard Hodgkin is profoundly emblematic of the practice of observation: of consciously interrogating the inner world while at the same time watching the outer, capturing the spirit of a thing and reducing it to its essence. According to novelist and art critic William Boyd, Hodgkin was much like the early 20th-century artist Paul Klee, who writes of being “abstract with memories”,[35] awash with recollection and memory, trying to decipher it all and distil its truth.

This, again, is akin to the entrepreneur, flush with his or her first profound insight, struggling to bring the primitive prototype to life through endless tinkering and enquiry, ongoing mutations and iterations. Nothing being complete, nothing remaining permanent. Think of Google here, of the first Lego-framed search engines, clunking away. Like Hodgkin's paintings, these early versions were merely metaphorical portents, straining at the leash of currently available computational power: shadowings of a broader vision relentlessly seeking self-expression. Google's key insight - applying (statistical) regression-analysis techniques in traditionally 1,011-quantifiable domains such as the internet - has a direct crossover with the imaginative longings of art. According to art critic William Boyd, “What we are talking about here is a particular stimulus common to certain works of art where visceral delight cohabits with analytical curiosity or even analytical imperatives.”[36] As the acerbic author Dorothy Parker once wrote: “The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.” Steve Jobs, however, reported being almost cured of his innate boyhood curiosity while at school. “I was kind of bored for the first few years so I occupied myself with getting into trouble. I encountered authority of a different kind than I had

ever encountered before, and I did not like it. And they really almost got me. They came close to beating any curiosity out of me."[37]

Lauded South African artist Jean Welz is another who was renowned for his refined and driven sense of the aesthetic. Such was his acute and restless sense of observation that he would often rework paintings which, years earlier, he had deemed complete, sometimes signed, and even sold. For example, if, with the passing of years, the Austrian-born Welz decided that a particular painting still required resolution, without hesitation he would rework it until he was satisfied with what he wanted. In this respect, his biographer, Elza Miles, noted: "Certain works subjected to this transformation process were naturally altered totally. Others were destroyed."[38] Miles held that Welz's unerring vision for perfection lay in the almost Zen-like "equivocal nature of truth". This search for the core truth is something that sets great artists apart. The story of Welz's still-life painting entitled Baroque is a case in point, being reworked some 25 times! Ultimately bequeathed to his children, this modernist turquoise rendition began in the period 1958/59 under the title Large Architectonic Still Life With Urn. Following several subsequent iterations, it was presented in 1962 at an exhibition of the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Art, this time entitled Baroque. Even the favourable press reviews of the time did not dissuade him from further adjustments. Said Miles of Welz: "For him truth and reality could not be seen only in one dimension, and through each refinement of the image he attempted to interpret and expose another of its facets."[39]

A wonderful anecdote concerning Welz is derived from his time in Worcester, in the Western Cape, where he was principal of the Hugo Naudé Art Centre. During the 1942 Easter school holidays he devoted his art lessons to drawing, frequently outdoors. One of his students at the time, Rae Matthee, recalled how afternoons would be spent going through his art books and, in this way, extending their lessons into the realm of art history. Here Welz spent much time emphasising the works of the Impressionists, especially Cézanne. In her last art lesson with Welz, he placed an apple on a chair and asked her to draw not simply the visible form of this particular apple, but in shades of Cézanne, to go further and draw "the soul of all apples". This was his way of attempting to expose his students, in a non-onerous way, to each artist's search for the unrevealed character of the material world, to ground real creation in artistic discipline, and to strive for the continuous transformation from the intimate to the symbolic.

Friend and fellow painter Cecil Higgs said: "When Jean Welz paints a quince or an avocado pear, it is better than seeing a real quince or a real avocado pear, not because man's paintings are better to look at than God's fruit, but because the painting enables us to perform the miracle of feeling with someone else's uniquely different

senses. It is partly like discovering for the first time, this part of creation, for through other eyes it is an orient freshness, brilliantly new. How extraordinarily beautiful, all at once, a quince is; the quince in the painting is just like a real quince, but in it one feels the peculiar shape, the fullness, the firmness of the quinces, as qualities so wonderful that they make the pulse beat higher, an avocado pear looks like a real avocado pear but how the senses caress it - how they linger over the dark rough rind, assessing the exact degree of roughness, how our eyes gloat as they feel its exact degree of plumpness and fullness." For Welz, this ongoing mission to render the non-visual, innate and enduring nature of the subject became a poetic journey - the painting of poetry. "The end result of every work should be a piece of poetry. To look for that is my passion and my justification," he said in 1965.[40]

Inspired action

The question of being in the zone - in that uncritical space where you can simply create what is waiting to manifest within you - is pivotal to the rendition of great art and is beautifully explained through an incident relating to jazz pianist Bill Evans, shortly before his death in 1980, aged just 51. Warren Bernhardt, whom Evans was mentoring, was paying attention to the master as he played. Bernhardt reported that Evans, even though severely hooked on cocaine at the time, was playing magnificently. He recalled how Evans, in such zone-like moments, when musical conditions were perfect, said he could get every molecule in that environment to begin reverberating in a new and higher order, a quantum leap from the conditions of everyday. This, recalled Bernhardt, was something Evans could actually observe while it was happening.[41] Bernhardt, no slouch himself, went on to work with Steely Dan, touring as musical director and pianist in 1993 and 1994 when the duo put out their live set Alive in America.

Winner of the 1973 Nobel Prize in Literature, Patrick White was another who found the flow, uncritically pouring himself onto paper in the first phase of writing his great Australian novels. By avoiding his inner critic, White opened himself up to the artistic-unconscious within him. The first draft of a Patrick White novel was thus stream-of-consciousness (typical of his writing style anyway), the words literally gushing forth as if from a spring in one long, sustained, uncritical burst - typically in the deep of night, and usually assisted by alcohol. The process of getting the words out and onto paper as rapidly and uncensored as possible was essential to the creation of his art, he told his biographer, David Marr.[42] In this mode he was at his least critical and simply and, most importantly, in the "zone".

Later, much later, when the entire book had been rendered in this rough-hewn form (a process that took about three months), he would resume with a critical eye

and redraft the piece a further two times. The third draft would be the version finally submitted to his publishers. Though largely forgotten by contemporary readers, White was a giant of his period - and books such as Voss (1957), adapted as an opera by Richard Meale, and The Solid Mandala (1966), his personal favourite, are seriously worth reading. A later novel, The Vivisector, received posthumous recognition in 2010 when it was shortlisted for the Lost Man Booker Prize for 1970. While be has long been one of my favourite writers, perhaps a more significant referral comes from the great Van Morrison, who is reported to have enjoyed his work immensely.

Bruce Springsteen's style of composition is also worth noting, despite the level of banality that seemingly overlies this process of magic. In his biography, Bruce, author Peter Ames Carlin reported on how ordinary days would begin at around 11 o'clock with a bowl of Cheerios, after which Springsteen would mosey into town for a look-see and maybe to pick up some food. Back home, by mid-afternoon the Boss would be ready to work with the muse, tinkering on the piano or just plain sitting on his bed strumming his six-string. Thus he would spend wordless hours waiting for the moment to arrive. This state of watchful waiting, of being so absorbed in an enjoyable activity that you lose track of your sense of time and space, is something we have all experienced. It is, variously, known as "the zone", "the alpha state of mind" and "flow". Trying to describe the creative process, Springsteen said: "When you're writing well, you're not exactly sure how you've done it, or if you'll ever do it again. You're looking for the element you can't explain. The element that breathes life and character into the people or situation you're writing about." Warming to the theme of just how difficult it is to locate the space in yourself that enables creation, the Boss said: "So to do that, you gotta tap something more than ... well, it can't just he math. There's got to be some mystical aspect to it. And when that third element arrives, it's sort of one and one makes three."[43] The molten classic "Born to Run" is reported to have emerged in this way. Recently single, Springsteen had rented a small house west of Long Branch, New Jersey. Beside an open notebook, he strummed idly on his guitar, fishing for an idea from the depths. Then three words appeared in his mind: "born to run". Springsteen later recalled how he had liked the phrase because the cinema it had conjured in his head was sparked off by Brian Wilson's "Don't Worry Baby", which he was listening to at the time. (The songs are played in the same key and deal with the same themes.) It would take many more weeks to smooth it all out but this was the moment when the heart of the song presented itself.[44]

Through Springsteen's idle noodlings, we can begin to understand how, with analysis and self-criticism out of the way, creativity may be invited to step out and express itself. The rasping Tom Waits argued that, while everybody loves music, for creativity to happen you want the opposite: that is for music to love you. He cautioned

that this required a certain respect for the creative process. Music is writing you, you are not writing the music and, in this situation, you serve as the instrument through which music will be scripted.[45] Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones said pretty much the same thing: that songwriting requires ongoing tinkering and experimentation. For Richards the creative process has always been an unconscious one. He's never actively set out to write such and such a song; the process is always indirectly achieved.[46] Seventies folk-hero James Taylor agreed about this selfless aspect of songwriting. Speaking about the truly great songs he's written, such as “Sweet Baby James”, “Fire and Rain” and “Carolina in My Mind”, he said: “Yes they are good songs, I still sing them, I still connect with them, and I am thrilled to have written them. But I don't really feel as though I write songs, I feel as if I hear them first, and remember them and get them down. But it's such a mysterious and sub-conscious process that I couldn't really say that I wrote those songs. I just channelled them; they happened to me first ... There is a sort of lightning bolt kind of moment when you are visited by a song; sometimes a whole song, sometimes just a fragment. And you have to collect those fragments and later on sequester yourself, hide away somewhere and work them.”[47]

Taylor's view chimes with that of Bob Dylan, who argued that the artist should approach his work like an athlete: highly trained and deeply instinctual. Said Geffen Records executive Carole Childs of Dylan's uncanny abilities as a composer: “He would [write songs] as if he were a canary ... He writes those songs alone. He is his own man. He stands proud in his shoes. He don't need nobody to do nothin’. He's that gifted and that talented.”[48] Dylan is reported to have told Steve Jobs about the songs he wrote back in the ‘60s and ‘70s. “They just came through me,” he said. “It wasn't like I was having to compose them.”[49] Near the end of his life, Jobs remained staggered by the creative mystery that was Dylan, confessing that he couldn't figure out how he'd done it when he was so young, (quite ironically perhaps, given his own ability as a once-young artist-entrepreneur). Notwithstanding his remarkable talents, Dylan has remained watchful of his song-craft, and a keen observer of the inner dynamics that sought to undermine his ability to write well. As you get older you get smarter, he observed, and this can serve as a hindrance as your smartness tends to gain control over the creative impulse. Creativity, he maintained, is something that does not enjoy control and stricture; it's not a train on rails that can simply be shunted around. Rather, creativity is to be treated with care and respect; not controlled by the mind. “If your mind is intellectually in the way, it will stop you,”[50] he said. And so you have to train your brain to let go and not to theorise too much. Looking back at that hallowed time when writing came easily as pure water from a spring, Dylan reflected on the process of songwriting: “Still staying in the unconscious frame of

mind, you can pull yourself out and throw up two rhymes first and work it back. You get the rhymes first and work it back to see if you can make sense of it another way. You can still stay in the unconscious frame of mind to pull it off, which is the state of mind you have to be in anyway."[51] Artists like Dylan appear especially good at this: not thinking about what they are doing, or elaborating on why they think or act this way, but rather just doing. Said singer-songwriter Neil Young of Dylan's remarkable capacity to tap into the unconscious: "That's so powerful. You can't keep that. That comes and goes through you. You can't strive to be that. There's no way you own it. It's a gift that keeps on giving. It goes away, then it comes back, if you're ready to accept it it's there. I've heard Bob say that he doesn't know the guy who wrote those songs anymore ... I understand what he's saying. I understand the feeling behind it."[52]

T.S. Eliot believed that poets do many things by instinct, for which they can seldom give a better account than anybody else.[53] The act was all; it was never intentionally rational or intended in such a way that it could be explained in a rational format, such as a recipe or a piece of machinery. On the topic of songwriting, '70s British singer-songwriter Elvis Costello offered this insight: "I don't want to sound spiritual, but I try to make an antenna out of myself, a lightning rod out of myself, so that whatever is out there can come in. It happens in different places, in hotels, in the car, when somebody else is driving."[54] In 2016, 12-time Grammy winner Paul Simon shared a similar view when reflecting back half a century to his writing of the epic "Sounds of Silence": "I was really too young to know that there are times when – I don't want to sound silly - but when you are plugged into the universe and all of a sudden something comes through you, and it's yours but it isn't yours ... It comes out and you don't know were it comes from. I don't know why or how I wrote that song when I was 21 or 22 years old. It was certainly beyond me."[55]

The emotionally charged poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen also confessed to the complexities of his craft: "Songwriting is basically a courting process," he pronounced back in 1972. "Like hunting women. Most of the times it's a hassle."[56] Some four decades later, at the 2011 Prince of Asturias Awards, he was less flippant, noting this in the lead-up to the actual award: "When I was packing in Los Angeles, I had a sense of unease because I've always felt some ambiguity about an award for poetry. Poetry comes from a place that no one commands, that no one conquers. So I feel somewhat like a charlatan to accept an award for an activity which I do not command. In other words, if I knew where the good songs came from I would go there more often."[57]

Hearing comments like this from truly great recording artists such as Waits, Richards, Taylor, Simon, Dylan, Costello and Cohen should force you to sit up and pay attention. For, clearly and independently, they all agree that important work does

not come from ego-driven showmanship but rather from a process of letting go. As Paul Simon recently reminded the students of Yale: "The less ego there is, the more efficient your thinking will be. Don't judge it and don't listen to what other people judge."[58] This attitude of detachment cuts directly across the self-importance of many contemporary would-be creator-entrepreneurs. Money, a sense of power and an overriding ego are not keys to this universe. Rather the spirit of creativity sources from a deep and inward process of immersion and an ultimate commitment to discipline and integrity. The route to proper art, seemingly, has no obvious shortcuts and does not trade in worldly currencies.

Being yourself

Let us turn to the question of authenticity and its bedfellow, the suspension of criticism. Since creativity requires an open mind, the inner voice of judgement has to be silenced. Withholding this voice means suspending the habit of error detection ingrained through years of social conditioning, and creating a new space for marvel and self-investigation. If we fail to silence the upwelling of self-judgement, all attempts to enter places of potential creativity will be in vain. This is very much the approach advocated in The Artist's Way, in which the author, Julia Cameron, asks students to keep a diary of negative self-criticisms.[59] Logging these self-critical feelings gives them an avenue of expression and, in doing so, allows the artistic non-criticised aspects of self to emerge. When in songwriting mode, the late Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees was also quite clear about avoiding any sources of criticism. "The creative process is a very personal thing. One problem is: don't invite anybody to say anything critical when you are developing a song. It is crucial that you don't. If you feel that you are onto something special, that will uniquely come out as something special in the end, the last thing you want is somebody coming in, 'Oh, I don't like that ...' They may be the cleaning lady for instance, but it has a psychological effect."[60]

The question of finding the voice inside you, knowing what it is you want to say and instinctively directing your actions in such a way that gives it its best expression is not easy: you just have to find it; yet in many instances we don't know that we even have a voice. Instead we tend to mimic others that we admire: singing like Elvis Presley, writing songs like Bob Dylan. We never feel that we can actually sing and write like ourselves. On the question of finding your voice, Elvis Costello thought it was just a matter of self-confidence. "I don't believe anybody hasn't got a voice," said the husband of jazz siren Diana Krall. "I just think they haven't found it yet. I believe everybody can write songs in the same way."[61] Five years before his death, Leonard Cohen spoke of his struggle to find a voice, and his struggle to do this is a strong reminder of the circuitous route many of us must take:

Now, you know of my deep association and confraternity with the poet Federico García Lorca. I could say that when I was a young man, an adolescent, and I hungered for a voice, I studied the English poets and I knew their work well, and I copied their styles, but I could not find a voice. It was only when I read, even in translation, the works of Lorca that I understood that there was a voice. It is not that I copied his voice; I would not dare. But he gave me permission to find a voice, to locate a voice - that is to locate a self, a self that is not fixed, a self that struggles for its own existence. As I grew older, I understood that instructions came with this voice. What were these instructions? The instructions were never to lament casually. And if one is to express the great inevitable defeat that awaits us all, it must be done within the strict confines of dignity and beauty.[62]

Cohen's counsel on matters of artistic integrity finds resonance in a tale told recently by saxophonist Clarence Clemons. The rapidly ageing and infirm Clemons, for years one of Bruce Springsteen's top-gun sidesmen, was asked to play some sessions with the new world recording artist Lady Gaga. When he asked her what and how she wanted him to play, he reported that she replied: “Just be Clarence Clemons. Play what you want, be who you are. I'm gonna drop the needle and you go.” Smiling, he recalled: “So that's what I did and she loved it. That was very cool. Something I hadn't experienced in a long time, not since Bruce’s first albums. Sit down and play, just play. It reminded me of why I love being a musician and doing what I do.”[63] Again, I can see Tom Waits nodding his head. And Cézanne? Certainly.

In closing, two anecdotes regarding Neil Young and Bob Dylan are worth recounting. In a recent Memphis concert, while introducing an early favourite of his by Ian Tyson called “Four Strong Winds”, the now statesman-like Young reflected back to the time when he was still a teenager struggling to break free to find that sense of self that would soon convert into the gift to music that he became. Said Young: “When I was just a kid, 16 years or 17 years old, I went to this place near Winnipeg where I grew up, called Falcon Lake. And it's just one of those first times when you get away from home and you're on your own, and I was just kind of feeling it for the first time, and there was this little kind of restaurant place with a juke box that was there. And I used to go there and I think I spent all of my money playing this song, over and over again. It was the most beautiful record that I'd ever heard in my life and I just could not get enough of it.”

If you know a little about Young's parents, their separation, and his troubled teenage years spent drifting from school to school, you can understand why Young was so affected by the lyrics of “Four Strong Winds”; the words exacted the trail of

failed personal connections, the music steeped in a prairie tradition of stark simplicity and elegant motifs that, within 10 years, he would make his own. It was as if Young was discovering a part of himself that he did not yet know existed, an inner, existential, truer self. Indeed, during one of his country turns (as opposed to turning out with Pearl Jam) Young covered "Four Strong Winds" himself on the 1978 album Comes A Time. Close to his death, Johnny Cash did the same on his American V, released posthumously in 2006. In 2005 "Four Strong Winds" would be voted by the listeners of CBC Radio One as the greatest Canadian song of all time.

During the early '50s, in Midwest America, a young Dylan became similarly afflicted by the blues through listening to the late-night radio stations. He recalled times when he would stay up and listen to Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed and Howlin' Wolf coming in from the distant East Coast radio station beaming out from Little Rock, Arkansas, Chicago, Illinois and Shreveport in Louisiana. Like Keith Richards, the more he listened to blues songs, the more he spent time trying to figure them out. Soon he began playing them himself. It was all he did; all he could do. Admitted Dylan: "The reason I can stay so single-minded about my music is because it affected me at an early age in a very, very powerful way and it's all that affected me. It's all that ever remained true for me. And I'm very glad this particular music reached me when it did because frankly, if it hadn't I don't know what would have become of me."[64] Later, in New York, when in his early twenties, Dylan first came to hear the vinyl recordings of Robert Johnson from half a century before. It was as if he'd been hit by a bullet. Over the next few weeks, he would listen fixedly to Johnson's vinyl, playing each song, repeatedly, cut after cut. "Whenever l did it felt like a ghost bad come into the room, a fearsome apparition. The songs, were layered with a startling economy of lines. Johnson masked the presence of more than 20 men. I was fixated on every song and wondered how Johnson did it. Songwriting was for him some highly sophisticated business ... Everything was up for transition and I was standing in the gateway. Soon I'd step in heavy loaded, fully alive and revved up. Not quite yet, though."[65]

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. This chapter provides an overview of the creative process.
2. Economic think-tank founder Brian Arthur suggests that it may be divided into three distinct phases: observation, withdrawal/silence, and inspired action. Through citing the creative processes of a number of great artists, these dynamics are briefly examined.
3. Also considered is the importance of authenticity, and how we might find our uncritical creative voices.

section **two**

THE ARTISTIC MINDSET

chapter two

Artistic Grit

THIS CHAPTER EXAMINES TWO VERSIONS of artistic grit. The first refers to the strength to persevere and push on, regardless of the odds. Through examining artists such as Tom Waits, J.K. Rowling and the Fagen and Becker duo who made up Steely Dan, we see that where the risk of failure is greatest, there, so often, is found the artist. The second version of grit is moral integrity. Here we'll see how Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Talk Talk took up principled positions in the name of art. The chapter closes with a look at the relationship of grit to the potentially compromising influences of state and capital.

> The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.
> GEORGE BERNARD SHAW[1]

> Creativity takes courage.
> HENRI MATISSE[2]

> One's only chance is to be one's self.
> RAYMOND MCINTYRE[3]

> Every so often, a painter has to destroy painting. Cézanne did it. Picasso did it with Cubism. Then Pollock did it. He busted our idea of a picture all to hell. Then there could be new paintings again.
> WILLEM DE KOONING[4]

> To be a guerrilla, to be on your own, is far more rewarding in the end, if you have the determination to carry it through.
> DAVID BOWIE[5]

One of the best novels to come out of the Western genre is True Grit[6] by Charles Portis. Set in the 1870s, it tells the story of the 14-year-old Mattie Ross, from Dardanelle, Arkansas, and her quest for justice after their hired hand, Torn Chaney, shot her father in cold blood for $150 and two Californian gold pieces. Mattie discovers that Chaney has joined up with a band of outlaws in the adjacent Indian

Territory, a legal no-man's-land under the sole jurisdiction of US Marshals and so sets out to find a marshal to join her, someone with the ruthless qualities required to bring in her man. The local sheriff suggests a number of potential candidates, some marshals excellent at tracking and others with religious sensibilities who bring in their prisoners alive. But the meanest of them all is a certain Rooster Cogburn, “a pitiless man, who's double tough”, according to the sheriff. Opting for Rooster, Mattie seeks him out in his rented backroom behind the Chinese grocery store. Though he is living like a “billy-goat” and has an inclination for “pulling the cork”, Rooster's fallen circumstances belie his resilience, his gundog persistence and his moral courage. As the book plays out, he is revealed, ultimately, as the man of “true grit” - a defining metaphor of those final days of Frontier America. Roald Dahl, for one, reckoned the book to be one of the finest he'd come across.[7]

Presenting this as a requirement for getting through the hard times, the “true grit” quality of Rooster Cogburn is also what characterises many great artists. Rooster's grit carries notions of persistence, determination, doggedness and, importantly, a degree of moral courage. As with Rooster, a number of creatives have taken principled positions, irrespective of the cost. This is grit, possibly in its highest form.

Grit as determination in the face of failure

> The best thing ever to happen to Steve [Jobs} is when we fired him, told him to get lost.
>
> ARTHUR ROCK, EARLY INVESTOR IN APPLE INC.[8]

> I know entrepreneurship is usually associated with success, and invention is usually associated with excitement. But ewer my life the only thing consistently associated with entrepreneurship is failure. And the only thing consistently associated with inuenticm is frustration.
>
> DEAN KAMEN, INVENTOR OF THE SEGWAY TRANSPORTER[9]

The stubborn streak characteristic of grit means that you can hear “no” from a hundred record labels or publishers and still persist until you hear the ultimate “yes”, implying some level of emotional resilience. When starting out or, later, maturing into a newer style of art, many of the great artists have been forced to endure refusal or to busk on the sidelines. Those prepared to guts out these twilight times, remaining true to their art and themselves, are those left with a chance of making it through to the

end. The backstories describing perseverance-to-the-final-point- of-breakthrough are often instructive in the sense that they demonstrate the importance of commitment to self-purpose and artistic vision. While the role of luck is clearly critical (as will be argued in a later chapter), without artistic commitment and a certain boneheadedness, almost all initial promise is doomed to flounder. Back in April 1961, as young boneheads just discovering their mojo at Hamburg's god-forsaken Top Ten Club, The Beatles stand as an early example of true grit.[10] In that same year, Dylan, too, was to suffer public indifference. At a concert staged at the Carnegie Chapter Hall, the venue was only a quarter full and, although the promoter, Izzy Young, had agreed to split the gate with Dylan, when it became clear that the 52-strong audience was not going to cover costs, Dylan received nothing more than a few spare dollars from Young's own pocket. 'He took it pretty straight," Young recalled later.

In the mid-'70s, as an opening act to Frank Zappa, the young Tom Waits also recalled being jeered and spat upon. "I'd stand there and say, 'Well, thank-you. Glad you enjoyed that one. I've got a lot of new material I'm going to play for you tonight.' It went right downhill and I never got my fingers underneath to pull it up. It's amusing in retrospect, but there were some nights when, Jesus Christ, does this type of work look interesting to you?"[11] There were nights when it was like pulling teeth, lamented Waits. "The artist business is merchandise. I see it from the bowel now. One night off in two weeks. The problem with performing is it's repetitive, and unless I can come up with something new each night, I find it gruelling. Like I'm just a monkey on a stick. So I try to stretch out nightly, make something of it. And that's very valuable to me, and a lot of songs come out of that."[12]

As some palliative perhaps, Queen's lead guitarist, Brian May, has commented: "If you have enough talent and enough will to succeed, you will get there by whatever route presents itself. Once you have scaled the castle walls with the sword in your hand, it matters little how you got there."[13] Keith Richards endorsed this view, stating that, as a school dropout in 1959: "I had big ideas, even though I had no idea how to put them into operation. That required meeting a few other people later on. I just felt that I was smart enough, one way or another, to wriggle out of this social net and playing the game. My parents were brought up in the Depression, when if you got something, you kept it and held it and that was it. Bert [my dad] was the most unambitious man in the world. Meanwhile, I was a kid and I didn't even know what ambition meant. I just felt the constraints. The society and everything I was growing up in was too small for me. Maybe it was just teenage testosterone and angst, but I had to look for a way out."[14] Self-deprecatingly, perhaps, R.E.M's Peter Buck asserted that sometimes you don't even need talent. Recalling his early punk-inspired days with R.E.M., the only band he'd ever been in, Buck said that he'd always been arrogant

enough to think that if he was in a band, it wouldn't matter that he couldn't play. “If you have good enough taste, you don't have to be a great musician to make great music. When the band started, I knew about five chords and a Chuck Berry lick. I didn't even know bar chords,” he said.[15]

As a young graduate in her twenties, what J.K. Rowling feared most for herself was not poverty but failure. Addressing the Harvard graduating class of 2008, she confessed that a mere seven years after graduation day she had failed on an epic scale. Unemployed, divorced, a single parent and as poor as it was possible to be in modern Britain without being homeless, Rowling said that, by every usual standard, she was the biggest failure she knew. Such failure was not fun, she added. With no idea that there was going to be any form of fairy-tale resolution and no idea how far the tunnel extended, for a long time any light at the end of the tunnel served as a hope rather than a reality. Despite these setbacks, Rowling told the Harvard assembly that the consequences of her failure gave her an existential sense of focus because, as she put it: “Failure meant a stripping away of the inessential. I stopped pretending to myself that I was anything other than what I was, and began to direct all my energy into finishing the only work that mattered to me. Had I really succeeded at anything else, I might never have found the determination to succeed in the one arena I believed I truly belonged. I was set free, because my greatest fear had already been realised, and I was still alive, and I still had a daughter whom I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life.” This said, Rowling warned her audience that, while they might never plumb such depths, some failure in life is inevitable, stating that it is impossible to live without failing at something unless you Live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all, in which case you fail by default. Failure, she said, gave her an inner security that she had never acquired by passing exams. Indeed, it taught her things about herself that she could not have learnt in any other way, for example, discovering that she had a strong will and was indeed more disciplined than she had suspected. “The knowledge that you have emerged wiser and stronger from setbacks means that you are, ever after, secure in your ability to survive. You will never truly know yourself, or the strength of your relationships, until both have been tested by adversity. Such knowledge is a true gift, for all that it is painfully won, and it has been worth more to me than any qualification I ever earned.” With hindsight, she reflected that she would remind her 21-year-old self that personal happiness lies in knowing that life is not a checklist of acquisition or achievement. “Your qualifications, your CV, are not your life, though you will meet many people of my age and older who confuse the two,” she concluded. “Life is difficult, and complicated, and beyond anyone's total control, and the humility to know that will enable you to survive its vicissitudes.”[16]

Perhaps the most prolonged brush with initial failure was Don McLean's, whose 1970 debut album, Tapestry, including the now standard “And I love you so” (a subsequent international hit for Perry Como), endured rejections from 34 labels before he signed with Mediarts. Such sustained agony is possibly rivalled by the breakthrough story of Steely Dan, the iconoclastic ‘70s jazz-pop outfit, who struggled mightily to break into New York's music scene. Amidst the Aquarius-age-student-discontent of 1969, this singer-songwriter duo, made up of Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, were as close to nowhere as one could possibly imagine. Just out of college and holed up in a squalid Brooklyn apartment, the precociously gifted yet utterly uncool twosome would venture out, cold calling on Manhattan's music recording establishment. So destitute that they could not even afford to put together a demo tape, the duo resorted instead to assaulting their potential bosses with live renditions of their latest offerings, cheesily plunked out on any available out-of-tune office piano. Bemused record executives would baulk at these weirdos and their obscure lyrics, using any pretext to get them out, usually with the words “zero commercial prospects”.[17] Despite these early hardships, the two persisted, signing eventually with the financially distressed music publisher JATA Enterprises. When they knocked on JATA founder Kenny Vance's door, they looked like hobos - Vance later describing them as “insects, with no vibe corning from them”. “Librarians on acid” was another descriptive term he used at the time.[18] Despite their appalling appearance, in Vance, their warped persistence and musical self-belief finally won them a manager and the chance to record a twelve-song demo-tape. Even this proved to be a failure. Just as when they'd live serenaded their reluctant audiences, now the tape left the suits running for cover, embarrassed and nonplussed by the duo's references to jazz greats such as Parker, Blakey, Mingus and Evans. Namechecks intimidated Vance, whom the sententious Becker once accused of having the “soul of a kreplach”.[19] Despite such ignominies, by late 1971, things began to improve, with JATA hiring out the duo as songwriters to the ABC label in Los Angeles. Once inserted into the lurid West Coast vibe that they would so viciously parody in later albums, Fagen and Becker were soon signed on as ABC recording artists. Adopting the Steely Dan stage name, they began their first recording, Can't Buy a Thrill, the next year. Although a further six highly regarded albums followed before they temporarily disbanded in l 981, were it not for their initial reserves of determination and self-belief, it is highly unlikely that Becker and Fagen would ever have made it through.

Grit as artistic integrity

When we signed with them, they knew what they were getting. They knew they weren’t going to get some easily manipulated pre-packaged pop group. That was not

going to happen. What they wanted, I think, was the integrity that we had to offer. What they wanted was the kind of street cred or cache that R.E.M. could bring to them and the chance that we would give them a hit or two. What happened was we gave them a bunch of hits. And we became huge.

MICHAEL STIPE EXPLAINING THE PROCESS OF R.E.M,'S 1988 SIGN-UP WITH WARNER BROTHERS[20]

Having attained some level of achievement, the integrity of established artists is likely to be challenged as they move on to newer forms of art. This may require a lot of gritty staying power. A case in point is the French artist Henri Matisse who, with Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp, is regarded as one of the radical drivers of visual art in the early part of the 20th century. In 1909, at the age of 40, Matisse put on the most comprehensive exhibition of his work to date, his aim being to showcase the sequential progression to the stripped-down minimalism he had achieved. His reviewers responded to his efforts with dismissive cruelty, accusing him of crude overindulgence, befuddlement and wanton savagery. Established critics skewered him for inconsistency and lack of clear artistic vision. As his biographer Hilary Spurling observed: "One after another they attributed their inability to make head or tail of what Matisse was doing to his shortcomings rather than their own. Attacks came from all quarters. The young and progressive were as splenetic as the elderly and conservative."[21] Despite the severity of this personal criticism, Matisse endured, moving, in time, to present a coherent line of artistic achievement that would establish him as one of the founders of Modernism, Fauvism and Impressionism. A few decades later, Hemingway was proving equally radical in his approach to writing. "A writer's problem does not change," he said. "It is always how to write truly and having found out what is true to project in such a way that it becomes part of the experience of the person who reads it."[22] Critical to this task, he suggested, was some kind of "built in shock proof shit detector". All great writers have this, he said.[23] Author and historian Paul Johnson has suggested that, while Hemingway was deeply flawed on a number of levels, the one thing he did not lack was artistic integrity. His lifetime project sought to create fresh ways of writing English and, in his fictional works especially, he was remarkably successful. "It was one of the salient events in the history of our language and is now an inescapable part of it," said Johnson.[24] Bob Dylan offered an additional perspective on artistic grit when, during his infamous 1965/66 world tour, he switched mid-concert from acoustic to electric guitar. Up to that point Dylan was the crowned prince of folk music and the darling of the civil rights movement, being labelled as the "spokesman of a generation".[25] Such was the richness of Dylan's craft that Paul Simon believed, at least for a while, he defined the genre.[26] Anyone trying to understand the extent to which an art form and its artist may forsake its fan base for the sake of new

art would do well to examine Dylan's 1963 to '66 musical transition from quiet acoustic albums such as The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan and The Times They Are a-Changin', to the subsequent Bringing It All Back Home and Highway 61 Revisited, and especially the electrifying Blonde on Blonde. Given the earnest, folksy foundation of his earlier work, his decision to go electric was, understandably perhaps, met with outrage. On the notorious bootleg recording of the 1965 Manchester concert, the acoustic disciples were scandalised, one famously yelling out: "Judas!" to an equally unimpressed Dylan, who replied "I don't believe you, you're a liar!" before ripping into a snarling version of "Like a Rolling Stone", instructing his band to "play it fucking loud".[27]

Yet, just as his fans were adjusting to the electrified format, the muse was pushing Dylan yet further away from them. Following a freak motorbike accident in July 1966, he sought sanctuary on a farm close to Woodstock. Now married and seemingly dismissive of the increasingly popular psychedelic format á la Sgt. Pepper (1967),[28] he'd cut his hair, taken up painting and spent time each day reading his Bible. The songs from the consequent 1968 album, John Wesley Harding, were massively pared-down and countrified. Recording in Nashville, Dylan reportedly arrived at the studio with the numbers fully composed. The album, including the now standard "All Along the Watchtower", took only nine hours to record, in contrast to Sgt. Pepper, which had blown out to five long months. Later Dylan's drummer, Kenny Buttrey, confirmed the new inclination towards the less polished format: "We went in and knocked 'em out like demos," he said. "It seemed to be the rougher the better. He would hear a mistake and laugh a little bit to himself as if [to say], Great, man, that's just great. Just what I'm looking for."[29] This was just another phase in the chameleon-like process of Dylan's art. His 1975 album Blood on the Tracks would return to a far more measured approach, recorded Steely Dan-style, with a number of different session musicians, in two recording locations. The resultant album is broadly acclaimed as one of his finest ever.

A further instance of cat-like independence is the equally obdurate Neil Young, who, at numerous stages of his career, has also done the principled swerve into the underbrush. Following the success of early '70s albums such as After the Gold Rush and Harvest, the singer famously retreated from his lucrative, mellow, countrified style. By way of explanation, he claimed that while songs like "Heart of Gold" (off Harvest) had put him in "the middle of the road", "[t]ravelling there soon became a bore so I headed for the ditch. A rougher ride, but I saw more interesting people there."[30] This rougher ride would last three years, yielding some of the most critically acclaimed albums of his legacy, most especially Tonight's the Night, recorded in 1973 in a series of tequila-soaked jam sessions but released only two years

later, and On the Beach, an album initially avoided by fans but now lauded as an exemplar of the genre. Reflecting on the 1973 tour that featured work almost solely from his hitherto unreleased Tonight's the Night, Young remarked: “It was dark but it was good ... maybe as artistic a performance as I've given. I think there was more drama in Tonight's the Night because I knew what I was doing to the audience. But the audience didn't know if I knew what I was doing. I was drunk outta my mind on that tour. Hey you don't play bad when you're drunk, you just play real slow. You don't give a shit. Really don't give a shit. I was fucking with the audience. From what I understand, the way rock 'n' roll unfolded with Johnny Rotten and the punk movement - that kind of audience abuse - kinda started with that tour. I have no idea where the concept came from. Somebody else musta done it first, we all know that, whether it was Jerry Lee Lewis or Little Richard, somebody shit on the audience first.”[31]

On this infamous tour, Young would toy drunkenly with his audience, introducing the show with a slurred: “Welcome to Miami Beach ladies and gentlemen. Everything is cheaper than it looks,” before loping through the title track at least two or three times during the set. At the show's conclusion, he would lean into the bemused multitude, offering at last to play a song that they were actually familiar with. The crowd, thinking that they were finally going to hear something off Harvest, would bellow in relief, whereupon Young would launch hilariously into one more lewd version of the same “Tonight's the Night”. Extending the tour to England, Young played a Bristol concert encore to nobody but Ahmet Ertegun, then owner of Atlantic Records. Reported Young later: “I said, ‘Ahmet, I played so good tonight I think I deserve my own private encore.’ So we went out and played ‘Tonight's the Night’ for the fourth time that evening ... with no-one left in the theatre.”[32]

Such was Young's antipathy towards the mainstream that, a decade later, he would provoke David Geffen of Geffen Records into a lawsuit, accusing him of producing music “atypical” of his art. Following some dabblings into techno and country music, it was the release of Young's 15th studio album in 1983, a ‘50s retro soiree entitled Everybody's Rockin', that proved the final straw. With no memorable songs, it was his shortest album ever, running a mere 25 minutes, and utterly unlike anything Young had ever done before. Once it became clear that the album was going to bomb, Geffen sued Young for producing music that was “not commercial” and “uncharacteristic of previous recordings”. Incensed, Young countersued Geffen for interference, his recording contract having stipulated complete artistic independence from the recording suits. In the subsequent settlement Young is reported to have told Geffen: “I'm not here to sell things. That's what other people do,” adding: “You hired me to do what I do, not what you do. As long as people don't tell me what to do,

there will be no problem."[33] This was not the end of Geffen's troubles. In the wake of this altercation, the then upstart indie band R.E.M. moved to scupper their own recording deal with Geffen, signing instead with Warner Brothers. Their future status as a '90s mega band would rankle with the posturing Geffen, serving as a future totem to recording labels tempted to micromanage the artistic delivery of their charges. Recently, Bob Dylan neatly explained why Young has remained a pre-eminent singer-songwriter of his generation: "An artist like Neil always has the upper hand ... It's the pop world that has to make adjustments. All the conventions of the pop world are only temporary and carry no weight. It's basically two things that have nothing to do with each other."[34]

Some years later, this time in the UK, the mishandling of another band would serve to further profile the sensitivities at play. Talk Talk, initially launched as a clone of the '80s New-Romantic boy band Duran Duran, later became known for following Dylan and Young's cue to veer off the tarmac. Contrasting with the typically inane pop banter, when he was being interviewed Talk Talk's lead singer, Mark Hollis, presented a dignified and intellectual persona, citing the influence of jazz and classical greats such as Davis, Coltrane, Bartók and Debussy. Asked to name his favourite band, however, Hollis namechecked Can, Otis Redding and Burt Bacharach, leaving the interviewer and audience nonplussed. Certainly listening to their first heavily synthesised '80s albums, The Party's Over and It's My life, the musical tie-in to these references would not have seemed immediately obvious. Though both recordings sold well enough, it was their third, 1986, album, The Colour of Spring that propelled them into the popular mainstream. Incorporating the UK hit single "Life's What You Make It", the Spring album went on to sell two million units, earning their EMI recording bosses sufficient revenue to grant their (by now) moody and introspective hirelings an unlimited budget for their following album. Given this opportunity to pursue their own artistic direction, Hollis and his co-writer and producer, Tim Friese-Greene, started recording the epic and groundbreaking Spirit of Eden (1987). Contrary to the then post-punk philosophy that crowd-pulling music could be laid down in an unpolished if not virtually raw format,[35] Eden took more than a glacial year to complete,[36] with Hollis insisting that no singles were to be taken from the album and that no EMI representatives be permitted to attend the London-based Wessex Studio recording sessions. Such was the sombre, avant-garde introspection of Eden that one music critic ventured: "It's the kind of record which encourages marketing men to commit suicide."[37] Doubting that the album had any commercial appeal, EMI requested the re-recording of certain songs and the inclusion of supplementary material; demands which Hollis refused to entertain. Then, pursuing the same line as Geffen, EMI moved to sue Talk Talk for producing "wilfully obscure"

and “uncommercial” music. While the lawsuit never stuck, it established grounds for the precedent clause of future recording contracts, that the output from any signed-up band or artist be commercially acceptable – a major defeat for artist-musicians going forward.

Upon its eventual UK release, the six-track Eden peaked at 19, leaving critics uncertain of its merits. Particularly worrisome was a 30-second gap of silence inserted between tracks three and four. Wrote Markus Berkmann of The Spectator: “It is either a work of immense merit and bravery or a load of bilge, and I cannot decide which.”[38] Any uncertainty has long since evaporated, with Eden lauded today as one of the ‘80s’ significant albums and a marker for many of the great bands that would follow. “Spirit of Eden has not dated,” opined Alan McGee of The Guardian 20 years later. “It's remarkable how contemporary it sounds, anticipating post-rock, The Verve and Radiohead. It's the sound of an artist being given the keys to the kingdom and returning with art.” Added McGee: “I find the whole story of one man against the system in a bid to maintain creative control incredibly heartening.”

Following the EMI bust-up, Talk Talk signed with Polydor for what would be their final album, Laughing Stock (1991). Issued on Polydor's old Verve jazz label, it also stretched the boundaries of avant-garde, though it would take a further six years before Hollis would make his final statement with the remarkably sparse and delicate Hollis, recorded Bon Iver-style, with just a single pair of microphones. Hollis has since remained silent, the album appearing to have taken his music to a point of conclusion.

Jazz great Bill Evans is possibly another who never compromised his artistic integrity. “The market doesn't influence my thinking in the slightest,” asserted the brilliant and tortured musical genius in one of his last interviews. “I know where I come from, where I am and what I have to work with, and I try to make what I consider to be the most total kind of musical and human statement within the means and tradition from which I came.”[39] This level of artistic integrity is remarkable given the sheer volume of 164 albums featuring the pianist between 1955 and 1980. Though many of these recordings were made without consent and released by record labels more interested in making a fast buck than producing well-recorded jazz, Evans was never short of work. Rotating between the Village Vanguard in New York, Ronnie Scott's in London, and Shelly's Manne-Hole in Los Angeles and performing regularly at jazz line-ups in Montreux, Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Paris and other jazz capitals in Europe, Evans kept a full card. He was dedicated throughout, never yielding to external pressure. Despite his quiet, introverted disposition and his debilitating addiction to drugs, over the more than two decades of his performing life, he was loved and adored by fans the world over.

Another gritty artist is Leonard Cohen. A poet and novelist long before he came to songwriting, Cohen's capacity to render extraordinary lyrics always exceeded his characteristically restrained sense of musical arrangement. The constantly evolving Cohen moved through a number of artistic and personal phases, including a five-year period in a Buddhist monastery (where he was ordained a Rinzai Zen Buddhist monk) and a messy financial court case in which it was found that his prior manager and lover had defrauded him of most of his life's earnings, leaving him, in 2005, with just $150,000 to his name. Much of the touring and recording that followed was driven by the consequent need to fund his retirement, resulting in a series of "old man" albums that compare well with those of Dylan and Johnny Cash. He is on record as acknowledging his struggles with liquor, women, depression and his genuine sense of poverty when crafting his songs. He stated in 2012 that he'd always felt he was scraping the bottom of the barrel when trying to get the songs together. "I never had the sense that I was standing in front of a buffet table with a multitude of choices," he said. "I felt I was operating in more what Yeats used to say was the 'foul rag and bone shop of the heart'. I just pick it together. I don't work with a sense of great abundance." Songwriting, he suggested, involved persistence, sweat and also a certain kind of "grace and illumination".[40]

In the South African context, few could be considered more physically resilient than Helen Martins. A virtual recluse all her life, this visionary sculptor – known as the Owl House Lady of Nieu Bethesda - was discovered only after she took her life on 8 August 1976, aged 78, by drinking caustic soda. The tiny village of Nieu Bethesda lies in the upper hills of the Karoo, roughly 50 kilometres north of Graaff-Reinet, near the famous Valley of Desolation. Until 1992, this town was without both electricity and piped municipal water. Here, in this remote and barren place, roughly midway through her life, Martins began her Owl House project - a work that took up most of her last 17 years, but which ultimately remained incomplete. In certain ways her eccentricities, her shyness and reclusiveness, became the means by which she could withstand the conservative apartheid craziness that consumed a large part of South African society during her time. Koos Malgas, her personal assistant who crafted so many of the cement statues at her Owl House, recalled: "They said she was crazy. Truly that is what they said. When I first came here, I also thought so. But after I worked there for a few months, I saw that she was not crazy. People said she was mad because she was a bit different to other people. Truly, she was more intelligent than the people in the village. She was very clever. I was a simple sheep shearer who came to work for her, and I learnt a great deal from her in order to be able to do this work." Granny Gongo Oliphant, who was employed by Martins, also saw her grit and steely reserve. "She dressed like the brown people," said Oliphant. "The white people did

not understand it. They said that she was crazy. Everything she did in that house, she did not do as if she was crazy - but out of understanding." In a feudal village of so much ill regard, one can only imagine how Martins struggled to hold on to a sense of purpose for as long as she did. Revisiting the Owl House on a stone-cold but sunny winter morning, I was moved by the strange paradox that beset this woman, the garden of her life, which she so yearned to see flourish with meaning and bloom with explosions of colour, was reduced, ultimately, to a cement garden: a dusty, sterile cemetery of figurines that lived with vitality and expression only in her mind's eye.

Was Martins merely expressing an inner world that the outer world could not comprehend and had turned its back upon? And, therefore, and more generally, to what extent is this drive to express "innerness" the lot of artists and creators per se? Is it their role to express what others find impossible to bring into the light? In some instances, it seems as if this role is actually forced upon them. If this is so, why are "non-artists" so incapable of self-reflection? And conversely, why, for the chosen artists, is the road to discovery so often so hard? Where do artists find sufficient inner resources?

Similar to many other artists who defy constructs of normality, Martins was never formally trained and employed unusual art materials, including cement and glass. Seeing her work as a personal progression of self-enquiry and innovative discovery, Martins worked neither for profit nor public recognition. Typical of an Outsider artist, she created for herself, her work a concrete expression of an inner dialogue with her own unconscious. Martins' biographer, Anne Emslie, notes: "There are other art labels that apply to this form of art. One of these is Naïve Art, describing the untutored vision; another is Art Brut. The latter is a term coined by Frenchman Jean Debuffet to describe art that is characterised by individuality and originality and which, as he says, 'thrives in other places than those socially assigned to the fine arts'."[41] A closer study of Martins' work and her context indicates quite clearly that these "other places" were both emotional and geographical, an enforced and painful estrangement from all aspects of the conventional. As an artist of grit, there can be no doubt that she succeeded in her ambition, but the cost was severe.

Moral courage versus state and capital

It is worth noting that those vested in the status quo tend to do whatever they can to preserve their power and maintain their position and rank in society. This is why creatives are so often the outsiders and outlaws. Steve Jobs, one of the greatest renegades of commerce, could have been paraphrasing Neil Young's ditch-swerve mentality when he put it this way: "If you want to live your life in a creative way, as an artist, you have to not look back too much. You have to be willing to take whatever

you've done and whoever you were and throw them away. The more the outside world tries to reinforce an image of you, the harder it is to continue to be an artist, which is why a lot of times, artist have to say, 'Bye. I have to go. I'm going crazy and I'm getting out of here.' And they go and hibernate somewhere. Maybe later they re-emerge a little differently."[42] Framed in this way Jobs highlights the ancient and ongoing battle between creativity on one side and the compulsion to civil conformity on the other.

In the final episode of the BBC series The Ascent of Man, Joseph Bronowski demonstrates this conflict, filming himself on the road that leads into Jerusalem. With the evening light glinting off the Holy City's distant roofs, Bronowski remarks the camera that, as a spiritual, intellectual and moral leader, Jesus would have walked this selfsame road en route to certain death at the hands of the system of government which regarded him as an enemy of the state. History reveals a long list of "leaders as outsiders" who, through dictates of conscience, chose to face down those in authority. Socrates (470-399 BC), Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), Galileo, (1564-1642), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Martin Luther King (1929-1968) and Albert Einstein (1879-1955) are but some. Einstein's name is most especially apt since he was offered the presidency of Israel in l952, which he declined. Bronowski was under no illusions, stating in the Jerusalem scene that science "is a source of power that walks close to government, and that the state wants to harness". He went further, predicting that, if scientific knowledge allowed itself to he commodified by organs of power, then faith in role of knowledge and intellectual leadership would ultimately disintegrate under the weight of what he termed "cynicism". If, as per the Latin conventions, we equate the term "science" with all forms of knowledge, then Bronowski is not alone in this view. In the final volume of the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling invokes the ancient headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore, to pronounce on the damageing effects of state power on magical thinking: "Years passed. There were rumours about him. They said he had procured a wand of immense power. I, meanwhile, was offered the post of Minister of Magic, not once, but several times. Naturally, I refused. I had learned that l was not to be trusted with power ... I had proven, as a very young man, that power was my weakness and my temptation."[43]

J.R.R. Tolkien also takes a position on power in his 1954 epic fantasy The Lord of the Rings. Seen as a charm to defeat death and achieve immortality for its bearer, the power of the One Ring invariably becomes toxic. So, while conceived as a means of acquiring eternal life, wearers of the Ring are instead transformed into Ringwraiths: neither dying nor fully alive. At the start of the great trilogy, Frodo the Hobbit asks the wizard, Gandalf, to clarify his understanding of this power.

> "You say the ring is dangerous, far more dangerous than I guess. In what way?"
>
> "In many ways," answered the wizard. "It is far more powerful than I ever dared to think at first, so powerful that in the end it would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it ... The lesser rings were only essays in the craft before it was full-grown ... But the Great Rings, the Rings of Power, they were perilous. A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is a weariness. And if he often uses the Ring to make himself invisible, he fades: he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the Dark Power that rules the Rings. Yes, sooner or later - later, if he is strong or well-meaning to begin with, but neither strength nor good purpose will last - sooner or later the dark power will devour him."
>
> "How terrifying!" said Frodo.[44]

According to the literary critic Tom Shippey, Tolkien's more contemporary view on the progressive toxicity of power is a removal from the earlier medieval notions which suggested that acquired power merely revealed true character, though did not change it.[45] For Tolkien, by contrast, the Ring's power is corrosive of character, fitting closely with Lord Acton's famous statement: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."[46] A number of other books published at about the same time also explore this revisionist interpretation of power, namely: George Orwell's Animal Farm (1945), William Golding's Lord of the Flies (l954), and T.H. White's The Once and Future King, (1958).[47] These volumes should not, however, seduce you into believing that a blanket ban on relations between creativity and state and capital offers a solution to the problem of artistic compromise. To be sure, some important ideas need to be commercialised. Some degree of restraint is, however, required. Apple's Jonathan (Jony) Ive put it this way when trying to explain what it was like working prior to his link-up with Jobs: "There wasn't that feeling of putting care into a product, because we were trying to maximize the money we made ... All they wanted from us designers was a model of what something was supposed to look like from the outside, and then the engineers would make it as cheap as possible. I was about to quit."[48] Jobs was equally blunt about the quest to monetise at all costs, stating: "I hate it when people call themselves 'entrepreneurs' when what they're really trying to do is launch a startup and then sell or go public, so they can cash in and move on."[49]

As a young artist Bruce Springsteen was equally aware of the potential dangers posed by his status as a rising star. "The distractions and seductions of fame and success as I'd seen them displayed felt dangerous to me and looked like fool's gold," he declared in his recent biography. "The newspapers and rock rags were constantly

filled with tales of good lives that had lost focus and were stumblingly lived, all to keep the gods (and the people!) entertained and laughing. I yearned for something more elegant, more graceful and seemingly simpler. Of course in the end, nobody gets away clean, and eventually I'd take my own enjoyment (and provide my share of laughs) in fame's distractions and seductions, but not until I was sure I could handle them."[50]

Artistic integrity is surely the reason that a number of artists have refused to allow their work to be licensed for commercial endorsements. Tom Waits certainly condemned this practice: "Even worse are artists aligning themselves with various products, everything from Chrysler-Plymouth to Pepsi. I don't support it. I hate it. So there."[51] Neil Young was more direct: "Makes me look like a joke," as he once sang on "This Note's for You". Bronowski was explicit about this, stating that it was not the business of science to "inherit the earth" but rather to serve as the custodian of society's moral imagination. So, like Tolkien, he insisted that, without a moral core, the enlightenment project would succumb inevitably to the corrupting influence of power. As he put it, contemporary knowledge-structures would prevail only if they were founded on the recognition of "the uniqueness of man and a pride in his gifts and his works".

The pull of state and capital aside, creative knowledge systems currently face two additional threats. The first stems from the decline in maths and sciences in Western countries,[52] and the second from the decline in many schooling systems of creative disciplines such as art and dance. Authors such as Sir Ken Robinson maintain that most schools educate creativity out of children and hence handicap their ability to generate the insights necessary for fresh forms of knowledge and understanding.[53] As this book will argue, if society is to be elevated above its current plane of civilisation, these creative processes should be fostered, not undermined.

In conclusion, please note that the two forms of artistic grit, namely determination in the face of failure, and moral courage, are in certain ways similar. Moral courage is required in the face of failure while, in turn, courageous optimism often risks failure. Of course no one of integrity considers this when they take a principled stand. The stand is important, not whether it succeeds or not. One of the most wrenching evocations of failure-meets-grit relates to when Paul Simon sang "The Boxer" on Saturday Night Live, two weeks after the events of 11 September 2001 when Islamic radicals flew four passenger jets at key American installations causing the deaths of 2997 innocent people. Two of these jets targeted New York's World Trade Center's Twin Towers, bringing them to the ground in scenes of apocalyptic destruction. In that single incident, 343 firefighters and 72 law enforcement officers were counted among the dead, along with 2192 civilians. The majority of these

emergency workers were killed in the vain attempt to quell the Tower fires and rescue civilians more than 80 storeys up.

Prior to the show, Simon asked the producer, Lorne Michaels, whether he thought that "The Boxer", a song about the poverty and loneliness of a fighter, was the right song. Reported Simon: "Lorne said I think that somehow it makes a statement about persevering and enduring. I of course said whatever you want of me I'd be happy to do." On the night of the show, approximately 20 firemen and NYC policemen walked onto the studio floor, led by the then mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. The studio atmosphere was charged as Giuliani spoke grittily into the camera: "Good evening. Since September 11th, many people have called New York the city of heroes. Well these are the heroes. We will not let our decisions be made out of fear. We choose to live our lives in freedom." With the studio in half shadow, Simon then led his band into "The Boxer". It was a profound moment in American television history. With any artist of grit, the fighter will always remain, no matter what.

If you seek another symbol for moral courage, think of The Goldfinch, painted in 1654, the year of his death, by Carel Fabritius and made yet more famous by the 2013 novel of the same name by Donna Tartt. Close to the end of this magnificent book, Tartt moves in to examine what it is about this little bird that speaks so clearly to the heart of the human condition. "There's only a tiny heartbeat and solitude, bright sunny wall and no sense of escape. Time that doesn't move, time that couldn't be called time. And trapped in the heart of light: the little prisoner, And unflinching ... in this staunch little portrait, it's hard not to see the human in the finch. Dignified, vulnerable. One prisoner looking at another." As I first read these words, I became intensely aware of what Tartt was trying to say: that this metaphor speaks not about a generic-unconscious version of the human experience but of individuals aware of their inescapable suffering: struggling, like the goldfinch, just to be fully present. While the human version of this more conscious journey is so often exemplified by the artist, its potential calling lies within each and every one of us - if we seek it intently. Referring once more to the bird, Tartt writes:

> Because - what if that particular goldfinch ... had never been captured or born into captivity, displayed in some household where the painter Fabritius was able to see it? It can never have understood why it was forced to live in such misery: bewildered by noise, distressed by smoke, barking dogs, cooking smells, teased by drunkards and children, tethered to fly on the shortest of chains. Yet even a child can see the dignity: thimble of bravery, all fluff and brittle bone. Not timid, not even hopeless, but steady and holding its place. Refusing to pull back from the world.[54]

Little prisoner. Dignified. Vulnerable. Thimble of bravery. In many respects artists are this bird, grittily refusing to pull back from the world. And not even hopeless.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. The concept of grit offers two perspectives of artistry.
2. Most obviously, it speaks of the capacity to stare down adversity and to endure. The breakthrough stories of artists such as J.K. Rowling serve as examples here.
3. Grit is also about honour and morality; figuring out your principles and sticking to these. Vignettes from the work of Bob Dylan and Neil Young are used to illustrate.
4. Finally, this chapter examines the role of grit in mediating the potentially conflicting influences of political and economic power.

chapter three

Passion

IN THIS CHAPTER passion is shown to be a strong catalyst for good art. It examines the unconscious tendency to yoke certain artists to specific subjects: witness Picasso and his bulls, Henry Moore and his bones, Van Gogh and his sunflowers. The works of Neil Young and John Constable are examined to tease out a more nuanced appraisal of how passion plays itself out through creativity. Also considered is the question of "artistic vocation" and the romantic concept of báraka: that lightning strike of supernatural inspiration that many call "the muse".

> One person with passion is better than forty people merely interested.
> E.M. Foster[1]

> The idea is am I into what I'm doing? I really want to do somethin' that represents music the way I feel it. That represents me.
> NEIL YOUNG[2]

> There is a love and respect at the centre of everything we do together. It's not just business, it's personal. When you come to work with me, I had to be assured you'd bring your heart. Heart sealed the deal. That's why the E Street Band plays steamroller strong and undiminished, forty years in, night after night. We are more than an idea, an aesthetic. We are a philosophy, a collective, with a professional code of honour.
> BRUCE SPRINGS[3]

I've always been moved by the Oasis song "Cigarettes & Alcohol" the lyrics that ask if it's worth the trouble of looking for a job "when there's nothing worth working for".[4] It speaks so clearly to the problem of meaningless work. So many are forced down this road, so many wish it were different. But in what way different? How could we be better disposed to get out of bed on a cold weekday morning? The answer, if we read the lives of poets and painters, is through personal intent, purpose and, most

of all, passion. Most artists have this in spades. It's the sort of internalised intensity of feeling that, when activated, gives you focus, a sharpened sense of awareness, plus a drive to persevere and perfect. It's as if a motor has been turned on inside you. At times it releases an uneasy restlessness. Sometimes it can simply burn you up, if not destroy you. That's how most artists appear when they're inspired by their art. They ignite and burn intensely. It's sometimes as close to a near-death experience as you can get, such is the proximity to the life force: the work and loves of Vincent van Gogh and Dylan Thomas being prime examples here.

The prolific Neil Young suggests that great art requires 100 per cent commitment. "You have to be ready to give everything you have, and you have to make sure you really got a lot to give," said Young. "Because if you go out there and you're not ready to give everything you have - and you're not strong enough to give as much as you possibly can - to go right to the end of the candle, to right where it's going to melt and be gone, then you're nothin'. You shouldn't even be there. You're just markin' time."[5]

An apt example of Young's passionate work ethic comes not from his music but from his love of model trains. During much of the '80s and '90s, as a means to connect with his second child, Ben, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and spastic paraplegia, Young spent a lot of his time building train-set layouts. With Ben bound to a wheelchair, Young used sophisticated remote-control systems to trigger movement on the layout. As he was (by then) a very wealthy man, he could apply significant cash to the R&D process required to develop these systems. In a certain sense this became his new passion. In 1992 he became an equity partner in a model train business called Liontech, which specialised in the development of remote-controlled devices, thus providing Young with the means to allow Ben to remotely operate his train set. Importantly, his involvement with the train world would also serve to revitalise his music, which had been in serious decline. Said Young of this period: "My dad said he couldn't understand why I would need an obsession to distract me from my work. How can you miss something if you don't go away? If you're not really into music and excited to be there, it sounds like it. You can't hide that. So the only way to do that is to starve yourself. Get to the point where you have to play."[6] Asked then whether it was easy for him to have fun, his response was intriguing. "Well, it's easy for me to have fun doin' this," he said. "Fun is for me making things - having a goal- an idea. Lionel [aka Liontech] is an American institution. This is like GM, RCA, General Electric, Ford, Revell ... those classic names. It's gotta be cared for like a piece of fuckin' history. It's tradition. And I have the technology to make these trains compete today. I'm on this."[7] Reflecting further, Young added: "I've been a notoriously bad businessman ... I'll do anything to get what I want. Pay way too much, that's how I do it, usually. Y'know, I don't care. If I want something – I don't wanna

hurt somebody or cheat, I don't like to do that and I don't do that - but if it can be gotten financially and I want it, I'm tenacious. I'll just keep going for it until I get what I want." Commenting on how his business advisors respond to this dog-with-a-bone attitude, Young replied: "Oh you think they liked it when I was spending a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars on a spec for a [train set] control system for Liontech? It's like what the fuck are you doing? They're just scratching their heads, makin' fun of me and shit. But here I am ... and it's happening."[8]

A comparatively recent development is Young's interest in electrically driven vehicles. The New York Times review of Young's 2012 autobiography, Wageing Heavy Peace, had this to say of his current obsession: "When Young finds something he likes or cares about, he has a single mode: all in. With a team of technologists and investors, he has been working on an electric car for years - the Linc Volt – and when there was an accident and it burned, he just started over. He still plans to drive it to the White House and make a movie about the car. He can speak with authority about biodielsel, Chinese battery manufacturing and the specific optical properties of 16-millimeter film."[9]

When working on a project, Young is famous for his avoidance of dispassionate analysis, preferring instead to dive straight in, with passion. Not surprisingly, he tends to surround himself with similarly intense work colleagues, two key collaborators being Dennis Fowler, who's driven the technical details on his trains, and David Briggs, his long-time record producer. Talking about his trains, Young calls Fowler his go-to man, describing him as "completely focussed on the stuff - to the point where he can hem and haw on some little detail for like days, nights, weeks ... he's so into it."[10] As for the late Briggs, few drove Young further into accessing the artistic muse. From the late '60s onwards, he would produce an incredible 18 of Young's albums, beginning with the self-titled Neil Young in 1968 and ending with the coda to Kurt Cobain's suicide, Sleeps with Angels, in 1994. Between these lay a trove of sonic treasures, including After the Gold Rush, On the Beach and Rust Never Sleeps. Briggs was famed for perfecting a low-tech approach to producing records, preferring emotion over technical gimmickry.

While artists such as Young insist that passion is a prerequisite for good art, it should be clear that this kind of passion does not necessarily coincide with the pursuit of money or fame, though sometimes they do follow. Rather it serves as a combustible that, when ignited, drives us to increasingly higher levels of self-expression. The work of 19th-century British artist John Constable is an example of this. A recent study analysed the motivation behind his work, focusing specifically on why Constable came to paint his beloved country landscapes with such obvious passion.[11] A clue emerged in the correspondence between Constable and Maria

Bicknell, whom he courted for six years before they married in 1816. During this period, Constable's work acquired an added fervour, with the lovestruck artist producing a flurry of sunset oils, awash in vivid pinks and reds. In combination, the effects revealed a heightened appreciation of light and its play on the landscape. Through an analysis of his work, then, it seems clear that Constable had found his muse in the Suffolk countryside of his youth. Splicing together the biographical sequence of his life, the scenes that Constable depicted during this prolific period occurred mostly in the locations where he grew up, where he developed from boy into man and where, in particular, he fell in love with and courted Bicknell. In many of his love letters to her, Constable wrote that painting was another word for feeling. According to Robert Blythe, an expert on Constable, rather than reserved expressions about agriculture, these country paintings served to express "the most profound feelings for life itself, for being on the earth, for relationships." Such was this version of sublimated love that, in correspondence with Bicknell, Constable would describe the countryside as his "mistress".

The same dynamic can be seen in the early poetry of the celebrated 17th-century British poet John Milton. While the topics of his poems are fairly chaste, relating to matters of religion and the creation of the earth, their lines are shot through with sexual allusions that appear to emanate from a young man with too much testosterone and nowhere to use it.

The same sense of sublimated passion applies to the work of the South African oil painter Tinus de Jongh, who is renowned for his late-'30s Impressionist works of the massive sandstone mountains of South Africa, suffused with luminous light. During his formative years in the Netherlands, however, the focus of De Jongh's paintings tended to the dull and melancholy. It was only when he fell in love that his art changed. "I must confess that my fiancée was the cause of a turning point in my career," admitted De Jongh later. "She brought me, unconsciously, to the right sunny way."

Helen Martins, the reclusive Owl House woman, was also deeply passionate about her work. Trapped in a suspicious and narrow-minded world, her art became her life's calling. Her mystical world of cement camels, shepherds, mermaids and owls became the one true source of meaning for her, providing intense fulfilment and enabling her to explore inner child material through creative play. In the words of biographer Anne Emslie, her work "provided her with a sense of meaningfulness and purpose. Her work was her voice, a way of articulating her thoughts, heartfelt emotions and personal perceptions."[12]

In a lecture in 1897 at the University of Fribourg, the Swiss Symbolist artist Ferdinand Hodler offered an insightful perspective on why certain artists chose

particular forms of art. “One paints that what one loves; that is why one gives preference to this figure rather than that one,” he said. “One reproduces that particular landscape in which one had been happy. For the painter, an emotion is one of the basic stimuli that cause him to create. He feels compelled to tell of the beauty of the landscape, or of the human figure, that is to say, of that particular small part of truth which had 'moved' him so profoundly.”[13]

In a related analysis, produced some decades later, the English art critic Sir Herbert Read drew a distinction between common sympathy and artistic empathy. For Read, sympathy for the environment is shared by most of us and involves a feeling for things. Empathy, by comparison, is a higher level of emotion and, in the process of artistic creation, is typically experienced as a projection of personal feelings into certain objects. Thus, applied to Hodler's thinking, the further one has entered into the essence of the object, the more absolute and profound is the basis from which one is able to create.[14] This notion underpins the call by so many creative luminaries to do what you love. As Ernest Hemingway said: “The country that a novelist writes about is the country he knows, and the country that he knows is in his heart,”[15] adding later, “It doesn't matter that I don't write for a day or a year or ten years as long as the knowledge that I can write is solid inside me. But a day without that knowledge, or not being sure of it, is eternity.”[16] In this vein, the Nobel Laureate advised writers: “Find what gave you the emotion, what the action was that gave you the excitement. Then write it down making it clear so that the reader can see it too.” For Hemingway, of course, the consequent writing had to be conducted with absolute economy, with few or no adjectival flourishes. “Prose is architecture,” he asserted, “not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over.”[17]

Aside from Constable's Suffolk, De Jongh's mountains and Martins' owls, further bonds of artist-to-objects are worth noting: Vincent van Gogh and sunflowers, Paul Cezanne with apples and Mont Ste Victoire outside Aix-en-Provence, George Stubbs with horses, and Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin with common domestic kitchenware. (Think of his well-loved copper kettles, earthenware jugs and battered cups, spoons and ladles - all symbols of the stability and continuity of the human experience stripped to its essence.) As an aside: these levels of connection should not be confused with versions of artistic laziness, in which lesser painters and sculptors are known to repeat the same forms ad nauseam because they are easily rendered and sell well. Examples of “passion” expressed as artistic empathy that date from a more recent era include: Pablo Picasso and his bulls, René Magritte for his apples and bowler hats, Henry Moore and his bones, Jasper Johns and flags, David Hockney and swimming pools, and South African artist Jack Lugg for the abattoir donkeys of his youth. Turn to music and you find the same subjective glue: Van Morrison and his

repetitive referencing of T.S. Eliot's “gardens wet with rain”, J.J. Cale and his take on the stoned cockerel hobo existence, Bruce Springsteen and his reading of the American blue-collar, and Bob Dylan and his sense of the biblical metaphor. Arguably this is art in its most exalted form and, in return, if timeously recognised, such artists are offered keys to their cities, knighthoods, adulation. In certain ways such artists come to embody the truths of their art; they epitomise the motifs that they render. They become, as it were, human constructs of truth. For example, when David Bowie died in 2016, survivors of contemporary swinging London mourned his passing. And, when Dickens died more than a century before, celebrants of his foggy version of Victorian London mourned too. And yet, despite the passing of Bowie and Dickens, both versions of London endure and remain etched in the national consciousness. This can only be so because of the strength of the artistry that shaped their meaning. And this would not be so without passion. Passion drives creativity, creating unforgettable art.

It should be clear that such passion is common not only to artists. It applies to anyone with a purpose or a vocation. It's a passion driven to fulfil their life's calling; the thing they were destined to do. Setting artists aside for a moment, within the sphere of business, it should be clear that the entrepreneurs who burn most brightly burn primarily to satisfy a deeper longing of some as yet unarticulated expression of self. The South African-born hotel magnate Sol Kerzner exemplifies this: “I have always said that the thing that drives me is not the money – although there are obviously advantages to living like this - but it's the excitement of the business, the thrill of creating.”[18] Similarly, in their book Success Built to Last, authors Porras, Emery and Thompson state quite clearly that it is for passion that the great life-builders do their work. “Listen up,” they urged, “here's some really bad news: it's dangerous not to do what you love. The harsh truth is that if you don't love what you're doing, you'll lose out to someone who does! For every person who is half-hearted about their work or relationships, there is someone else who loves what they're doing. This person will work harder and longer. They will outrun you. Although it might feel safer to hang onto an old role, you'll find your energy is depleted and, miraculously, you'll be first in line for the layoffs when they come.”[19] In the same book, director and actress Sally Field is quoted as saying how much better off she's been when doing what she really loves, as opposed to “working on herself”, underscoring the view that following programmes of self-improvement is no clear route to either happiness or success. Field is unequivocal about the imperative of passion, observing: “If you say, l don't have anything I love, well then there's a real problem right there, and you have to sit down and say, ‘Why don't I have anything that I love?’ What in me has walked away from every inclination that I had, that I had found something that sparked me, something

that was for me, and I didn't do it. You have to go back, you know, just recount every moment of your life, what was it, what was that one thing that I did that I loved?"[20] One hundred years ago, the Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke was of the same mind. When asked for counsel from a young poet, this is what he offered:

> You ask whether your verses are good. You ask me. You have asked others before. You send them to magazines. You compare them with other poems, and you are disturbed when certain editors reject your efforts. Now ... I beg you to give all that up. You are looking outward and that above all you should not do now. Nobody can counsel and help you, nobody. There is only one single way. Go into yourself! Search for the reason that bids you to write, find out whether it is spreading out its roots in the deepest places of your heart, acknowledge to yourself whether you would have to die if it were denied you to write. This above all ... ask yourself in the stillest hour of the night: must I write? Delve into yourself for a deep answer. And if this should be affirmative, if you may meet this earnest question with a strong and simple "I must," then build your life according to this necessity; your life even into its most indifferent and slightest hour must be a sign to this urge and a testimony to it. I want to beg you as much as I can ... to be patient towards all that is unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer ... Take whatever comes with great trust, and if only it comes out of your own will, out of some need of your innermost being, take it upon yourself and hate nothing.[21]

In 2005, six years before his death, Apple CEO Steve Jobs succinctly presented the same message in a commencement address at Stanford University. The remarkable thing about this speech is that he knew, even then, that he had contracted cancer.
It seems as if this knowledge sharpened his existential sense of purpose:

> [T]he only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking ... And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers ... As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.[22]

In the subsequent years of his life, Jobs observed that the older he got the more he saw how much motivation mattered. Somewhat contentiously he put it that Microsoft's 2006 “me too” Zune MP3 music player was “crappy” because the people at Microsoft didn't really love music or art like Apple designers did and that Apple had won the race to portable digital music because they personally loved music and had built the iPod themselves. He believed that, if you're doing something for yourself or for your best friend or family, you're not going to “cheese out”. If you don't love something you're simply not going to go the extra mile or work the extra weekend or challenge the status quo quite as much.[23] Looking back, his successor, Tim Cook, said what he'd learnt about Jobs was that, while a lot of people mistook some of his comments as ranting or negativism, this really was just the way he showed passion. Cook was not especially flustered by Jobs and his tantrums. “[T]hat's how I processed it,” he said. “I never took issues personally.”[24]

When asked what drove him, Jobs said he believed most creative people felt the need to express appreciation for being able to rely on work that had been done by others before them. He acknowledged that he hadn't invented the language or mathematics employed in his work at Apple, adding too that he made little of his own food and none of his own clothes. “Everything I do depends on other members of our species and the shoulders that we stand on. And a lot of us want to contribute something back to our species and to add something to the flow. It's about trying to express something in the only way most of us know how - because we can't write Bob Dylan songs or Tom Stoppard plays. We try to use the talents we do have to express our deep feelings, to show our appreciation of all the contributions that came before us, and to add something to that flow.”[25]

Following his 2012 scripting of Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Stoppard (of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead fame) was interviewed about his passion for playwriting. “I would like to work every day when I'm allowed to. It settles me,” he said. Trying to explain the basis of his vocation, Stoppard recalled the Anna Karenina character of Levin (a version of Tolstoy himself), noting that Tolstoy was a writer who fancied himself as a peasant farmer too: “In this movie, when Levin takes a hand to help with the mowing, he has a scythe, and he says something like: ‘I don't ask myself, why am I here doing work?’ and I don't ask myself why I am here when I've got a pen in my hand; it's almost like having a purpose, isn't it?”[26] Similarly, the American writer Richard Ford sees writing as a vocation, stating: “A profession goes on a track that's parallel to your life, and sometimes your life never reaches over and reaches that track. Priestly lives are vocations - not that a writer has a priestly life by any means, but a vocation is one that basically runs along the same rails as your life. As you live so do you work. So there's not that distinction.”[27]

Bob Dylan broke right into the songwriting zone following his break-up with long-term girlfriend Rotolo in 1964. The previous year, she was famously featured arm in arm with him on The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan album cover, walking down a cold Manhattan side street. The heartache of her departure would inspire two great pieces subsequently released off The Times They Are a-Changin', "Tomorrow is a long time" and "Don't think twice, it's alright"- songs that revealed a Dylan at the peak of his songwriting powers. According to session-guitarist Bruce Langhorne, who worked on Freewheelin' in the autumn of 1963, Dylan was no longer aping his long-time hero Woody Guthrie; he had found his voice and was working out his own music, passionately, at full pace. Saturated in the full hurricane of his muse, Dylan was transformed, relentless. Said fellow musician Mark Spoelstra: "He began writing anywhere and everywhere ... He'd be in a booth somewhere, in Gerde's Folk City ... and he's sitting there writing a song on the napkins. And you couldn't interrupt it. He was driven, and obviously enlightened."[28] Such is the force and consequence of passion.

With Dylan, possibly the most significant songwriter of his generation, this search for greatness appears to have been founded on a pact made directly with God. This was revealed years later, when interviewed on 60 Minutes following the publication of his 2004 autobiography, Chronicles, Volume One. Asked why he was still musically active and touring at the age of 63, his reply was telling: "Well it goes back to the destiny thing. I made a bargain with it, you know, a long time ago, and I'm holding up my end." Asked what the bargain was, Dylan replied: "To get where I am now." On probing precisely with whom he had made this pact, Dylan responded: "Ha-ha. With, with, you know, with the chief, the chief commander ... On this earth and in the world we cannot see."[29]

In the mid- to late '50s, prior to being selected to play piano with the Miles Davis outfit, the introspective Bill Evans preceded Dylan in his move to New York, "to make or break in jazz", as he put it. Ever the analytic, Evans recalled thinking at the time: "Now how should I attack this particular problem of becoming a jazz musician, as making a living and so on?" Upon some reflection he decided simply to stick unambiguously to his passion, explaining later: "I came to the conclusion that all I must do is take care of the music, even if I do it in a closet. And if I really do that, someone is going to come and open the door of the closet and say, 'Hey, we're looking for you.'"[30] Almost a decade later, and following the tragic death of his double bassist, Scott LaFaro, just 11 days after the recording of the brilliant Village Vanguard sessions, Evans was looking for a new bassist for his trio. After a number of false starts, Evans eventually picked out and stuck with the Puerto Rican bass player Eddie Gomez, who would record with him till 1977. Years later, Gomez recalled the advice

offered by Evans on one of their final albums: You're Gonna Hear from Me (released posthumously in 1988): "His demands were simple enough - show up and give one hundred percent, don't hold back, and take some chances now and then. He urged me to be myself and not to dwell on the legacy of Scott LaFaro. Bill Evans was articulate, forthright, gentle, majestic, witty, and very supportive. His goal was to make music that balanced passion and intellect that spoke directly to the heart."[31]

Bruce Springsteen agrees on this, stating that technical issues become secondary if the song's expression comes from the heart. "There are many good, even great, voices out there tied to people who will never sound convincing or exciting," he said. "They are all over TV talent shows and in lounges in Holiday Inns all across America. They can carry a tune ... they can hit all the high notes, but they cannot capture the full emotional content of a song. They cannot sing deeply."[32] Paul Simon says something similar, stating that when given the option of five melody lines, most people would choose the most musical of these. "What I'm interested in, however," he said, "is what comes out of someone's heart when they sit down at their instrument or use their voice to pour it out."[33]

Given that passion has to be one of the key drivers of inspiration, it's ironic just how little respect it receives in the secular, non-artistic world; while in commerce, for example, where so much lip service is paid to creativity, the search for "new ideas" is generally conducted dispassionately, through rote orthodox techniques driven by flip charts and dime-store consultants. So seldom, it seems, is passion seriously considered as part of the creative package. And so, as the poet Robert Graves observed in the '60s: "This is a critical, not a poetic age ... Inspiration is out. Contemporary poems must reflect the prevailing analytic spirit. But I am old-fashioned enough to demand baraka, an inspirational gift not yet extinct, which defies critical analysis."[34] (Note here that baraka is often interpreted as the Islamic quality of God-inspired blessedness, yet more directly translated means "lightning strike". Taken as such, baraka implies the instance of God's hand of enlightenment reaching down to touch the artist in the form of inspiration.)

The primal dimension of báraka is well described by Picasso, following his viewing of the first exhibition of African art in Paris: "When I went for the first time, at Derain's urging, to the Trocadero museum, the smell of dampness and rot there stuck in my throat. It depressed me so much I wanted to get out fast, but I stayed and studied. Men had made those masks and other objects for a sacred purpose, a magic purpose, as a kind of meditation between themselves and the unknown hostile forces that surrounded them, in order to overcome their fear and horror by giving it a form and an image. At that moment I realised that this was what painting was all about. Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator

between this strange, hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires. When I came to that realisation, I knew I had found my way."[35]

Picasso's statement speaks directly to a fully consecrated artist's facility to seize inspirational power straight from the primal and supernatural world, and couples with many earlier cited instances where the same sense of divine inspiration - or muse - has birthed quite incredible pieces of art. Referencing just the great songwriters of this rapidly passing era, we could include here: Leonard Cohen, James Taylor, Tom Waits, Elvis Costello and Bob Dylan, just for starters. The ability to attract the muse as a source of supernatural inspiration goes back to the Ancient Greeks. Certainly it was critical to the formation of the German Sturm und Drang era of music and poetry (1760-1780) and the ensuing Romantic period (1800-1850) - witness the poetic works of William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) – each period a reaction to the materialism espoused during the Age of Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution. In the 20th century, the role of the emotional intuitive was especially championed by Robert Graves, who cited his writing of The Golden Fleece as an example in which he experienced powerful feelings of a "sudden" and "unsolicited" enlightenment.[36] In the '70s, art philosopher and scholar Graham Collier wrote Art and the Creative Consciousness to present his case for a universal creative zeitgeist (spirit of the time) from which artists draw inspiration.[37] Today there would seem to be endorsement from scholars such as Otto Scharmer[38] and the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico. This top-class think-tank of scientists is famous not just for its alumni of Nobel Prize winners, but also for its only resident novelist, the incredible Cormac McCarthy, who, in "straight English", penned the institute's mission statement in 2014. As a group of high-octane academics, their approach to cosmology and chemistry mirrors much of the guidance offered in this book, as witnessed by excerpts from the McCarthy mission statement: "Scientific work at SFI is always pushing creativity to its practical limits. We always court a high risk of failure. Above all we have more fun than should be legal ... Occasionally we find that an invited guest is insane. This generally cheers us all up. We know we're on the right track."[39]

Citing passion as a catalyst for inspiration, this chapter serves as a challenge to the materialist project and all that it represents. This includes its negation of mythology, ritual and spirit. Art - be it painting, sculpture, poetry, music, dance or whatever - is always conducted with feeling, freedom, love and passion. Although many great and important ideas are subsequently commercialised, in the main, commercial and technocratic interests seldom serve as genuine creative drivers. As Graham Collier wrote in 1972:

> Living in a technocratic culture it becomes all too easy to accept a programmed way of life and a relatively predictable pattern of events. Our attitude and our behavior become regimented and we tend to distrust our more esoteric thoughts and feelings...But this can ultimately make for an unbalanced consciousness - one in which poetic and intuitive modes of awareness have little credibility - and results in the individual's inability to be nourished spiritually through symbolic means ... It is my view that the widespread interest in "the arts" which we have witnessed represents one of the ways by which people have discovered the satisfaction of shaping experience for themselves - of realizing the complexity and depth of their own nature - and of developing empathy towards things of nature and the environment. There are those who believe that when the ultimate technological culture arrives, man will have evolved into a supremely rational creature. Only then will he be free of those nonrational demands of the psyche for the kind of participation mystique we have described. He will be free from art, poetry, religion, and all other magic rites which are the legacy of his pre-logical days. He will be sufficiently emancipated to live by the rational intellect alone, accepting things as they phenomenologically are and having no need to create the images of art by which natural events are transformed to embody human sensibilities. Well, as far as I can see, there is little evidence at the present time to suggest that we are moving in this direction.[40]

In the light of this, how then can we find a better way to live creatively? Artists. of any integrity are bound by a code to be all that they can be: to divine their calling and to commit their lives to this work. Passion helps to see them through this process, for to be sure material rewards are mostly meagre. Richard Ford, one of America's greatest living novelists, understands this better than most. When asked what advice he'd offer to a young aspiring writer, his response cut to the heart of why artists choose the paths they do and why they seek, and so often merit, the divine guidance and protection that shadows the process of their work:

> If they say: "I'd like to try my hand at writing," yes, I would say, give it a go. If they had that sort of tentativeness about it, I would say sure, it's a victimless crime, you know, go ahead. If someone else said: "What I want to do more than anything else in the world is I want to be a novelist," I would say, well why don't you try talk yourself out of it first, because you're probably going to fail. The vicissitudes of life are such that you have to be very lucky to get any place:

> you have to marry the right person, you have to not get sick, you have to not be a drunk, you have to not get hit by a truck, you have to have enough money - a whole lot of things have to fall into alignment for you to be lucky enough to even have a chance to do the work - and once you do the work maybe no one will ever read it and it won't be any good. So if you think in terms, as I do, of being useful to the world, which I think is a goal which I've always sought for myself, to be useful to the world, there are lots of other ways a person could be useful to the world without it raining down horrors on itself. Then if the person says to me: "Okay, I've done all that, I've listened to all that you say, I've tried to talk myself out of it but I really can't do it," then I would say, go with God young man, go with God.[41]

In the next chapter, we'll look at the notion of the inner child as a component of the artistic mindset, and at how the betrayal of the child so often provides the necessary wounding that spurs artistic endeavour.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. Along with grit, passion is one of the critical components of the artistic mindset. Without it, the impetus to move forward and create will prove insufficient in the long run.
2. The role of heart can therefore not be overstated. Many artists have pointed this out: most recently Steve Jobs, in his brilliant Stanford commencement address in which he reminded his listeners of the importance of loving what you do.
3. Author Richard Ford is mindful of this too, noting that the crooked path of artistry seldom yields material success.
4. Properly pursued, art may thus be considered as something of a vocation – a mythological quest that, in moments of enlightenment, may invoke the muse

chapter four

The Exiled Child

THE CONCEPT OF THE INNER CHILD introduces attendant notions of innocence, simplicity and a willingness to make mistakes: qualities that are not usually adult. Psychologists describe how, from early on, the inner child is typically betrayed, split away from the self, and ushered into the shadows of the unconscious. In the journey towards reintegration, wounded artists spend years seeking reconnection with this "exiled" child. In this chapter a number of artists speak of the struggle to locate the inner voice of this child - an act that is often both a source and a manifestation of remarkable creativity. Such artists typically emerge as outsiders. Remarkably, while Outsider artists are world changers, they are seldom given the keys to this kingdom. They chafe at the status quo, longing for inclusion, hungry to make a difference, their power derived from early experiences of deprivation and suffering. Further anecdotal evidence is drawn from outcasts such as literary giants Ernest Hemingway and Charles Dickens.

> There is a deep desire to make pictures. That's why children draw. They start drawing at an early age. When people said to me people didn't have to draw, I said: "Go and tell that to some young little kid who's just drawing. They'd laugh at you. They would!"
> DAVID HOCKNEY[1]

> I watch kids draw and go: I wish I could do that. I wish I could get back there. I wish I could go through the keyhole. You become very self-conscious as you get older and less spontaneous and you feel very victimised by your creative world, your creative person.
> TOM WAITS[2]

In line with the Hockney and Waits quotes above, one of the key arguments presented in this book is that, while all children are artists, with the passage of time their voices are silenced. If we see singing as a metaphor for the creative spirit, the dearth of imagination in various spheres of life may be due to the voices of so many being rendered mute. Singing is thus a metaphor for the carefree spirit of children, the spirit that is uncensored, that enquires naturally about the wonders of life and seeks to give

full self-expression whenever it sees the opportunity. It is from this perspective that the Michelin three-star gourmet chef Heston Blumenthal observes how “creativity can really bloom when you have some naivety”.[3] Naivety is, after all, a function of innocence, a child-like disposition impervious to adult criticism.

An example of the beauty of naivety is revealed in the work of one of the early Apple designers, Bill Atkinson. In 1981, Atkinson was part of the initial Macintosh team tasked to develop the graphics to enable Windows screens to overlap. This technology enabled us to treat alternate documents as overlapping pieces of paper that we can move around onscreen as we would documents on a desk, one on top of the other. While today we all take this aspect of computer functionality for granted, back then there was no code that gave reality to this illusion of overlapping templates. The weird thing here is that Atkinson was able to pull off this innovative piece of code because he thought he had seen it done during an earlier visit to the computer labs at Xerox. This, in fact, was not so. No one had done it before. Naively, Atkinson simply assumed it had been done and so proceeded to replicate the work as he imagined it. Looking back at this feat of software engineering, Atkinson later remarked how he'd developed a respect for the empowering aspect of naivety: because he didn't know it couldn't be done, he was enabled to do it.

The freedom to believe that you can make whatever occurs to you without fear of sanction stands in stark relief against the corporate control fetish, which insists on error-free operation. By contrast, creativity thrives in the child's world where mistakes are not just tolerated but encouraged, and misinterpretations are construed merely as the progenitors of fresh insight. The gravel-throated Tom Waits spotted a great example of this: “Most changes in music, most exciting things that happen in music, occur through miscommunication between people - 'I thought you said this.' Poetry comes out of that too. It's like song lyrics: Kathleen (my wife) always thought that Creedence Clearwater song ‘Bad Moon Rising’ - she always thought ‘there's a bathroom on the right’. That's outside, a song about that, because that happens all the time -you go to a club, ‘there's a bathroom on the right’. But I love those mistakes. I salute them and encourage them.”[4] Weird versions of the songs we love are not uncommon; there's even a word for it: mondegreen. One of mine is from Queen's “Bohemian Rhapsody”: “spare him his life from his pork sausages”, as opposed to the correct “spare him his life from this monstrosity”; along, more embarrassingly, with “where the ducks are lonely” instead of “whereabouts unknown” from Van Morrison's “Alan Watts Blues”. There's a ludicrous reinterpretation reported on the song by The Rolling Stones' “Satisfaction”. The story goes that Keith Richards and Mick Jagger were on a flight when a woman in first class buttonholed them, observing: “You guys smoke dope,” and concluding: “That bit in the song where Mick sings

‘Hay! Hay! Hay!’ he's really taking about grass.”[5] Noel Gallagher, from Oasis, recounts a similar story about one of his favourite songs: “This Guy's In Love With You” by Hal David and Burt Bacharach. “For years I listened to that song and it blew me away,” said Gallagher. “I thought it was called ‘The Sky's in love with you’ - that's as psychedelic as fuck. I thought it was the most cosmic thing of all time.”[6]

Neil Young struggled to retain his songwriting spontaneity when his doctor advised him to give up dope and alcohol. Being clear and alert was a new and perplexing state that brought with it a whole new realm of inhibition. Sting has also touched on the theme of the judgemental adult. “As you get older the critic gets more and more powerful and smarter and has a forensic memory,” telling you you've done something before, or someone else has, or that it's not as good. “You get all of these barriers to the creative child which is what you're really trying to nourish. When you're younger that creative child is very strong. Whatever you try is fine. But as you get older and wiser the child gets buried. So your job is to try and stimulate that child as much as you can. It's largely an unconscious process. You have to get into a state where you just allow things to come through.”[7]

The class lesson

Living is my choice.
And I refuse
To lose my voice.

JEAN FRYER, UCT ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDENT, 2008

Sting's take on the severance of the inner child from the adult self can be further illustrated by an example from a class of my post-graduates. When teaching about the mindset required of an entrepreneur, I often ask if there is anyone who would like to come forward and sing a song to the class. Out of a class of 50 students, typically, there are just one or two volunteers. Inevitably, the rest are silent. I then ask the students to imagine that they are five-year-olds in grade 0 and that I am their schoolteacher. I then say, “Good morning, class! Who would like to sing us a song?” I see a forest of hands. The children are all eager to sing. Next up, I might ask the class to imagine they are now 12 years old. On repeating the request for singers, this time about half the class might raise their hands. Moving on, I find that, by the time the class age has reached 17, no one can sing any more. No one has a voice. Everyone has been rendered mute, inarticulate, silent.

So, where did the voices go? Why is it that when alone in the shower we can sing with gusto but, when asked to sing in public, suddenly we become mute? Of course the answer to this bas nothing to do with the quality of our voices. To

substantiate the point, look at singers such as Bob Dylan and Tom Waits who make very good livings with their voices, awful as they are. Clearly there must be something else at work here.

Close analysis suggests that the loss of voice can be attributed to two dynamics. We can choose to be silent, or society will enforce silence upon those who presume to speak up. The system is thereby self-reinforcing. Author and psychologist Helene Smit takes the argument further, claiming that social stability and the protection of vested interests often depend on the wholesale denial of certain elements society would like to forget.[8] What happens to these unheard voices? Whether suppression is maintained within an individual or a group, unconscious voices will, ultimately, insist on being heard. And the more you hold it back, the more you stifle or ignore it, the greater will be the backlash. This is inevitable. It's a bit like a catapult: the further you pull it back the further the stone will fly.

Ken Robinson on children and education

While seeing this lack of self-worth among adults as a deep-rooted problem of our age, educational specialist Sir Ken Robinson believes that children have remarkable gifts of innovation and creativity. The problem, he observes, is that in the typically volume-driven system of education, these talents are callously overlooked and ultimately wasted. Worse still, the system has duped the majority into believing that there is no educational alternative.[9] The implication is that the system has, at extremes, become a Pink Floyd sausage machine, where imaginative young minds are sucked into one end and transformed into capitalist mincemeat at the other. Education has become a factory. While this one-size-fits-all version of education might well have served its purpose in the pre-digital era, arguably today it has run its course. In the present millennium, capitalism has advanced to a stage where it actually needs imagination, artistry and innovation. The era of mass education is over, as too are the models of efficiency-driven production that spawned it. Today, increasingly, existing business models are being overtaken by newer, fresher business enterprises. Dinosaurs are rapidly being exterminated and the foundations of contemporary capitalism are being shaken to the core. It is deeply ironic, even tragic, that an economic system so in need of overhaul seems largely incapable of producing the insights or ability to make the requisite changes to do so. So, while “creativity” and “imagination” have become the buzz words du jour and are touted by every snake-oil salesman, no one appears to have developed an alternate take to business as usual. Everything seems rote and machine-like. Doing the same thing over and over is no recipe for change. It offers nothing fresh.

By way of redress, and in the interests of reparative work at a structural and individual level, an important step forward would be to find out what it is that holds back the child, to deconstruct this, to nurture the reassertion of the timid child, and to encourage the spirit of enquiry, self-expression, laughter, creativity and life. If we can develop such insights at an individual level and learn what the great artistic individuals do to (1) sustain themselves despite the system and (2) produce the great imaginative work that they do, then perhaps we can learn to do so ourselves, individually and collectively. This would be no new money-making enterprise. The genuine pursuit would be to find out what it is to live as fully and completely as artists do and to learn something from this.

The psychology of the inner child

On the topic of naivety, Jungian analyst James Hollis suggests that uninhibited thinking "prevails until about the age of ten ... [yet] [t]hrough the pain and confusion of adolescence, the magical thinking of the child suffers some rough wear".[10] Actor Dustin Hoffman gave this a darker slant: "The minute we get into school, whatever it is that makes us individuals is knocked out of us. The idea of being outside the norm is to be laughed at and scorned. It's a bizarre inversion of the miracle of life."[11] The dyslexic business-entrepreneur Richard Branson concurred. "School was painful," he said. "I'd look at a blackboard and wouldn't be able to understand anything of what was going on."[12]

Reasons underpinning the suppression of the inner child are complicated but can generally be attributed to the creation of shadow: the psychological process whereby all painful and unmanageable aspects of the early self are split off and shunted to the unconscious, where they are left neglected and separate from any aspect of the creative life. As the years pass over the severed self it will do whatever it can to reunite with the rejecting twin. As it gropes blindly for recognition, the severed, unattended shadow can become a source of much emotional pain. This is largely inevitable as the split-off self bashes the doors and smashes the windows of the rejecting self as it seeks to find expression. Described in this way, if we are to recapture and give shape to our inner untrammelled voices, we must give the shadow of the inner child some form of expression. We must seek, ultimately, for its reintegration into our lives.

In his book The Journey of Desire, John Eldredge inverts the tragedy to provide an alternate, allegorical tale of redemption: of a sea lion who had lost contact with the sea and who comes to live in a dry, barren countryside devoid of any water. The tale of the sea lion is thus a parable of the individual who has lost touch with his inner yearnings. Tethered by the conventional, this is the story of one who has, for

whatever reasons, settled for second best and is slowly dying of thirst. For the sea lion this new land is not pleasant. It is harsh and unforgiving. Such places of self-enforced exile always are. And yet here he resides, mostly content with his parched life but arrested occasionally by visions of the big blue.

> Now, as I told you before, there were other nights in which he had dreamed of the sea. But those were long ago and nearly forgotten. Even still, the ocean that filled his dreams this night was so beautiful and clear, so vast and deep, it was as if he were seeing it for the very first time. The sunlight glittered on its surface, and as he dived, the waters all around him shone like an emerald. If he swam quite deep, it turned to jade, cool and dark and mysterious. But he was never frightened; not at all. For I must tell you that in all his dreams of the sea, he had never before found himself in the company of other sea lions. This night there were many, round about him, diving and turning, spinning and twirling. They were playing.
>
> Oh, how he hated to wake from that wonderful dream. The tears running down his face were the first wet thing he had felt in three weeks. But he did not pause even to wipe them away; he did not pause, in fact, for anything at all. He set his face to the east, and began to walk as best a sea lion can.
>
> "Where are you going?" asked the tortoise.
>
> "I am going to find the sea."[13]

The proverbial sea is, of course, that integrated state of self where we can be what we want to be, imagine what we want, and dream, create and conjure up what we always wished we could. It is a place of magic. In its highest sense, a reinvention of self.

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.
> "LITTLE GIDDING", T.S. ELIOT[14]

At this stage it is reasonable to enquire how best and soonest we might expedite this process of self-awakening. Without sounding trite, the process will differ depending on the degree of inner work to be done. This requires patience, resilience and an alertness to pain. For some, life has been kind and they remain relatively unaffected, with little self-work to do. For others it means a serious interrogation of the operating

assumptions that unconsciously drive them, and the constructs by which they live. The journey is different for us all.

From the world of art and creativity there are some remarkable examples of seemingly hopeless cases who did the hard inner yards, who connected somehow with their childhood issues, who broke through and found their artistic voices. To be sure, connecting with early pain doesn't always solve the problems of life. Facing down, or at least acknowledging the past does, however, enable better understanding and more connectedness.

Creativity as a function of unresolved pain

In 2011, CNN host Piers Morgan stated how amazed he'd been by the number of hugely successful performers who had told him that at least one, if not both, of their parents had never told them directly that they loved them. Morgan observed: "You can almost chart the parallel - that it's performing that gives them the platform where they get loved." Rob Lowe, the '80s Brat-Pack actor and star of The West Wing, who was on Morgan's show at the time, concurred with this. "Well it's funny," he said, "while I was really blessed, my parents did divorce, but my dad - he has always been present for me and loving me, and my mom as well, when she was alive. But honestly, I've never drawn this connection until this moment: that the moment I decided to become an actor was around the moment my parents split." Elaborating, Lowe observed how it was "so fulfilling to connect with an audience on stage, on screen - that when you're doin' it - it's such a high - and it's a way of communicating - particularly in a world where you're having a hard time communicating". [15]

Lowe's thesis is incredibly powerful, suggesting, as alluded to a few pages back, that emotions stemming from pain are often so strong that they will seek expression in whatever way they can. In the following chapter I'll return to this matter in more detail, for it is indeed true that great artists are often tortured souls. Creativity, it seems, is often the consequence of the outpouring of a burdened spirit. This is one of the powerful reasons that damaged kids so often move on to use the energy of their pain in alternate ways, and commonly the vehicle is art. Creativity is in many respects a function of unresolved pain. While we must be careful not to glorify the pain of early suffering because "good" art is produced as a consequence, there is ample evidence that early moments of suffering are grist to the creative mill.

Examples of exiled children

The process of being chopped clown appears to be pretty generic. Over time, the free uninhibited inner child is silenced, shamed, ridiculed and chased away- explaining in

part why, as adults, so many are afflicted by a lack of self-belief. Instead, their disposition no longer declares, “I'm alright, my voice is great, and I actually love singing.”

The celebrated Victorian novelist Charles Dickens suffered terribly as a child His family could afford to send only his elder sister to school, while he was forced into underage work in a boot-blacking factory. In the books he wrote as an adult it was to the theme of poverty that he returned again and again, and his childhood experiences appear as vignettes in many of them. The sheer volume of his work is remarkable - he was driven to produce. It was as if he were on fire. The emotional damage that marked him so early ignited his will to create. Reflecting on this earlier time, Dickens wrote: “My whole nature was so penetrated by the grief and humiliation that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I ... wander desolate back to that time in my life.”[16]

So ashamed was Dickens of his childhood experiences that, by the time of his death, all save an inner circle were unaware of what had happened to him. He would not confess. When details of this formative time emerged in John Forster's biography of the novelist, published four years after his death, readers, were stunned. Yet perhaps they should not have been. The clues from his novel were all too evident. The 10-year-old David Copperfield speaks of being “thrown away” by his stepfather to work in a warehouse. In Great Expectations, Pip carries with him the scars of his subcaste background and, in Little Dorrit, the young Amy knows well the dread and hopelessness of a debtors' prison.

Singer Robbie Williams felt a similar sense of inadequacy as a young adult. In a 2012 interview he admitted falling in love with his now wife, Ayda Field, because she made him realise that he was fundamentally a “good person”. Reflecting on how he saw himself as a young man, Williams said, “I went all the way through my twenties thinking I was sentenced to a life of mental imprisonment, hut I'm in a better place now.”[17]

Well worth noting is the story of Bruce Springsteen’s unusual childhood, his struggles with his father, Doug, and the creative outpouring that resulted. Bruce was treated as a substitute for his father's sister, Virginia, who was killed at a young age in a vehicle accident. Doug was emotionally scarred by his sister’s death, largely due to the depth of the tragedy experienced by his own parents. They never really got over their loss and Doug did not fully recover from the sense of shame and guilt he felt as the surviving sibling. The situation was exacerbated when Bruce was born in 1949 and Doug, his wife, Adele, and the young infant moved in with the grandparents. The old house was haunted by the past and shrouded in grief, a crumbling ruin that would ultimately be condemned as unfit for human habitation. Reflecting on this time, Springsteen recalled his confusion - not knowing whose son he really was - his parents’

or his grandparents'. Serving as a replacement for a lost child was complicated. "And that," as he said, "became a problem for everybody...It was very emotionally incestuous, and a lot of parental roles got crossed. Who you answered to and the different kind of responsibilities you had were very confusing for a young kid. Your allegiances were being pulled in different ways. Then we were beyond the point of no return."[18] Clearly there was some deep damage done, which manifested especially between Bruce and his father, who mostly remained silent, embittered and tortured throughout Springsteen's formative years. Ultimately, Bruce wasn't impacted as much by his father's occasional outbursts of rage, nor by his late-night criticisms fuelled by booze, as by the emotional estrangement - the distance he felt as a result of the lack of affection, praise or warmth from his dad. "It wasn't in the doing," said Springsteen later, "it was in the not doing...It was in the complete withholding of acknowledgement. It was in the vacantness."[19]

Years later, in 1979, Doug suffered a stroke and underwent something of a personality change as a result. Gone was the sunken, retreated man and in his place emerged a person who wore his heart on his sleeve, who showered everyone with affection, including his son. In the decade that followed, with Springsteen now on the world's stage, on occasion his family would visit him backstage after shows and, sometimes, Doug would ask his son to sit on his lap. These actions were poignant, marked with awkwardness and primal emotion. Later still, in 1994, when Springsteen junior won the best song Grammy for "Streets of Philadelphia", he brought the trophy back to his dad, placing it in front of him at the kitchen table. His old man is reported to have wept with sorrow for the years he'd spent trying to reform his son, and with pride at the success he'd achieved despite - or rather because of - the psychic burden he'd carried all his life. Actress Joyce Hyser, who met Springsteen in the late '70s, contended that he was afraid of being happy because it would "screw up with his creative force," as she put it. "At least at the time, he created from a place of anger, not from a place of happiness."[20]

By all accounts, Springsteen hated school. Raised a New Jersey Catholic, he attended St Rose of Lima convent where he was constantly at odds with the nuns and other students. His mother, Adele, recalls that Bruce would always march in with his head held high. "Good," she said. But what happened after that, she wondered? One day she left work early to check it out for herself, and there was her little boy against the fence, alone, without any playmates. She was devastated.[21] Looking back at this time, Springsteen corroborated, saying that most of his classmates were "good souls". Some, however, were "rude, predatory and unkind". "It is here I receive the bullying all aspiring rock stars must undergo and suffer in seething, raw, humiliating silence,

the great ‘leaning up against the chain-link fence as the world spins around you, in rejection of you’ playground loneliness that is essential fuel for the coming fire.”[22]

Another who suffered early parental abandonment was John Lennon, who was raised by his aunt. Early Beatles songs such as “Help” and “I'm a Loser” clearly reference Lennon's low self-regard. In the ‘70s he even underwent primal scream therapy, and subsequently released “Mother” with the Plastic Ono Band. Primal scream therapy is based on a view that early suffering can be remediated as an adult by re-entering the early periods of life when the initial damage occurred. If you listen to “Mother” you can hear Lennon’s shrieked lament: “Mother, you had me, but I never had you”. Interviewed by Playboy in 1980, shortly before his assassination, Lennon said bluntly: “I don't have any romanticism about any part of my past...I don't believe in yesterday.”[23]

In 1991, Madonna, one of the great recording artists of the last generation, spoke candidly of her endless struggle to locate and free her voice. “I have an iron will and all of my will has always been devoted to conquering some horrible feelings of inadequacy,” she said. She described going through phases of being able to push through fear - to see herself as “a special human being of worth” only to plummet again into thinking she's “mediocre and uninteresting and worthless”. “Because even though I have become a ‘somebody’ I still have to prove that I am somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.”[24]

The outsider

> When I started out, mainstream culture was Sinatra, Perry Como, Andy Williams, The Sound of Music. There was no fitting into it then and of course there's no fitting into it now.
> BOB DYLAN[25]

Through the lens of the examples explored, we can see how the initial psychological effects of the exiled child are typically accrued within a family setting. In time, however, further effects may emerge in wider social contexts, most commonly within the school milieu. The deadly combination of toxic school and family dynamics imprints deeply on the young psyche to the extent that the wounded child may emerge on the shores of adulthood as an outsider.

It is not clear why outsiders remain such a force in effecting change, but they do. A 2006 study emanating from Harvard Business School found, for example, that immigrants are key drivers in the formation of US-based innovation. While they make up roughly 10 per cent of the US working population, they constitute about 25 per

cent of those people working within the field of technology. More astounding is that half of all PhDs conferred in the US go to foreigners. When looking at the origin of US-based Nobel Prize winners, cited authors and patent registrations, the figures tell a similar story. Outsiders - those with ethnic origins outside the US - dominate.[26] While this disproportionate set of statistics is in some way explained by tbe progressive domestic policy climate that predominated in the US prior to the 9-11 clampdown on the immigration of foreign talent (this policy has subsequently been abandoned), the fact that these talented people are outsiders is a story in itself.

Creative outsiders

Some notable examples of creative outsiders are the lead guitarist of The Rolling Stones, Keith Richards, the dancer Carlos Acosta and the playwright Roy Williams. As his birthday fell on 18 December, Richards was younger than most of his classmates. Also, he says, he was a very small guy - known, in those days, as a squirt - a late developer, hitting puberty only at about 15. Richards recalled that, when he was 9 or 10, he was repeatedly waylaid by schoolyard toughs on his way home. As he soberly (makes a change) observed: “I know what it is like to be a coward. I will never go back there. As easy as it is to turn tail, I took the beatings. I told my mum I had fallen off my bike again. To which she replied, ‘Stay off your bike, son.’...The playground's the big judge. That's where all decisions are really made between your peers. It's called play, but it's nearer to a battlefield, and it can be brutal, the pressure. There’s two blokes kicking the shit out of some poor little bugger and ‘Oh, they're just letting off steam’.”[27]

Former Principal Guest Artist at the Royal Ballet in London, Carlos Acosta is one of the great outsiders. The past 50 years have seen only a handful of dancing greats: names such as Nureyev and Baryshnikov come to mind here. Acosta, or “Air Costa” as he is affectionately known, is one of these. Born in Cuba, be broke into top-class ballet in the ‘90s, performing first as Principal Dancer with the English National Ballet and then Houston Ballet before signing with the Royal in 1998. From his background, few would have picked him out for success. Acosta grew up in a Havana slum, sharing a one-bedroom apartment with the rest of his 12-member family. Like Elvis Presley, his father was a poor truck driver - a temperamental, even abusive man, who signed Carlos up to a local ballet school at the age of nine, in the hope of negating some of the delinquency prevalent in his boy.

Initially perceiving dance as some form of coercive conditioning, Acosta chafed, at his talent and, for a long time, saw his potential as a soccer star as the way out of slum-hood. Later, his proud, statuesque bearing would make him famous as an international dance sex symbol, all the while balancing his commitments in the

luxurious ballet theatres of the West with the memory of his impoverished upbringing. His enduring love for his home country, Cuba - sneered at by many as an economic basket case - was also difficult to manage, as he acknowledged in his 2007 autobiography, No Way Home. And thus by way of his underclass upbringing his Latino culture and race (he was the first black man to dance the lead in a majo1 production of Swan Lake), he acknowledges that he was always the rebel outsider Quoted in a Time interview, he said: “I didn't choose ballet and for years I rebelled against it, believing it kept me from my family, from home, and from happiness... But it eventually became not my home but my shelter. I have come to terms with it. But it has taken me many years.”[28]

British playwright Roy Williams is certainly a kindred spirit. “I wouldn’t know how to write a hero,” he is quoted as saying. As a black kid growing up in the ‘80,. he was useless at sport, though later he would use cricket, football and boxing a, backdrops to plays such as The No Boys Cricket Club, Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads and his latest, Sucker Punch. He related that he was once in a five-a-side football team though was seldom picked to play. “They only put me in because they felt sorry for me. They would give me a run-out for the last two minutes if we were, like 5-0 ahead.” Still, he said, he was desperate to be good even though he was rubbish. “Because to be a footballer then was the only thing black kids had going for them, and all my other black mates were really good at sports. I felt left our.” This said, his friends understood that he was passionate about writing and encouraged him. “They were like, yes, that's the one thing Roy’s good at. Roy can’t play football, but Roy, he can write a story.” Williams admits, too, that he was awkward with girls. “I was a bit of a shy kid when it came to the ladies. And even when I started becoming more confident, my mates always seemed to be way ahead.” Asked how old he was when he first went out with a girl, he replied: “Eighteen. Sharon, I'll tell you her name, I really liked her.” And on whether not being sporting or hip made him into a better writer, his take was an unequivocal “Very much so. It made me more observant of the rest of them. If I had been as good as them, I don't think l'd be here talking to you now.”[29]

The formidable boxer Mike Tyson grew up in Brownsville, the tough end of New York. He would go on to become the youngest undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, aged 20 years, 4 months and 22 days. If anything, an artist only in beating the shit out of anyone who dared fight him, Tyson's recollections of the beatings he took as a small boy are instructive. Aged just seven and wearing Coke-bottle glasses because of his near-sightedness, Tyson recalls that going to a public school was a frightening experience. “I was a pudgy kid, very shy, almost effeminate-shy, and I spoke with a lisp. Sometimes my mother would be passed out from drinking

the night before and wouldn't walk me to school. It was then that the kids would always hit me and kick me." Tyson relates a particular experience when one of the local toughs tried to take his lunch. "I had some meatballs from the cafeteria wrapped up in aluminum to keep them hot. This guy came up to me and said, 'Hey, you got any money?' I said, 'No.' He started picking my pockets and searching me, and he tried to take my fucking meatballs. I was resisting, going, "No, no, no!" I would let the bullies take my money, but I never let them take my food. I was hunched over like a human shield, protecting my meatballs. So he started hitting me in the head and then took my glasses and put them down the gas tank of a truck. I ran home, hut he didn't get my meatballs. I still feel like a coward to this day because of that bullying. That's a wild feeling, being that helpless. You never ever forget that feeling. That was the last day I went to school."

Four years later, then 11, Tyson had grown bigger and was fighting back. With only streetwise arrogance and a reputation that he would fight anyone, even grown men, Tyson began to exact revenge on the bullies who'd crossed him. "I'd be walking with some friends, and I might see one of the guys who beat me and bullied me years earlier. He might have gone into a store shopping, and I would drag his ass out of the store and start pummeling him. I didn't even tell my friends why, I'd just say, 'I hate that motherfucker over there,' and they'd jump in too and rip his fucking clothes and beat his fucking ass. That guy who took my glasses and threw them away? I beat him in the streets like a fucking dog for humiliating me. He may have forgotten about it, but I never did."[30]

Often sick and bedridden as a child, Andy Warhol is also reported to have been a school outcast. So, too, was Neil Young; his divorced mother was always on the move and Young was bullied in the schoolyards of Ontario. Eric Burdon, lead singer of The Animals, pronounced his formative years at school as the kind of "dark nightmare" that could've been "penned by Charles Dickens". "Some teachers were sadistic," said Burdon, "others pretended not to notice - and sexual molestation and regular corporal punishment with a leather strap was the order of the day."[31] Steely Dan's Donald Fagen was also an outsider. "I was a nerd at school. Somewhere between a nerd and a schmendrick. I didn't fit in on any level," he confessed in 2000.[32]

School life for Steve Jobs was also a nightmare. Excessively bright, when he finished fourth grade, Jobs was promoted up two notches to grade seven. His adoptive parents baulked at this extravagance, insisting that a single grade move to grade six would suffice. For the generally asocial Jobs, the changeover to a class of kids even one year older than himself was traumatic. Now in a new school, Crittenden Middle, where ethnic gang fights were common, Jobs was bullied and, by the middle of the

following grade seven year, he confronted his parents, insisting that they put him in a different school, which they did.

Jobs' outsider status marked him for life. On launching the Mac design team in 1983, he made sure that they were seen as outsiders by the rest of the Apple staff, his motto being that it was better to be a pirate than to join the navy. Accordingly, he saw to it that the pirates raised the skull-and-crossbones flag above their offices, using the Apple company logo as the pirate's eye-patch. Although other senior executives were critical of this move, Jobs, who always projected himself as the renegade "pitted against the forces of darkness",[33] as unrepentant. "We were the renegades, and we wanted people to know it," he said.[34]

Like Jobs, next-generation visionary entrepreneur Elon Musk was also bullied at school. In his 2015 biography, Musk put it that these early times of suffering were formative, giving him the extra strength and resources to succeed later in life. In this respect, schools today are very different, observed Musk. "They might have a little adversity at school, but these days schools are so protective ... If you call someone a name, you get sent home. When I was going to school, if they punched you and there was no blood, it was like, 'Whatever. Shake it off.' Even if there was a little blood, but not a lot, it was fine."[35]

The iconoclast Richard Branson received his education at the exclusive private school of Stowe. Though he was not unpopular, his single-minded pursuit of things that served his purpose left little room for others in his world. Coupled with dyslexia and an undetected case of poor eyesight, Branson's indifference to schoolwork meant that he showed little inclination for academic study. "Having left school without going to university, I decided to make money. I never considered failure," he said.[36] Known for his anti-establishment principles, Branson (Richard to everyone), has always scorned suits and ties and generated a working culture where fun was seen (by him certainly) as more important than higher paying salaries. As a self-cast outsider to the business establishment, Branson appears quixotic, tilting at windmills as he challenges complacent, bloated business models. Commenting on the so-called "dirty tricks" campaign in which British Airways attempted to put Branson's airline out of business in the early '90s, Lord King, BA chairman at the time, said: "If Richard Branson had worn a pair of steel-rimmed glasses, a double-breasted suit and shaved off his beard I would have taken him seriously. As it was I couldn't. I underestimated him."[37] Such is the image projected by the maverick outsider.

Ernest Hemingway understood well the struggle. for artistic meaning. "You go against the grain, you're bound to get splinters, but that's the price for not conforming," advised the hard-drinking winner of the 1954 Nobel Prize in Literature. Key to Hemingway's brilliance as a writer was the rugged simplicity of the language

he used. His sparse, hard-hitting copy lends much to the contemporary works of Cormac McCarthy and J.M Coetzee. Author of For Whom the Bell Tolls and The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway was an original, arguably the first no-nonsense 20th - century writer. And being first is not always easy, admitted Hemingway. "The risk of originality is humiliation which is another way of saying failure," he said. "In high school I once wrote an essay entirely in dialogue and I got an F, not because the dialogue was inferior but because no one had ever written an essay like that before. 'Essays,' the teacher said, 'are proper sentences, not dialogue.' Form over content. When I first set out from home, the report card of my life wasn't very good, but then my grades gradually improved, the more I convinced 'em that finding my own way, on the road and on the page, had its merits."[38]

Other outsiders include individuals who were, particularly at an early age, seen as odd halls. For example, Howard Carter, the archaeologist famed for the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, was an uneducated amateur, rejected by his qualified peers because of his low-class credentials. Despite his ground-shaking discovery, he remained on the periphery of recognition and, on his death, was buried in a middle-class graveyard with little or no fanfare.

Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist Cormac McCarthy is another excellent example of the fringe life. A softly spoken semi-recluse, McCarthy has, for the most pan of his life, refused to give interviews. He has consistently rejected socialising with the American literati, and instead has chosen residence at the Santa Fe Institute in the New Mexico desert. As mentioned earlier, McCarthy is the only novelist on campus. His first major novel, Suttree,[39] published in 1979, is semi-autobiographical; its "hero", Cornelius Suttree, lives in exile in a derelict houseboat, skirting a homeless society of crackpots, recidivists and breadline survivors. The great J.D. Salinger, who died in January 2010 at the age of 91, was perhaps even more wary of the mainstream. Author of the seminal Catcher in the Rye, such was Salinger's hermitic disposition that he never gave interviews nor allowed photos of himself to be published. He was, to all intents and purposes, absolutely anonymous; and possibly even just a ghost - or so he would have led us to believe.

We've all heard of Gary Player, South Africa's greatest-ever golfer, voted as South Africa's sportsman of the last century. Player, who won all four Majors on both the regular and the senior tours, also started from humble beginnings. His father was a miner earning £100 a month; his mother died when he was just eight years old. With a brother away fighting for the Allies in World War II and his sister at boarding school, the young Player would get up at 5:30 each morning to catch the tram to town. From there he would walk to school. His daily school-time routine would often see him return home late at night. As his father was still working, the house caretaker

would give him his supper. As he grew up, Player learnt to fend for himself, often taking on bullies at school who would pick on him because he was a small guy. These early setbacks made him even more determined to succeed. At the age of 14 he took up the game of golf and, within 18 months, he became a scratch golfer. During this period, he spent hours learning and practising his craft - something that gave rise to possibly his most famous quote: “The harder you practise, the luckier you get.” Not satisfied to compete merely on home soil as a newly minted professional, Player headed overseas to the European and American circuits, competing toe-to-toe with the greats of the time: Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus, winning the first of his Majors at the tender age of 22. He would complete the Slam seven years later in 1965. The only other golfers to have achieved this are Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods - all Americans. In golf, Player remained the perpetual outsider, his dictum: “To compete you have to be different.” His dedication to fitness, hard work and practice, his focus and his determination combined to make him a remarkably successful golfer.[40]

While Player's story is extraordinary, South African golfing history reveals a lesser known though even greater golfing outsider: “Papwa” Sewgolum. Sewgolum started out as a golf caddie. By the age of 34, and despite enormous personal and political odds (he was designated “Indian” by the old apartheid regime), Papwa had moved through the ranks to win the Natal Open golf tournament in 1963 against an entirely “white” field. Inasmuch as it was a political victory for “non-whites” in South Africa, it was victory for outsiders everywhere.

Sewgolum’s great-grandfather was one of a battalion of labourers shipped from India in 1860 to work as indentured labourers on the sugar plantations of modern day KwaZulu-Natal. Barely one caste above slavery, successive generations of his family eked out an existence in Durban and, from 1948 onwards, fell victim to the strictures of formalised apartheid. Sewgolum would have been 18 at the time.

The story goes that his love of golf emerged because of the proximity of Durban's Beachwood Golf Course, which lay close to the township in which he lived. His father, who died when Sewgolum was still quite young, carved his son's first golf club from the branch of a guava tree. Working as a caddie at Beachwood, Sewgolum evinced a raw, prodigious talent for golf. With no access to formal golf coaching and few opportunities to play on golf courses (under apartheid only whites could play on “white” courses and few other courses existed), Sewgolum was self-taught, and developed his own unique method of hitting a ball. Famously, unlike virtually any other golfer we know, he learnt to swing with a reverse grip: that is to say, as a right-hander, he gripped the club with his left hand below his right. This “cack-handed” method (with no interlaced or even interlocking fingers) had never been successfully

employed by any professional golfer (except occasionally for putting) and yet, undeterred, it was with this approach to striking the ball that Sewgolum emerged as a seriously good young golfer. “I believe a man should swing a club the best way he knows how,” he told the Golf Digest in 1964.[41] With this highly unorthodox “outsider” style, Sewgolum would regularly shoot in the sixties and is noted for once having scored a hole-in-one at Beachwood's par-4 16th hole. In 1959 he won the Dutch Open, a title he would go on to win twice more. Achieving success in South Africa was another matter, however, most especially because the Group Areas Act forbade “non-white” access to designated white areas. Loopholes around this law were ultimately found so that players of colour could, for the duration of a tournament, be permitted to play on a white course, as long as they remained out of the clubhouse and any other whites-only areas. Starting in 1961, the use of these permits enabled Sewgolum to enter big “white” tournaments such as the South African Open. Under such strictures (no practice days were permitted) it must have taken incredible courage just to pitch up, let alone compete. And yet, in 1963, to the joy of an enthusiastic crowd of Indian supporters, Papwa Sewgolum won the Natal Open, whereupon, controversially, he was awarded the Cup outside the clubhouse of the Durban Country Club so as to comply with racist laws of the time. Soon these laws would tighten even further, making his participation in South African golf impossible. It must have been heart breaking. Yet, despite these obstacles and the toxic societal dynamics at play, Sewgolum displayed enormous fortitude and grit. As his son Rajen reflects: “He never lost his cool, never raised his voice, never said anything harsh. He was a humble man.” It is a truly remarkable story.

Another outsider who defied convention was the great self-taught abstract artist Jackson Pollock. Reminiscent of Sewgolum’s unorthodox grip of a golf club, Pollock employed novel methods of working with paint. “I continue to get further away from the usual painter's tools such as easel, palette, brushes, etc.,” he said. “I prefer sticks, trowels, knives, and dripping fluid paint or heavy impasto with sand, broken glass or other foreign matter added.” By so distancing himself from Western norms of using an easel and paintbrush, he was able to move away from the vertical and apply his art on a horizontal plane using his entire body to paint. “My painting does not come from the easel,” he told Time magazine in 1956. “I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting.”[42]

Making it from the outside

There can be little doubt that their unhappy status as weirdos and outcasts actually set many artistic greats on a trail to self-expression. In fact, mounting evidence suggests that you need to suffer to some degree in order to achieve creative success. How can this be? Early in his book Antifragile, philosopher and scholar Nassim Taleb introduces the possibility of something opposite to the deleterious effects of post-traumatic stress syndrome. In the post-traumatic stress syndrome scenario, typically after a severe experience of violence or emotional scarring, the subject wilts under the effects. They become nervous wrecks. Yet there is a phenomenon called "post-traumatic growth", where the victim recovers, rebounds and ultimately excels. Taleb notes that, while this dynamic is scarcely observed in academic literature,[43] it is well known in folklore and typically summed up when people say an event will "build character". As Taleb sees it, the key concept underpinning the possibilities of growth is what he calls "antifragility". The opposite of fragility, it implies that when something undergoes stress, it actually strengthens and becomes better. The human body is much like this, if the level of stress is not too extreme and the duration of recovery is sufficient. Crates of champagne flutes, says Taleb, arc not made this way. Shaken around, they break because they are inherently fragile. However, antifragility is not the same as robustness, insists Taleb. Robust objects do not grow stronger under stress. They remain in stasis. By contrast, antifragility is fragility with a negative sign. The more you shake such objects the more resilient they become.[44] As a governing principle, this concept would seem to explain why outsiders appear to succeed where most insiders don't.

Outsiders in a foreign land

Many outsiders appear to find acceptance and fame away from home. Three examples of this phenomenon are Jimi Hendrix, James Taylor and The Police.

The story of Hendrix's rise to fame is possibly the greatest within the lexicon of Outsider artists. As a child he and his four siblings were subjected to much of his parents' drunken feuding. Up until his mother's death, when Hendrix was just nine, his parents split up and reunited a number of times. Over this period of internal damage and uncertainty, some of his siblings were given up for foster care. He knew poverty all his early life and, without a permanent family, relied on the kindness of friends and near relatives to keep him alive. So impoverished was his upbringing that, years later, he would note: "If I wasn't a guitar player, I would probably be in jail."[45] With no positive primary relationships to speak of, Hendrix could never find the intimacy and commitment for which he yearned. On 23 September 1966, Hendrix

took a flight from America to London with nothing but a guitar, a small bag containing some personal belongings (including some pink curlers and a tube of acne cream) and $40, which he had borrowed from a friend. Michael Jeffrey, manager of the band The Animals, paid for his ticket. At the time, Hendrix had nothing to offer but talent. He was without pedigree or credentials and arrived in London a total stranger. Within 12 months, and in the presence of UK guitar gods such as Eric Clapton, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page, he would become a musical legend, blowing away everyone in his path.

At about the same time, another - albeit less flamboyant - US artist, also set out to the UK to make it. This was the young James Taylor, who would eventually make it super-big in the '70s West Coast folk sound. By the time of his flight to London, however, Taylor had experienced numerous bouts of darkness and despair. Of his feelings as a 15-year-old, Taylor said: "I felt as though I was born on the dark side of the moon and that I didn't have a place in the world."[46] Though talented and from a wealthy East Coast family, by 16, Taylor had rebelled against his private school boarding house education and, a year later, had committed himself to the Massachusetts-based McLean Psychiatric Hospital. Dabbling up and down the East Coast folk circuit, the emotionally fragile Taylor had also experimented with some serious drugs. While most folkies of the time would smoke pot, Taylor – like Keith Richards, Bill Evans and certain black jazz artists operating with Miles Davis - eventually became addicted to the more expensive and severe heroin, a narcotic with which he struggled for years. In early 1968, a disillusioned Taylor headed off to London where he found a flat in Notting Hill. At this time, The Beatles had just set up their own Apple Corps recording label and, through the help of some intermediaries, Taylor, a complete outsider to the swinging London scene, was auditioned by none other than Paul McCartney, who immediately signed him up. (For the chaotic and dysfunctional label, Taylor would be the first and only seriously big signing.) Championed by the "Fab Four", Taylor finally found the impetus he needed to break through, issuing the eponymous James Taylor album later that year, the recording of which McCartney sat in on, even playing bass on the key track "Carolina in My Mind". "From that point on," as Taylor later put it, "everything changed."[47] Though always emotionally confounded, Taylor thus returned to the States to issue a series of classic '70s albums -including Sweet Baby James and Mud Slide Slim. These seminal works would mark him, together with the Eagles, Jackson Browne and Fleetwood Mac, as one of the serious progenitors of American '70s music.

Just as the outsiders Hendrix and Taylor would need to travel to Britain in order to make it big back in the States, a decade later, the British ska-inspired band

The Police would need to travel as virtual unknowns to the US to become successful back home in the UK.

Founded in the late ‘70s, The Police trio included its drummer and founder. Stewart Copeland, bassist and lead vocalist Sting (Gordon Sumner), and guitarist Andy Summers. In April 1978 they released the single Roxanne, but it would sleep, unrecognised, for more than a year due to the domination of the punk movement in the UK. Around that time, punk bands like the Sex Pistols and The Clash complete I) dominated the UK charts. As Andy Summers recalls of that phase: “We were just about finished as a band you know - we couldn't get gigs really. If we got a gig we'd have to spend all the money hiring the PA and the van to get there.” It was then that, in a last-ditch effort to stave off implosion, they decided to embark on a self-financed tour of the US. Says Summers: “It felt different when we came to the US. It felt like it was a clean slate. People accepted us just on the music alone. They didn't care about punk credentials or anything like that. They just reacted to the music.” Drummer Stewart Copeland takes up the story: “In the US they responded to our music city to city, incrementally, tour after tour. You know, people imagine that it happened suddenly. But it didn't. It was a lot of shows. It was step by step by step.”[48]

And so it was that, as a group of relative outsider-unknowns, The Police’s popularity grew, with their progress in the US increasingly reflecting back on their British record sales at home. Such was this trans-Atlantic sales dynamic that, within a year of venturing to America, The Police would become the dominant music act in the UK.

Creative cities

Much thought is currently being focused on the spaces that outsider-creatives inhabit. Why is it, for example, that some places become destinations for creative types while others are steadfastly avoided? Using the example of how low economic barriers to entry enable new firms to enter attractive industrial sectors and thus keep that sector fresh and evolving, the University of Toronto's Richard Florida believes the same applies in creative situations. There are, he maintains, critical factors that combine to attract creative people who, in turn, can power possibilities of growth and innovation. Creative types, he argues, are not looking just for low-threshold work options but rather for something of a higher order: attractive employment opportunities. For city planners and business-sector managers, creating these opportunities is not merely a matter of setting up conventional work-style options that seek to employ competent, diligent, intelligent individuals. These qualities are in great abundance and easily and cheaply acquired. Artistic qualities such as creativity, innovation and passion are less easily bought. Certainly, creative people see traditional work conventions as

conformist strictures and will do almost anything to avoid them. Formulaic approaches are generally unhelpful, and attempts to reverse-engineer the creative urban space have not met with much success. This is because creative work opportunities typically develop organically, which is to say that they tend to develop of their own accord.

What do these spaces look like? And what is required to produce them? To conclude this chapter, let's consider briefly one of the great creative cities: San Francisco. In the '60s, when Steve Jobs was growing up, popular experimental studies were conducted in the surrounding Santa Clara Valley on a manufactured drug called lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), or acid for short. Because of its prior use in psychotherapy, LSD was not, as yet, a banned substance and was openly promoted by a number of enlightened New Age intellectuals including Doug Engelbart, the Palo Alto computer scientist who co-developed the computer mouse; the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg and the Harvard-based Timothy Leary. Another proponent was the author Ken Kesey, who believed strongly that acid was the key to unlocking creativity. Periodically, Kesey hosted colourful LSD celebrations, some attended by the Stones' Keith Richards, Mick Jagger and Brian Jones while on tour. The house band that morphed into the Grateful Dead usually serenaded these events. It was the advent of a period known as psychedelia, spawning a whole generation of hippies. Underpinning this new cultural upswelling were numerous New and Old Age cosmic therapies including yoga and meditation, the disciplines of Hindu and Zen spirituality, primal scream therapy, pyramid power, vegetarianism and fasting. Parallel with this heady blend of the mystical was a new thrust of technology, driven primarily by computers. By the close of the '60s, weird technologies and belief systems had converged. And in the centre of it, eating only carrots for weeks on end, dropping in and out of Stanford classes, meditating and working night shifts for Atari, was Steve Jobs. Reflecting on the San Francisco scene back then, Jobs observed how alive everything seemed: with some of the best music - Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead and Joan Baez - as well as computer innovations such as the microchip, and the counterculture magazine, the Whole Earth Catalog.[49] It was this environment that massively informed Jobs as he launched and grew Apple from the mid-'70s onwards. On a visit to Stanford in 1982, Jobs interrogated a class of commerce faculty students expecting management tips on successful start-ups. With typical Jobs candour, he veered off and asked how many of them were virgins and how many had dropped acid. His question was met with embarrassed tittering. A year later, when Apple began recruiting for the Macintosh design team, Jobs applied the same non-orthodox approach. With the aim of hiring out-of-the-box, smart types, along with the virgin and acid questions, candidates were also asked to play the Defender computer game.[50] Reflecting on the

contemporary crop of materialistic kids, Jobs said it was different when he was at school: that the now grown-up kids of his generation were still thinking in idealistic terms. Many of them were now in top IT positions, the idealistic wind of the '60s still at their backs and the tenets of the Aquarius age deeply ingrained.[51] U2's lead man, Bono, concurred on this, stating that the people who invented the 21st century were mostly equivalent versions of Jobs: pot-smoking, sandal-wearing West Coast hippies who saw things differently. Such divergence is not encouraged in places like the US East Coast, nor in England, Germany and Japan. The '60s spawned an anarchical sensibility of things, observed Bono, just what was required for imagining a world waiting to be born.[52]

The above example of San Francisco underscores the point that, regardless of ethnic background or sexual orientation, outsider-creative types will interpret a prevailing acceptance of difference as a "non-standard flag" that says outsiders are welcome here. Invariably such places will tend to welcome fresh possibilities and experimentation. In US cities where creativity indices are high - places such as Seattle, the greater Boston area, New York and the aforementioned San Francisco - we note a flowering of musical talent. The Summer of Love psychedelic movement started in San Francisco; the grunge bands Soundgarden, Alice in Chains and Nirvana emerged out of Seattle (along with Jimi Hendrix), the indie band the Pixies came from Boston, and the bebop jazz, folk and avant-garde arthouse and punk movements took root in New York. Added to the music of such cities, of course, is a compelling span of restaurants, historic buildings and art galleries. Nightlife is critical and always vibrant. Typically these cities favour interactive, multi-level entertainment possibilities, seeking indoor and outdoor recreation spaces that offer stimulation rather than passivity or escapism, allowing for experimentation and self-reinvention. Within these precincts, no permission is required to be what you want. You can just hang out.

This, then, appears to be the general pattern of how creative communities emerge: organically and with scant respect for the orthodox. Any tendency towards top-down policing behaviour is spurned. Creatives flourish when there are no institutional nannies; their urban zones become a hotbed of innovation, artistry and progress. With the prize of an innovative business generation in the crosshairs, many city officials and politicians worldwide are seeking out ways to attract creative classes to their cities and towns. This is not easy because, most of the time, officialdom fails to understand what it is that attracts such people in the first place.

Richard Florida is most especially critical of those cities that spend millions of taxpayers' dollars on baseball or football-type stadiums.[53] Any city hosting the Olympic Games or Soccer World Cup would have had their bounty of such stadiums. To restate: these professional sports stadiums are not what creative types seek and

they will not drive GDP or create daring new businesses. Neither are creatives interested in fake-themed stripmalls or neighbourhood complexes. What artists and innovators are interested in is the genuine, the authentic, the uncontrolled, and the possibility of unhindered self-expression. Towns and cities that cannot provide this will fail in their pursuit of the imaginative individual.

In his Harvard Business Review article of June 2010 entitled "The big idea: How to start an entrepreneurial revolution", Daniel Isenberg spelled out this message in further detail, suggesting that government agencies "should observe which direction entrepreneurs take and 'pave the footpath' by gently encouraging supportive economic activity to form around already successful ventures, rather than planning new sidewalks, pouring the concrete, and keeping entrepreneurs off the grass". Isenberg was not optimistic that his suggestion would be noted, stating," his most unglamorous but practical insight is often lost as cluster theory gets translated into government policies that are suspiciously akin to debunked centralized industrial planning."[54]

The challenge for those city states seeking to engender the mindset of the genuinely artistic and creative is to step away and let artists be who they are. Antithetical to official versions of itself, the creative process is largely self-developed and, at best, can be assisted but not replaced. I have yet to find any examples of state sponsored initiatives that have successfully fostered spaces of genuine innovation and creativity. The Londons, Berlins and San Franciscos of this world all developed spontaneously, organically, from the inside out. I am aware how keenly economic managers are viewing the possibilities of an accelerated "outside-in" process and thus look forward to being proven wrong!

To conclude this chapter, here are some questions to consider. Why, for example, is the outsider so important as the agent of change and insight? What spurs the outcast? Why, too, is the world so vested in normality, in the status quo that seeks convergence, compliance and submission to the dominant narrative? Globally, we are lectured about the importance of diversity and yet, in non-legislated forms of society, schooling implies socialisation not enquiry. Famously, the painfully introverted Lester Young learnt to play the saxophone sideways and Albert Einstein grew up with an aversion to wearing socks. One has to wonder whether these outsiders would have succeeded in the orthodox stream of society. Volume-driven education requires conformity rather than genuine difference. If we are to encourage entrepreneurs and world artists, are we then required to hold up difference as key to promoting insight and possibility? If we constantly legislate for tolerance of diversity, will this necessarily imply a flowering of fresh ideas and entrepreneurial action? By stimulating the possibilities of social acceptance, could we assimilate the outsider who needs to be at the edge in order to self-express? This inward-outward business is complicated.

Certainly there are top-down power structures that require serious revision if we are to unleash the possibilities of enquiry.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. This chapter (1) introduces the inner child as a proxy for the qualities of innocence, simplicity and a willingness to take chances regardless of the risk of being wrong and (2) demonstrates how these characteristics are stifled at an early age.
2. The child's betrayal leads to an exile of the creative spirit and is a reason why so few adults can sing.
3. In an attempt to reconnect with the severed unconscious, artists spend years working with the exile archetype, many positioning themselves as outsiders.
4. Though seldom invited to sup with the elites, outsiders are global change agents and use the power of their exclusion to profound creative effect.
5. The question of why outsiders generally find success away from home is considered, along with how cities might better prepare themselves to welcome the outlaws and vagabonds of creativity.

chapter five

Depression, Madness & Addiction

IT IS A MAD, MAD WORLD. Artists know this better than most, suffering accordingly. This chapter explores the complex dynamic of depression and its sometimes remarkable effect on art and creativity. We look at artists and some of the great entrepreneurs who likewise appear to exhibit traits of instability and pathology. The effects of alcohol and drugs are also assessed, with the fatal addictions of Bill Evans and Ernest Hemingway serving as case studies.

> The first requirement for an artist is that he must be able to love and be prepared to suffer.
> SOUTH AFRICAN ARTIST JEAN WELZ[1]

> The more crises you have, the more material you have.
> PAUL MCCARTNEY[2]

The myth of Actaeon and Diana tells the story of the hunter Actaeon who spies the goddess Diana while she is taking a bath. He falls in love with her and, in so doing, is transformed into a stag, only to be hunted down by his own dogs. This is a story not just of the dark powers of the artistic muse, but also of the powers that haunt those driven to take opportunity to market.

So many great artists have suffered inner torture. Such is the stigmatisation of depression that rejection is common currency. Breaking through to new ground seems to incur unbearable costs and yet, despite the derision of critics and betrayal of "friends", so many great artists have not merely survived, they have prevailed. In their fight for survival, for vision and self-expression, their wounding has become their source of strength and inspiration. Søren Kierkegaard called this level of stress and anxiety "the dizziness of reason". According to T.S. Eliot it was, in fact, "the handmaiden of creativity". The great 20th-century Southern writer William Styron, who famously chronicled his own descent into severe depression in his Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness, stated that the disease of depression remains "a great mystery...[yielding] its secrets to science far more reluctantly than most of the other major ills besetting us".[3] In an article published in Vanity Fair, Styron observed that "the pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered

it, and it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne. The prevention of many suicides will continue to be hindered until there is a general awareness of the nature of this pain. Through the healing process of time - and through medical intervention or hospitalization in many cases - most people survive depression, which may be its only blessing; but to the tragic legion who are compelled to destroy themselves there should be no more reproof attached than to the victims of terminal cancer."[4]

While the "right" levels of depression can serve as a creative instigator, as we shall see, at other levels the behaviour it induces can become pathological. And, to be sure, much pathology is present in the observable patterns of behaviour of many artists and innovators. Said Don Henley of his early years with the Eagles: "The creative impulse comes from the dark side of the personality so we worked it good."[5] Such was the Eagles' success that Volume 1 of their collation Greatest Hits (1971-1975) stands as the biggest selling album of the last century, with more than 42 million units sold globally to date.[6]

Supporting Henley's view, actor Rob Lowe has stated that, at some point, people in his line of work simply have to access a masochistic streak to deal with, firstly, the rejections of the business and then, if they make it, the unrelenting scrutiny of success. So saying, he called his craft a barbaric business and that he'd never met anybody drawn to show business who was "completely and utterly healthy". There was, he claimed, always some sort of need or dynamic that they were unaware of, a dynamic that drew them into this life. Astutely, Lowe also pointed to the trap of success: that once you've made a name for yourself you really have to do some hard work on yourself to move on and avoid self-detonating. As he put it: "You really, really have to work to grow if you find success in this business - because people want to keep you fat and happy and immature and not connected and not paying attention. So I have a theory that you stop growing emotionally at the very age you become famous."[7] Lowe was obviously talking from experience: during his days as a Brat-Pack actor, his star was one of the brightest in the firmament: talented and handsome, yet hounded by the effects of liquor and easy sex. Following the publicity resulting from one of his binges, Lowe finally quit drinking and turned his life around. Today the West Wing actor is widely regarded as one of the mature seniors of his profession.

J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, is one artist who took to psychotherapy to deal with the vicissitudes of success. Her story is worth noting. Rowling who, with her sister, had a difficult relationship with her father, describes herself as not being "very good at being young". She fled home as soon as she could, studying classics and French at Exeter University. By the age of 28, following a brief stint in London and a disastrous marriage, Rowling was broke, divorced, the mother

of a six-month-old daughter, clinically depressed and suicidal. In the late '90s and in this state of mind, she holed up in Edinburgh, living on the dole and writing what would be the first of her seven Harry Potter novels. Following many rejections, Bloomsbury paid her an advance cheque of £1500 for the Potter manuscript. Not foreseeing the success that was to follow, her publishing editor, Barry Cunningham, advised her to quit writing and focus instead on getting a teaching job. Ten years later, though now staggeringly wealthy and famous, the stress and tension of the emotional struggle of her earlier life was still visible - a 2007 TV documentary about her shows a woman still recovering from the pain of her prior impoverishment and heartache. Asked five years later if it had taken time to process the dynamics of material success following so many years of disappointment, she replied: "Well it has now. But there was a definite lag. For a few years I did feel I was on a psychic treadmill, trying to keep up with where I was. Everything changed so rapidly, so strangely. I knew no one who'd ever been in the public eye. I didn't know anyone to whom I could turn and say. 'What do you do?' So it was incredibly disorientating." Although she'd sought psychotherapy when at "rock bottom" during the first drafting of Potter, Rowling acknowledged that in a newer and upward phase of her life, she'd been forced to seek help again, "when my life was changing so suddenly - and it really helped".[8]

While we might be critical of anti-social behaviour in the business world – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Strauss-Kahn case is worth noting here -within the creative arts, a degree of good-natured tolerance is generally expected. Thus, deviant or socially outrageous behaviour is typically accepted, seen as normal, as just another day at the office. Two hundred years ago, William Blake wrestled with the self-same issues of what was socially acceptable and what was not - and what should or could be done about it. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the poet took the line typical of most artists: "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." Such views had long been commonplace and still are today - witness the current slew of revelations emanating from the Harvey Weinstein affair. So, for artists such as Hemingway, Picasso and Pollock, the manic outbursts, spectacular tantrums and nights of social violence were widely regarded as just part of the creative package, emblematic of the way they were. To some extent such behaviour could be construed as the outpouring of a burdened spirit. Without condoning such behaviour, in the search for innovative business practice, perhaps we should ask where one world stops and the other begins. As an aside, therefore is there any correlation between a firm's inability to generate institutional insight and creativity and, in the main, those internal policies that see erratic, eccentric behaviour as some kind of aberration to be managed out of the system?

A glimpse into the life of the lead Fauvist, the great French artist Henri Matisse, provides some perspective on the mental anguish suffered by so many great innovators. In 1909, when Matisse visited an artists' café in Montparnasse, Paris, to have a drink with Picasso, neither Picasso nor anyone in his party would speak to him. Sitting at a table alone and unacknowledged in a room full of other artists was humiliating confirmation of his outcast status. "All my life I've been in quarantine", said Matisse, on recalling the scene. In 1910 he moved to Spain where, following a betrayal by an associate, he suffered a nervous breakdown. As Spurling writes in his biography: "He had been living on clenched nerves for so long that they could not be unwound." On his first night in Madrid he failed to sleep. "From then on insomnia exacerbated his inner turmoil. He had not slept for more than a week by the time he reached Seville in a state of near collapse." Following a spate of bad weather, he fell ill and remained indoors. His doctor prescribed rest, tranquillisers and warm baths three times daily. "Matisse owed much to this shrewd and sensitive Spanish doctor, who explained that there was nothing clinically wrong with him, that black despair would inevitably follow bouts of such intense nervous pressure and emotional exhilaration, and that all he could do was learn to manage his condition by sticking to a regular work schedule, and by being less exacting towards himself." Writing later to his wife, he observed of his emotional fragility: "All artists have this particular make-up, that's what makes them artists, but with me it's a bit excessive...perhaps that's what gives their quality to my pictures."[9]

The life of the Post-Impressionist Van Gogh was also saturated with madness. Born in 1853, at the relatively late age of 27 he embarked on a career as a self-taught artist. He lived for just another 10 years, producing - with increasingly velocity - more than 2000 works, including some 900 paintings. It is believed that, during his lifetime, he was unable to sell any of his works, relying almost solely on the financial support of his brother, Theo. In the latter period of his life, Van Gogh was particularly afflicted by mental problems. It is widely conjectured that the extent of his condition was critical to his development as an artist. In 1890, having suffered repeated bouts of depression, he is reputed to have shot himself in the chest with a revolver. A recent biography has, however, disputed this account, suggesting instead that a truant teenager goaded him into a shooting accident. Since his death, more than 150 psychiatrists have attempted to label his mental condition, delivering more than 30 different diagnoses, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and syphilis. All of these would have been compounded by his fondness for absinthe, coupled with overwork, malnutrition and insomnia.

In the light of the achievements of such artists, a gathering body of research has begun to explore the correlation between creative achievement and mental health.

While a cursory examination of the lives of people such as Einstein, Van Gogh and '70s composer, record producer and recording artist Phil Spector suggests little in common, they and many other gifted achievers have suffered from varying degrees of mental instability. And as Styron put it in Darkness Visible: "Never let it he doubted that depression, in its extreme form, is madness."[10] One of the most acute descriptions of depression comes from Jarvis Cocker, front man of the British pop group Pulp. Cocker, who was bullied at school, said: "When I speak of depression I speak of a clinical depression that is the background of your entire life, a background of anguish and anxiety, a sense that nothing goes well, that pleasure is unavailable and all your strategies collapse."[11]

The twinning of madness and levels of artistic genius has increasingly led to a view that the common traits of psychotic behaviour might be the very enablers of those alternate views of reality necessary to spawn creativity. Certainly, someone with a melancholy disposition is fated with a poisoned chalice. But, as Romantic poet Lord Byron put it, also with a "fearful gift". The underpinning theory that explains this fearful gift suggests a continuum between the mentally healthy and mentally unstable - and that in many instances "creative types" are able to explore innovative ideas while suffering mental illness, though without (some of) the incapacitating symptoms often associated with that condition.

Quoting Byron's description of the spurned angel Lucifer, in his novel Disgrace, J.M. Coetzee might well have been describing the solitary outcast artist, touched by madness:

> He stood a stranger in this breathing world,
> An erring spirit from another hurled;
> A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped
> By choice the perils he by chance escaped.[12]

Quoting another line from Byron's poem, "His madness was not of the head but heart," Coetzee's university-lecturer protagonist, David Lurie, observes that we are not asked to condemn "this being with a mad heart, this being with whom there is something constitutionally wrong". He continues: "On the contrary, we are invited to understand and sympathize. But there is a limit to sympathy. For though he lives among us, he is not one of us. He is exactly what he calls himself: a thing, that is, a monster. Finally, Byron will suggest, it will not be possible to love him, not in the deeper, more human sense of the world. He will he condemned to solitude."

While Coetzee's Lurie is, in part, referring to his own wayward and loveless disposition, a wider reading suggests that he is also alluding to an aspect of Byron's human nature: mental fragility, instability and madness.

Scientific research suggests that the genetic make-up that shapes the condition of mental illness is carried down countless generations over tens of thousands years. Evolutionary psychology intriguingly suggests that these traits must haw carried with them some positive social benefit. If not, through the process of natural selection, these traits would have long been weeded out of the species. From this we can conjecture that the emotional problems often associated with creativity cannot be wholly malevolent; there must be some benefit. Anxiety, from which so many suffer, is one such trait commonly associated with mental instability and yet in measured doses, it enables a beneficial alertness and clarity of mind. The quest is therefore to find the appropriate dosage.

Gordon Claridge, Emeritus Professor of Abnormal Psychology at Oxford University, notes: "While people accept that there are health benefits to anxiety they are more wary of schizophrenia and manic depression." Claridge recently edited a special edition of the journal Personality and Individual Differences, which focused specifically on the connection between creativity and mental illness. "It can be difficult for people to reconcile mental illness with the idea of traits that may not be disabling," he said. "There is now a feeling that these traits have survived because they have some adaptive value. To be mildly manic depressive or mildly schizophrenic brings a flexibility of thought, an openness, and risk-taking behaviour, which does have some adaptive value in creativity. The price paid for having those traits is that some will have mental illness." The psychologist and academic Kay Redfield Jamison supports this view: "There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that, compared to 'normal' individuals, artists, writers, and creative people in general, are both psychologically 'sicker' - that is, they score higher on a wide variety of measures of psychopathology- and are psychologically healthier (for example, they show quite elevated scores on measures of self-confidence and ego-strength)."[13]

Worth noting here is that risk-taking behaviour commonly associated with entrepreneurs is not deemed common to most of society, which is generally conservative, pattern following and unlikely to deviate from the norm. Herd behaviour is generally observed, hence the counter construct of the innovative "outsider" achieving on the periphery, as identified earlier.

The notion that creative individuals are more likely to have traits of mental illness is supported by numerous historical examples. In the 19th century, luminaries such as poet Emily Dickinson, evolutionist Charles Darwin, military general William T. Sherman and statesmen Benjamin Disraeli, Abraham Lincoln and, in the 20th

century, Winston Churchill, are all known to have suffered from mood disorders. In an article on how genius embraces the gift of madness, British journalist Roger Dobson cites a study that examined the incidence of mood disorders, suicides and institutionalisation of British and Irish poets between 1600 and 1800. Over this period the reported incidence was 20 times higher than that of "normal" individuals. Dobson notes that other studies have demonstrated how psychiatric patients perform better in tests of abstract thinking.[14] In another piece of research focused on the lives of 291 distinguished and innovative men from various fields, it was established that 69 per cent suffered from some form of mental illness.

Writing in the same journal as Claridge, experimental psychologist Emilie Glazer states: "Most theorists agree that it is not the full-blown illness itself, but milder forms of psychosis that are at the root of the association between creativity and madness...The underlying traits linked with mild psychopathology enhance creative ability. In severe form, they are debilitating."

A further strand of research suggests a correlation between the various traits of mental illness and different types of consequent creativity. For example, the creativity required to develop a mathematical theory of prime numbers is starkly different from that required to produce a piece of complex jazz or abstract art. Here three possible forms of illness have been identified as responsible for various creative outputs: (1) schizophrenia and schizophrenic traits, (2) bipolar disorder (or cyclothymic traits), and (3) traits associated with autism and Asperger's disorders. Dobson reports on a study that found important differences between artistically creative people and mathematicians: typically artists present with schizotypal traits associated with psychosis, while, by contrast, mathematicians, who commonly deal with detail, usually present with traits associated with autism. "Affective disorder perpetuates creativity limited to the normal," says Glazer, "while the schizoid person is predisposed to a sense of detachment from the world, free from social boundaries and able to consider alternative frameworks, producing creativity within the revolutionary sphere." It is this detachment from boundaries that enables revolutionary insights and the creation of new paradigms.

This form of creativity is no mere incrementalism; it is the generation of alternate realities. So, at a certain level, new mathematical insights are more likely to reveal themselves to the schizophrenic disposition. As Glazer observes: "Newton and Einstein's schizotypal orientation, for instance, enabled their revolutionary stamp in the sciences."

The Nobel Prize-winning mathematician and economist John Nash also suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. His sister remembered that, as a child "Johnny was always different. [My parents] knew he was different. And they knew he was

bright. He always wanted to do things his way. Mother insisted I do things for him, that I include him in my friendships...But I wasn't too keen on showing off my somewhat, odd brother".[15] Such was his brightness that, in 1948, Nash's then academic advisor wrote in a letter to support his application to study maths at Princeton: "This man is a mathematical genius."[16] On submitting a 28-page dissertation on non-cooperative games, he was awarded a PhD from that university, the institution where he was based for the rest of his academic life. The dissertation itself led to the publication of four journal articles. Over the 54 years stretching from 1942 to 1996, he would publish 23 scientific studies. At the age of 31, two years into his marriage with Alicia de Lardé, Nash was involuntarily admitted to a mental hospital where he was diagnosed with clinical depression and paranoid schizophrenia. Over the next 11 years he would be in and out of psychiatric hospitals where he received antipsychotic medication and shock therapy. In subsequent interviews, Nash suggested that his delusional thinking over this period was related to his general despondency and struggle for academic recognition. In a PBS interview entitled "Downward Spiral", he expressed the view that, if not for the pressures of academia, he would have thought "more normally". "If I felt completely pressureless I don't think l would have gone into this pattern,'" he said. In 1992 aspects of Nash's life were dramatised in the eight-times Oscar-nominate movie A Beautiful Mind. Nash was killed in a car accident in 2015.

Similar to Nash, the 20th-century surrealist artist Salvador Dalí was severely disturbed. His behaviour was at times paranoid, antisocial, histrionic and narcissistic in aggregate, he presented traits found in people with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. But these aspects were all fundamental to his contribution as an artist. In the absence of any of these traits of mental illness, it is unlikely that he would have made as profound an artistic contribution as he did.

In addition to being diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Phil Spector has some of the other common traits of creative genius: he was bullied as a child, was an outsider at school and his father died when he was nine. Famous for his collaborations with the Righteous Brothers, The Beatles, John Lennon post Beatles, Leonard Cohen and the Ramones, the reclusive and erratic Spector was inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 1989. His lunatic binges having been well documented, Spector was found guilty of shooting a struggling actress during a psychotic episode and, in May 2009, was sentenced to 19 years in prison.

Looking back on the first decade of his career, '70s folk singer-songwriter James Taylor recently spoke about his period of self-medication. Taylor committed himself to a mental institution when he was just 17 and again later in his early twenties, when he signed in to the Austen Riggs psychiatric hospital, a place where he

would pen - among other songs off Sweet Baby James - the haunting “Fire and Rain”. Painfully shy on stage, Taylor became addicted to heroin and struggled for years thereafter to stay clean. Said Taylor: “The study of addiction is very interesting to me, and I did survive my own period of abuse, and it did serve me in a way. I think that there are some people who perhaps drink to get blasted; who are really looking for oblivion. But most people who are addicts are self-medicating; they're just trying to feel normal, really. The drugs that are available - the pharmaceuticals - are getting better and better at treating the human condition.” Reflecting on his personal battles with heroin addiction, Taylor added: “It's dangerous to recommend it.”[17] Bruce Springsteen is less emphatic on the use of stimulants, “We all need help somewhere along the way to relieve us of our daily burdens,” he said. “It's why intoxicants have been pursued since the beginning of time. Today I'd simply advise you to choose your methods and materials carefully or not at all, depending upon one's tolerance, and watch the body parts!”[18]

Comedians, too, have a history of emotional fragility and are commonly prone to depression. Those who have acknowledged severe bouts of depression include Dudley Moore, Robin Williams, Tony Hancock, John Cleese, Spike Milligan, Stephen Fry and Paul Merton. Why the stark contrast? Rod Martin, author of The Psychology of Humor -An Integrative Approach, believes that humour is developed as a coping mechanism in response to depression. Martin cites a study of 69 successful comedians, which found that they were, typically, of superior intelligence, angry, suspicious and depressed. On top of this, their earlier lives were marked by suffering, isolation and feelings of deprivation.[19] While suicide is not the logical conclusion of mental disorders, it seems clear that many gifted artists are prone to depression and bipolar disorders. Anyone wishing to further explore the topic should consider two books by Kay Redfield Jamison: Night Falls Fast and Touched with Fire.[20]

While erratic behaviour is relatively common among artists, it also occurs among business achievers. Well-known examples include Sol Kerzner and Steve Jobs, the latter probably the best-known business entrepreneur to have exhibited instances of instability. The reasons are not difficult to fathom. As a young teenager Jobs quickly worked out that he was brighter than his parents and this, along with the knowledge that he was adopted, served to distance him from his family and those around him.[21] In 1972, during the week leading up to his high school graduation, the young Jobs refused to acknowledge the supportive role of his adoptive parents, who had driven in especially for the big day. While he later expressed regret over the incident, at the time he preferred that no one knew of his parents but rather that people around him saw him as some kind of hobo-orphan who thumbed lifts across the country, arriving out of nowhere, with no obvious past or set of connections.[22]

(This inclination paralleled Jobs' hero, Bob Dylan who, as a young songwriter still on the make, preferred to be seen as a homeless Guthrie-type troubadour rather than as someone from a stable Jewish family out in the conservative Midwest.)[23]

Jobs' early capacity for creating fiction speaks also to his subsequent manipulation of truth during his reign at Apple. This distortive capacity, where flights of fancy saw objective truth discarded, became euphemistically known as his "reality distortion field". According to Andy Hertzfeld, one of his co-workers on the Macintosh team in 1984, this distortion field remained socially potent even when those around him knew he was operating in it. Stratagems aimed to neutralise his truth distortion were widely discussed by those on his team, but to little effect. Most good-naturedly acquiesced to it, seeing there was little they could do to change it.[24] Some, however believed his distortions were delusional, and amounted to lies, where he would present a story as fact without the slightest consideration of the actual truth as everyone knew it to be.

His stubborn resistance to reality was often at the expense of himself, where he would contrive a convincing self-exterior in order to bluff others into accepting his agenda. He was, in this way, like Nathan, the paranoid schizophrenic in Willian Styron's Sophie's Choice, convincing Stingo and Sophie that his madcap laboratory work was for real; that he was always on the verge of a massive breakthrough. Of course none of this was true. Importantly, and in contrast to Nathan, Jobs did make breakthroughs, such were the powers of his conviction and persuasion. An example often cited is Jobs convincing his partner, Steve Wozniak, to design the Breakout game within the space of just a few days: a vision no one believed could be achieved until, under Jobs' manic cajolery, it was.[25] Debi Coleman, another member of the early Mac team, fell under the same spell, saying that his distortions became self-fulfilling prophesies, with you as his subject: doing the impossible because you were led to believe that, actually, it was possible.[26] The 60-second signature Apple ad "Think Different", drafted by Lee Clow of the Chiat/Day ad agency, is resonant here. Almost directly referencing Jobs and his reality distortion effect, it ran: "Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." Reported to have produced some of this copy himself, Jobs subsequently admitted to having wept each time he reconnected with this piece.[27]

An additional and interconnecting component of the Jobs personality profile was his unnerving abrasiveness. This aspect surfaced early. In pre-Apple 1974, isolated to night shifts at the Atari factory because of his unsociable rudeness, the youthful Jobs continued to rile fellow workers, calling them “dumb shits”, an opinion from which he never backed down. In fact, the only reason why he shone there was that everyone else was so bad, he self-righteously opined.[28] By 1977 Jobs was head of Apple and becoming increasingly despotic, denigrating underling engineers with their designs that looked “like shit”. One of these programmers, Randy Wigginton, recalled how Jobs would breeze in, quickly check out what he'd been doing and then inform him that it was shit - this without any notion of what it was or why it had been produced. During this same period, he would insult waitresses at local restaurants, sending untouched plates of food back to the kitchen because he said the servings were “garbage”.[29] In his pitch to Bob Belleville to join Apple, Jobs offered that everything he'd ever done was “shit”, so why didn't he come and work for Jobs instead? So persuasive was the Jobs reality distortion that Belleville complied and joined up.[30] Complaining by memo to the Apple board in 1981, senior underling Jef Raskin wrote that, while he’d always liked the man, Jobs was, in truth, a dreadful manager and impossible to work for. His capacity for missing appointments was legendary and, when present, he was reactive and thoughtless, seldom giving credit when required. When told of a new idea, he'd immediately attack it, slating it as a stupid, useless waste of time and energy. If, by some miracle, the idea was a good one, he'd instantly claim it as his own.[31] John Sculley, a successful Pepsi-Cola president from 1977 to 1983, who was later hired to manage Apple and its mercurial founder, subsequently came to the view that Jobs was mildly bipolar, with big mood swings -wildly ecstatic one minute, darkly depressed the next. Regularly, Sculley would be required to placate a seething Jobs who’d exploded over some perceived design infraction. Twenty minutes later, he'd receive another call that Jobs was losing the plot, again.[32]

Andy Cunningham, his publicist in 1985, tells a story about when the cranky Jobs was in New York preparing for a series of one-on-one interviews with the press. Nothing was right in the set-up. They were the wrong sort of strawberries, so were the flowers, and the piano was in the wrong place. When Cunningham tried to mollify her boss he turned on her, criticising the outfit she was wearing. Conditioned to his bouts of roiling, unfocused anger, she tried to pacify him, saying that she understood his distress. “You have no fucking idea how I feel ... no fucking idea what it's like to be me,” he is reported to have retorted. [33]

Apple's key designer, Sir Jony Ive, worked closely with Jobs yet still did not understand the man. “He's a very, very sensitive guy. That's one of the things that makes his antisocial behavior, his rudeness, so unconscionable,” said Ive. “I once

asked him why he gets so mad about stuff. He said, 'But I don't stay mad.' He has this very childish ability to get really worked up about something, and it doesn't stay with him at all. But there are other times, I think honestly, when he's very frustrated, and his way to achieve catharsis is to hurt somebody. And I think he feels that he has a liberty and a license to do that. The normal rules of social engagement, he feels, don't apply to him. Because of how very sensitive he is, he knows exactly how to efficiently and effectively hurt someone. And he does do that."[34] One would imagine that this level of psycho behaviour would simply not be tolerated in business, but it is. In 2010 Jobs was named the Fortune CEO of the Decade. It will take a serious reappraisal to knock Jobs off his pedestal.

Another well-known business personality who fits fairly comfortably within the Jobs mould is the South African-born casino and hotel sultan, Sol Kerzner. Kerzner's quixotic disposition demonstrates incredible levels of both emotional resilience and fragility. Arguably these two qualities are simply two sides of the same coin and, like Jobs, Kerzner exhibits tendencies of dogged determination and unrestrained bouts of mental anguish. He is an absolute perfectionist, and has described himself as "driven aggressive, obsessive and addictive". Born in 1935 to Russian immigrants who had arrived in South Africa six years earlier, Kerzner was the youngest of four children. His parents had little or no money and he was raised in the poor Johannesburg suburb of Doornfontein. While he was studying to be a chartered accountant, his parents moved to coastal Durban, where they ran a small kosher boarding house. There the young Kerzner honed his initial understanding of the hotel industry. In 1963 he raised sufficient capital to build the first of his Sun International luxury hotels at Umhlanga Rocks, north of the city. By 1983 the chain would contain 31 such hotels. The biggest break came in 1979 when, controversially, he obtained exclusive gambling rights in the apartheid homeland of Bophuthatswana, two hours' drive north-west of Johannesburg. This enabled the building of Sun City and, in 1992, the Lost City.

Many see Kerzner as a contemporary Napoleon - abrasive, controlling, compulsive and insecure. Over time, and with varying degrees of success, Kerzner appears to have learnt to control his compulsive behaviour. Smoking 60 cigarettes a day, in 1989 he suffered a serious heart attack at the age of 54. At the time, he was told to quit smoking and to cut back on the booze and his 20 cups of coffee per day. He later confided to the London Evening Standard: "My cardiologist said no cigarettes and three drinks maximum... I swapped my cigarettes for worry beads but he didn't say how large each drink should be. I still get through half a bottle of Scotch in a night maybe more, very easily." In 2005, Kerzner told Graham Boynton of The Telegraph, UK, that for years he never considered himself an alcoholic because he

“didn't wake up in the morning desperate for a drink”, but through a spell at the Betty Ford Clinic had come to understand his workaholic behaviour and addictive personality. He has, subsequently, been off the booze and seemingly better off without it.[35]

The Guardian's Emma Brockes was of the opinion that he has “a reputation for great charm, interspersed with outbursts of temper”. He is a man who suffers no delusions of human frailty. Commenting on the recently opened One & Only Hotel in Cape Town he said: “It's arguably the best. I don't want to boast and I'm not knocking SA hotels considering I built a lot of them in the ‘70s, but this [hotel]...by global standards there's nothing like it.” So driven is Kerzner and his standards so exacting that a former business associate told a British newspaper that he once witnessed Kerzner force an employee to paint a wall seven times before he got it the correct shade of green. “He wants things just right. And he never fails. Never.”

In 2007, Chris Brammer, who spent a decade working for Kerzner as a general manager, told the Financial Times that Kerzner was “not an empathic person”. He recalled that after “a very fine lunch” next to the pool at Sun City, his boss asked how his lunch was. When Brammer replied, “Very nice,” Kerzner snarled, “The hot dishes were shit, the desserts were shit, the people responsible for the lunch are shit.”

By way of justification, in 1993 Kerzner defended his style of management, telling the Sunday Times: “It's not a question of whether you're Mr Nice Guy or not. The key to success is setting your objectives. I like to think of myself as a perfectionist. Unquestionably I set high standards and I recognise and appreciate people who are able to meet my expectations. The fact that I don't easily tolerate substandard performances I don't see as a shortcoming.”[36]

Emotional maturity

> The essence of a work of art is not to be found in the personal idiosyncrasies that creep into it - indeed, the more there are of them, the less it is a work of art - hut in its rising above the personal and speaking from the mind and heart of the artist to the heart and mind of mankind. The personal aspect of art is a limitation and even a vice. Art that is only personal, or predominately so, deserves to be treated as neurosis.
>
> CARL JUNG[37]

> After first contact knocks you on your ass, you'd better have a plan, for some preparedness and personal development will he required if you expect to hang around any longer than your fifteen minutes.
>
> BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN[38]

While creative output may initially be pinned to a troubled spirit, if it is to endure the artist needs to grow up. Some level of self-awareness or self-mastery is required - why he or she acts or feels in a particular way. This is something we might call emotional maturity.

Let's back up here. What I'm saying is that much creativity comes from the surge of energy catalysed by early experiences of pain and thwarted attempts to be loved and to have one's primary needs met. This is why Rob Lowe can say, for example, that as a young man his acting career kick-started when he found he could connect with the sources of audience affirmation that he could not ordinarily have found at home. Bearing in mind the observation Piers Morgan made during his CNN interview with Lowe - that many creative people never received the explicit declarations of love from their parents they so desperately craved[39] - the consequence, it seems, is often a star that burns brightly, fuelled by the primal desire for acceptance and affirmation. We all know stars like this: who fired up on this initial quest but never moved on from there. Many stagnated, became caricatures. They could not move on and grow up. Some drank themselves to death. Some did drugs. All sought some form of external dependence, addicted to that which was going to make it okay. “I think that is the ultimate tragedy of fame...People who are simply out of control, who are lost,” observed George Michael of this phenomenon, somewhat presciently, in 1990.[40] So rather than growing up, many such artists have remained simply where they are. Sometimes they are forced to by an art industry that requires them to be the persona that fans adore, and to keep producing more of the same indefinitely. Some refuse. Neil Young and his “unrepresentative” albums spring to mind here, along with the post-Top 20 Talk Talk, Bruce Springsteen (prior to Darkness on the Edge of Town) and, in the post-Beatles era, John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

Steely Dan’s Donald Fagen is also an artist who became victim to his pathologies and then grew up and moved on. Via a number of sources, he has revealed something of the relationship between his creative ability as a songwriter and the state of his inner life. During the ‘70s Steely Dan had become one of the greatest selling jazz-rock- pop outfits in the US, putting out seven critically acclaimed albums in the eight years from 1973 to I 980. Together with his songwriting partner, Walter Becker, “The Dan”, it seemed, could do no wrong. And then, suddenly, Fagen lost his mojo and everything went wrong. Upon his break-up of the group, post Gaucho (1980), Fagen put out his solo set, The Nightfly (1982), a compilation of songs inspired by his life as a reclusive teenager growing up in the suburbs, listening to doo-wop radio. In the decade following The Nightfly, however, Fagen suffered from severe depression and writer's block. Later, according to Steely Dan biographer Brian Sweet, Fagen observed that his inability to produce was driven internally and not because of the

musical failings of any external parties. He could not produce anything of merit and he feared that perhaps his facility for songwriting would never return. As a big fan of mega-'60s and '70s songwriter Burt Bacharach, who had penned many of the Carpenters' hits, Fagen had watched Bacharach suffer such a fate. "He had this couple of years of incredible inspiration. That's what most artists have, just a couple of years. You're very lucky if you have them, and very lucky if you can maintain such standards. There are only a few people, great artists, who work until they die. Stravinsky or Vladimir Nabokov,"[41] said Fagen. Facing the void, Fagen warned his record company, Warner Brothers, to back off and not impose any deadlines. They had little choice. Neither did his fans. I still recall my delight, as a student, at discovering and savouring the earlier Steely Dan albums - and perplexedly trying to figure out when the next album would arrive. It would take a while.

Finally mixed in February 1993, the Kamakiriad album marked the end of an 11-year hiatus for Fagen. Later, trying to put the pieces together, he attributed his writer's block to his "extreme idealism", a euphemism, perhaps, for a form of Type-A controlling behaviour that marked his entire musical life and ultimately forced him to seek psychological help.[42] For Fagen - one of the sharpest knives in the box - the critical insight was that, in the early days of success, music and the camaraderie of musicians had offered him the perfection, sense of control and peace of mind that aspects of his earlier personal life had not. Reflecting on this, he observed that people from his generation had been forced to create alternate families because their biological families so often failed to provide the requisite emotional support. Fagen's substitution of musical family for biological family as a base from which he could reiteratively reconstruct himself would prove a critical one. Forsaking old family ties, he increasingly came to rely on his music to sustain him emotionally. And then, in his mid-thirties, at the apparent height of his musical powers, Fagen reached a place in himself where music could no longer provide the succour and support on which he depended. At this point, despite all his commercial success and love for the music he was making, the demons of his childhood powerfully began to reassert themselves. Fagen was now a burnt-out workaholic, at one point even trying to force the recording engineers on Gaucho to work on Christmas day to help him alleviate the "boredom" he suffered when doing nothing. Later, Fagen could see just how ridiculous and neurotic his behaviour had become. "That album is almost a document of despair. We were running out of steam as far as our youthful energy was concerned and we weren't mature enough to deal with it. We were still adolescents."[43] Continued Fagen: "I think a lot of it had to do with not wanting to address certain things I had to address personally, and working gave me the chance not to do any kind of self-examination. I'm a very introspective kind of person as it is, so I like the action of always working,

it's a kind of therapy in itself. I'm basically someone who has to fight nervousness and depression."[44]

The conclusion of Gaucho marked the end of Fagen's optimism and faith in the belief that his musical creativity could stave off the darkness inside. "I was part of a generation that believes you can reinvent yourself at will; start from scratch and detach yourself from the past that had bad faith in it and lots of values that weren't valuable," he would later say. "I really did try to invent myself according to the spirit of the times. And one of the things you learn as you grow older is that there is no escape. I don't know what it was inventing but whatever it was, it wasn't what my parents had expected of me. That was my addiction. The Fifties were so repressed they were a recipe for insanity."[45]

This new realisation would prove Fagen's creative undoing. Stripped of his art he would be required, finally, to face down his demons alone. Trying to explain the emotional turmoil of the 10 years that followed Gaucho, Fagen scripted his mythological searching through a series of life-narrative sub-plots that linked both the songs and main character of the Kamakiriad album. In an autobiographical interview given around the time of its release, Fagen described the album's protagonist-hero as "kind of a fuck-up, but with excellent intentions".[46] Qualifying this, he noted that "most people start out rather optimistic about their life. They fall in love, they idealise their partner, and it doesn't work out so well. The main character on the album goes through a series of losses ending [as in the song] 'On the Dunes' where he is totally abandoned and despondent, even suicidal." Fagen admitted that the album story was really an alternate take on his own life. "In Steely Dan," he observed, "we were very arrogant kids and when life starts to kick you around, you have to swallow your pride... By the end of making Gaucho I think both Walter [Becker] and I were down and depressed and both of us really had to make changes."

So the changes came, most especially in the form of psychotherapy aimed at addressing the personal problems that beset Fagen. As he would later admit: "I've experienced numb periods in my life, for sure. I'm an emotional person and I think that for that reason maybe I'm a little guarded. I feel a lot happier now, but I still keep my therapist busy."[47] With time and counsel, Fagen appears to have grown up, seeming somewhat less driven, spending portions of the early new millennium touring with Becker. Their Grammy-winning 2000 album Two Against Nature, and the DVD that followed, bear testimony to a more laid-back, yet still acerbic, Fagen. In more recent years he has teamed up with Michael McDonald and Boz Scaggs to form the touring "super-anti-group", The Dukes of September. In 2013 he published Eminent Hipsters, a book of short essays and musings revealing a cranky, restless Fagen still aware of his own unresolved issues. The final piece of Hipsters is drawn from a series

of journal entries while on tour with the Dukes. An entry from 20 June 2012 is possibly the most revealing: “By the way, I'm not posting this journal on the internet. Why should I let you lazy, spoiled TV Babies read it for nothing in the same way you downloaded all those songs my partner and I sacrificed our entire youth to write and record, not to mention the miserable, friendless childhoods we endured that left us with lifelong feelings of shame and self-reproach we were forced to countervail with a fragile grandiosity and a need to constantly prove our self-worth - in short, with the sort of personality disorders that ultimately turned us into performing monkeys?”[48] The man is a work in progress to be sure.

Like Fagen, Bruce Springsteen was equally poisoned by the strictures of his past. Constantly at odds with his father, who smoked and drank excessively, Springsteen, while still an adolescent, became a control freak, eschewing the laid-back, narcotic excesses of the hippie generation around him in favour of manic self and team micromanagement.[49] In the early years on tour with his E Street Band he played the proverbial Scout Master. No one dared to let Springsteen think they were messing with narcotics lest their commitment to the music be called into question. Road manager Bobby Chirmside relates a situation that occurred in 1978: he and Springsteen dropped by the band’s dressing room to find the boys getting high, with one guy holding up a cocaine spoon to the nose of another. Seeing the Boss, they awkwardly offered some to the bristling Springsteen who turned on the ice. “If. I. Ever. Fucking. See. This. Again. I don't Care who it is. They're gone. On the spot. I'll fire them,” he reportedly hissed. His girlfriend at the time, Joyce Hyser, subsequently confirmed that she'd never seem him toking on a joint; not even a cigarette.[50] Decades later, a reflective Springsteen observed that if you're sufficiently immature and emotionally damaged, becoming a fastidious, Type-A workaholic can be a far easier short-term option than doing the hard yards to directly face clown your demons. Much in line with the martinet Donald Fagen during his Gaucho period, Springsteen has since accepted the crazy flaw to this approach. “It was the only way I knew how to work,” admitted the Boss. “It was fun, but it was exhausting. I think intentionally exhausting.”[51]

In the spring of 1987 matters came to a head when Springsteen separated from his wife, Julianne Phillips, and hooked up with back-up vocalist Patti Scialfa, who joined the E Street Band on the 1988 tour celebrating his subsequent album, Tunnel of Love. The music from this and the following albums bear testimony to Springsteen's inner turmoil and battles for integrity in a slippery world. Chronically aware of his own failures, he said of this time: “crashed into myself and saw a lot of myself as I really was. I questioned all my motivations. Why am I writing, what I'm writing? Why am I saying what I'm saying? Am I bullshitting? Am I just trying to be the most popular

guy in town? I questioned everything I'd ever done and it was good."[52] In his recent autobiography, Born to Run, Springsteen adds this view on the continual struggle with self: "In all psychological wars, it's never over, there's just this day, this time, and a hesitant belief in your own ability to change. It is not an arena where the unsure should go looking for absolutes and there are no permanent victories. It's about a living change, filled with insecurities, the chaos of our personalities, and is always one step up, two steps back."[53]

Perhaps a lighter version of the Fagen/Springsteen prototype is Neil Young, the '70s folk hero who famously acknowledged that he'd never penned a song not stoned.[54] Asked in 2012 if he was a good recording artist to work for, he replied: "Sometimes it's better not to blow up at someone. I can save that anger and emotion for my guitar playing." By way of an afterthought, he offered this too: "The fact is that I can be really irritable when I'm unhappy about stuff ... I can be a nitpicker about details that seem to be over the top. But then again I'm into what I'm into, so a lot of people forgive me because of that."[55] Joe Walsh, the West Coast guitarist and Eagles bad-boy of too many trashed hotel rooms to mention, talks in a similar vein of his work with the group in the period covering Hotel California: "In the press and media it was presented that we were constantly at war. And I can't say that's exactly the case. We were interacting and we were all intense. Glenn [Frey] said to me one time: 'I get nuts sometimes and I'm sorry.' But that tension had a lot to do with fanning the artistic fire. Having that dynamic was important in making the music."[56]

Drugs and drinking

Artists who either failed to work through their issues or did not quit drinking or taking drugs (or both) are not hard to find. The tragedy is that most of them are dead. In truth, it seems all too often that artists who struggle with depression and melancholy end up as addicts who cannot come back from the brink. Famously, the list includes singers Elvis Presley, Brian Jones, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Nick Drake, Tim Buckley, Sid Vicious and, more recently, Amy Winehouse and Prince. All these artists died hard and before their time, mostly as addicts of some type. Jazz pianist Bill Evans also falls within this caste. Though 51 when declared dead in 1980, Evans had become addicted to heroin, followed by cocaine, 20 years earlier. According to jazz critic Gene Lees, one of his admirers, "It was the longest suicide in history."[57]

So why did he succumb? Certainly one of the reasons was his father, who drank heavily to cope with the financial strain of the Depression. Another was the influence of the '40s jazz giants, many of whom maintained a schedule of hard drugs, especially heroin, to sustain their hard-living, glamorous profession. The legendary jazzman

Charlie Parker was a user of note and his endorsement appeared to spur others on. Certainly this applied to Evans who, at the time, was just developing his precocious, adolescent talent for jazz. (The Rolling Stones' Keith Richards also confessed to having been introduced to smack while on the road performing with black Blues artists from the '60s.) Later, in the army, Evans is reported to have indulged in marijuana despite warnings that it would interfere with his recall ability. It was, however, not until his connection with Miles Davis, his band and their culture of heroin use that Evans crossed over to convert his experimentation with heroin to a habit. Ever the uber-cool but only white performer in the Davis set-up, Evans was determined to fit in with the spiked-up jazz fellowship. Soon he was the worst junkie in the band. Eliot Zigmund, who drummed with Evans on albums such as the great You Must Believe in Spring, suggests that Evans took to drugs as a transformative, to get away from the fact that he was just a regular American guy. In shades of Jobs and Dylan, Evans appeared to cast off his conservative upbringing in an attempt to find his groove. "I think the drugs for him made him more mysterious, or got him to a more mysterious place, got him out of his background,"[58] offered Peri Cousins, Evans' ex-lover and inspiration for "Peri's Scope", adding that she believed his addiction was self-destructive. "He knew what he was doing and part of him felt that was something he had to do and that when he was finished he'd stop. I suppose lots of people felt that way...I have a theory about his addiction. When he came down, when he kicked it, which he did on numerous occasions, the world was - I don't know how to say - too beautiful. It was too sharp for him. It's almost as if he had to blur the world for himself by being strung out. I had that impression all the time."[59]

By 1962, according to Gene Lees, his personal and musical life was "in hideous disarray".[60] Following the death of his inspirational lead double bassist, Scott LaFaro, the year before, Evans was barely going through the motions and was in deep trouble, cutting a series of uninspired albums merely to finance his steepening narcotic dependency. In the four months after April that year he had recorded in three separate studios on eight different dates for the output of four-and-a-half albums.[61] Following threats from loan sharks to break his fingers during the Interplay sessions that July, Evans was playing hard for all the cash he could get.[62] By January 1963, he'd paralysed his right arm with a needlestick injury and spent a week at New York's famous jazz club the Village Vanguard playing only with his left hand. His bassist at the time, Bill Crow, recalled how "with his left hand and some virtuoso peddling, he was able to maintain harmonic interest in support of treble lines. In morbid fascination, pianists dropped by to witness this phenomenon. He would dangle the dead right hand over the keyboard and drop his forefinger on the keys, using the weight of his hand to depress them. Everything else was played with the left hand, and

if you looked away, you couldn't tell anything was wrong."[63] Things did not get better. By the end of that year, as a result of the needlestick, the outer two fingers on his right hand had lost all feeling and control. Booked at the time for a two-week gig at Boston's Jazz Workshop, he continued to play with apparent flawlessness: one session in front of a certain teenaged piano prodigy, Keith Jarrett, then on one of his first tours as a professional muso.[64]

Between these periods of oblivion, there were spells during which Evans would attempt to kick the habit, returning south to his parents' home in Florida to gain weight and isolate himself from the band friends and place cues that continued to provoke the relapses that beset him. Suffering for most of his life from addiction and hepatitis (common for users of shared needles), his pithy analysis of the tune "Suicide is Painless", from the Vietnam War-based TV series M*A*S*H, drew wry smiles from those in the know. "Debatable," he offered, with little apparent irony.[65]

Alcohol is of course the other great and fatal distraction of so many talented artists, including writers. It is known to alter one's creative perspectives, introducing, as Charles Bukowski asserted, new insights, yanking and joggling you "out of the routine thought of everydayism". Kingsley Amis suggested a glass at close of play. But those in the habit find this hard to put into practice. Jack London started initially by rewarding himself with a drink once halfway through his daily quota of 1000 words. Soon, however, he was drinking before the writing commenced. And so it was with many other famous writers: Scott Fitzgerald – "Too much champagne is just right"; Dorothy Parker – "I'd rather have a glass in front of me than a frontal lobotomy"; William Faulkner – "I usually write at night. I always keep my whisky within reach"; and of course Hemingway – "Write drunk, edit sober".[66]

To wit, Hemingway, who had been drinking since the age of 15, claimed that few things gave him more pleasure than liquor. "When you work hard all day with your head and know you must work again the next day, what else can change your ideas and make them run on a different plane like whiskey? When you are cold and wet, what else can warm you? Before an attack who can say anything that gives you the momentary well-being that rum does?"[67]

In due course, however, Hemingway's wellbeing was replaced by a series of disasters fuelled by his alcoholism. One night in 1928, well in the bag, he confused the skylight cord and the lavatory chain, yanking the entire glass fixture down onto his head, causing concussion and requiring nine stitches. This was just the start. In a series of harebrained moments of severe intoxication, he shot himself in the leg (1935), broke a toe while kicking at a gate lock (1938), smashed his foot through a mirror (1944) and, in that same year, was twice concussed - once ramming his car into a water tank during a blackout, the other when leaping from his motorbike into a ditch.

Thereafter the booze-fuelled slapstick show just got worse. In 1945 he suffered severe lacerations when he drove his vehicle into a ditch, sending his wife through the windscreen. Three years later he sprained his shoulder, again in a car accident. The following year, 1949, while skiing, he got a speck of dust in his eye. Combined with his continuous drinking, this turned into a 10-year bout of erysipelas, with an inflamed red welt running from his mouth to the bridge of his nose. Then in 1958, he tore ankle ligaments while climbing over a fence, again drunk. Finally, in 1959, he was in yet another car accident,[68] this coinciding with his final booze-up in Spain, by which point he was in seriously bad shape, with ailing kidneys and liver, a likely case of haemochromatosis (iron build-up), cramps, sleeplessness, high blood urea and blood clotting. He was impotent, to boot, and showing signs of premature ageing.[69] "Death is just another whore," as he once wrote, with Evans-like detachment.[70] Finally, at the age of 61, following various unsuccessful treatments for his paranoia and depression, the Nobel Laureate blew his head off with his favourite double-barrelled shotgun. His father had taken his life in a similar fashion at age 57.[71]

Such stories of wanton self-destruction are not that unusual with creatives. Hemingway and Evans aside, the late William Styron suggested that, in its graver clinical manifestation, depression is likely to take 20 per cent of its victims by suicide, many of these being painters, poets and novelists.[72] A far-from-comprehensive list of artist suicides includes poets and writers Hart Crane, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, John Berryman, Jack London and Primo Levi (he who'd survived the Nazi death camps), painters Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock; and photographer Diane Arbus.

Though still alive at the time of this writing, Bob Dylan was another who did not shy too much from pain. Reeling from a devastating divorce, Dylan's masterpiece 1975 album Blood on the Tracks, yielded some of the greatest songs penned in that period, including: "Tangled up in Blue", "Idiot Wind" and "You're a Big Girl Now". The tone and lyricism of these pieces appeared to underscore an observation he'd made earlier, that "pain sure brings out the best in people, doesn't it?"[73] Dylan's world, arguably, is one where God exists but only just, and where one is required to work out one's salvation with fear, trembling and confusion. On many occasions we see Dylan touching the edges of madness. While never a junkie like Evans or Richards, Dylan was introduced to LSD in 1964 and is assumed to have taken narcotics throughout the early part of his career. In a 1984 Rolling Stone interview, he noted this: "I never got hooked on any drug. [But] who knows what people stick into your drinks or what kinda cigarettes you're smoking."[74]

Back in the '60s, trying to describe his existential sense of alienation, Dylan referred to his earlier readings of Jack Kerouac, confessing: "I felt that that

atmosphere, that everything that Kerouac was saying about the world being completely mad, you know, and that the only people that for him were interesting were mad people, the mad ones, the ones, you know, mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything, at the same time, the ones who moved beyond: all those mad ones. I felt like I fitted right into that bunch."[75] Some 20 years later, and following some disastrous album sales in the late '80s, Dylan once acknowledged that he'd been abandoned by his art and by God and sought desperately to understand the nature of his condition. Deducing existentially that it was only he whom the audience came to see and not the band, he strove with renewed energy to perform as best he could, concluding: "I'm determined to stand whether God will deliver me or not." This insight to stand fast and be true to his art turned out to be a revelation. "Everything just exploded every which way," he said later.[76] In the years that followed, he released some of his finest work, including Oh Mercy (1989) and Time Out of Mind (1997).

A further subset of these "undeveloped" artists are those who didn't die early, living well into old age, unchanged and immutable. Picasso, Dalí and actor Marlon Brando are apt examples, all Peter Pan artists caught in a world of their own intrigue, unable or unwilling to move on. There's little doubt that Picasso was the greatest painter of the last century, but he was a narcissist who fed off the adulation of his public and the women he burnt up along the way- hardly a paragon of emotionally mature adulthood.

Beside this group is a bunch of creatives, who, it appears, did grow up and continued to produce compelling art in subsequent phases of their emotional development. Within the acting fraternity, standouts include Robert Redford, Meryl Streep, Jeff Bridges and Tom Hanks. Each exudes a level of maturity in the sense that they've looked into the mirror, made their art and moved on to make new, different art. Amongst musicians, we could name Stravinsky along with more contemporary artists Paul McCartney, Madonna, James Taylor, Tom Waits, Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Bruce Springsteen, Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Van Morrison and David Bowie. In 1999, Bowie confessed that he no longer drank nor did drugs. "I'm an alcoholic," he said, "so it would be the kiss of death for me to start drinking again. My relationships with my friends and my family, everybody around me, are so good and have been so for many years now I wouldn't do anything to destroy that again. It's very hard to have relationships when you're doing drugs and drinking. You become closed off, unreceptive, insensitive; all the dreadful things you've heard every pop singer ever say - and I was lucky that I found my way out of there. It's been good for me."[77]

While Don McLean is not one of those who have continued to produce great art over time, he recently spoke about his '70s hit Vincent, who, as the song goes, suffered for his sanity. McLean was forthright about the imperative to fight against the undertow of madness. It is one of the strongest statements from any artist about the capacity to prevail. "Everybody, not just artists, everybody is in a struggle – and everybody has to fight against going insane. Everyone. So in a sense if you use just an artist's struggle - and the idea of his sanity - that doesn't just relate to artists. It relates to cabdrivers and carpenters and teachers and everybody who is struggling against all these difficult things in their lives ... One of the things I learnt is that you must struggle. You must fight. And sometimes people who do lose their sanity haven't found that if they struggle and fight - they'll live to fight another day. And they will come through that problem as I've come through many fights and difficulties in my life."[78]

Tied with the preceding chapter on the betrayal of the inner child, this overview on the role of depression and addiction represents a diptych on the undertow of the artistic disposition. Twinned with the more buoyant components of artistic grit and passion, we have what I believe are the four major components of the creative mindset.

In the third section that follows, I shall explore the four disciplines of art, namely proactivity, practice, perspective and the role of instinct, intuition and the unconscious. Together with components of the artistic mindset, these disciplines will be shown to be crucial in the development of creativity.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. This chapter examines the roles of depression, madness and addiction in creativity.
2. Depression is shown to be a significant marker in creativity, though the trick is to find the right balance. Severe depression can be debilitating.
3. Mental instability in creativity appears to manifest most notably as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, while autism-related disorders tend to predominate within disciplines related to mathematics. There are exceptions of course.
4. Within the music industry emotional wellbeing and maturity is often difficult to achieve, most notably because growth comes at a risk of change in the prevailing business model. There are key examples of artists who grow up, and James Taylor and Bruce Springsteen serve as these.
5. Finally, the role of alcohol and narcotic abuse is assessed through the fatal addictions of Bill Evans and Ernest Hemingway.

section **three**

THE ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES

Chapter six

Proactivity

PROACTIVITY IS CENTRAL T0 CREATIVITY. It is the engine of productivity and creative energy. This chapter examines why proactivity is so important and what factors typically undermine it. These include genetic disposition (instinctual fear) and psychological make-up (usually formed with or without parents by the age of seven) and the social environment into which an individual is born. Vignettes are taken from the lives of Steve Jobs, Marvin Gaye, Sting and James Taylor.

> Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.
>
> Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.
>
> THE LORD OF THE RINGS, J.R.R TOLKIEN[1]

Proactivity is the thought pattern of resolve that precedes action itself. It is a metaphor for action, a posture of intent: the signature of those who step up and seek out opportunities rather than those who react instinctively to incoming traffic. While most artists possess this precursory gift, equally there is little doubt that proactivity is one of the crucial elements that make up the entrepreneurial mindset. Stephen Covey places this as the first of his seven habits of highly effective people.[2] Possibly the easiest way to demonstrate this mindset is to juxtapose the language of reactivity and proactivity. An example would be "There is nothing I can do here" versus "Here I can make a difference". The former suggests a defensive and, sometimes, victim orientation. The latter demonstrates an offensive, purposeful approach.

Inevitably, the problem in working out what to do is that, despite our best proactive intentions, somewhere down the line we wind up doing reactive, or just plain stupid stuff. This is either because life can spring nasty surprises on us that we have little or no control over, or because of the damage to the inner child as discussed earlier, or a combination of the two. Here we find ourselves caught in a web of provocation, whiplashing into thoughtless actions that we would seldom purposefully undertake. We enter a space of the lower shrunken self, a place where the unconscious

takes control. By way of example, imagine a typical family get-together – a birthday celebration or Christmas party. This is an event that you've looked forward to for a while - close family to see, old friends to catch up with. Now imagine one particular person at this event. Usually there is just one, though there could be more. What makes this individual special is that he or she has a remarkable ability to wind you up and unravel you with one casual comment. This comment is usually part of a broader behavioural narrative, the repeat of an earlier scene, conjuring a primal dynamic that places you on the edge of where your shadow meets the light. It is something you've witnessed and experienced many times before. It is certainly not new if and when this remark is made, either you can face up and push through the painful feelings in the most mature, grown-up way that you can, or you can spin out and regress, becoming a wounded four-year-old child, yet again. The comment that drives you to this edge is most certainly connected to your own vulnerability - something like "So who invited you?" or "You've got fat!'" It might be just a condescending look or perhaps a complete lack of eye contact, a denial of your presence. Usually these actions or non-actions have the ability to undo you completely, leaving you incapable of being yourself as you retreat, wounded, to the margins of your interior world. This renders the long-awaited event an unpleasant one. You might want to leave. You might feel that you never want to return. How often has this kind of scene played itself out? Too many times, you might reply.

In the light of these predictable events, imagine what, with a proactive intent, you could do to change your response once the dreaded comment has been made. How best could you avoid the red mist of recoil? What response could you manufacture so that you are in control of the proceedings as they unfurl? No matter how badly you are hurting, how best could you determine the outcome of this interaction? This celebration that you've looked forward to for so long: how could you make it one that works for you, turning it into a genuinely happy occasion?

Given this challenge, some might ask whether it might be wiser to act before the dreaded comment has been made, to deal pre-emptively with the offending individual, if you will. This is a wonderful way to be proactive because you control and wield your power before someone tries to take it away from you. However the events play themselves out, the aim here is to concentrate on getting ahead of your emotions by managing the gap between the stimulus and response. The key is to bring the response upfront, making it less instinctual and more thoughtful, to make you the boss of your own feelings. There's a great anecdote of how the touring British Lions rugby team of 1974 dealt with the typically confrontational and physical Springboks – "by getting their retaliation in first", as the story goes. According to the Lions captain, Willie John McBride, a line-out code was given, "99". This was an immediate

call to arms, upon which the entire team climbed into the hapless Springboks. The thinking here was that the referee would not send off the entire touring 15 if they were caught fighting, and so it proved. None of the South Africans saw it coming and, once the brawl had played itself out, the Lions had left no doubt in anyone's mind that they would not be intimidated. Having dealt with the legendary threat of the Springbok forwards, the Lions went on to annihilate the Springboks 3-0, the final test being drawn. The key point of learning from this "retaliation first" principle is that you become the key creator of the event. You do not allow circumstances to impinge upon you. You do not allow them to dictate your actions.

Backing up from these opening remarks, words from T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" are particularly pertinent here: "Between the conception/ And the creation / Between the emotion/ And the response/ Falls the Shadow."[3] Eliot's key point is that that which we conceive of is typically severed from the creative act by the shadow of suppressed self, thereby stifling creation before it can begin. Similarly, that which rises as emotion is obliterated by shadow before we can fully and properly respond. Eliot understood well the deleterious work of shadow and the damage it can inflict on our ability to step out and lead creative, proactive lives.

The damaging effect of shadow

The source of this kind of regressive behaviour, where the shadow closes us down and leaves us as stripped-down versions of our true selves, can generally be attributed to three different dynamics and these are worth reflecting on. The first is our psychic inheritance, that which we inherit from our families and primary caregivers as we grow up. The second is our DNA, that which makes us intrinsically human. The third source of damage comes from contemporary society.

The primary source of our shadow affliction is usually fuelled by our psychological inheritance. This is inevitably the product of domestic pathologies rooted deep in our formative years. I know very few adults who don't carry a certain amount of baggage from the past. Many people I know were told, as children, that they weren't good enough, or weren't doing the right things. They did too little or too much. They internalised some kind of blame when their parents fought, when they drank, when they never came home, when they divorced. Damage seems to be variously incurred. Some people hurt more than others. Some recover quickly. Others take decades to heal. I often joke about the big, green, shiny apples we buy in top-end supermarkets. We are not these apples, I tell my students. We are the banged-up, bruised and battered specimens found at the bottom of the discarded box at the back of the shop. The sooner we accept this reality, the sooner we can move on. It's not easy for any artist or entrepreneur to accept this, but they must and they do.

Pathologies of abandonment are found among many great artists. Divorce, alcoholism, absent fathers - these family symptoms are common to many of those who challenge authority and the prevailing power dynamic. For reasons already analysed, the abandoned and rejected are typically those who will strike out on their own, seeking new ways of doing things. Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, is a case in point. Not many are aware that Jobs suffered terribly as a youngster from feelings of abandonment, due to being put up for adoption. Said Greg Calhoun, a college friend: "Steve talked to me a lot about being abandoned and the pain that caused ... It made him independent. He followed the beat of a different drummer, and that came from being in a different world than he was born into ... The primal scream and the mucusless diets, he was trying to cleanse himself and get deeper into his frustration about his birth. He told me he was deeply angry about the fact that he had been given up."[4] His first serious girlfriend, Chrisann Brennan, described him as a man "full of broken glass". She conceived a child with Jobs, who subsequently abandoned both her and his newborn child. Looking back, Brennan remarked: "He who is abandoned is an abandoner."[5]

For many entrepreneurs and artists, "father issues" are the trigger point. Marvin Gaye, the Motown star and recorder of the critical '70s soul albums What's Going On and Let's Get It On, probably had the worst deal in this respect. In l984, following a sustained period of domestic argument, he was shot in cold blood by his father, Marvin Gay, Snr. Gaye was one day short of 45. Such was the acrimony between him and his father that, when his Motown career took off in the '60s, Marvin Jnr added an "e" to his surname to distance himself from his father (and dispel any uncertainty as to his sexuality). According to his sister, from the age of seven Gaye suffered his father's regular and brutal whippings. Looking back on his childhood, Gaye described his son-to-father experience as "living with a king, a very peculiar, changeable, cruel and all powerful king". Had his mother not encouraged his singing, Gaye believed he'd have been a case for child suicide. As an adult, he suffered relentless bouts of depression, resorting to cocaine abuse and attempting suicide twice: in the late '60s and again in the '70s. In an interview in 1983, Gaye confirmed that he had bipolar mood disorder. During periods of depression, he explained, he didn't feel as if he was loved, and he didn't feel love. "I felt useless," he said.[6]

Sting, former Police frontman and an artist in his own right, also appears to have struggled with his father. Interviewed by Time in 2011, he spoke of his father's recent death. "My dad and I had the same hands. I hadn't really noticed that until he was on his deathbed, and I mentioned it. And he said, 'You used your hands better than I did.' My dad was a milkman. And I realized that was probably the first compliment he'd ever paid me, and that was kind of devastating."[7] Enough said.

The second source of shadow stems from our actual genetic make-up and includes instinctive pre-coded responses to various environmental stimuli. These responses are deeply imprinted within our genes and we can do very little about them. These include the typical “fight or flight” or “freeze and play dead” responses to danger. Such instantaneous trigger responses stand in contrast to those that enable us to make rational decisions based on some kind of planning and thought. Other responses might include a sense of panic when held under water or a fear of heights, spiders, snakes and so on. When faced with an emergency or some potentially life-threatening circumstance - such as a gun being held to your head in a hijack situation - programmed cues will trigger a pre-programmed set of options over which we, cognitively, have little or no control. These reactive impulses are derived from evolutionary processes that are thousands and thousands of years old. Thus we just “act out” by either lashing out, fleeing or playing dead.

Bruce Springsteen spent decades of painful introspection trying to unravel the moods that afflicted him. While therapy indicated that much of his inner trauma could be pinned down to events that occurred in his childhood, specifically relating to his father, he has acknowledged that this is not the full story and that, while insight into the parental dynamic has given him a sense of understanding, it has not guaranteed him peace. Just when he is not expecting it, when he's in a particularly good space, his mood will darken for no apparent reason. “You go through periods of being good, then something stimulates it,” he said.[8] It could be the clock or some random memory. Springsteen realised that the incessant patterning of such mood swings was part of his physiological script, a script over which he had limited control. “You're going along fine, and then boom, it hits you,” he observed. “Things that just come from way down in the well. Completely noncausal, but it's part of your DNA, part of the way your body cycles.”[9]

Similarly, James Taylor spoke about the mismatch he feels between his prehistoric instincts and a contemporary society in which these instincts are outmoded. This he described as a “difficulty being in my own skin”: a problem of feeling alien and being ill-equipped to cope with the stresses of modern-day existence. “1 think human life is not normal. We were evolved, physiologically perhaps, to a state that people lived in 5000 years ago, maybe. But I think today we're always trying to play catch-up with the changes we make to our environment. We have so much capacity to change what we live in. There's no way to call it normal - or to say it's where we should be. It would be fine if I'd been a Scandinavian 5000 years ago. It would have matched my condition,” he said. Reflecting on the impact of this prehistoric dynamic on how he behaved as a young teenager, Taylor remarked: “Living in human society (today) I just ran into trouble, and I think everybody does

to a greater or lesser extent."[10] How right he is. Many of our automatic, instinctual responses have no place in society today; they are simply vestiges of another time, inherited responses from a prehistoric epoch. While these ancient triggers, such as the fight, flight and freeze responses, might once have assisted us in getting out of trouble fast, today they are more of a hindrance and can actually serve to sever us from our real intent.

The third source of damage is inflicted by society in general. In South Africa one need look no further than the damage wrought by the apartheid ideology. Most South Africans of European descent will struggle to appreciate just what it must have felt like for Africans to be told that, because of their skin colour, they were not good enough, that they were second-rate citizens and that certain schools, suburbs, jobs, beaches and other aspects of life were forbidden to them. This level of institutional toxicity has had untold effects on many of those subjected to it. It is not surprising that so many of us in South Africa today lack the belief in our own worth - in our ability to make independent judgements of our creative worth. Speaking about the challenges facing black South Africans, more than 30 years ago struggle giant Steve Biko observed: "Any changes which arc to come can only come as a result of a programme worked out by black people. And for black people to be able to work out a programme, they need to defeat the main element working against them - this being a psychological feeling of inferiority."[11] As with much of Africa still grappling with the issues of the past, the redress of South Africa's wounded psyche will take decades to heal, and this only with care, education, patience and love.

Paradoxical as it may sound, one of the most remarkable traits of all creators is the ability to use this original toxicity- whether its roots are genetic, psychological or social - to actually fuel the creative process. But this is a fundamental truth of the life-artist. Once absorbed, acknowledged and faced down, it is often this original toxicity that ends up driving us to compete, to create, to master and to endure. It is this toxicity which, when integrated within us (and not pushed away), gives us the power to create and thrive as never before. Catharsis and art are close cousins. Seemingly, unresolved pain is the source of great art. In his biography on Jobs, Walter Isaacson confirmed the action orientation of the Apple founder. Jobs, wrote Isaacson, "reflected philosophically on audiences in general and on his own in particular, asserting that most people do not want a challenge, do not want to participate, but simply want something done to them". He added: "There would always be some 15 per cent, though, who desired something more and were prepared to search it out; herein lay the response to art."[12]

Having already described the factors that debilitate the inclination towards action, it should be clear that all artists do ultimately respond with action to produce

art. The process is never easy and, usually, there is very little in material return. There are ulterior motives at play, as we shall see.

For now it might be useful to sketch out a number of subroutines that emerge as a function of a proactive orientation.

1. Adapt your life. While you might see the world as inherently weird, you need to use what you have to make the best of it. You can't curl up your toes and bemoan your existence. Some artists, of course, are prone to histrionics but little will ever come of it. Great art comes from action. You therefore have to make the difference yourself. There's a wonderful French term that describes this incremental day-by-day DIY difference-making: bricolage. The term, coined by the theorist Claude Levi-Strauss in the '60s, means making do with what you have at hand[13] to address existing problems and opportunities. Jackson Pollock the abstract painter is a case in point. He was self-taught and used dripping sticks and basting brushes to apply vast amounts of viscous paint to huge canvasses rolled out across his studio floor. As he "bricolaged" his way into further abstraction, the greater grew his vision and the possibilities of his newly developing technique. It is a common language for many, many artists. Singer-songwriter and serial entrepreneur Neil Young is a great proponent of this form of creative exploration. Musing on why the processes of artists, engineers and designers have always held such fascination for him, Young reckoned that it was because, at the start of any project, he'd never been sure whether an idea would actually work. "I love to watch and try to guide what is happening, expanding the goals and reach of a project as it unfolds," he says. Though some people believe that predictive, long-range planning is the proper way to go about projects, Young disagrees. Tinkering phase by phase is the way to go, he maintained. "Each tangent offers new possibilities for exploration and discovery. A job is never finished. It just reaches a stage where it can be left on its own for a while."[14]

2. Learn from your mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes, and it is important to be open to correction. Such openness implies an ongoing awareness of the possibilities of failure and a view that there is always something to be learnt from not getting it quite right. Theorists call this "Action Learning"[15] - an orientation that believes learning should occur through an ongoing questioning of assumptions and constructs that bind our modes of practice. Plans always need to be revised since very little ever goes according to plan. Revision is ongoing. So, when things go wrong, the questions must always turn inwards to examine whether any governing practices or policies require adjustment, or even complete

revision. Critically, we need to understand that failure should be tolerated, even welcomed. Within some businesses, there is a built-in tolerance of failure. So, when running a string of nine or ten entrepreneurial ventures, we understand that some, even most, will inevitably fail. This is the view of the venture capitalist: that, while each venture is well considered, it is unlikely that every bet will pay off. Evolutionary theory supports this view. Everything is run on risk. Only the lucky and the strongest survive. Sometimes survival and success has more to do with luck than strength, and we will examine the role of luck later. Strong companies also fail. There is no disgrace in failure. It is a fact of life, a natural course of events. No one can predict failure, just as no one can predict success. Google is well known for this orientation; and certainly no one predicted the success of Google, let alone Facebook, let alone the computer, the laser beam or the internet. No one saw these game-changers coming. Randomness is a fact of life.[16] Success, as 2002 Nobel Prize-winning behavioural economist Daniel Kahneman suggests, is merely an equation: luck plus ability.[17] As you will read in a later chapter, we need ability but we also need luck. If anything, the view should be: if you're going to fail, fail fast. Don't hang on. Rather move on. If it takes nine failures to make one success, move through those nine as fast as possible. Get failure out of the way.

3. Do it yourself. Adapting your life as you go means not waiting for others to fix it for you. You need to get on and do it yourself. Sal Khan, founder and director of the Khan Academy, an online education platform, endorses this view. Since its inception in 2006, the academy has produced more than 6500 video tutorials, concentrating initially on maths and science. Khan says that the best piece of advice he's been given, the insight that's driven him the most is: just keep moving. The imperative is not to ask questions, to over-analyse or prognosticate. It is just to keep swimming. Says Khan: “Before I make a video for Khan Academy, I don't think, Let me go talk to some people and do focus groups. Obviously you have to have some learning, but if it's ruining the tempo of activity, you have to rethink things. At the end of the day, what matters is whether your product works and whether people like it.”[18]

   The quicker you learn to act proactively and to do it yourself rather than rely on others, the faster things will happen. Hence follows the axiom: if you want something done, give it to a busy person. That means you! Without denigratingnthe importance of teamwork and interdependence, let us recognise these for what they are: managerial practices (mostly employed in organisational life) which usually follow rather than precede the development of original thought.

While there is much skill required in drawing out the collective creative best from any organisation, in reality, great ideas do not usually emerge from organisational life. There are exceptions of course - witness Apple, Google and 3M.

Organisations aside, parents can prove critical in fostering in their children a sense of independence and enquiry. Richard Branson, for example, though severely dyslexic, scarcely literate by the age of eight and completely innumerate, came from a happy and secure family background. His mother, Eve, is reported to have encouraged her children to be self-reliant and accountable, and to take charge of their own destinies rather than demurring to others. This seemed to have worked. One tale is told of how, on a drive home from a visit to his grandparents, she asked her then four-year-old son Richard to get out of the car and try to find his way home. The farmhouse where they were staying was not too far away, but Richard still got lost, eventually arriving at a neighbouring farm. All worked out well in the end, of course.[19]

4. You have only one chance. While not always true, for some opportunities will recur, the general imperative is to get on with it because you seldom get more than one shot. In a hyper-competitive world, you cannot afford to sit back and wait for the next best thing. Some windows of opportunity close after a very short span of time. For some reason it is part of human fallibility to underestimate the passage of time. Many people see time as something that is inexhaustible, like a river, a resource that is ongoing, easily acquired. The truth is that time is not like that. The biblical perspective, that there is a season for everything, is wise counsel for the potentially creative person who prefers to procrastinate and is easily deflected into more pleasurable pursuits. One important example is the orientation of young men and women still in their twenties and early thirties who seldom clearly grasp what they need to accomplish in order to move successfully into the next phase of their lives. While not wishing to oversimplify or sound glib, the key quests of young adults are (1) to find out what it is they were born to do - in other words, breaking into a career path that gives them purpose and meaning - and (2) to find a life partner. Neither of these tasks is easy, and each requires much insight and self-knowledge. If they are not successfully negotiated, they will discover, later in life, that they're in a place, with a person or in a condition from which it becomes increasingly difficult to extricate themselves. Easy money or work options, too much drinking or drugging, or associating with inappropriate partners can leave them in a weak life position. And yet all too often young people squander their days on frivolous pursuits, not knowing what they are doing or are meant to be doing. In other words, they default into their lives instead of proactively seeking

out that which they hold to be important. Too many wrong forks in the road can lead to life disaster.

I have a friend who believes that, by the age of 30, you need to know who you are and where you are going; from 30 to 40 you need to go there; from the age of 40 to 50 you need to make some money doing this; from 50 to 60 you need to keep on doing this and earning money but using your experience to work less; and, from 60 to 70, be able to kick back and enjoy the fruits of your labours because from 70 to 80 life becomes a lottery.

Having said this let me repeat that while a decade-worth of failure can deliver bitter lessons down the road - lessons best avoided - these lessons can spark a certain level of consciousness. And consciousness is the axe blade of proactivity. It can and should drive intent.

The great American Existential author Paul Bowles had no belief in God and saw life as a brief and meaningless sojourn. On this sterile promontory, he acknowledged (with a sense of ennui) just how finite our lives actually are. And yet within this limited span, he also noted how deluded we are with the sense of endless possibility. In The Sheltering Sky, he wrote:

> Death is always on the way, but the fact that you don't know when it will arrive seems to take away from the finiteness of life. It's that terrible precision we hate so much. Because we don't know when we will die, we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. Yet everything happens only a certain number of times, and a very small number, really. How many more times will you remember a certain afternoon of your childhood, some afternoon that's so deeply a part of your being that you can't even conceive of your life without it? Perhaps four or five times more. Perhaps not even that. How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps twenty. And yet it all seems limitless.[20]

This quote is perhaps familiar to some; and to many it may send a chill of regret at the frittering away of our days. A warmer quote, but one which, I feel, makes the same point, is drawn from A Handful of Summers, the memoir of '60s South African tennis player Gordon Forbes.

> Go back down the years
> And recall if you can
> All the warm temperate times;
> You may find with surprise

That they're all squeezed in
To a headful of thoughts
And a handful of summers.[21]

Whichever way you look at it, those who maintain a passive view of life and hold that, if we kick around for long enough, something worthwhile is bound to arrive, tend to miss the point. There are possibilities out there for sure but the proactive tend to be the ones who make these possibilities happen. Fatalistic passivity is a disposition given to those who don't value what they have, what they can do or could make of themselves. By the time they wake up it's usually too late. As Paul Simon once pointedly wrote in the lyrics of "Rene and Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After the War", decades will "[glide] by like Indians". The passage *of* time is so silent, so insidious, you just won't notice until it's too late.

Writing, for example, does not happen simply by dreaming up stories and thinking up spectacular plots and schemes. While such dreams are critical, they are only realised through hard graft and hours of application. Those who pick up this thread tend to understand the dictum, carpe diem, "seize the day". While we shall later consider the question of how much work is actually required, the point to grasp here is this critical posture of intent: one of constantly moving outwards, of spying out new territories of possibility and nurturing these lands to a point of fruition. Nothing can happen without this proactive intent. Nothing.

Chapter Summary

1. As demonstrated through anecdotes from the lives of artists such as Sting, Steve Jobs and Marvin Gaye, this chapter illustrates the powerful role of proactivity. Proactivity is, after all, what spurs us on to creative pursuit. Without it nothing can happen.
2. Three powerful factors can, however, work to neuter proactivity, namely genetics, one's psychological make up and the social milieu into which one is born.
3. Through genetics one inherits certain instinctual traits, phobias and the Like. Such traits can also manifest through adverse developments within the psyche, a process that is mostly completed by the time one reaches the age of seven. The role of one's environment can also prove important, with children born in California, for example, having a far higher chance of creative success than those born in Central Africa.

Chapter seven

Practice

How IMPORTANT Is PRACTICE in the development of art? This chapter reviews Malcolm Gladwell's l0,000-hour rule that explains, in generic terms, the amount of practice time needed to attain a level of world-class mastery. Recent research suggests that this rule is subject to variation, being moderated by two key variables: (1) the structural stability of the discipline and (2) its level of cognitive complexity. This chapter looks at both. In examining artistic stability, it considers the rigour required by the Bolshoi Ballet and the craft of writing pop or rock music, as per the likes of Michael Jackson, Glenn Frey and Leonard Cohen. In examining cognitive complexity, it turns to jazz and the work of Abdullah Ibrahim, Bill Evans and Joni Mitchell.

> We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.
> WILL DURANT[1]

> *I make tens of mistakes, but I always said to myself I wouldn't forgive myself if I made the same mistake twice. You learn more when things go wrong than when they go right.*
> HESTON BLUMENTHAL[2]

> *I am always doing that which l cannot do in order that I may learn how to do it.*
> PABLO PICASSO[3]

Many great musicians of the last era appear to understand that the capacity to create artistic miracles is fashioned through focus, discipline and practice. Though Keith Richards had a lot of fun along the way, in his biography, Life, the rock-guitar legend states bluntly that short cuts are not possible. To get anywhere, says Richards, you have to put in the necessary hours of practice, starting with an acoustic guitar and then moving on to an electric. “If you want to get to the top, you've got to start at the bottom, same with anything,” he said, observing that lots of beginners erroneously believe that they can become Jimi Hendrixes just because they can make a flat-top go “wee wee wah wah”. Guitar greatness comes from getting to know the instrument

inside out, Richards maintains. “I would just play every spare moment I got. People describe me then as being oblivious to my surroundings - I'd sit in a corner of a room when a party was going and be playing. Some indication of my love of my new instrument is Aunt Marje telling me that when [my mother] Doris went to hospital and I stayed with [my grandfatherl Gus for a while, I was never parted from my guitar. I took it everywhere and I went to sleep with my arm laid across it.”[4]

For the freshly constituted Rolling Stones, the contribution of practice in their crafting of blues music was remarkable. By 1964, a mere five years after Richards had acquired his first guitar, the Stones were hitting America with a version of black-inspired blues so strong that no one thought they were white, let alone from the UK. The November 1964 release of their single “Little Red Rooster” proved a defining moment. With Mick Jagger's exaggerated vocal phrasing, Brian Jones' slide-guitar and Richards' ever-improving fret-work, “Rooster” entered the New Musical Express chart at number one, a feat more typical then of an Elvis Presley or The Beatles.

Such was their US impact that Motown giant Bobby Womack remarked that at first he'd thought the Stones were black guys. “Where did these motherfuckers come from?” he reportedly asked.[5] Given the hours spent absorbing and practising the blues, all traces of Englishness had been rinsed from their delivery and Richards was frankly not surprised by the degree of the Stones' uptake. While, as Richards recalled, their initial musical ambition had simply been to turn people on to blues music, “what actually happened was that we turned American people back on to their own music. We turned white America's brains and ears around.” He explained that back in the mid- to late '50s, “American black music was going like an express train”. But after the initial breakthrough of white rock 'n' roll acts there was a reversal in the fortunes of blues-driven rock. Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran had both died in accidents. Presley had been enlisted and Jerry Lee Lewis had married his 13-year-old cousin. By the time the Stones arrived in the mid-'60s, white music had relapsed into the sugar-spun melodies of Bobby Vee and The Beach Boys. Richards commented that US music taste was “stuck in the past”. But when “Little Red Rooster” charted there, the blues floodgates burst. “[S]uddenly,” said Richards, “Muddy [Waters] and Howlin’ Wolf and Buddy Guy are getting gigs and working. It was a breakthrough. And the record got to number one. And I'm absolutely sure what we were doing made Berry Gordy at Motown capable of pushing his stuff elsewhere, and it certainly rejuvenated Chicago blues as well.”[6]

Recalling a conversation with Joe Walsh, lead guitarist on the Eagles' Hotel California album, Richards said that like Womack, Walsh had also confessed to the profound effect of first hearing the Stones. No one else was doing anything remotely like it at the time, declared Walsh. Up to that point, he'd been listening to doo-wop

and not much else and had never even heard of black Chicago blues-men like Muddy Waters. Such was his induction, via the Stones, into black Southern blues that Walsh decided, at that point, to commit seriously to music.[7]

From such tales of discipline and application, there is a growing appreciation of the extent to which experience and practice are critical to the artistic mindset. In his 2008 book, Talent Is Overrated, Geoff Colvin observes that to reach world-class greatness, a significant degree of "deliberate practice" is required. With deliberate practice, Colvin suggests that such mastery should be achieved within approximately 10 years[8] - a view restated by Gladwell in Outliers, in which he presents his so-called 10,000-hour rule.[9] Gladwell used a number of examples to illustrate his case, including Bill Gates and The Beatles. Gates began his career in computing as a teen while attending Lakeside School in Seattle, which taught a course in coding. Similarly, before The Beatles had even made it in Liverpool, they were laying down eight-hour gigs in Hamburg strip clubs. The same principle of practice applies to Leonard Cohen. Though he never received training in classical music, the wordsmith Cohen was a published writer and a poet long before he became a songwriter.[10] Simply put, he had done the hours.

According to Gladwell, this rule of thumb cuts across all disciplines, from golf, to chess, to philosophy. The road to greatness is not easily achieved without a consolidated period of deliberate practice, he says. A 2014 Princeton-led review of the topic has tested the 10,000-hour theory on 88 studies of deliberate practice across several domains. Its key finding is that, in the main, practice explains only 12 per cent of the variation in performance. This figure is found, however, to vary substantially across disciplines. In games such as chess, for example, practice explained 26 per cent of the success achieved. In music and in sports, this figure reduced to 21 and 18 per cent respectively. In education, practice accounted for just 4 per cent of the difference, and in business it was a negligible and statistically insignificant 1 per cent. Deliberate practice, the study concluded, is important but not as important as has been argued by Gladwell and company.[11]

One explanation for this variance lies in the structural stability of each discipline. Those with strong and stable structures, such as chess, ballet, golf or classical music, see little variation in the rules. So, with dedicated practice, participants can be fairly confident that their growing levels of expertise will endure and pay off. However, in disciplines where the rules can change and the orthodox is never permanent, the amount of practice is less likely to explain any subsequent success. This is typical of domains such as four-chord rock music, modern art and entrepreneurship, where the emphasis seems to lie on conceptual production rather than technical proficiency.

Certainly punk bands such as the Ramones and the Sex Pistols were never driven by any degree of finesse. In fact, in early 1977, the Pistols' bassist at the time, Glen Matlock, was fired, purportedly because of his musical ambitions. A big fan of The Beatles, Matlock had sought to style his fretboard technique on Paul McCartney. His 19-year-old replacement, Sid Vicious, barely knew how to hold his bass.[12] When starting out, even members of R.E.M. admitted that they knew very little about the instruments they were playing. The more contemporary Rufus Wainwright also appears to disavow practice. In 2010, he commented: "You know the question: 'How do you get to Carnegie Hall?' Answer: 'Practise'? Well, in my case, I got there by not practising. I didn't finish my music degree. And when I got into the pop world I decided not to conform because I figured that the point of being an artist was that you shouldn't be like anyone else.[13]

Around the same time that punk music was emerging to challenge the dominant soft rock of the period, conceptual art arrived at London's Tate Gallery in the form of 120 bricks. This installation was bought from US artist Carl Andre for an undisclosed fee and arranged in a 6 x 10 oblong configuration, two bricks thick. Unlike punk music, Minimalism took a while to be fully appreciated by the British art-loving public. Now, it is shunned no more; its exponents are widely celebrated and their conceptual offerings, such as discarded jackets, unmade beds, piles of toffees and stuffed sharks, sell for millions of dollars.

In business, too, billionaires emerge in fields where they have little or no accreditation. With no formal university training, Richard Branson started out selling records through a student magazine and, later, in a high-street venture that morphed into Virgin Music. Today, Branson has interests in more than 400 companies, one of which even aims to send customers into space. Another serial entrepreneur, the engineer-trained Elon Musk, has similar ambitions and hopes to colonise Mars through his company SpaceX. Musk started out with Zip2, an online business marketing tool, which was sold to Compaq Computers – his share of profit amounting to $22 million. Next came X.com, which, in 2000, merged with Confinity to crack the online payments business through PayPal.

Musk also has business interests in a wide field of disciplines, including electric cars, solar electricity and an embryonic high-speed transcontinental transport called the Hyperloop.

So, across multiple fields where the rules are easily broken, it seems that the 10,000-hour rule has little or no application. However, across more formal fields of art, such as ballet for example, practice remains critical to explaining success. Ballet, we all know, is a discipline in which practice and technique are jointly required to reach any level of mastery. In 2013, the BBC reported on a talented British teenage

dancer, Daniel Dolan, who'd been accepted to study at Moscow's prestigious Bolshoi Ballet Academy. Getting into the Bolshoi as an outsider is virtually unheard of. Having negotiated the school's stringent entry requirements, outsiders have. to adapt to a gruelling routine of up to 10 hours of dance a day (with all instruction in Russian), and accept the institute's cramped and archaic training environment. They also have to weather the bitter Russian winter, when temperatures can plunge to -20° C. Dolan entered the Bolshoi at 16 and, after four years, became only the second Englishman to pass the academy's rigorous final examination, easily surpassing the 10,000 hours of practice en route. During his training, Dolan spoke of the Bolshoi's unyielding approach to achieving excellence. "At times you feel like you just want to give up and you don't want to go any further and you're very tired," he said. "And that's what I think makes the difference between some of the world's best ballet dancers and just average dancers. We're taught to go through and push the boundaries and go through our limits, go past when we're tired. Work harder and make ourselves stronger. And I think that's what I'm taught to do. And it works. I've never improved so much in my life."[14]

Moving from dance to popular music, we've noted already that Keith Richards practised for five years before achieving proficiency in the blues. And before launching into the big time, The Beatles probably logged twice that in playing time. As a serious Beatles fan, Steve Jobs was struck by the work put into one of the earlier takes of "Strawberry Fields" off the Sergeant Pepper's album (1967). "It's a complex song, and it's fascinating to watch the creative process as they went back and forth and finally created it over a few months," remarked Jobs. "You could actually imagine other people doing this, up to this version. Maybe not writing and conceiving it, but certainly playing it. Yet they just didn't stop. They were such perfectionists they kept it going and going. This made a big impression on me when I was in my thirties. You could just tell how much they worked at this. They did a bundle of work between each of these recordings. They kept sending it back to make it closer to perfect." Reflecting on these production values, Jobs observed how he'd used The Beatles' approach in much of his own work at Apple: starting off with one version and then refining continuously, doing detailed models of the design, or the buttons, or of a specific operational function. "It's a lot of work," he reflected, "but in the end it just gets better, and soon it's like, 'Wow, how did they do that?!? Where are the screws?'"[15]

Pop great Michael Jackson also believed in doing the hard yards. Asked in 2003 what he would have done differently given a second chance, Jackson replied without hesitation: "Practise more."[16] Pause here for a moment; for this was Micheal Jackson, who, singing aside, was possibly the greatest non-classic dancer since Fred

Astaire: the man who dazzled with his moonwalk and whose choreography made MTV renditions of songs off the Thriller album so unforgettable. The mind boggles at the notion of Jackson having to practise more. Putting the 10-year rule into perspective, by the age of four he was already fronting for the Jackson Five, spending 17 years with the band before going solo in 1979 with the band. His first solo bestselling album was Off the Wall (1979).

Singer-songwriter Bob Seger also believed in practice. When he and Eagles founder Glenn Frey were youngsters-on-the-make in their hometown Detroit, the slightly older Seger agreed to mentor Frey in the craft of songwriting. As Frey recollected: “Bob was the first guy who wrote his own songs and recorded them that I ever met. He said, you know, if you want to make it you have to write your own songs. And I said, well, what if they're bad? And be said, well they're going to be bad; so just keep writing and eventually you'll write a good song.”[17]

Frey also shed light on the songwriting craft of the prolifically talented Jackson Browne. When he relocated out west from Motor City, Browne invited Frev to move in with him in L.A.'s cheap and hip Echo Park neighbourhood, along with another future Eagles member, J.D. Southern. Frey and Souther ended up renting an apartment for $35 a month, with Jackson Browne shifting to the basement. “That was it,” affirmed Browne. “There was a stereo, a piano, and bed and guitar and a teapot.” Looking back on those pre-Eagles days, Frey recalled how he and Southern would wake at around 9am with a kettle-whistle going off beneath the floorboards, followed by the sound of Browne tinkering on his piano. “l didn't really know how to write songs,” confessed Frey, believing up till then that you simply waited around for inspiration, “and that was the deal,” as he put it. Looking back, Frey reflected on how his understanding of his songwriting craft had emerged “through Jackson's ceiling and my floor”. Continued Frey:

> Jackson would get up and play the first verse and the first chorus and he'd play it 20 times. He'd play it just the way he wanted. And then there's silence and then I hear the teapot going off and there'd be quiet for IO or 20 minutes. Then I'd hear him start to play again; and there was the second verse. So then he'd work on the second verse and he'd play it 20 times, and then he'd go back to the top of the song and then he'd play the first verse, the first chorus and the second verse another 20 times until he was really comfortable with it - you know and change a word here and there. And I'm up there going: So that's how you do it! Elbow grease, you know! Time. Thought. Persistence.[18]

Leonard Cohen was equally convinced of the primacy of practice over talent, describing the slow and painful process by which most of his songs developed, even when they were good. “There are people who work out of a sense of great abundance,” he said in 2012. “I'd love to be one of them but I am not. You know, you just work with what you've got.”[19] Cohen acknowledged that most of the time songwriting was a hard slog. “Hallelujah” was refined out of an eye-watering 80 potential verses, taking approximately five years to finish.[20] “My tiny trouble - and can I just say tiny in comparison to all the troubles in the world – is that before I can discard anything I have to write it and polish it and finish it. Only then can I throw it away. I wrote a lot of songs on the last tour,” he remarked without any apparent irony. Grappling with his songwriting limitations, Cohen recalled sharing his frustrations with the Canadian poet Irving Layton, explaining to him what his aspirations were and what he was trying to do. “Leonard,” Layton is quoted as saying, “are you sure you're doing the wrong thing?”[21] Ever the philosopher, Cohen offered this as self consolation: “Well, you know, we're talking in a world where guys go down into the mines, chewing coca and spending all day in backbreaking labour. We're in a world where there's famine and hunger and people are dodging bullets and having their nails pulled out in dungeons so it's very hard for me to place any high value on the work that I do to write a song. Yeah, I work hard but compared to what?”[22]

Sting is another who agrees that success relies mostly on perseverance. Asked if there were any compositions that came out of nowhere, he said yes, but only a few. “Some do come already wrapped up in ribbon, probably the most successful ones: ‘Every Breath You Take’, for example, or ‘Roxanne’.” The remaining songs, he said, took a lot of time and effort.[23] On receiving his Nobel Prize, Dylan, too, was forthright about the practice required. “Everything worth doing takes time,” he said. “You have to write a hundred bad songs before you write a good one. And you have to sacrifice a lot of things that you might not be prepared for. Like it or not you have to follow your own star.”[24]

Bruce Springsteen is also renowned for his unrelenting work ethic. His documentary on the making of Darkness on the Edge of Toum (1978) recounts the effort he put into this album, with historical footage showcasing Springsteen both alone with his composition notebooks and together with the E Street Band as it ground out a raft of songs in a collaborative slow-heave. Even when he joined his first band, The Castiles, at the age of 13, his work ethic was never in dispute. Recalls fellow Castiles band member, Frank Marziotti: “Bruce was always a fast learner. You showed him one thing, and he came back the next day and showed you three.” Springsteen fondly confirmed: “I guarantee you that once I had the job, I went

home and started to woodshed like a mad dog. I was in a band ... Oh yeah, after I got into the band, I just listened and played all night. Every available hour and minute."[25] In his autobiography, Springsteen owned to the gunslinger lore that, while he was fast, there was inevitably going to be someone faster. This was not his prime concern, however. What he was chiefly afraid of was not maximising his abilities and not possessing a clear understanding of where he was going and how he was going to get there. "I was all I had," he said of himself in his start-up band, Steel Mill, in 1970. "I had only one talent. I was not a natural genius. I would have to use every ounce of what was in me - my cunning, my musical skills, my showmanship, my intellect, my heart, my willingness - night after night, to push myself harder, to work with more intensity than the next guy just to survive untended in the world I lived in."[26]

Novelist Earnest Hemingway also spent years honing his craft. Believing that the religious and moral foundations of the post-war society were corrupt and should be replaced by an expression of truth that could be verified through the five senses, Hemingway was especially taken with Joseph Conrad's perspective on writing, which he described as "scrupulous fidelity to the truth of my own sensations".[27] Conrad's style contrasted with the exhaustive use of cliche and elaboration characteristic of writing at that time. Hemingway was particularly scathing of professional journalists, whose reporting he considered ponderous and superficial. Trained as a reporter at the Kansas City Star, which applied a no-nonsense template of 110 rules of writing, Hemingway was convinced that ornate language could be replaced by a tauter economy of expression. He would later describe the template as "the best rules I ever learned for the business of writing".[28] Some of these were:

1. Use short sentences. Use short first paragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative.
2. Never use old slang. Slang to be enjoyable must be fresh.
3. Be careful of the word only. "He only had $10," means he alone was the possessor of such wealth; "He had only $10," means the ten was all the cash he possessed.
4. Avoid the use of adjectives, especially such extravagant ones as splendid, gorgeous, grand, magnificent, etc.[29]

In his seven novels published between 1924 and 1951, Hemingway proceeded to lay the foundations of a sparseness of language that writers such as J.M. Coetzee would subsequently adopt. Certainly, his early training as a cub journalist was critical to his development, and Hemingway was forthright about the discipline required: "I like to write standing up to reduce the old belly and because you have more vitality on your feet," said the Nobel Laureate. "Who ever went ten rounds sitting on his ass? I write description in longhand because that's hardest for me and you're closer to the paper

when you work by hand, but I use the typewriter for dialogue because people speak like a typewriter works."30 Like Browne and Springsteen, he also had a fixed routine, starting early and rereading and editing everything he'd written to the point where he'd left off. "That way I go through a book I'm writing several hundred times," he explained. "Then I go right on, no pissing around, crumpling up paper, pacing, because I always stop at a point where I know precisely what's going to happen next. So I don't have to crank up every day." Hemingway was adamant that the toughest but most important part of writing lay in the editing: refining the language until it acquired a sharpness "like the bullfighter's estoque, the killing sword", as he put it. He cited the instance where his son, Patrick, had brought him a story to edit for him. "I went over it carefully and changed one word," he recalled. When his son then complained that he'd changed only one word, he replied: "If it's the right word, that's a lot."[31]

Having looked at how hours of practice tend to correlate with increasingly stable art structures, let's turn now to a second factor explaining practice required across different artistic disciplines: namely cognitive complexity, using jazz as an example.

The mastery of jazz requires significant thought and usually some prior training in standard musical formats. While in South Africa with his New York six-piece band, Ekaya, jazz legend Abdullah Ibrahim (formerly known as Dollar Brand) met with a group of children and teachers from Cape Town's South Peninsula High School. One of the children asked if sight-reading music was necessary in order to play jazz. Ibrahim asked members of his band to respond. Keith Loftis, his tenor saxophonist, replied that if you want to work as a session musician, you'd better be able to read music. "If you don't read, you don't eat," he said. "That's it. Don't let anyone else tell you any different." His baritone saxophonist, Jason Marshall, agreed: "Jazz is a language. So if you can't read it, you'll be very limited in what you can do, you know."

"What about singers?" asked one of the children. "Must they also sight-read?" The band members could barely contain their amusement. Loftis, who was also a composer, recounted the tale of a "damn fool" diva who wanted him to write the score to a tune she wished to record. When he asked what key it should be in, she didn't know what he was talking about. "So yes," replied Loftis, "singers have got to know what key they're singing in. And they should be able to play the piano. And yeah, learn how to read and write music."

Thereafter followed further questions on the importance of practising scales, a form of musical discipline most children hate. Loftis told his audience that scale training was a lifetime's rehearsal and absolutely necessary. "Practising has become a

form of therapy. It clears my head," he said. Commenting later on the children's lazy attitude, Ibrahim lamented that many kids see jazz as something requiring neither teaching nor practice, and observed how most of them were ignorant of even basic standards such as "I Got Rhythm". Knowledge of such pieces, he insisted, is a basic requirement to enter jazz. You have to pay your dues, do the hard work, get to know such tunes and know how to play them. "But you look at those youngsters and they've never heard of it! So you really have to start from the ground up here. Also, the other thing is that they hardly have the basic skills. You have to have those skills. Twenty-five hours a day, every day, for a lifetime."[32]

Fellow jazz pianist Bill Evans is another who understood that technical proficiency preceded any form of creative lyricism. From the age of six, until thirteen, he learnt to sight-read and play classical music to the point where he could perform pieces by Mozart and Beethoven. Thereafter followed jazz training at the Southeastern Louisiana University. By all accounts Evans was not an orthodox student and did not take to rote practice, exasperating his teachers with improvised off-beat versions of the requisite arpeggios and scales. "Everything I've learned, I've learned with feeling being the generating force," asserted Evans. "I've never approached the piano as a thing in itself, but as a gateway to music."[33] By the end of these studies, however, Evans had developed a high degree of technique and an ear for tone-colour, emotion, mood and harmony. Technically proficient by his mid-twenties, he was finally free to hone the musical voice inside him. He said: "Technique gave you the ability to translate your ideas into sound through your instrument," which went beyond scales to "a feeling for the keyboard that will allow you to transfer any emotional utterance into it".[34] "You have to spend a lot of years at the keyboard before what's inside can get through your hands and into the piano," said Evans. "For years and years that was constant frustration for me. I wanted to get that expressive thing in, but somehow it didn't happen. When I was about twenty-six - about a year before I went to Miles [Davis] - that was the first time I attained a certain degree of expressiveness in my playing. Believe me I had played a lot of jazz before then."[35]

Running the numbers on the hours the 26-year-old Evans must have practised to get to this point of virtuosity is revealing. Starting at age six, he would have logged two decades of piano training – 13 years just in jazz. During his jazz training, at two-and-a-half (to three) hours' practice daily for six days a week, the left-handed

Evans would have logged 10,172 hours, fitting neatly within Gladwell's rule. Years later Evans did some teaching himself. His friend Warren Bernhardt recalled his sessions under Evans, remarking, too, on his incredible proficiency:

> We continued our lessons, which were not lessons at all, but consisted of Bill sitting across from me at the couch listening to me play, quietly offering suggestions from time to time. He would never show me anything, like his voicings, which everybody wanted to steal from him. He did show me an approach to harmonic textures which I use to this day, and I spent many hours looking over his shoulder or sitting next to him while he practised... I never heard him make a mistake. Never. He organized his material and chose his harmonic palette with complete mastery. He could play any of the tunes in his books in any of the twelve keys... Sometimes he would search for weeks, even months, for the right keys to use with the trio. More than anything else, his concentration and unswerving focus on his art were the most amazing and inspiring phenomena to me.[36]

Reading the above perspectives on Bill Evans and Abdullah Ibrahim should illustrate some of the cognitive and technical demands of jazz and help explain just how difficult it is to become proficient within the discipline, let alone creative. This is simply not so for less demanding music genres. Punk music, for example, was never going to impose high barriers of entry: witness the Sex Pistols and its incompetent bassist, Sid Vicious. Yet despite (or possibly because of) their deficiencies, their output is still critically regarded, with the authoritative Virgin Encyclopedia of Seventies Music awarding Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols (1977) a top score of five stars, thereby equating it with some truly accomplished offerings of the same period. Consider, for example, Bob Dylan's Desire (1976), David Bowie's Heroes (1977), Kraftwerk's Trans-Europe Express (1977) and Talking Heads' Remain in the Light (1980). Placing “low art” such as Never Mind the Bollocks in the same category as these pieces is not easy and, arguably, the same criticism applies to rap music, where technical proficiency and practice is less an explicator of success than is perhaps straightforward marketing and, possibly, luck. While there are those who argue that rap artists such as Eminem, Dr. Dre and Kendrick Lamar have elevated their rhyming couplets to the level of art - the receipt of Grammy awards proves this - others would counter that their genre pitches no higher than other “well-managed” art forms such as Tracey Emin's unmade bed, Dennis Oppenheim's hubcaps and Damien Hirst's stuffed animals.

In less demanding fields, therefore, it would seem that “novelty” and “originality” are equated with “art” and typically employed interchangeably. For while there is certainly novelty in fields such as punk music, rap and contemporary art, whether these novelties transcend into art is debatable. The paying market hotly asserts that any determination of art remains fixedly in the eye of the beholder and

there are economies driven by auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's to maintain the faith structures necessary for sustaining the sham-aesthetics of wealthy patrons. Quite how long these bubble economies will last, we don't know. At some point the music does stop. The 1637 Dutch tulip mania proved to be a Ponzi scheme, some bulbs selling for 10 times the annual income of a skilled craftsman. And, within South Africa, the current craze for colour variants of certain antelope, supposedly bred for hunting purposes, is one too. Asset bubbles do not last long, however.

With what may indisputably be classified as art (as opposed to just craft), the question of practice and technique will continue to remain of paramount importance. While a lot of contemporary art has arguably "dumbed down" and diminished the importance of technical proficiency, this is not so in an art form such as jazz, which requires a fluidity of expression to permit the entry of creativity and imagination. Speculating on the future of jazz, the composer George Russell predicted, in 1971, that jazz techniques were "going to get more complex", making it harder for "the composer to master the techniques and yet preserve his intuitive approach". Similarly, for the jazz improviser, the anticipated complexity would prove challenging to master while preserving what he called "the intuitive earthy dignity of jazz".[37]

By way of one final example, Joni Mitchell is a contemporary singer-songwriter who has successfully mastered the technical requirements of jazz. At the start of her career, while still in her "folk" phase, a weakness in her left hand- due to mild polio as a child - saw Mitchell struggling to master the guitar's F-chord. However, she soon overcame this difficulty by open-tuning her guitar to the chord of F. Though this further required the adaptation of the remaining chords into this new tuning format, Mitchell soon mastered this. Indeed, her work ethic is well known in the industry. "The writers that I aspire to, like Joni Mitchell and Randy Newman, they'll tell you that the work gets harder, not easier," said singer-songwriter Christopher Cross.38 Her discovery and increasing appreciation of open-tuning principles meant that she could compose in non-conventional keys, using a so-called indicated arrangement, which incorporated nuances of the baseline, together with vocal and instrumental counterpoints. And so, as a singer-songwriter who'd recorded some of the telling notes in the West Coast folk genre - the stark Blue and Court and Spark being prime examples - her mid-'70s shift away from the confines of folk tunes marked something of a Dylanesque departure into the hitherto unknown. As early as 1973, Mitchell had felt increasingly stifled by the confines of contemporary melody making. "For a long time, I've been playing in straight rhythms," she told a friend at the time. "But now, in order to sophisticate my music to my own taste, I push it into odd places that feel a little unusual to me, so I feel that I'm stretching out."[39] The real stretch-out began in earnest with her 1975 album The Hissing of Summer Lawns - a

favourite of both Morrissey and the late Prince - and then, with more intensity, Hejira, the following year. Collaborating with jazz luminaries, including Jaco Pastorius, Wayne Shorter, Pat Metheny and Charles Mingus, further albums would follow - Don Juan's Reckless Daughter (1977), Mingus (1979) and the live double-set Shadows and Light (1980) - leaving many of her earlier ardent fans and critics jilted and bemused. “I've spent more time at jazz clubs, and I'm not a rock fan,” said the unrepentant Mitchell in 2000. “White rock 'n' roll, generally speaking, was never appealing to me. The stances of the little white boys never did it for me.” And thus the reclusive Mitchell has continued producing songs that do not conform to the tastes of “little white boys”.

For the uninitiated, sample her “Song for Sharon”, off Hejira, which is all of eight-and- a-half minutes and was composed in a stream of consciousness while she was high on cocaine, following a daytrip to New York to buy a mandolin. Using Garden-of-Eden imagery, Mitchell's lyrics contrast Sharon's conventional lifestyle with her own, which flirts with the “apple of temptation”. In a recent concert, Mitchell commented that playing such songs with their different tuning requirements was a bit like typing on a keyboard where the letters kept shifting about. She was inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame as recently as 1997 (a ceremony she did not attend) and was listed in Rolling Stone magazine's list of the 100 greatest artists of all time as low down as No 62- just after Metallica (61) and the Sex Pistols (60). Nonetheless, when the revised history of 20th-century music is finally completed, it will reveal that, while Dylan's hallmark was his transition into the electric, Mitchell's was her transition into jazz. As David Crosby remarked: “Match her and Bob Dylan up as poets, and they are in the same ballpark. But she was a much more sophisticated musician.”[40] The jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, who covered her work on River: The Joni Letters (2007), once recounted that one of the greatest experiences he'd ever had was listening to a conversation between Mitchell and saxophonist Wayne Shorter. “Just to hear them talking, my mouth was open. They understand each other perfectly, and they make these leaps and jumps because they don't have to explain anything.”[41]

Blessed by the twin engines of composition - a profound connection to the muse and a restlessness to explore and master the technical constraints of the art within her - there is little doubt that Mitchell will ultimately be acknowledged as a towering musical genius of her time.

Chapter Summary

1. Within the realms of art, beginners tend to tire and give up, either because they don't understand the complexity of the task or because they think they can't conquer it clue to lack of ability.
2. Alternatively, they are so impatient to reach mastery that they don't have the perseverance to see it through.
3. Practice, however, is the salve in all these respects.
4. For as early 20th-century philosopher and psychologist John Dewey once put it: "The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action."[42]

Chapter eight

Perspective

WHAT EXACTLY IS PERSPECTIVE and how does it help us understand the possibilities of artistic invention? How can we – to quote Morpheus from The Matrix – avoid having the world pulled over our eyes? This chapter will show how being able to stay mentally young, neutral and curious helps and, furthermore, that to elude rote thinking, we need to avoid readily accessible modes of interpretation. We shall come to appreciate the importance of being able to view things from more than one angle and see how existing artistic perspectives were challenged and changed across certain periods of art. Along the way, we shall consider the works of Salvador Dalí, Georges Braque and René Magritte, as well as insights from Steve Jobs, Bruce Springsteen and Ernest Hemingway.

> We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.
> ALBERT EINSTEIN[1]

> We greet the dark and we greet the light ... But that does not mean that the solution is at any point in between. It is outside in the regions of those two extremes. That is the world of creation.
> JEAN WELZ[2]

> Question: "Why aren't you wearing your girl's dress today?"
> David Bowie: "Oh dear: You must understand that it's not a woman's. It's a man's dress".
> MELODY MAKER, 1972[3]

Artists and innovators see the world differently. They have perspective, more specifically, a different perspective. This ability to conceive of and hold an alternative view enables them to see things that others do not, providing them with an added view on the way things are. In part, this derives from the artistic mindset and from an outsider's mentality. Of course there are other sources too.[4] My favourite example of perspective comes from the 1977 painting by Salvador Dalí entitled Lincoln in Dalivision. Each year I use this painting to teach my students about perspective.

Fundamentally, this picture is about the interplay between dominant and subordinate viewpoints. One is the more obvious spectacle of Dalí wife, Gala, seen from behind, naked, as she stares into a golden sunset. This perspective is cued by a tiny "tiled" version in the bottom left-hand corner of the painting. The other less overt perspective emerges if one squints at the picture, refocusing and staring into the distance as it were. So doing, the full head-and-shoulders image of Lincoln emerges from what is at first a haze. This alternative view is similarly cued in the bottom left-hand corner of the painting, this time by a smaller tile of Lincoln's portrait. The cues are adjacent – each suggesting, in the most neutral of terms, a perspective. Both are equally valid ways of seeing. The ironic and somewhat base reality, however, is that the viewer usually sees only the perspective of Dalí's wife. Few can make out Lincoln's face without guided instruction, despite the title that tells us exactly what the painting is about: Abraham Lincoln. Dalí is, in a sense, laughing at us, at our inability to interpret the signs on offer. On interrogation, the unenlightened viewer is usually unable to explain why, with a painting called Lincoln in Dalivision, only a postage stamp's worth of his face is apparent in the bottom corner of the composition. As T.S. Eliot reminds us in the Four Quartets, "human kind cannot bear very much reality."[5]

Presented in this way, Lincoln in Dalivision becomes a challenge to viewers to recalibrate their senses, to see a different world and to appreciate the quiet force of perspective. This ability to discern is one of the hallmarks of visionaries, change agents and entrepreneurs in general. David Bowie put it like this: "It's the union between the user and the art that creates and finishes art."[6] Writer Anaïs Nin understood this dynamic too, commenting: "We do not see things as they are. We see things as we are."[7]

Painter Jackson Pollock had a profound understanding of the tendency to see only what we want to see. As an abstract artist, at first he gave names to his drip paintings, such as Male and Female, Cathedral and Enchanted Forest. These names, he discovered, provided his viewers with figurative clues to decode and interpret his work, a tendency he found distasteful. Putting a stop to this, in the final phase of his career he commenced numbering his paintings, using titles such as Number 5, Number 3, Number 29 and so on. In an effort to explain, Pollock suggested that the viewer "look passively - and try to receive what the painting has to offer and not bring a subject matter or preconceived idea of what you are looking for". Lee Krasner, Pollock's wife, commented: "Numbers are neutral. They make people look at a picture for what it is - pure painting."[8] Sixties Pop artist Andy Warhol adopted a similar deadpan approach to his audience, often playing dumb with the press and refusing to explain his work. He was famous for once saying that all you needed to know about him and his art was already there, on the surface.

Bill Evans had a comparable attitude to his jazz concerts, never introducing the playlist until the set was complete. His focus remained on letting the music speak for itself, rather than allowing people to cue the songs in their heads by introducing them up front. “The best way I can draw people into a musical experience is to avoid words entirely,” he said.[9] The same applies to Neil Young, who, once on stage, seldom lets on to the audience what's in store for the night. Says his old mate Willie Nelson who, with Young and John Mellencamp, started the Farm Aid movement in the mid-'80s: “You never know what you are going to get in a Neil Young concert because he never knows exactly what he's going to do. That way everyone is surprised.”[10] I can attest to that. At a 2016 concert played at London's 02 arena, Young played out a cacophonous electric set with his old pals from Crazy Horse. Those who'd arrived expecting to hear Harvest had mostly left by half-time. Indeed, over two-and-a-half hours, Young played only three acoustic numbers, one, “Blowin' in the Wind”, not even his. Certainly, Young was not on stage to do anyone any favours. As he growled through the deep-end catalogue of this grungy set, he brooked no crowd interference, hunched over his guitar, “Old Black”, hardly facing the audience. He was an artist at work; you, the audience, were invited to come and listen. And that was all the invitation that there was.

Leaning on the philosophy of jazz improvisation, Bruce Springsteen is similar with regard to his recording sessions: no overpreparation; just going with the flow and staying with the vibe. Said Springsteen: “It's fascinating to record a song when musicians don't know it.” In shades of Groundhog Day, he explained: “If people learn their parts too well they consciously perform rather than play flat out. When you just launch into it, it breaks down another barrier between you and the audience. One less layer of formality.” In a studio session, Springsteen was observed shushing the band to silence and gently admonishing them: “That's good! If it gets any better than that, it'll be worse.”[11] It reminds me of one of my all-time favourite tunes, “Girl from the North Country”, which Bob Dylan recorded with the late Johnny Cash in 1969 for the album Nashville Skyline. In the recording, Dylan's timing is off and in one of the verses he even starts off with the wrong words. This notwithstanding, it remains one of his most loved songs and continues to be covered by artists across the world.

This impromptu style of recording stands in stark contrast to some of the later work recorded by the fastidious rock-jazz outfit Steely Dan, who, by the close of the first phase together, would spend months in the studio micromanaging the tiniest minutiae of their music to very little effect. Professional session musos hired for these recordings were driven crazy in the process. These were not small-fry musicians. Mark Knopfler, then frontman and lead guitarist from Dire Straits, was one of the hapless victims. Before the Steely Dan session, Knopfler, an instinctive guitar genius who

cannot sight-read, was given a tape of the music format he was expected to produce. On the day of his session, he arrived in the studio expressing concern because he did not know some of the required chords. Recalled Walter Becker of the incident: "When he came in we could tell he was worried. He got set up and said there were sections he did not know. We said, 'Don't worry, because that isn't where we're going to have you playing.' But what came out was good. Anyway, it takes a long time for us to do things and maybe he felt like he was some kind of remedial guitar player, because it took hours for us to do the stuff. But that happened to everybody."[12] Cold comfort under the circumstances. Though the subsequent album, Gaucho, went platinum with over a million in sales, within a year of its release Steely Dan had folded and would remain dormant for the next 20 years. They had run out of perspective.

Like Young, Cuban-born ballet dancer Carlos Acosta is reluctant to pander to his audiences. He is critical, too, of the stiff, formulaic protocols and "orthodox" conventions of movement that dominate his art. He resents the way in which ballet celebrates the artificial, transforming dancers into wind-up toy things performing for the gratification of an audience schooled in a weird aesthetic that has little in common with the human spectrum of common gesture or natural movement. Rightfully, Acosta points out that ballet is a formula and it's unorganic. "It's antihuman... A square here" (holding his arms out in front of him) "a box there" (raising his arms above his head). "Humans were not meant to move that way, let alone while jumping in the air," he said. Added to the requirement that ballet dancers contort themselves into unnatural postures is the requisite smiling face, which projects to the audience a sham sense of delight and effortlessness. In truth the smile is a fig leaf, a rictus grin. In 2010, Acosta was in a new phase of dance. "I am searching for a transition ... The artistry is still in me. It's a question of finding the right vocabulary and language for your artistry," he said.[13]

In sum, these anecdotes serve to underscore two important points: (1) the efforts of artists to neutralise hasty interpretation and (2) their reluctance to pander to orthodox demands. Their labours in this respect should alert us to how deeply imbued we are with the "familiar" lens, and the drift towards easy interpretation. To this extent, lessons in perspective require us to recognise that each of us inhabits a world reality of our own choosing: a world- as Morpheus puts it in The Matrix - "that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth". The key message from art is that ours is a reality of our own making, a place we have familiarly constructed since birth. And from this familiarity emerges the individual challenge: that, to innovate and create, we must learn to decode and unshackle the limitations we put on our world and our imagination. For it is not so much the tendency to interpret that is the problem but rather the overriding instinct to dive in too quickly and automatically

and, all too often, into the shallow end of interpretation. It is here that our brains tend to get us into trouble, forcing us into silly errors driven by the disingenuous need for speed and efficiency. In order to curb our natural tendency to search out hasty interpretations and to connect the dots too quickly, psychologists such as Daniel Kahneman would argue that we should slow down.[14] We need to appreciate that not everything can be forced into boxes of logic and, that to accommodate the artistic temperament, we have to moderate our drive for rationality and explanation, replacing it instead with a tolerance for ambiguity. Dalí's Surrealism, for example, suggests that we suspend judgement and seek alternate perspectives. Pollock's splattered surfaces ask that we interrupt our deductive drive - his numerically neutral titles forcing us to curb our interpretive instincts. Bill Evans would ask you to listen to the music for what it is, rather than as some kind of tick-box exercise, and Acosta's dance forms urge you to reconsider what it means to move beautifully. With all this taken into consideration, perhaps we should begin to contemplate the possibilities of a world without direct codification, a world in which we can simultaneously hold a multiplicity of insights and possibilities and, like Heisenberg, be okay with that. But how do we get there? Are there any handles or examples that might assist us in this? Possibly one of the best is to backtrack to the child-like quality of curiosity. This often boils down to the question: but what is that really? Michelin chef Heston Blumenthal reflects on his curious nature, a central cog to observing better. In an interview, the owner of the now globally renowned Fat Duck restaurant admitted that he had never formally trained as a chef and how this and his reading on the topic of cooking had sharpened his sense of curiosity. He relates the story of how, in the mid-'80s, he bought a book by an American food chemist and chef, Harold McGee, on the science of cooking. Based on the physics of cooking, the book described why soufflés rise and why eggs help make custards thicken. In it, Blumenthal came across a section explaining why browning meat does not help keep in the juices. This “went against everything I'd learnt in French classical cooking at the time”, says Blumenthal, adding that, as a result of this counter-truth, “a kind of light came on and I felt: if that's not true, how many other things that I've read are not true? So I started questioning everything and that inquisitive nature has really been the driving force for me”.[15]

South African symbolist painter Jean Welz had especially unusual ideas regarding teaching children to access curiosity and awareness - ideas he put into practice during his tenure in the '40s at the Hugo Naude Art Centre in Worcester, the same small town where Nobel Prize winner J.M. Coetzee spent much of his childhood. Welz's biographer, Elza Miles, documents the recollections of one of Welz's ex-pupils, Paul du Toit, who said that Welz did not school children in technique but rather in ways to access artistry and wonder. “His teaching was surely the most unconventional

imaginable. I think nostalgically about the endless hours in which we wandered without words through the veld around Worcester and just allowed the little and the larger things in nature to talk to us and to carry us along into that metaphysical ecstasy of discovery. In this way he awakened in me the ongoing urge to be constantly aware."[16]

In a similar vein, British sculptor Henry Moore has spoken at length about how his search for inspiration led him away from his studio and into nature. In 1937, he wrote: "I have always paid great attention to natural forms such as bones, shells and pebbles, etc. Sometimes, for several years running, I have been to the same part of the sea-shore - but each year a new shape of pebble has caught my eye, which in the year before - although it was there in hundreds -1 never saw. Out of the millions of pebbles passed in walking along the shore, I choose out to see with excitement only those which fit in with my form-interest at the time. A different thing happens if I sit down and examine a handful one by one. I may then extend my form-experience more by giving my mind time to become conditioned to a new shape."[17]

Singer-songwriter Elvis Costello expressed a similar insight: that if we want to change our perspectives, we need to pay more attention to the natural kingdom. The man who once sang "I don't want to go to Chelsea" said: "I saw this one thing about the sense animals have. They showed altered pictures of what insects and birds see. Now to my way of thinking, that means we're the ones with the optical illusion, because we don't pollinate flowers, except by accident. Whereas the flowers have evolved and presumably evolved giving off these colours to insects. So really, daisies are not yellow and white, they're really purple and orange and something. Once you start taking that into account in music, then you realize that some people can't physically hear things. A kid that listens to Metallica or something can't hear that, because he's filled up with this stuff, he physically can't hear a banjo or a harp or something."[18] This coincides with Torn Waits' view on how we can acquire fresh perspectives. In 1987, he said: "The geography of the imagination should have a little bit more wilderness in it; I hate when it becomes subdivided."[19]

Waits has more suggestions on how the juxtaposition of context can allow for new insights. "I think it's like when you listen to opera in Texas, it's a very different world. In Rome you almost ignore it. I've done the same thing, gone out and bought music from Pakistan, Balinese stuff, Nigerian folksongs and all this, and I find that if I bring it with me to unusual places, the place itself is as much a part of the music."[20] His other take on the matter of alternating realities is this: "It's like when you're in a film and you see where the camera is, and then invariably one will look to the left out of frame and see something infinitely more interesting. It's what I try to look out for. It's not a science," said Waits. "It's like you hear music 'wrong' or when you hear it

corning through a wall and it mixes in - I pay attention to those things. You can't always do that. Other times it's imperative that you follow the rabbit, and roll."[21] Shades here of the three-phase artistic process covered in the opening chapter, where, in the third "inspired action" phase, you are required to move fast and act instinctively.

An artist who constantly challenged perspectives was the Swiss-born sculptor and experimental artist Jean Tinguely. Well known for his machine-like kinetic sculptures that self-destructed in the process of operation, Tinguely satirised the mindless, mass-produced commodities of advanced capitalist societies. The South African artist Willem Boshoff believes that Tinguely was a provocateur who "actively caused trouble".[22] Boshoff cites Tinguely's visit to South Africa during the apartheid years, when he was invited to give a demonstration to a group of students at an art school in Johannesburg. While the audience was awaiting his arrival, he quietly let himself in via the back door and introduced himself to the African cleaning staff. When the senior administrators eventually found him, he was engrossed in a sculpture of ostrich feather dusters, which he was assembling with his bemused retinue. It is this ironic sense of social inversion that is common to many successful entrepreneurs. They will single-handedly take on a market giant and do whatever is required to upstage the dominant player. They represent the renegade Colonel Kurtz from Apocalypse Now, who "put a weed up Command's arse".

Ernest Hemingway was another who could not abide stuck-up pretentiousness. He was famous for his brutal, direct prose. Not a Henry James nosing a literary pea around the bottom of a swimming pool, he was rather the great white shark, delivering minimalist prose to killing effect. For Hemingway, style was perspective; style was all. His put-down of the equally famous Southern writer William Faulkner is worth quoting: "Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words? He thinks I don't know the ten-dollar words. I know them all right. But there are older and simpler and better words, and these are the ones I use."[23]

One of the great "revolutionaries" of musical grammar was "The King", Elvis Aaron Presley. With his good looks, sex appeal, musical instincts and ability to cross over between black-driven blues and traditional white country ballads, Presley personified all that mainstream bubble-gum music was not. By virtue of his negation of all stereotypes of the time, he became one of the greatest shapers of the rock 'n' roll era. In 1957, the effect of Presley on the then eight-year-old Bruce Springsteen was mind-blowing. "He was actually the forerunner for a new kind of man," says Springsteen. "Everyone changed their ideas about everything after that. About race, about sex, about gender descriptions, what you could look like, what you could wear. It was outrageous. It's a fantastic thing to be."[24]

In certain important ways, Hemingway, Tinguely and especially Presley, stood in their time as interpretive symbols. For without them you would struggle to see and understand the alternate possibilities that they sought to bring to our attention. This unveiling of alternate realities is, at base, an artistic undertaking: the artist primed to seek out more of reality than is currently visible. So, while an icon such as Presley stood wholly as a symbol of '50s counterculture rebellion, really, the role of all artists is to direct the world towards paths previously untrodden, to places unknown. And, if they are artists, then certainly they are also inventors, thinkers, tinkerers, dreamers, innovators and creatives (entrepreneurs included). As Eugéne Delacroix the great 19th-century French painter put it: "Men of genius have a way utterly peculiar to themselves of seeing things."[25] And this, then, is perspective.

Think of the maxim of Canadian ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky: "Skate where the puck is going, not where it's been." Many aspects of this type of anticipatory thinking have been absorbed into the current lexicon of scenario planning and political discourse. Though not a planner, on the ice Gretzky possessed an unsurpassed sense of vision and ability to employ space at pace. This was his perspective and, for others, it created new possibilities of thinking, both on and off the ice. The New Zealand All Blacks rugby team is similar in this respect: constantly challenging the operating norms of rugby with their knack of attacking space rather than trying to physically dominate their opponents - the latter being a Neanderthal style of rugby perfected by their traditional rivals, the South African Springboks.

Steve Jobs was another who challenged conventional thinking. Diagnosed with cancer in 2003, he understood clearly where his existential puck was going, and the reality of his approaching death provided immense perspective on the life choices he would still need to make. "[R]emembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life," he said shortly before his death in 2011. "Because almost everything - all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking that you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart."[26]

Yet even before his cancer, Jobs was remarkable at seeking out new perspectives and he would use these to drive his colleagues to higher levels of performance and output. For example, in an incident recalled by early Apple Mac designer Bill Atkinson, Jobs complained to engineer Larry Kenyon that the Mac operating system was taking too long to boot up. Kenyon tried to justify the current set-up but Jobs shut him down by asking whether, if it could save someone's life, it

would be worthwhile clipping 10 seconds off the boot-up time? Kenyon conceded that, if this were the case, then yes, he probably could speed things up a bit. Working off the whiteboard, Jobs then proceeded to demonstrate how five million Mac users each saving 10 seconds of boot-up time a day totted up to roughly 300 million saved hours a year - or 100 lifetimes saved annually. “Larry was suitably impressed, and a few weeks later he came back and it booted up twenty-eight seconds faster,” said Atkinson, musing, “Steve had a way of motivating by looking at the bigger picture.”[27]

There's a story I once heard about Jobs in which he was complaining to his iPod designers that the current version just wasn't small enough. Oh no, they replied, it was definitely as small as they could possibly go. “Oh really?” he is said to have shot back as he dropped the prototype into a fishbowl. Two small air bubbles tracked silently up to the surface. “There!” Jobs smirked, triumphantly. “You see, there is space!”

Another anecdote about Jobs relates to his obsession with fonts. He would fixate over the title bars above documents and window screens, requiring his assistants to redo them endlessly until he was satisfied, which he seldom was. He is reported to have taken a special dislike to the hard-edged font of the earlier Apple Lisa and, for the new Mac, insisted on softer font edges. Atkinson recalls that they must've gone through 20-odd design iterations before Jobs was finally happy to sign off. In the midst of this obsessive craziness, one of the underlings complained to Jobs that this level of micromanagement was ridiculous and that there were more important things to do. “Can you imagine looking at that every day?” Jobs reportedly shrieked. “It's not just a little thing, it's something we have to do right.”[28] Looking back at the Jobs legacy, it is clear that he was just a little off the edge. He thought that Bill Gates was a complete square and way short of perspective. “He'd be a broader guy if he had dropped acid once or gone off to an ashram when he was younger,” he is quoted to have said.[29] Ever the existentialist, even as a young man, Jobs was sucking at the marrow. “We all have a short period of time on this earth,” he said, shortly after his first success with Apple. “We probably only have the opportunity to do a few things really great and do them well. None of us has any idea how long we're going to be here, nor do I, but my feeling is I've got to accomplish a lot of these things while I am young.”[30]

For contemporary artists, certainly one of the key tasks is to attack the architecture of human perception, and a discussion on perspective would not be complete without reference to some of the significant changes that have marked and shifted contemporary visual art over the last century. Take for example the historical tension between painting and photography. There is an enduring myth which suggests that, while painting can produce art that reveals distortions and lies, photography, on

the other hand, produces faithful renditions of a world as it really is: painting as falsehood, photography as truth, as it were. Certain artists have taken exception to this dichotomous thinking, directing the viewer to ask whether and where truth might lie when looking at a photo, which, we are told, cannot lie.

A 1968 painting, Domplatz, Mailand (Cathedral Square, Milan), by German artist Gerhard Richter, makes the point brilliantly. Richter designed the painting in question to look like the blurred photo of an urban landscape, in this case, Milan's Cathedral Square. Its wave-like blurring requires the viewer to refocus the picture, an impossible task. Through its blurred and fuzzy image, this particular painting has become a further commentary on our own inner distortions of reality and the untruths that lurk within photos as much as within paintings. In May 2013, Domplatz sold for $37.1 million, at the time the highest figure ever paid for a painting by a living artist.[31] Six months later the record was smashed when a large sculpture, Balloon Dog (Orange) by Jeff Koons, was sold for $58.4 million.

Richter aside, long before cameras and their commentary on reality, Impressionism came as one of the first important periods in modern creativity to challenge the artistic status quo. It may be argued that the reason many critics have said it was the Impressionists who first showed us the character of true colour is that they steered clear of combining their colours in the traditional way. Until then, about 1874, hues and tones were produced by mixing colours and using white and black to lighten or darken their shades as required. By contrast, the Impressionists, including Monet, Renoir and the exquisite but (during his lifetime) commercially unsuccessful Alfred Sisley, laid down pure rainbow colours alongside one another. Employing short, thick brushstrokes, greys and darks were achieved through the juxtaposition of complementary colours. Not considered a “true” colour, black was studiously avoided and there was seldom any artistic blending of primary colours. Instead, the direct deployment of pure unmodified “spectrum-type” colours enabled the eye to do the mixing of contrasting colours. Thus, in observing an Impressionist canvas, the mixing of colours occurs neurologically as the retina registers, for example, a wavelength of blue light alongside one of red. As a result of this juxtaposition, the retina will receive the impression of purple. Similarly, an Impressionist would contrast blue and yellow to yield a neurological impression of green.

Such colour impressions produced vibrant results, combined with the unmixed and adjacent blue and red colours, for example, that continued to present on the canvas independent of any neurological interpretation. Via this presentation, we can understand better how the traditional approach of physically mixing two colour pastes to create a new colour obliterates the independent wavelength purity of each of the original colours. This, in turn, diminishes the intensity of the new colour.

So we can sec how mixtures created to develop compound colours ultimately result in dulled colour values and a diminished breadth of hue. John Constable the English landscape painter called this the “brown gravy” effect - a depressing coloration that typified much of the art preceding Impressionism, as a stroll through any of the great art museums of Europe will show.[32] (While Da Vinci is known to have understood some of the basic properties of light, it is puzzling that he does not appear to have applied this knowledge to his paintings.) It should also be noted that, while the Impressionists laid claim to colour in all its purity, there are a number of preceding artists who transcended the brown gravy of their peers, notably the Spaniard Diego Velazquez, Constable, the French “lumanist” Camille Corot and the sublime worker of English light, Joseph Turner, whom Monet studied in depth as he developed his Impressionist techniques.

The Cubists, too, are critical in respect of their challenge to traditional perspectives on painting. Those leading the Cubist movement were Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, commencing their first experiments in Paris in about 1907. Braque's Still Life with Violin and Pitcher exemplifies the central tenets of this period: in the painting, he extended the conventional perspective on tables, jugs and violins, offering not one view as per the traditional format, but several simultaneously. We are confronted with the fragmentation of several day-to-day objects, the artist moving beyond the orthodox of presenting solely one fixed point of view. The pitcher and violin are presented from a view lower than eye level and the table is presented as if from above. Additional scrutiny shows how the pitcher is further fragmented: the lip of the pitcher viewed as if from above, the vessel itself as if from below eye level. The violin is similarly shattered, the entire picture suggesting a compositional plasticity, attacking our conventional and subjective sense of reality. It is quite unnerving, as it implies that subjective reality - the reality we all take for granted - is at best a construct, at worst, an illusory world to blind you from alternate ways of seeing.

Under “normal” conditions, our view of an object is that which is visible only from our current perspective. Should we wish to see more, we need to shift position and thus our perspective. So to see the table or water jug from the six perspectives presented in the Braque painting, we are required to move six times or, alternately, to break the violin and table into six different pieces. In the case of the former, time is required as we shift from points one to two to three, etc. Our shifting sense of space amounts to an ongoing stream of time-lapsed images, each image representing a singular perspective. Reality aside, in the shifting inner world of the artist, other than technical considerations, there is little holding him or her back from composing an image where each refracted perspective can be viewed simultaneously. Here time is consequently sped up and ultimately collapsed, negated, the fractured object unified

indefinitely in a time-space compression. As an epoch in the evolution of art, Cubism became - as art critic Graham Collier put it- "the first full-scale movement... in which the artist breaks loose from the visual tyranny of the object. By this I mean that he exercises his freedom to restructure forms multi-dimensionally in accordance with their several aspects - that he is not tied mentally or emotionally to his perceptual experience of them from one position."[33] This, then, is the first real expression of non-subjective reality, that is to say the consideration of a world divorced from a singular personal perspective.

Of course Surrealists such as Dalí went a step further, suggesting that even within one subjective viewpoint a number of contending perspectives could be identified. Dalí aforementioned Lincoln in Dalivision is a case in point: the painting nudges the viewer to seek an alternate perspective to the more obvious one offered by Gala's curvaceous figure.

An additional hallmark of the Surrealist group was a view that real perspective lay in the realms of the subconscious - witness Dalí world of melting clocks and washed-out landscapes. Their challenge was that we should consider this unconscious world a valid space, and hence seek to bring it to consciousness. Said Dalí: "In the Surrealist period, I wanted to create the iconography of the interior world and the world of the marvelous."[34] Consciousness is a term mostly employed in the psychoanalytic discipline(s) and is used typically in conjunction with its opposite, which is unconsciousness. Unconscious people, psychotherapists might say, are those simply unaware of the inner patterns that govern their lives. To a point then, we are all unconscious; there are levels to this, as in everything. This said, with age, and sometimes through therapeutic work, we can be led more confidently towards hitherto unconscious aspects of ourselves, which we might not otherwise recognise or acknowledge. These aspects, the analysts might say, are those parts that have been denied or split off. The notion of the "inner child", as discussed earlier, is part of this unconscious world - a part that constitutes shadow or underworld. The inner child invokes aspects of play, curiosity, innocence and fearlessness (for starters). As such, when brought from the shadow to consciousness, that child, or indeed that playground of children, can become a catalyst for creativity, an instigator of enquiry and upender of our orthodox adult worlds. If we wish to become more conscious, one of the key tasks, as jungians would say, is to connect with the unconscious, so as to reintegrate with the shadow and its children.

We might connect more fully with the unconscious, but what then? What does being more conscious actually mean? What does it offer? Can it provide more happiness? Does it mean that we might become any easier to get along with? Could it imply that we will "arrive" at a station of higher self-awareness where insight and

maturity are finally ours? In his book Creating a life - Finding your individual Path, respected psychoanalyst and author James Hollis suggests not. Instead, he claims that the notion of a climactic nirvana-type arrival and connection to the unseen aspects of self is sham - one of the greatest fictions spun by the psycho industry and, if anything, a cunning business model aimed at those who would seek self-enlightenment via the couch. For searchers of self-mastery, the truth of arrival is very different and, for Hollis, distils into three important points.

1. He suggests that consciousness will not put a stay on our inner battles. "[A]t best you will manage to win a few skirmishes in your long uncivil war with yourself", he says. "Decades from now you will be fighting on these familiar fronts, though the terrain may have shifted so much that you may have difficulty recognizing the same old, same old."[35] The schizophrenic Dali would concur.

2. Hollis argues that consciousness will require that you focus not so much on your inner wounds, but on dismantling the defences assembled to protect them. As this book argues, one of the key tasks of the artist is to sit in the fire and feel the burn, not stifle it. This fire, the source of our wounding, is where the mythological gods live and one of the places where artists and visionaries mine their creative ore. Artistic insights are not easily manufactured and cannot be produced on order.

3. Perhaps most aptly for this chapter on perspective, Hollis suggests that consciousness will not heal you and will not save you from pain and future suffering. Most artists seem to understand this anyway. As Hollis asserts, consciousness will not heal but it will, "quite simply, make your life more interesting". He concludes: "You will come to more and more complex riddles wrapped within yourself and your relationships. This claim seems small potatoes to the anxious consumer world, but it is an immense gift, a stupendous contribution. Think of it: your own life might become more interesting to you! Consciousness is the gift, and that is the best it gets."[36]

If this claim is not small potatoes, then how big, really, is it? And what can we make of it? If we are to emulate the artists and their search for perspective, working with the unconscious might certainly yield some interesting alternatives. This is no easy task, however, and many would baulk at the prospect of working with shadow and the unconscious in search of fresh perspectives. This said, in closing, a small artistic consolation for those less enamoured with dives into the deep unconscious: Magritte. The Belgian-born René Magritte was, like Dalí, a Surrealist artist but, unlike Dalí, he

favoured a far more rational approach to seeking out sources of artistic inspiration. In 1927, already a sophisticated member of Belgium's Surrealist inner circle, the 29-year-old Magritte journeyed to Paris. There he encountered Surrealists André Breton, Joan Miró, André Masson, Max Ernst, Dalí and others. Their effect on him was galvanising. Over a three-year period in the City of Light, he produced a quarter of his life's output: more than 200 works. By the close of this period and his return to Brussels, Magritte had worked out most of his key ideas and, based on these, he would produce the numerous signature motifs of the art that would buoy him upwards to artistic recognition, until his death some 40 years later. Years after his passing, these signatures are still hard to miss. The bowler hats, referenced by Pink Floyd on Wish You Were Here (1975); the clouds; the green apples, the inspiration for The Beatles' record label and, subsequently, Apple Inc.; and the iconic simultaneously day-and-night scenarios sketched out as if in a twilight death-watch over a Spanish-style Californian dwelling. Jackson Browne chose a version of this painting as the album cover for his wrenching Late for the Sky (1974). The adjusted version would see Browne's car waiting, for whom we know not, beneath a street light outside his shadowed home. Presciently, Late for the Sky would serve as the artistic backdrop to the subsequent suicide of his wife, Phyllis, some two years later. Commenting in the '90s on his songwriting role, Browne offered this perspective: "My version as a songwriter is to explore life as it is for everybody and the last thing I want to do is to live guarded in a mansion. A songwriter must get out and experience life."[37] When he said this, it's not clear whether Browne was referring to the Magritte day-night piece.

In the light of Magritte's profound contribution to the Surrealist movement, it is important to note that his ideas stood in stark contrast to those held by the Parisian circle. To be sure, he was in every way just as insubordinate to convention and bourgeois reality, and even more inclined to dally with the shifting sands of perspective. However, while Dalí and Breton insisted on a complete surrender to the unconscious and a rejection of logic and sanity, Magritte was stubbornly convinced that reason was, and remained, a critical component to the artistic journey. Consequently, as FT art critic Robin Blake asserts: "His art can be understood only as depending on a crucial tension between the uplift of logic and the downward tug of madness." Though rational, for Magritte, the role of mystery in the pursuit of art was undeniable. As he said once in an interview: "One cannot speak about mystery ... one must be seized by it."[38]

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. The use of multiple perspectives is critical if we are to weed out tired ways of thinking. It helps to keep things fresh.
2. This chapter shows how different perspectives are best obtained if we can remain mentally young, impartial and inquisitive, and sidestep “comfortable” avenues of interpretation. All these assist in avoiding one-dimensional thinking.
3. The ongoing shift from one art period to the next demonstrates the fluidity in artistic perspective and interpretation - witness the movements from Impressionism to Cubism to Surrealism.

Chapter nine

Instinct, Intuition, the Unconscious & Still Water

THE INTUITIVE LIVES OF ENTREPRENEURS correspond in many ways with artists who, by nature, tend to approach their work instinctively. Through a presentation of some of the intuitive aspects that have framed the art of greats such as Bob Dylan, Bill Evans and Jackson Pollock, this section provides a more thorough exploration of the muse. The tendency to self-learn, moments of transcendent otherworldliness, an avoidance of deliberation, and bouts of work frenzy arc all referenced as signatures typical of such artistry. Examples of "still-water" moments arc considered where, whether awake or asleep, creativity has manifested serendipitously.

> Art is a marriage of the conscious and the unconscious.
> JEAN COCTEAU[1]

> Man lives consciously for himself, but is an unconscious instrument in the attainment of historic, universal aims of humanity.
> LEO TOLSTOY[2]

> [A]rt belongs to the unconscious! One must express oneself! Express oneself directly! Not one's taste, or one's upbringing, or one's intelligence, knowledge or skill. Not all these acquired characteristics, but that which is unborn, instinctive.
> ARNOLD SCHOENBERG[3]

Picking up on themes introduced in Chapters One (the artistic sensibility) and Three (passion), this chapter offers a fuller examination of the role of inspiration in art through the interrelated facets of instinct and intuition, and the role of nonconsciousness. To begin, a brief definition of each:

Instinct

Instinctive behaviour generally manifests without any prior incidents of practice or learning. A first-time mother bear will suckle her young, a batch of newly hatched turtles will head down to the sea and dogs will shake their coats when wet. These are all instances of instinctive behaviour in the sense that they are innate and hardwired.[4]

Intuition

Intuition is understood as a subconscious thought pattern acquired through a process of conditioning. Conceptualised as rapid and automatic, intuitive behaviour is seen to be learnt, while innate instinctive behaviour is not.5 In this sense, when R.E.M.'s Peter Buck says he "couldn't tell you what a single one of the songs on Van Morrison's Veedon Fleece is about, but I think it's one of the greatest albums ever made",[6] he would be talking about the role of intuitive appreciation honed over years of listening to music.[7]

Non-consciousness

Non-consciousness or terms such as "subconscious" or "unconscious" are sometimes used to denote instances of non-rational and/or divine insight and inspiration that lie beyond the bounds of what science might attempt to explain. Psychologist Carl Jung said the unconscious is "the world behind the conscious world", from which creative processes arise independent of the waking will. "All art," he maintained, "intuitively apprehends coming changes in the collective unconsciousness."[8] US author Cormac McCarthy is in no doubt as to the authority and power of the ulterior world. "The sense of the subconscious and its role in your life is just something you can't ignore," he said.[9]

According to the ancients, the manifestation of inspiration was like the outpouring of heavenly fire, such as when the muse is woken in artistic bouts of creative passion. Alternately, when not freely given, inspiration may be viewed as something to be stolen. According to Greek mythology, the superhuman Prometheus stole fire from the gods at Mount Olympus. He gave it to humanity and so allowed them to cultivate higher order purposes such as architecture, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, writing and metalwork. Upon hearing what Prometheus had done, Zeus became angry and had him carried off to Mount Caucasus. There, he was tied to a rock and each day an eagle would descend to eat off lobes of his liver. Each night his liver would regrow and each day the eagle would return, in a cycle of unending agony.

In examining the role of inspiration in the dynamics of art, much of this book has pointed to the primacy of intuition. From the perspective of business, however,

the role of inspiration appears less celebrated, though of course it has always been there. By way of an introduction, some of these instances are presented below. In such cases, as you will see, the individuals cited either gave up university entirely or dropped out, considering formal education irrelevant, probably because they already possessed the necessary knowledge and insight to achieve their ends or what they were being taught was not helping them to do what they wanted or what was interesting.

Following intuition's siren call, the dyslexic Richard Branson never even went to university. On completing school in 1972, Steve Jobs was also well aware of the importance of gut feel. He dropped out almost immediately from UCLA after he'd become interested in the possibilities of typesetting on word processing software programs. By this point he'd understood that "an intuitive understanding and consciousness was more significant than abstract thinking and intellectual logical analysis". Following a two-year sojourn in India, Jobs observed how much emphasis Americans seemed to place on rationality rather than intuition. "Corning back to America was, for me, much more of a cultural shock than going to India," he reflected later. "The people in the Indian countryside don't use their intellect like we do, they use their intuition instead, and their intuition is far more developed than in the rest of the world. Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect, in my opinion." Jobs opined that Western rationality was not innate; it was acquired. "In the villages in India, they never learned it," he observed. "They learned something else, which is in some ways just as valuable but in other ways not. That's the power of intuition and experiential wisdom."[10] The extent to which Jobs shunned focus-group-based research in favour of intuitive market assessments is well documented. "Did Alexander Graham Bell do any market research before he invented the telephone?" he once asked.[11] Customers simply do not know what they want, he maintained. "I think Henry Ford once said, 'If I'd asked customers what they wanted, they would have told me, "A faster horse!"' "People don't know what they want until you show it to them. That's why l never rely on market research. Our task is to read things that are not yet on the page."[12] Bill Gates dropped out of university in his second year at Harvard. Seizing the opportunity to develop and sell software to a computer hardware company, he and then partner Paul Allen moved on directly to form Microsoft. Larry Page and Sergey Brin are two other dropouts, abandoning their Stanford PhD studies in 1996 to launch the online Google search engine in the garage of close friend and now CEO of You Tube, Susan Wojcicki. Prior to its subsequent incorporation in September 1998, Google had run on the Stanford servers as google.stanford.edu and z.stanford.edu.[13] As of January 2017, their combined wealth stood at $78 billion.

Another notable dropout is Mark Zuckerberg. As a Harvard sophomore studying computer science and psychology, Zuckerberg wrote a program to enable users to select courses based on the choices of other students. He also designed a program that allowed students to choose the "hottest" student from a selection of posted photos, creating a ranking of "hotness" across the campus. In one weekend it crashed the campus servers and was promptly closed down. Undeterred by the censure that followed, Zuckerberg soon started coding thefacebook.com, going live in February 2004. Thirteen years later, as Face book CEO, Zuckerberg was worth $53.6 billion, making him the tenth wealthiest individual on the planet.[14]

Though such dramatic walkouts might prove overly alarming to most parents, Gates' father, Bill Gates Snr, was unperturbed by his son's varsity exit, believing that parents need to trust their children's instincts and give them the freedom to follow their dreams. Reflecting on the success of Bill Jnr, he said: "Perhaps there's a lesson for the parents of other curious children who, from the start, require the freedom to meet life on their own terms: It is that there is no statute of limitations on the dreams you have for your children. And there is no way to predict how much delight you might feel when those dreams are realized in a far different way than you could have imagined."[15]

Though no dropout, South Africa's Sol Kerzner was another business genius given early degrees of freedom. As a youngster, he was passionate about music and his parents encouraged him to explore this creative side. "When I was six, I played in a talent contest at the old Metro Cinema in Bree Street," said Kerzner. "As a kid of twelve, I played with the symphony orchestra on the Johannesburg City Hall stage, playing great classics."[16] Though his musical interests developed no further, you can speculate that it was his parents' flexibility that taught him to follow his instincts in the hotel trade where, today, he is worth $400 million.[17]

Though such cases are poorly documented, the instinctive flair of these entrepreneurs corresponds in many ways with artistic examples that now follow. Examining the work of artists such as Bob Dylan, Bill Evans and Jackson Pollock reveals the essential role of - among other things - instinct, intuition and the unconscious.

Bob Dylan

Due to his lack of formal musical training, much of Dylan's artistic practice seems driven by intuition and instinct. In 1952, as an 11-year-old in Hibbing, Minnesota, Bob Zimmerman and his six-year-old brother, David, were offered piano lessons on the family's Gulbransen spinet by his cousin Harriet Rutstein. As their uncle Lewis Stone later recalled: "David, who was a very, very smart boy, took it all in ... and he

could play better than Bob. He was very musically inclined." Bob, however, became exasperated with the formality of these lessons and soon packed it in, preferring instead to teach himself.[18] Today he is a more than proficient player of the guitar, harmonica and piano, though like Eric Clapton, Robert Johnson, Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, Robin Gibb, Lionel Ritchie and Michael Jackson, Dylan can neither read nor notate music. With sufficient practice, however, Dylan soon developed his own approach to crafting music. Just a decade after his rejection of piano lessons, the now rapidly maturing singer-songwriter reflected on his songwriting abilities: "The songs are there. They exist all by themselves just waiting for someone to write them down. I just put them down on paper ... If I didn't do it, somebody else would." Following his initial breakthrough in New York, Dylan moved upstate to the then unknown village of Woodstock (population 3000), rooming in a bedsitter above the local Cafe Espresso coffee shop. Its then owner, Bernard Paturel, recalled how Dylan would scatter photos and pictures on the floor, stalking out images and word associations. "He was like an abstract painter composing a picture," said Paturel.[19] In the summer of 1963, he hooked up with folk queen Joan Baez, who subsequently described his method of song capture: "Bob stood at the typewriter in the corner of his room, drinking red wine and smoking and tapping away relentlessly for hours. And in the dead of night, he would wake up, grunt, grab a cigarette, and stumble over to the typewriter again."[20] Later that year Dylan moved in with Baez. Her friend Nancy Carlen recalled how, when in songwriting mode, he would stand by the window with its Carmel Valley mountain view and, Hemingway-style, peck-type on an old typewriter while simultaneously picking out the rudiments of a tune on the old piano. "He'd drink black coffee all the morning and then, at lunchtime, he would switch to rot-gut red [wine]. And he would drink red rot-gut the rest of the day."[21] According to reports, most of the Dylan songs of this period arrived close to completion, though the writing of "Mr Tambourine Man" in 1964 is reported to have taken a "lengthier" two months.

Bill Evans

Another deeply intuitive artist was the influential jazz pianist Bill Evans. His two live sets recorded in 1961, Waltz for Debby and Sunday at the Village Vanguard, are regularly cited as the greatest jazz albums of all time. Five years later, he collaborated with his brother, college music teacher Harry Evans, to produce a filmed recording explaining the creative process as he saw it. In the recording, Evans acknowledged that practice was required to attain mastery, though this, he believed, was merely an intermediary step towards elevating the aspirant jazz pianist to a position where he could instinctively articulate his art. Such play, he maintained, was connected to a

universal consciousness: a higher state of collective genius based on a form of unconscious collaboration across all of humanity. “I believe that all people are in possession of what I call a universal musical mind,” he said. “Any true music speaks with this universal mind to the universal mind in all people. The understanding that results will vary only insofar as people have or have not been conditioned to the various styles of music in which the universal mind speaks. Consequently, some effort and exposure is often necessary to understand some of the music from a different period or a -different culture - the knack to which the listener has been conditioned.”[22]

Agreeing with this interpretation, his brother, Harry, explained that a successful artist's playing style would eventually emerge from “that mysterious interior well of inspiration”, though he did concede that the mastery of musical fundamentals was critical to developing musical competence. This, he maintained, was not linked just to the technical facility of playing, but also to the brain's connection to the arm muscle. This neurophysiological development component was critical, developing the artist's competence, as he put it, “to the point where the subconscious mind can take over the basic mechanical task of playing, thus freeing the conscious to concentrate on the spontaneous creative element that distinguishes the best jazz and the best of human activity'”. This, he said, mimics the process of driving a car, where mechanical operations such as braking are relegated to the automatic processes of the brain, freeing up the more creative, neurological components to engage in more cognitive processes like making conversation or adjusting the music.

In the same documentary, Bill added that learning jazz required relocating the technical problems of playing from the outer layer of cognition to the inner level of the unconscious. Each separate component of technique requires intense levels of concentration until the operations of playing become secondary and subconscious. “Now when that becomes subconscious then you can begin concentrating on that next problem which will allow you to do a little bit more - and so on and so on,” said Evans. So it was that, after just 10 years of jazz practice, Evans began to feel a degree of expression and the ability to lay out his unconscious feelings through the craft of his musicianship. “We must remember that in an absolute sense jazz is more of a certain process of spontaneity than a style”, he said.[23]

Such was the unconscious dimension of jazz that, at first, Evans failed to recognise its pull on his life. “It's obvious now that jazz is the most central and important thing in my life, yet I never knew that,” he said. “I was involved with jazz - like I went to college; I got a teacher's degree - so that I could teach; but when the moment came - bang - I went out into jazz. It was like it was so much a part of my inner life and I didn't realise it. If you ask a kid what you want to be when you grow up - I would have said anything because I didn't really know and I don't think many

children do. So I just became involved with jazz – that it was a natural road and it just pulled me here and pulled me there and finally it revealed itself as the most important thing in my life."

Evans believed that - beyond the rudiments of piano playing - the higher planes of jazz art required discovery through self-learning. "The jazz player, if he's going to ultimately be a serious jazz player, teaches himself," he insisted.[24] Harry Evans recalled that when his famous younger brother stopped by for a week's visit, he had hoped to pick up a few trade secrets. Following four days of constant badgering, Bill reportedly told Harry: "Well, I don't want to deprive you of the pleasure of finding this out for yourself, and for that reason, I'm not going to show you a thing. If you sit at the keyboard and get into it yourself, it'll be a marvelous experience."[25]

This notion of self-discovery twins well with his other view that, in the art of jazz, instinct should always trump deliberation. The liner notes to Miles Davis' 1959 album Kind of Blue (featuring Bill Evans) illustrate this by describing a style of Japanese calligraphy that requires brushwork using watered-down black paint over a thin tissue-like parchment. Erasure is impossible and the visual integrity of the work is destroyed if the brushstroke is hesitant, unsure, overly deliberate or unnatural. Just as easily, a lack of skill can rupture the delicate parchment. Because of these constrictions, wrote Evans, "[t]hese artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere".[26]

For the haunting music he produced, which expressed a creative mastery of rhythm, harmony and interpretive conception, Evans was nominated for 31 Grammy awards, ultimately receiving seven. In 1994, he was posthumously awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jackson Pollock

One of the greatest artistic intuitives was the reclusive Jackson Pollock, perhaps the icon of the mid-20th-century period of Abstract Expressionism. From the late '40s until his death in an alcohol-related motor accident in 1956, the mercurial Pollock came to typify, if not own, this genre. Typical of an Outsider artist, Pollock's initial training was haphazard, with an early spell under the madcap Mexican Social Realist David Alfaro Siqueiros, and then, at 22, a year under the American Regionalist Thomas Hart Benton. Pollock was especially taken with Benton's hard-drinking machismo. This would prove a fatal attraction for the soon alcohol-addicted Pollock. Though in many ways alcoholism defined his artistic temperament, there is speculation that his aggressive use of drink ultimately shut down his access to the

muse. When, however, the muse was unleashed, the artistic results were profound. As fellow Abstract Expressionist George McNeil noted: “What is interesting about Pollock is that he came from very bad influences like Benton and the Mexican muralists and other anti-painterly influences, and yet, somehow, in a kind of alchemy, he took all the negatives and made them into a positive. It's a mystery. The rest of us were following the right path, and therefore the magic didn't issue.”[27]

To trace the source of Pollock's brilliance, it is worth tracking back to the development of Mural, his first fully representative work, painted in 1944 for the New York socialite and art collector Peggy Guggenheim, and now at the University of Iowa. Though Mural was painted almost solely by brush, like so many of the great works that followed, it was reportedly completed in a cataclysmic one shot all-night-and-day session. Its mesmerising, whirling energy represents a step change in Pollock's canvas work, with signature 11th -hour sessions of blinding passion and fury. Though Pollock had never been given to regimented patterns of work and was well acquainted with numbing periods of unproductivity, the frenzied work-attack on Mural now became his template. It had been his most agonising and most rewarding period of work thus far. Importantly, Mural was his first large canvas commission and, according to Howard Putzel, one of Guggenheim's artistic advisors, designed to establish “whether a larger scale would release the force contained in Pollock's smaller paintings”.[28] For a long time, this release was not forthcoming. In the months following the delivery of the substantial 2. 7 x 6.1-metre canvas to Pollock's studio, the artist was rendered immobile, though the November deadline loomed ever closer. Attempting to make progress, he made a number of preliminary sketches but to no avail. Over this period, his wife, Lee Krasner, recalled finding him staring blankly at the vast canvas and “getting more and more depressed”.[29] As the weeks ticked by, the now irate Peggy Guggenheim stipulated that the painting was to be completed in time for a January party at her apartment. Yet still nothing happened. And then, according to the catalogued notes that still accompany the painting, as the final deadline approached, Pollock cast himself over a creative cliff, painting non-stop with frenzied passion throughout the night and until nine the following morning. “I had a vision,” he recalled some time thereafter. “It was a stampede... cows and horses and antelope and buffaloes. Everything was charging across the goddamn surface.”[30] Close inspection of the painting yields little of what he described, though what is present is a driving, rhythmic energy- the painting being transposed into some kind of force field. Though Pollock had produced smaller drip paintings prior to this, it was this rendering of a primal and unconscious battle zone that marked the break from his previous work and characterised all his important pieces from then on. The transition was not, however, immediate. For almost three years afterwards, sustained bouts of lethargy,

drunkenness and self-doubt kept the muse at bay. Then, in early 1947, Pollock reconnected with his earlier magic and used drip-work on an ever-increasing scale. Art historian Martin Gayford called it one of art's most incredible ugly-duckling-into-swan transformations ever. “All the effortfulness, laboriousness, the sense of congestion that hung over his earlier work disappeared,” he said. “He became graceful, airborne. Suddenly he is flying.”[31]

One interpretation of Pollock's work is that his drips were transcribing figures from a distance above the canvas - in much the same way as a jazz musician might riff off a well-known song. He was not, he insisted, “just throwing the paint”.[32] Whatever the case, his connection with the non-rational was profound. “He painted like a machine,” said Nick Carone, another Abstract Expressionist, “but the machine was clicking away at another level. It was a conscious, unconscious dialogue.”[33] “When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing,” explained Pollock. “It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that l see what I have been about. I have no fear of making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.”[34]

Most times, Pollock found it difficult to describe the source of his inspiration. “I don't know where my paintings come from, they just come,” he said.[35] It was all a process of self-discovery, where “every artist paints what he is”. Driven to self-express, Pollock spent himself, utterly. “I have seen him come out of the studio like a wet rag,” observed fellow Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman. Much of his behaviour was coarse. Tormented as if by demons, he was famously rude to guests and prone to tantrums, and would suffer sustained periods of drunken self-alienation. Joseph Henderson, his psychoanalyst, was of the opinion that he was “basically uneducated ... [though] highly intelligent, much more so than he appeared, but it was all intuitive. His inability to express ideas went both ways - he couldn't absorb words, and he couldn't use them, but he picked up the subtlest nonverbal signals.”[36]

Immediately following his death and then again in 1967, Pollock's work appeared in retrospective exhibitions at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Pollock has withstood the vicissitudes of time. In the late '90s, his work was featured in major exhibitions at London's Tate and again at MoMA. It continues to sell at astronomical prices. In 2013, his Number 19 (1948) sold for $58 million and, three years later, his Number 17 A sold for a reported $200 million.

The Download

In the art of songwriting, Neil Young believes in something that lies beyond the bounds of instinct and intuition. “I don't feel the need to write a song. It's not like that,” he said. “It's almost like the song feels the need for me to write it and I'm just there. It's not like I'm doing a job. Songwriting, for me, is like a release. It's not a craft. Crafts usually involve a bit of training and expertise and you draw on your experiences - but if you're thinking about that while you're writing, don't! If I can do it without thinking about it I'm doing great.”[37] In 1971, Young admitted that, when in the right space, he had little control over the songwriting process. “I don't know where it comes from. It just comes out,” he said. “Seems like even when I'm happy, I write about bein' lonesome. I don't know why. And you're asking about images I write, like 'the burned-out basement' and all that - I really don't know where that comes from. I just see pictures. I just see pictures in my eyes. And sometimes I can't get them to come, y'know, but then if I just get high or something, and if I just sit there and wait, all of a sudden it comes gushing out. I just got to get to the right level. It's like having a mental orgasm.”[38]

Sting also believes that songwriting is largely an unconscious process. “You have to get into a state where you just allow things to come through,” he explained. “Which begs the question: are you writing anything or is it being written for you in some other, collective unconscious? I don't know the answer to that. Often I think you write good stuff ... it's kind of religious, but when you're in a state of grace, when you're not trying to do anything. You have no agenda. You have no end in mind. You have no care what happens next. You're just in the moment and then things just come to you. It's rare but I try as much as possible to get into that state. True freedom is not caring what happens next. There are certain jobs where that would be dangerous, but in songwriting it's OK.”[39]

Asked to comment on Lee Mavers' (of The La's) view that songwriters served as conduits to songs from the ether, Sting said: “I agree ... There's a degree of grandiosity in that statement but we really don't write songs. They pre-exist. We find them like an archaeologist. It's my experience ... it feels that way. Even though I've put the work in and I've done the graft they seem like they're already there. The best songs are that way. That's paradoxical. What a great privilege, some great fucking songwriter out there!”[40]

Responding to a question about whether the muse had stayed with him over time, Ray Davies of The Kinks carefully replied: “To a degree ... Alone in a quiet room I tend to be too reverential of the space needed. It's the old Jimmy Webb theory: apparently when he wrote 'Up, Up and Away' and the hits for the 5th Dimension

group, he lived in a car and had a very transient lifestyle. According to folklore he had all the success, bought a fantastic house, put a studio in it and then couldn't write."[41]

As with Jimmy Webb, Paul Simon's initial songwriting period appears to have drawn on instinct and intuition. When asked where pieces like "Bridge over Troubled Water" and "The Sounds of Silence" came from, Simon confessed that he had no idea. All this changed following his break-up with Art Garfunkel, when it seems that the muse deserted him. To this extent, so doubtful was he that he would ever replicate his earlier songs that he commenced formal songwriting lessons, forsaking the non-conscious traditions laid down by Evans, Dylan, Pollock and indeed himself. It seems unbelievable that Simon would break so with his art, though, as many golfers will acknowledge, when intuitive muscle memory fails, you need to fall back on the discipline of practice. That he would title one of his subsequent solo albums One Trick Pony (1980) is testament to the continual doubts harboured by this truly great songwriter. In a 1992 interview, Simon seemed to have come full circle, equating songwriting to wandering down a path without an obvious endpoint. "Somewhere, toward the end, you can sort of see what the destination is and you can understand what the journey is about," he said. "At which point, if I want, I can go alter some of the things that occurred to set it up. But usually I don't. It usually just goes along as a story that I'm telling, and I'm a listener, and at a certain point I say, 'Oh! That's what it's about.' ... But that part of the process, I really can't explain it. I don't really know why an idea comes to me."[42]

These examples return us to a dynamic already introduced: that in art, genius is typically manifested during states of higher consciousness or enlightenment. Alternately, for the artist, there are periods when he is reduced to the status of a journeyman, when there is simply no inspiration, no clear-cut direction, and when the output is simply ordinary. In Art and the Creative Consciousness, art historian Graham Collier compares two horse sketches by the French Romantic painter Eugéne Delacroix, namely, The Constable of Bourbon and his Conscience (1835), and Study for Attila (1843-47). Though the two works are ostensibly similar, Collier disagrees, suggesting that, while inspiration and genius are clearly evident in the former, in the latter they are not. In The Constable of Bourbon and his Conscience, Collier observes how, for example, "the volumes of man and horse push through space; slow, liquid, and sensual lines run with lines which are broken, brittle, and speedy ... Such formal eloquence carries its own psychological power – a dramatic mood is created by these sensuous rhymes ... Then one becomes involved with the detachment and uncomfortable posture of the man on the horse ... a man riding alone but accompanied by the unremitting and unseen presence of the 'other self' - and so the image intensifies its specific psychological hold over us."[43] Collier argues that Study for Attila is,

however, more conventional and - though it contains a degree of vitality - it is almost wooden by comparison. The elevated vision is simply not there. Unlike The Constable of Bourbon, it does not generate the degree of sentiment in those observers who possibly share the same feelings as the artist.

I have viscerally understood this capacity to move audiences through art, having wept before sketches by Kathe Kollwitz and while reading passages by Patrick White. How could I be so profoundly moved by drawings and novels so far removed from my immediate and material life? The answer is surely that these pieces, like many works of great art, were deeply inspired in moments of heightened consciousness: their creators believing that what they had to say mattered, not just for them but for us as well. Imagine how this occurs: across time and distance, the enlightened artist reaches out to a receiver, a "you", daring you, challenging you, to feel and believe and perceive and empathise and live this particular way. In certain respects, though the underlying intent of such art is premeditated as in "I feel the need to write or paint this particular piece today" - the process of inspiration and its outcome are invariably not. Most great art is not, in this sense, preconceived. Collier noted critically that elevated inspiration of this sort occurs when strong and spontaneous fluxes from the subconscious are thrust up to override the conventional processes of logic-driven cognition.44 Plato agreed, writing that "the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind no longer in him, when he has not attained this state he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles".[45]

Michelangelo scholar Robert Clements had no doubt, too, that the great Italian artist created supraliminally and subliminally "out of his nights without rest, out of meditations, dreams, ecstasies"46 And we know that Pollock was similarly controlled by the unconscious. The Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke is known to have produced his finest work in a single period of artistic frenzy. In 1922, over a period of just three weeks, in a "savage creative storm", Rilke wrote a cycle of 55 sonnets entitled The Sonnets to Orpheus, while at the same time completing the Duino Elegies, a series of poems that he had been working on for 10 years. Both pieces are regarded as his finest contributions to German literature. Writing to a former lover, Rilke described this period as " ... a boundless storm, a hurricane of the spirit, and whatever inside me is like thread and webbing, framework, it all cracked and bent. No thought of food."[47] When subject to the muse, Russian painter Kazimir Malevich was similarly racked, describing a netherworld where "the contours of the objective world fade more and more".[48]

Such transcendence has also been reported in sport. For example, in the intense heat of play, every so often the NBA basketball great William (Bill) Russell

experienced a similar feeling of otherworldliness. “That feeling is difficult to describe,” he wrote, “and I certainly never talked about it when I was playing. When it happened, I could feel my play rise to a new level ... The game would move so quickly that every fake, cut, and pass would be surprising, and yet nothing could surprise me. It was almost as if we were playing in slow motion. During those spells, I could almost sense how the next play would develop and where the next shot would be taken ... My premonitions would be consistently correct, and I always felt then that I not only knew all the Celtics by heart, but also all the opposing players, and that they all knew me. There have been many times in my career when I felt moved or joyful, but these were the moments when I had chills pulsing up and down my spine.”[49]

Gary Kirsten, the South African cricketer who coached India to World Cup glory in 2011, also acknowledged the role of transcendence during his years as opening batsman for South Africa. “When you are in the zone, it is like heaven on earth,” said Kirsten, who described the space as being without external noise. It allows you plenty of time to think and there is only the present, reported the left-hander. In a sport where international fast bowlers are regularly timed at 150kph, batting in the zone made Kirsten feel invincible. “No bowler can bowl too quickly for you when are in the zone,” he reflected.[50]

Tennis legend Billie Jean King expressed a similar experience: “It's a perfect combination of ... violent action taking place in an atmosphere of total tranquillity,” she observed. “When it happens I want to stop the match and grab the microphone and shout, ‘That's what it's all about'. Because it is. It's not the big prize I'm going to win at the end of the match, or anything else. It's just having done something that's totally pure and having experienced the perfect emotion, and I'm always sad that I can't communicate that feeling right at the moment it's happening.”[51]

When inspired to write, English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge was also intensely aware of himself operating in the experience, as if he were birthing something already within himself. “In looking at objects of nature,” he wrote, “as at yonder moon dim glimmering through the dewy window pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolic language for something within me that forever and already exists, than observing anything new. Even when the latter is the case yet still I have always an obscure feeling, as if that new phenomenon were a dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature.”[52] Bob Dylan felt the same, stating that for creativity to spark, you must pay attention to the dynamics of your inner world. “There is no guidance at all except from one's natural senses,” he said.[53] Poet laureate Seamus Heaney wrote similarly of W.B. Yeats' frog-like ability to live “the

amphibious inner and outer world", adding: "Being in two places at once is, of course, the only way."[54]

A lad insane

This leads to a further interesting question. If artists are required to be "amphibian", living in a littoral zone that connects the land of logic to the subliminal sea, what occurs when the undertow proves too strong? Inevitably, there is a price to pay and, in most cases, the penalty comes in some form of mental breakdown. Here, David Bowie's descent into the psychotic underworld provides a cautionary tale.

Though spurred by a hitherto restrained use of drugs, it is known that Bowie was prone to hallucination well before his period of cocaine addiction. In "Oh You Pretty Things" (1971), for example, he described a hand reaching down from a crack in the sky, which was inspired by one of his earlier visions.[55] "The fine line between the dream state and reality is, at times, quite grey," he once observed.[56] His mid-'70s descent into a drug-crazed, psychotic hell was more than mere hallucination, however. By 1975, ensconced in the Helter-Skelter-New-Age-Anything-Goes culture of L.A., Bowie was living on a simple diet of milk, peppers and cocaine. A coked-out junkie, Bowie veered into the realms of psycho-fracture, at one point becoming increasingly obsessed with the idea that witches were trying to steal his semen. From his window he reportedly witnessed dead bodies falling from the sky. Convinced that he had attracted some kind of curse, Bowie drew protective pentagrams around his $300,000 Art Deco mansion and studied a then 40-year-old book by Dion Fortune entitled Psychic Self-Defense, which explained how to understand the signs of a psychic attack, vampirism, hauntings, and methods of defence.[57] According to his then-wife, Angie, when the book's defensive spells proved ineffectual, the unhinged Bowie contacted a white witch from New York to perform an exorcism on his indoor swimming pool in which, he was convinced, Satan had taken up residence. During the exorcism, the waters of the pool were said to have thrashed and bubbled, leaving a dark stain at the bottom. At his wit's end and while at the same time filming The Man who Fell to Earth, Bowie penned the remarkable "Word on a Wing" for the 1975 album Station to Station, in which he beseeches the "Lord" to release him from his spiritual torment. While it is difficult to infer from the lyrics whom he refers to as "Lord", in an interview with NME magazine, Bowie confessed that the song was directed towards Jesus. "There were days of such psychological terror ... that I nearly started to approach my reborn, born again thing," said Bowie. "It was the first time I'd really seriously thought about Christ and God in any depth, and 'Word on a Wing' was a protection. It did come as a complete revolt against elements that I found in the film. The passion in the song was genuine... something I needed to produce from

within myself to safeguard myself against some of the situations I felt were happening on the film set." This was as close as Bowie would ever come to publically admitting a faith in God. "The minute you know you're on safe ground, you're dead," he flippantly rationalised sometime later to Playboy magazine.[58]

Although the effect of his drug addiction and dabblings in the occult suggested that he would never break free, Bowie's release from this tormented period was triggered by the "left field" insinuation of an arrestingly beautiful album of contemplative solitude by the avant-garde musician Brian Eno. Originally a member of the art-rock group Roxy Music, Eno, who did not play any musical instruments, became interested in electronically based recording techniques, releasing a series of low-volume albums aimed to alter your awareness of the environment. The composer Erik Satie called this "furniture music", in the sense that it could provide the backdrop to an occasion. The first of these "furniture" albums was inspired when, in January 1975, Eno was hospitalised following a car accident. To facilitate his recovery, Eno's girlfriend brought him an album of 18th-century harp music. When playing the album, the volume was too low but Eno did not have the strength to get out of bed to adjust it, so he left it to play at a level that was barely audible. He was captivated by the consequent "ambient" effect of this music, commenting later that "this presented what was for me a new way of hearing music - as part of the ambience of the environment just as the colour of the light and the sound of the rain were parts of that ambience".[59] Inspired by this experience, when he recovered, Eno recorded a "low sonic" album that incorporated variations of Johann Pachelbel's Canon in D Major. Entitled Discreet Music and released in 1975, this ambient music was a world first. It was made up of just four instrumental pieces, the longest of which ran for 31 minutes. Its effect was hauntingly peaceful.

Remarkably, it was this Discreet Music that Bowie latched onto over the Station to Station recording period of September to November 1975. Reflecting on his first interaction with Bowie, Eno said that Discreet Music was "the only thing he would listen to for a long time", its dreamy effect seeming to shift Bowie out of his tormented darkness and into a place of quiet and peace. Bowie was so moved by the ambience of Discreet Music that he contacted Eno, asking him to collaborate with him to set up similar "sonic scenarios" to work off in future recordings.[60] Eno accepted the proposal and, in late 1976, Bowie decamped to West Berlin to commence working with him. Aside from Ziggy Stardust (1972), this collaboration would prove the pinnacle of Bowie's creative output, realising three critically acclaimed albums all recorded in Berlin. This so-called Berlin Trilogy of Low, Heroes and Lodger is now cast in the firmament of sonic art.

In addition to contributing fundamentally to Bowie's emotional and creative breakthrough, Brian Eno is also known for his critique of the notion that art is generally spawned by lone, genius types such as Bowie and Dylan, and for offering an alternate view on the source of great ideas. When in art school, Eno was "encouraged to believe that there were a few great figures like Picasso and Kandinsky, Rembrandt and Giotto and so on who sort of appeared out of nowhere and produced artistic revolution". Eno, however, concluded that this was not necessarily so. For example, pivotal political and artistic events around the time of the Russian Revolution were driven within a vibrant ecology of many like-minded thinkers, tinkerers and artists. The same can be said of artistic events in medieval Florence under the Medicis or in San Francisco with music and computers during the mid-'70s. To incorporate this view of synergistic creativity, Eno came up with the term "scenius", which, as he put it, is "the intelligence of a whole ... operation or group of people".[61] The notion of scenius is similar to Bill Evans' conceptualisation of the "universal mind of music", with Jung's view of a collective unconscious, and also with the German term "Zeitgeist" or "spirit of the time". Instances of such mutually conceived art, Eno maintained, were surely connected to such a universal ecology of minds.

Eno's more recent reflections regarding the intent behind his collaboration with artists such as Bowie, Talking Heads and Coldplay is revealing about the purpose that drives art. "I think that they are inviting me to work with them for the same reason - they want to go somewhere different," said Eno. "[A]rtists don't just want to have the same hit over and over again. It's boring. The thrill of being an artist is going somewhere that you haven't been before ... I was always interested to see what was new for the band; what was exciting for them and to try to make something of that. So I think that's why I was asked to produce a lot of records."[62]

To conclude this section: from the examples cited here, perhaps inspiration should not be interpreted as a simple combination of intellect and capacity. Rather, it appears as if creativity is bestowed on those who empty themselves of their cognitive powers. The artistic "evidence" seems to suggest that genuine, creative inspiration is afforded to those who prize the spiritual/non-material virtues of art above everything else. The muse tires of flipcharts and seldom correlates itself with price. Most great art is made well before recognition in the market. ln this respect, inspiration seems, therefore, to be a condition of the heart. Stated this way, it is clear to me that the most definitive of creations are the product of inspiration and, in particular, divine inspiration. In the lesser instances of instinct and intuition, as when time-honed skills step in automatically to supersede the interference of cognitive rationality, any consequent art is invariably also "elevated".

There is an additional point to make. The Creator does not appear to allocate according to any particular religious perspective. Evidence indicates that most artists receive regardless of affiliation, if they affiliate at all. As Shakespeare observed through Hamlet: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”[63] It is a mystery beyond mystery.

Still water

The opening chapter of this book examined the three-part creative process: observation, withdrawal and action - described by Brian Arthur of New Mexico's Santa Fe Institute. To close off this chapter I want to examine the “withdrawal” component- a subprocess that I call “still water”. As already explained, still water implies a removal from the stress of normal life to a place that allows the psyche to speak. This is akin to setting the creative table. It is straight preparation.

Finding still water requires that we eliminate hurry from our lives. In a world where there is so much compulsive busyness, this is not easily achieved. But somehow we need to locate the source of our compulsive behaviour and manage it.64 In an unhurried world, issues become far more manageable, and being an entrepreneur becomes more like being an artist or a monk. It is a practice and a discipline. Struggling to complete the final volume of the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling followed this strategy, albeit somewhat expensively, by booking a room in Edinburgh's five-star Balmoral Hotel and remaining there, in splendid uninterrupted isolation, until it was completed. Important to note here though is that there is, or should be, no prescribed way of finding this balance. In this respect it's a bit like prayer. Within the Christian doctrine, other than the Lord's Prayer, there is no established “one way” to do it. Rather, as the spiritual writer Philip Yancey suggests, prayer is about keeping it honest, keeping it simple and keeping it regular.[65] Similarly, with still-water creativity, no one can presume to tell us how to locate, actualise and implement that part within us that seeks self-expression. This is the slippery part of being an artist-entrepreneur. The first thing, however, is simply getting on with it, doing it regularly, and with all the authenticity we can muster. In time, and given enough practice and discipline, things tend to come together. We just need to keep at it. For every individual, the mental preparation required to steady oneself is, I believe, critical in the artistic process. Without the necessary preparation the muse is unlikely to join you at the table. Though necessity is often the mother of invention, all too often that invention comes through a posture of empty-handed readiness.

Finding moments of still water allows our brains to slow down and contemplate issues and problems in ways that they might not ordinarily be given the chance to. Using brain scans we can - through exercises such as pattern recognition –

identify the conditions under which we usually reach insights or have original thoughts. Research of this nature tells us that we are most likely to be aware of our original thoughts when removed from noisy and stressful environments. In other words, it is within contexts of relaxation that the realisation of creativity is most likely to occur.

The list of significant quiet-water moments when artists and thinkers had significant insights away from busy places and crazy schedules is quite remarkable. Here are a few examples.

Insights that emerged in still-water dreams

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge penned his poem "Kubla Khan" on waking from a particularly vivid dream (allegedly fuelled by opium).

2. Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley, was based on a nightmare.

3. A piece by Beethoven was inspired by a dream which he subsequently related to one of his publishers, Tobias Haslinger, by letter: "While I was dozing I dreamt that I was travelling to very distant parts of the world ... during my dream journey the following cannon occurred to me ... As soon as I awoke, however, the cannon had vanished and no one note could I recall. But on the following day as I was driving back here in the same vehicle, and was continuing yesterday's dream journey while awake, behold, in accordance with the law of the association of ideas, the same cannon occurred to me." The three-part cannon is inscribed in the same letter.[66]

4. The main character in E.B. White's novel Stuart Little emerged from a dream.

5. The Beatles songwriter Paul McCartney literally dreamt up the classic "Yesterday" after hearing the tune played by a string orchestra in his sleep. "I had a piano by my bedside," said McCartney, "and I must have dreamed it, because I tumbled out of bed and put my hands on the piano keys and I had a tune in my head. It was just all there, a complete thing. I couldn't believe it. It came too easy. I went around for weeks playing the chords of the song for people, asking them, 'Is this like something? I think I've written it.' And people would say, 'No, it's not like anything else, hut it's good.'"[67]

6. Robin Gibb from the Bee Gees developed the melody for their 1987 hit "You Win Again" when he awoke from a dream with the song's keyline and melody

running through his head. He was able to locate a tape recorder and so sang the line into the machine: There's no fight you can't fight/ This battle of love with me/You win again.[68] When asked when he preferred to write his music, Gibb replied: “I would have to say the early hours of the morning when it's quiet, about 2 a.m. You can't write when there are people around. It's a vexation to the spirit.”[69]

7. When golfing great Jack Nicklaus went through a slump, hitting scores in the high seventies, he adapted his swing after a dream demonstrated a better way of holding the club. It worked, reducing his score to the mid sixties.

8. Also in a dream the German chemist Friedrich August Kekulé resolved the circular molecular structure of benzene while dozing in front of the fire. He’d been staring at the snake-like contortions of the flames in the hearth and saw, in his reverie, a snake seizing its own tail.

9. Another German, the sculptor Almuth Lütkenhaus-Lackey, described how her dreams proffered ideas for her work. In these dreams, faces and symbols appeared, recalling traumas she had suffered as a child during World War II. Using these visions, she was able to work through her early traumas and produce a series of evocative pieces that drew much critical acclaim in her new country of residence, Canada.

10. Pioneer of the sewing machine, Elias Howe, cracked the problem of how to design the mechanised sewing needle when, in a dream, he saw a ring of native warriors bearing spears. Near the tip of each spear was a hole, which inspired Howe to place the eye of the needle at the tip instead of at the other end (as in ordinary needles).

11. Said Ernest Hemingway: “Sometimes I write in my dreams, actual lines, and when that happens I wake myself up and write it down or I will have dreamed it all out.”[70]

12. Famous for his naval victories against Japan, the 16th -century Korean admiral Yi Sun-Shin's idea of cladding battleships in iron is purported to have come from a dream, which featured turtles.

13. Key sections of Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886) were inspired by a dream. His wife, Fanny Stevenson, recorded the event thus: "In the small hours of one morning ... I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare, I awakened him. He said angrily: 'Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.' I had awakened him at the first transformation scene." The author's stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, recalled this of the event: "I don't believe that there was ever such a literary feat before as the writing of Dr Jekyll. I remember the first reading as though it was yesterday. Louis came downstairs in a fever; read nearly half the book aloud; and then, while we were still gasping, he was away again, and busy writing. I doubt if the first draft took so long as three days."[71] As per Chapter One: shades here of the final act of the three-part artistic process of acting instantaneously and in one full rush of energy and passion.

14. While I have no great claims to greatness, one of my academic insights also emerged in a dream. The story is worth relating if only for its quirkiness. In 2001, I was registered for an MBA at the University of Cape Town. We were in the middle of a demanding finance module and I was especially taken with the Capital Asset Pricing Model and how the best yielding shares can be depicted graphically in an area called the "efficiency frontier". Worth stating, too, is that one of my ongoing social and research interests is wine. As a thirsty undergraduate student, I began my first collection by storing bottles under the floorboards of my grandparents' house (to avoid temptation). Many years later, in the midst of the finance module, my wife and I attended a wine-tasting dinner party and we were pretty rat-faced by the end of it. That night I had a dream in which I was walking into a '70s movie theatre where, typically, you might read in lights above the entrance: The Rocky Horror Picture Show. In my dream, above the entrance, in lights, read the encryption: Wine is Risk. At this point I woke up, dazed and confused, yet profoundly aware that this was an important dream. I immediately scribbled down the bare essentials of the dream and some rough equations that related. The initial result of this dream yielded my MBA research project and, ultimately, a PhD.

15. Cormac McCarthy relates a similar, though truly remarkable, story about an MIT mathematician, Don Newman. Newman had been working on a problem for some time and had reached a stage where he could progress no further. He became so distracted that friends began to worry about him, as did his wife. Then one night he had a dream in which he was having dinner

with a fellow MIT colleague, the maths genius John Nash. In the dream, Nash asked Newman to describe the problem, then asked for a napkin upon which he wrote down some equations which he thought might help solve it. At this point, Newman awoke, and jotted down the equations as well as a few notes. As McCarthy relates: "Well, the next morning he woke up and the first thing he thought was, God, what a strange dream. I wonder what kind of gibberish I've written on my pad? And when he looked on the pad there was this elegant solution to the problem. So be wrote the paper, and he cited Nash as co-author."

I remain utterly mystified as to how we connect with our unconscious psyches, and how at largely unpredictable times our psyches, in turn, lend insight and creative solutions to our waking lives.

Insights that emerged in still water awake

1. Newton was relaxing in an orchard when an apple fell on his head (so the story goes), prompting him to initiate his theories on gravity and to write his great work, Principia.

2. Galileo was reported to have come up with his ideas on using a pendulum to mark time while sitting alone in a church and watching the movement of massive chandeliers.

3. Albert Einstein first developed his famous $E=mc^2$ equation while sitting on a train going to and from work in a patent office in Bern, Switzerland. His key insights emerged as he imagined himself as a particle of light perched on the nose of the train as it accelerated towards the absolute velocity of any object, a constant, C, which today stands for the speed of light.

4. In similar fashion, author J.K. Rowling became inspired to write the Harry Potter books while on a delayed train journey between Manchester and London. During those four hours, Rowling says that the plot of the young wizard and his education at Hogwarts "came fully formed" to her.[72]

5. The structure of the atom was conceptualised by the scientist Niels Bohr while watching horses galloping around the race track-his model showed the atom being comprised of a nucleus with electrons moving in orbits around it.

6. In 1843, the great Irish mathematician William Hamilton came to his most profound insight while walking with his wife along Dublin's Royal Canal towpath, en route to the Royal Irish Academy. Through some flash of insight, fuelled by his subconscious, Hamilton saw that, by dropping the commutative law, a new number system known as imaginary numbers became possible. The subsequent equation runs as follows: $i^2 = j^2 = k^2 = ijk = -1$. As he wrote later about this "eureka" moment: "I then and there felt the galvanic circuit of thought close, and the sparks which fell from it were the fundamental equations between i, j k; exactly such as I have used them ever since." So taken was he by this manipulation that he immediately carved this formula into the stonework of the closest bridge. A plaque bearing this equation is still there, commemorating this event.[73]

7. In 1951, one of the first working models of DNA was developed by a biophysicist, New Zealander Maurice Wilkins, at King's College, London. This was two years before the double helix shape was finally announced to the world. Wilkins took a photo-image of DNA, but was still perplexed by its actual configuration. The legend is that, one night during this period, he stepped out of his laboratory for a breath of fresh air to gaze across the Thames and over towards the famous OXO Tower. The spectre of the well-known OXO logo gave him an idea that perhaps the DNA structure resembled an "x" or spiral-type form. For more than a year he kept this insight to himself before relating it to James Watson. Watson then raced back to Cambridge and, within a month, with his colleague Francis Crick, cracked the puzzle of the famous double helix. In 1962, for their efforts, Wilkins shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Watson and Crick.

8. Contemporary singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright said that the song "Zebulon" came to him when walking through Montreal one night after visiting his mother, musician Kate McGarrigle, in hospital. By the time he'd got back home the song was finished, he says. Another of his songs, "April Fools", came to him when he was in the bath. "I stood up naked and sang it. Songs come to me at odd times. The only thing they have in common is that, when they do come, the moment has to be theatrical," he says.

9. One day in 1968, during a bad dose of flu, a half-delirious, semi-conscious Neil Young wrote three epic songs: "Cinnamon Girl", "Cowgirl in the Sand" and "Down by the River".[74] All featured on his mid-career greatest hits compilation album Decade (1977) and are standard to the Young lexicon. All in one day!

10. The father of Cartesian geometry, René Descartes, was renowned for spending the better part of his mornings in bed; it was from there that he watched the checkerboard crisscross of shadows cast by his bedroom window frame play across a far wall in his bedroom. Ultimately, this horizontal-to-vertical play of dark on light provided the inspiration for his famous x-y coordinate system, revered (and reviled) by so many schoolchildren in the earlier phases of their mathematical education.

11. One of the first scientific theories about the creation of our universe was developed by Sir Fred Hoyle in the years following World War II. Working with his scientific colleagues Hermann Bondi and Thomas Gold, he set up shop at Trinity College, Oxford. After a period of kicking ideas around it seemed they were getting nowhere. Then, one night in 1948, the three went off to see a movie entitled Dead of Night. It was a thriller, based on the same plot as Groundhog Day, starring Bill Murray, where the same scene recurs with little variation, over and over again. The seed of an idea was thus planted in Hoyle's mind: what if the universe were like this too, caught in a loop of time with no apparent beginning or conceivable end? After sharing his hypothesis with his friends, Hoyle went on to develop the mathematics that would prove it. Ultimately this model of the "universe as holding pattern" was rolled over to herald the now dominant "big bang" theory.

12. In his jacket, jazz pianist Bill Evans always carried a small six-stave composer's notebook. When the muse struck, he would use it to write out melodies, take notes and transcribe ideas. Evans understood well that new music was as likely to arrive somewhere on the road as when he was sitting attentively at his Chickering piano. His composition "Show-Type Tune" was a case in point. Said Evans: "Songs usually required a lot of work later on the piano, but this one came out nearly complete. I still have a lot of those books that I should go back to. I read somewhere that Gershwin had to write twelve bad tunes to get a good one. That gives me confidence."[75]

13. Apple CEO Steve Jobs often saw himself as an artist. Famous for railing against rational science and motivating constantly for an integration between engineering and the humanities, the man named Fortune's CEO of the last decade confessed that, if he hadn't been involved in computers, he'd probably have been a poet in Paris. The design ethic at Apple remains legendary. In January 2012, Job' key designer, Jony Ive, was knighted for his brilliant design work at the Cupertino

headquarters. One story about the collaborative efforts between Jobs and Ive is instructive of how brilliant work can emerge from quiet water. In 2000, Jobs was mulling over the screen design for his new iMac computer. Ive had come up with a flat-screen design that incorporated most of the computer hardware at the back of the screen. Jobs was not happy with the work and called for a rethink. He went home early and, when Ive dropped by later that afternoon, he was out in the garden amid a profusion of sunflowers his wife had planted earlier that year. As Jobs' wife recalled later, "Jony and Steve were riffing on their design problem, then Jony asked, "What if the screen was separated from the base, like a sunflower?'" Ive began sketching possibilities from this idea and realised that the sunflower metaphor might imply a screen that was sufficiently mutable to seek out the sun, the source of all life and energy. It was a creative concept both he and Jobs thought compelling. And so it was that a screen articulated to a mutable chrome neck that could twist like an Anglepoise lamp or the face of a flower, according to the purpose of the user, was born. Said Ive later: "Why do we assume that simple is good? Because with physical products, we have to feel that we can dominate them. As you bring order to complexity, you find a way to make the product defer to you. Simplicity isn't just a visual style. It's not just minimalism or the absence of clutter. It involves digging through the depth of the complexity. To be truly simple, you have to go really deep. For example, to have no screws on something, you can end up with a product that is so convoluted and so complex. The better way is to go deeper with the simplicity, to understand everything about it and how it's manufactured. You have to deeply understand the essence of the product in order to get rid of the parts that are not essential."[76]

Many of these innovators are dead and most of their ideas and their origins are anecdotal; those surfacing occurred long before the current era of confessional life stories. Like Jobs' life story, the 2010 Keith Richards' autobiography, Life, is an extremely useful source of insight into the still-water process. So many of the really great Rolling Stones songs appear to have been sparked in moments of relative quiet. In 1965, for example, Richards was in still water when he wrote their first major hit, "Satisfaction". Having just bust up with his girlfriend, he was alone in his London flat, jamming on his acoustic guitar late into the night. Almost unconsciously, he pressed the record button on his Philips cassette player and spent five minutes experimenting with a few riffs before finally passing out. On awaking the next morning, Richards rewound the tape to hear what it was he'd played the night before, and there, before 40 minutes of loud snoring, was the rough-hewn chord structure for

“Satisfaction”. It was all he needed.[77] In 2004, Rolling Stone magazine voted it the second greatest song ever written, after Dylan's “Like a Rolling Stone”.

Later in his book, Richards comments on how his songwriting ability came to rely on the development of key chord sequences, or what he calls “riffs”, that came out of nowhere. “When you get a riff like ‘Flash’, [as in ‘Jumpin’ Jack Flash’], you get a great feeling of elation, a wicked glee ... ‘Flash' is basically ‘Satisfaction’ in reverse. Nearly all of these riffs are closely related.” He said Flash was particularly interesting because it was “almost Arabic or very old, archaic, classical, the chord setups you could only hear in Gregorian chants or something like that”. It was a mixture of rock 'n' roll and a “weird echo of very, very ancient music” that he didn't even know. “It's much older than I am, and that's unbelievable! It's like a recall of something, and I don't know where it came from.”[78]

While it is, undoubtedly, a source of creativity, constantly returning to the pool of quiet water is critical, too, if we wish to sustain ourselves. Those who dismiss this rule of life tend to burn up. “Your nerve coatings are only so thick,” said Don Felder, the former Eagles band member who composed the famous riffs to “Hotel California”. “When they get worn really thin and frayed, that's when people say things, do things, misbehave. Especially when you add fuel to the fire with drugs and alcohol. It just becomes a very volatile situation.”[79] In Neil Young's opinion, this is why Kurt Cobain from Nirvana committed suicide. “Because there was no control to the burn ... He didn't know that he could maybe go somewhere else and get some more fuel, come back and do it again ... At his stage, it was all music. Kurt Cobain only had one world.”[80]

U2's Bono has also spoken about controlling the burn within. “There's no doubt about the fact that I have a wild streak and I'm very capable of setting fire to myself. So you know I don't go to church for the view,” he says. To fight temptation, Bono gets up at six each morning to pray and meditate. “My meditation life feeds my soul and it's a wonderful thing for me to have time to reflect upon things and spend time with myself,” he says, adding that as a creative person he needs to find time and head space to think through and execute the ideas that he believes are the most important: “I want to squeeze every drop out of the day. But it's also the tyranny of good ideas, because if you spot one, then you think that you have to follow through on it. That might be a psychosis. I may have to get that fixed.” The implication here seems to be that part of that fixing requires time alone in still water.[81]

Andy Warhol was another artist aware of the burn. While many acknowledge him as the progenitor of the sexualised celebrity pop-culture, few know that his secret life was one of constantly seeking out spaces of stillness and grace. After his death, many were shocked to find out that Warhol, whose art and pronouncements did so

much to promote the promiscuous sexual and narcotic culture of the '60s, was in fact a committed Catholic who would attend church on a daily basis. There is a fearsome symmetry to the darkness and light within this man.

A wonderful account of silence and grace relates to the '80s band Talk Talk and their 1988 album Spirit of Eden. The album's architecture is unconventional, containing only six tracks, all between five and nine minutes long. Moreover, between the third and fourth tracks ("Desire" and "Inheritance"), there's that 30-second break mentioned earlier. It is 30 seconds of complete silence. Critics asked whether this was an error of judgement or if the band was in fact trying to say something. Looking at the themes of these two songs, and the meanings that bind them, you would conclude the latter.

Similarly, some three years later, Van Morrison issued a double set entitled Hymns to the Silence. Critical tracks, especially from Disc 2, can be regarded as spiritual contemplations on still water. The title track is a case in point and one of my long-time favourites.

A 2011 trip to New Zealand for the Rugby World Cup found me downtown in Auckland's main art gallery and drawn to a simple, yet evocative, oil-based portrait of a woman. The painting is smaller than an A4 piece of paper and is entitled Lizette. It was painted in London in about 1913 by one of New Zealand's most famous artists, Raymond McIntyre. Beneath the painting, the curators had posted an inscription quoting McIntyre's thinking at the time: "I am learning what I do not want to do. When I eliminate what I don't want to do, only what I do want to do will be left."

This view coincides with Steve Jobs and his ability to focus. "Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do. That's true for companies, and it's true for products," he said.[82] Tom Waits was of the same view. Asked why he became a musician, he replied: "I don't know. I knew what I didn't want to do. T thought I'd try some of what was left over."[83]

Perhaps the best exponent of silence was the exquisite Bill Evans. In 1975, fellow pianist Richie Beirach dropped by to visit Evans. "He was very happy, and he was actually openly happy, which was completely unlike him. And it threw everybody. Anyway, it was great. He showed me his Chickering. He pushed down the keys. They were like beautiful, old, yellow keys, and you could see where his voicings would come from. He was a real poet. Sometimes less is less. Sometimes less is just not enough. But he would create an aura of silence around him. He would draw you in whether you wanted it or not. He was hypnotic."[84]

As with Bono, Talk Talk, Van Morrison, McIntyre and Evans, the song of simplicity remains the same. Do only what you must do. And leave the rest.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. By nature, artists tend to work instinctively. This we see through the lives of artistic greats such as Dylan, Evans and Pollock.
2. This chapter also offers a more detailed appreciation of the muse. It is difficult to say quite how we get to the place where the muse is active. While there are no prescribed formulas for invoking the muse, there are certain creative behaviours that seem to characterise its arrival. These include: (1) the ability to self-learn, (2) the cultivation of dream-like otherworldliness, (3) a capacity to improvise, and (4) an ability to work in bouts of sustained frenzy.
3. We look at the "important and not urgent" quadrant of life-activity, and why it is the place to be if we wish to live creative lives. It shows that the best way to act on ideas is to operate in a zone of "less hurry" so as to control the burn, as Neil Young once put it.
4. Here we see why Bono meditates first thing every morning and why artistic control requires stillness and the discipline of thinking.
5. If we learn to quiet the urgent inner voices, the important and non-urgent part of our lives can also become the source of great ideas. Many creative insights have emerged from periods of sleep or quiet contemplation, as this chapter illustrates.

section four

FATE

Chapter ten

Success = Talent + Luck

SUCCESS MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO TWO COMPONENTS: luck and ability. In analysing the role of good luck, we look at the tendency to correlate commercial success solely with a degree of business savvy. As in the venture capital industry and in business in general, we find that success in art may manifest irrespective of whether one shows any business flair (as did Charles Dickens and Andy Warhol) or not (As with Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan). Noting this, we observe that luck is probably best described as "where opportunity meets preparation". Without the necessary preparation and practice, even the greatest talent risks being squandered.

> [M]aking money is art, and working is art and good business is the best art.
> ANDY WARHOL[1]

> [With "Wonderwall"] I become a millionaire 4 times in one week. One week.
> SINGER-SONGWRITER NOEL GALLAGHER, OASIS[2]

This final chapter considers the extent to which luck and talent work together in achieving success. Whether in art or business, most successful people will seldom attribute their success to luck, citing a combination of slog, practice and ability instead. Conversely, those who fail will probably point to the ill fortune that beset them, complaining that, given the right circumstances, success would have been inevitable. So which of these two versions is correct? Could both accounts be valid? Do both luck and talent combine to account for degrees of success? In his book Thinking, Fast and Slow, Daniel Kahneman, proposes exactly this view via the following two explanatory equations:

success= talent + Luck

and

great success = a little more talent + a lot of luck[3]

Using cricket as an example, consider what this means if, in a test match, two batsmen, with long-term batting averages of 50 runs per innings, respectively scored 100 and 0 in their first innings. Given this, how much would they be likely to score in the second innings? Kahneman's equations suggest that while player A, who scored 100, is probably in better form right now, he was also probably a lot luckier than player B, who scored 0. Assuming luck to be randomly allocated, using the rule of regression to the mean, both players A and B are likely to score something closer to 50 in the second innings. Player A, for example, might hit a 60 and player B possibly a 30. Tracking the fortunes of these two batsmen over the next couple of seasons, in all likelihood, we would see that their scores would tend to their historical average of 50.

From the above, the rule of regression to the mean therefore implies that any excessive performance beyond the mean is unlikely to be continually repeated. Inasmuch as there are periods of good form, periods of bad form will set in too: the batsman not moving his feet, perhaps picking up an injury, or being found susceptible to short-pitched fast bowling. This principle applies also to business. Because of random chance, at some point a business is likely to run into headwinds, no matter how well it is run. Good fortune cannot last indefinitely. You might counter that there are exceptions to this rule, citing the South African-born Elon Musk as an example. Certainly, Musk excelled on four consecutive occasions with PayPal (founded 1999), Solar City (founded 2006), Tesla (incorporated 2008) and SpaceX (first rocket launch 2010). In cricketing terms, though, this level of performance is like hitting double hundreds in four consecutive innings. Though he is no doubt incredibly talented, Musk's good form is unlikely to endure indefinitely. History shows that even firms such as Apple, Microsoft and Google do not succeed forever. Although they have all been profitable, over the years a number of their business initiatives have failed. For Apple, these include the Apple Lisa, the portable Apple Macintosh and Macintosh TV. Microsoft's Zune MP3 player and its Windows Phone also proved to be duds, as did Google's Orkut (its version of Facebook), its Google Catalogs shopping application and its Google Video (before the company capitulated and bought out YouTube for $1.65 billion in 2006). The point here is not to snigger, but rather to observe that failure is actually built into the broader system of how these businesses operate. In corporations like these, some degree of failure is inevitable and even allowed for. Under its holding company, Alphabet Inc., Google runs a collection of wide-ranging business “experiments” with the built in anticipation that, despite the flair and diligence of its managers, many of these will fail. While most venture capital (VC) firms run their financing models according to similar principles, the brutal truth for all VC initiatives is that when financing 10 start-ups you are unlikely to meet with more than one or two “blue sky” successes. Indeed, given the opportunity to pick out

10 long-term winners from a candidate list of 100 start-ups, most VC experts will struggle to discriminate between non-starter business proposals and those that end up shooting the lights out. The global VC firm Bessemer Venture Partners is a case in point, nixing early investment opportunities that would turn out to be world-beaters. Offered the opportunity to invest $60 million in Apple's pre-initial public offering, then-Bessemer partner Neill Brownstein walked away, calling the valuation "outrageously expensive. Byron Deeter, also of Bessemer, opted to buy a Tesla vehicle rather than invest money in the company itself. "It's a win-win. I get a great car and some other VC pays for it!" he said at the time.[4] Given the opportunity to invest in eBay, another Bessemer partner, David Cowan, sneered: "Stamps? Coins? Comic books? You've got to be kidding ... Nobrainer pass." Cowan also fumbled on Google during its first period of operation out of a friend's garage. When a mutual acquaintance offered to introduce them, Cowan showed no inclination to meet Page and Brin. "How can I get out of this house without going anywhere near your garage?" he is reported to have responded.[5] Ouch! Pause here a moment. Bessemer Venture Partners is a world-class VC outfit, with offices in Boston, New York, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, India and Israel, and $4.5 billion under management. Though its website proudly claims to have scouted firms like Pinterest, Blue Apron, Snapdeal and Fuze,[6] we must note at the same time how it missed out massively on Apple, Tesla, eBay and Google. From this history of random hits and misses, it would be difficult not to conclude that luck, both good and bad, must surely have played a significant role in their sifting for potential winners.[7]

In noting how this dynamic plays out in VC firms, to be clear, the role luck plays applies in all businesses. In the battle for survival, firms that make it through the heat of competition must also count themselves lucky. This is seldom acknowledged, however. We have all read books scripted by retired CEOs who celebrate their experiences at the helm of successful companies as though these constituted some kind of generic prescription for the successes of all similar firms going forward. A number of academic researchers have made similar mistakes. Two of the best-known cases involve Built to Last by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras,[8] and From Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... And Others Don't by Jim Collins.[9] Both books sought to describe the conditions under which competing firms may rise from mere goodness to greatness. In Built to Last, Collins and Porras identified 18 "visionary" companies that unfailingly outmanoeuvred their competitors through the relentless innovation of their products and services. Ten years later, however, close to 50 per cent of these firms had faltered. The same formula was repeated in the subsequent Good to Great, with Collins retrospectively selecting a sample of Fortune 500 firms that had financially outperformed their peers by some margin. Collins argued that the

overriding reason for these successes was the particular brand of leadership practised by their CEOs. Characterised by a quasi-religious mixture of humility and fierce resolve, Collins called this "Level 5 Leadership". At the time, Good to Great proved enormously popular, selling over four million copies, with some members of the CEO Council of The Wall Street Journal citing it as the most influential management book they'd yet come across. [10]

Despite the admirable qualities of Level 5 leaders per se, it later appeared that the fortunes of a number of these firms had declined. Others had simply gone bankrupt. The 2009 liquidation of Circuit City and the 2010 delisting of the giant mortgage lender Fannie Mae are cases in point, suggesting, in aggregate, that Collins had retrospectively cherry-picked his sample to support his leadership narrative. This begged the question of how many other firms had employed the same leadership style but, in turn, actually failed - a classic case of so-called survivorship bias. As Nassim Taleb said in his book Fooled by Randomness: "[T]he number of managers with great track records in a given market depends far more on the number of people who started in the ... business (in place of going to dental school), rather than on their ability to produce profits."[11] More so, in ignoring almost all pre-existing literature on the topic, Good to Great appeared to present itself as a definitive study emerging from a conceptual vacuum. Additionally, while Collins had cited a list of reasons why Level 5 firms had done well in the past, presenting these as foolproof methods of negotiating the future was stretching credulity. In a rapidly changing world, the past can seldom stand as a reasonable proxy for the future. As South African futurist Clem Sunter likes to say: "The future is not what it used to be." Increased volatility actually increases the chances of random events fouling predicted scenarios. For those readers seeking a better understanding of these dynamics, I would highly recommend Taleb's The Black Swan.[12] Along with Kahneman, Taleb is strongly critical of the predictive theories that populate much of social science (especially economics), and scornful of the pseudo-scientific assumptions that underpin these. Although their work falls largely outside the scope of this book, where it does overlap – as in the case of underestimating the role luck plays in forecasting success – both are way ahead of the game.

Business savvy in art

In light of the above, what can be said about the twin roles of talent and luck in the development of successful art? Given that art is merely a subset of business activity and thus equally susceptible to the random vagaries of the market, one would envisage instances where creative success has occurred either in the presence of business acumen, or alternately, in its absence. The following section provides some examples from both such scenarios, using Charles Dickens, Andy Warhol and Don McLean in

the case of the former, and Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan and the '70s band Magna Carta in the case of the latter. Though by no means a broad sample, these cases demonstrate that - given the right amount of luck – success may emerge irrespective of business acumen.

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was one of the earliest artists to demonstrate a marked degree of business savvy. As a 24-year-old trainee journalist, he came to novel writing accidentally when he accepted a brief to write a number of comic sketches in a series of monthly letters - for which he would be paid a shilling per instalment. Realising that his future success as a writer lay in developing an anchoring storyline, by the fourth of these letters, Dickens had begun to introduce regularly featured characters, such as the cockney Sam Weller. Published between April 1836 and November 1837, the collation of these 20 serialised vignettes converted naturally into his first book, The Pickwick Papers. Such was the increasing interest in his writing that by the conclusion of Pickwick, some 40,000 copies of his twentieth and final chapter were sold to his growing body of fans. His, next novel, Oliver Twist (1837-39), applied the same monthly instalment recipe, as did those that followed: Nicholas Nickleby (1838-39), The Old Curiosity Shop (1840-41) and Barnaby Rudge (1840-41).[13] Dickens can be considered the first serious novelist to employ the soap opera as a narrative technique, connecting with a hitherto neglected Victorian underclass and becoming relatively well-off in the process. Serialisation aside, Dickens was also one of the first authors to appreciate the importance of controlling copyright. At the time, England afforded little copyright protection to its writers, while in countries such as America, there was virtually none. Dickens successfully petitioned the English courts for stronger terms of protection. As a publisher himself, he was keen to ensure an ongoing revenue stream from the works of other authors he'd enlisted.[14]

Andy Warhol

Warhol was the principal figure driving the '60s Pop Art movement, particularly within its epicentre, New York. Showcased today in all top galleries celebrating modern art and fetching astronomical prices at auctions, Warhol's work explored concepts of consumerism, advertising culture and mass-production. While most famous for his silk-screen paintings of soup cans, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley, he also explored a number of artistic media including photography, cinema, painting and sculpture. During the height of his fame, Warhol presided over a creative incubator called The Factory. This was not unusual in itself. Rembrandt had done the same 300 years before him, as had a number of the great Italian masters. The key

difference, however, was that the scale of his output verged on the mass-production techniques that he so successfully parodied. “When we went up to the Factory it was a real eye-opener for me. It wasn't called the Factory for nothing,” observed The Velvet Underground's John Cale, in 2002. “It was where the assembly-line for the silkscreens happened. While one person was making a silkscreen, somebody else would be filming a screen test. Every day something new. I think he was dipping into anything he fancied.”[15] All told, The Factory fostered an artistic, if not cultural, revolution. Though not a musician himself, for a while Warhol managed Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground, raising their profile through his own already established reputation and incorporating them in a film and music roadshow entitled the Exploding Plastic Ineuitahle (1966). Along with socialites such as the “It Girl” Edie Sedgwick, and the photographer Stephen Shore, the Velvets were incorporated into Warhol's “superstars” - an inner circle of artists, drag queens, junkies, porn stars and street philosophers who each achieved some level of recognition through their association with The Factory. “Everyone gets their three minutes of fame,” as Warhol once drolly observed. And thus over that decade a pattern of mutual reinforcement emerged, each star feeding off the celebrity of others in their orbit. Pre-empting Silicon Valley by some margin, The Factory became an incubator for the avant-garde, producing scathing critiques of the prudish and conservative mores of the time. “The first Velvet Underground album only sold 10,000 copies,” said Brian Eno, “but everyone who bought it formed a band.”[16] As a business venture, Warhol's Factory proved remarkably entrepreneurial: a template for future artistic hubs such as those later presided over by contemporary artists Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and the fashion designer Marc Jacobs.[17]

Don McLean

Don McLean III is best known for his 1971 folk album American Pie, which produced two number one hits: “Vincent” and “American Pie” - the 8:36-minute ode penned to commemorate the plane-crash deaths of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and “The Big Bopper” J.P. Richardson, on 3 February 1959, the so-called day the music died. Following these successes, McLean lived comfortably as a recording artist, though never scaling the upper end of the charts again. Very few do. By the beginning of the ‘80s, McLean had penned some songs that were performing adequately, the given wisdom at the time being that your financial future was tied to your continued ability to produce chart fodder. At about that time McLean began to question this shibboleth, for, despite the disco and punk-driven changes in the music scene, radio stations were playing not just his current chart material but his older tunes as well. The key to his financial success, he realised, lay in regaining and retaining control over his older

songs. Though MTV was still in its infancy and iTunes had not yet been invented, McLean, who'd graduated with a business degree, employed contract lawyers not only to help him trademark both his name and the term “American Pie”, but also to insert non performance clauses into his recording contracts. These stipulated that, should it later emerge that the record labels were violating any of their marketing and distribution obligations, McLean could claw back his copyrights. By the early ‘80s this had emerged, as McLean explained in a 2015 BBC interview:

> In the 1980s I had this big hit with “Crying” and I had “Castles in the Air” on the charts, and I had “Since I Don't Have You” on the charts, “Jerusalem” was on the charts - the low end of the charts - but there was serious action in the ‘80s - when all the other singer-songwriters had already been off and out of the picture for five years because of disco - and it didn't change a thing - they were still playing the old songs of mine - and a light went on: I don't need a new hit; I need to control and own the old songs – because my past is my future. I realised that. And I said I'm going to get these songs away from all these people; they're blood sucking - and I went to war – and I started demanding that all these companies prove that they’d done what they were supposed to do - to be entitled to these ongoing percentages – and none of them did. So I got the songs back.[18]

Along with his intense dislike of the recording industry, this quote clearly demonstrates McLean's prescience in envisageing a world where he could control his music. Without control, he believed, artists were left with nothing. “The music business as we knew it is dead. There is no music business,'” said McLean in the same interview. “U2 gave away their last record. Bob Dylan gave away 50,000 copies of his record. There is no music business. It's nothing but an investment in a PR tool for the next tour. That's what it is.”

In April 2015, McLean put his original “American Pie” manuscript up for auction at Christie's where it was sold for $1,205,000. His insistence on the right to control song ownership laid down a marker for the subsequent purchase of musical copyrights by artists such as Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson, both of whom would amass fortunes on this basis.

Like McLean, artists such as Bill Evans and Neil Young also came to value the importance of proper business guidance. The drug-prone and depressive Bill Evans was terrible at the management of his own affairs. Indeed, the music critic Gene Lees maintained that, after the death of Evans' double bassist, Scott LaFaro, in July 1961, it was unlikely that the pianist would have lived another six months had Helen Keane not then stepped in as his manager.[19] Also prone to depression and drugs, Neil Young

is another who required tight management - in this case from the famous Elliot Roberts - to see him through. In a review of his autobiography, Wageing Heavy Peace, the New York Times quoted the singer on his ability to bum through cash, especially with respect to his pet passion: toy trains. “I spend it all,” said Young. “I like to employ people and make stuff. It will be my undoing.”[20]

Business trouble in art

While managers such as Roberts and Keane provided a lifetime of professional service to their clients, other artists have been less fortunate. Van Morrison, for one, loathes the recording industry. “Music is spiritual,” said Morrison. “The music business is not.”[21] We all know the story of Leonard Cohen's ill fortune when his lover and co-manager Kelley Lynch stiffed him of $5 million of his earnings, forcing him to tour well into his old age. The Beatles were also not immune to commercial problems - their ill-managed Apple Corps business venture producing little other than the early signing of James Taylor. Legend, too, is the story of “Sugar Man” Sixta Diaz Rodriguez, whose career fizzled in the US while, unbeknown to him, he became a household name in South Africa. Less well known, though, are the stories of Springsteen and Dylan, who both endured bitter and protracted severances from the legal contracts they had once naively put their pens to. Their stories are briefly recounted below, along with that of Chris Simpson, from Magna Carta.

Bruce Springsteen

Springsteen's first manager was Mike Appel. Appel was also the producer of his first three albums, Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J. (1973), The Wild, the Innocent & the E Street Shuffle (1973) and Born to Run (1975). Born to Run had, however, been co-produced with Jon Landau. Appel is perhaps best known for the ensuing contractual dispute with Springsteen, in which he refused to allow Landau production rights on future Springsteen recordings. Sparked by the view that he was being ousted from his role as Springsteen's boss-man, this refusal infuriated Springsteen who sued Appel, who in tum countersued. The case dragged on for a year and was eventually settled out of court in mid-1977, leaving Appel with just under a million dollars, and freeing Springsteen to record the sombre and introspective Darkness on the Edge of Town (1978), an album rated by Rolling Stone as the 151st greatest album of all time.[22] Springsteen's 2016 autobiography indicates that he and Appel are at peace with what went down. Though Appel was an abrasive individual, Springsteen seems to appreciate that, without his manager's perseverance during the initial stages of his career, the breakthrough with Born to Run might never have occurred. In his autobiography, Springsteen describes his marginal existence – that even while making

the second E Street Shuffle album, he occasionally slept on the beach between recording sessions. The plain truth is that, for much of Springsteen's early life as an artist, he needed Appel. In his book, Springsteen offers insight into his lifestyle at the time: he lived off the grid, had always been paid cash, and didn't have a cheque book or credit card, "just what was jingling in my pocket". He was ignorant about legal matters and didn't have any college-educated friends. "My Asbury Park was an island of misfit, blue-collar provincials. Smart but not book smart," he wrote. Reflecting on his lack of experience during the sign-on process with Appel, Springsteen says he had never signed, nor even seen, a contract before - not even a lease for an apartment. In fact, he was "extremely suspicious of them".[23]

Given this context, the naive Springsteen and streetwise Appel were destined to clash somewhere down the line, resulting in massive public sympathy for Springsteen. However, when reflected against the following story of Albert Grossman's relationship with Bob Dylan, Mike Appel appears as a choirboy by comparison.

Bob Dylan

Albert Grossman was Bob Dylan's manager - a shrewd, music-loving businessman with a degree in economics. On graduating, Grossman had started up the Gate of Horn folk club in his hometown, Chicago. There he would manage Joan Baez and collaborate with George Wein to establish the Newport Folk Festival in 1959. Nicknamed "The Bear", Grossman was a big man, six foot two, with a reputation for being a bully. He was, though, a remarkable scout of musical talent, signing on the folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary, in 1961. Though passing earlier on future folk stars Dave Van Ronk and Carolyn Hester, later Grossman would include in his stable the likes of Janis Joplin, Todd Rundgren, The Band, John Lee Hooker, Odetta and Gordon Lightfoot. Grossman was pugnacious, both in his method of inducing sign-ups and in managing them to stardom. Instead of the standard 15 per cent commission fee, Grossman charged 25 per cent. "Every time you talk to me you're ten percent smarter than before. So I just add ten percent on to what all the dummies charge for nothing," he is reputed to have said.[24] To understand Grossman's contribution to Dylan's artistic future, is important to note that Grossman backed him from the start, because (it emerged subsequently) of a very good- though ulterior - reason. In January 1962, in the first of a two-part deal, Grossman had convinced Dylan to assign the publishing rights of his songs to a publishing division of Warner Bros. called Witmark & Sons.[25] Then, unbeknown to Dylan, in July Grossman worked a deal with Witmark such that he would earn 50 per cent of any publishing income generated by Witmark-registered composers under his charge. Just over a month after the Witmark deal,

Dylan left Roy Silver, his first agent, and inked a management contract binding him to Grossman for the foreseeable future. With the dice now fully loaded on Dylan's future, Grossman would increasingly do all he could to ensure things worked out in his favour. From Dylan's perspective, his signing to Grossman was perhaps not that surprising: his first album with Columbia Records - Bob Dylan (1962) - had bombed in its first year, selling just a "break-even" 5000 copies. With hindsight, Dylan realised that his recording contract sucked, yielding only 4 per cent sales royalties and binding him to Columbia until 1967. Perhaps rightly, Grossman believed the Columbia deal was extortionate and attempted unsuccessfully to nullify it on the grounds that Dylan was still under age when he had signed. "I was just so happy to be able to record, I didn't even read it," admitted Dylan later.[26] Though clearly talented, Dylan was then not even 21, and naive in the extreme. However, with Grossman by his side, Dylan must have believed that his chances of success would improve. "He looked like Sydney Greenstreet from the film The Maltese Falcon, had an enormous presence, always dressed in a conventional suit and tie, and he sat at his corner table," he said of his manager. "Usually when he talked, his voice was loud like the booming of war drums. He didn't talk so much as growl."[27]

Stuck with the Columbia contract, Grossman presented now as something of a father-figure, putting Dylan up in his upstate Woodstock home, the same area where Dylan would later buy his first house and settle into marriage with former model Sara Lownds. Dylan wrote many of the songs for Bringing It All Back Home (1965) in Grossman's home; the photo on the album cover was taken in his lounge and the seductive woman in red reclining in the background is none other than his wife, Sally Grossman. Oblivious of Grossman's duplicity regarding the Witmark deal, at the time, Dave Van Ronk commented: "Whatever was wrong with Albert, he believed in Bob, he really did. He stuck with Bobby."[28] Odetta concurred, stating that the two formed "a mighty combination". Even in the legal acrimony that followed, Dylan reluctantly conceded that Grossman had done "some good things for me over the years".[29] After the release of Blonde on Blonde (1966), the dynamics of the paternalistic partnership shifted, when, in July 1967, Dylan - now the prince of folk and electric music - re-signed with Columbia in a five-year deal with terms that included a $200,000 advance, a 20 per cent royalty on all future albums, and a 5 per cent royalty on his back catalogue. Under this revised arrangement, Grossman's overbearing presence was no longer required and, within three years, driven by his growing dismay at his manager's greed and betrayal, Dylan had nullified all contracts between himself and "The Bear".

But this was not the end of it. More than a decade later, the relationship flared up publicly, when, in May 1981, Grossman sued Dylan for back-royalties and

commissions, plus $400,000 in punitive damages. Incensed, Dylan responded with 18 countersuits and a claim for $7.1 million, stating that Grossman had acted in bad faith and abused his trust as a young artist. In a sworn deposition, Dylan pointed out that well before Grossman had "discovered" him he had, in fact, already secured both an agent and a recording contract.[30] Asked how long he'd known Grossman, Dylan responded calculatingly: "Well, I don't think I've ever known the man, Mr Grossman."[31] The dispute between the two produced one of the largest case files in New York legal history.[32] A hard rain fell. It was the mother of all bust-ups.

Magna Carta

In September 2007 the '70s folk band Magna Carta played in Cape Town for the first and probably only time. They appeared in a pub in Observatory- one of the city's gritty inner suburbs - a far cry from the larger venues they might have once played. Before the show, through a mutual friend, I was fortunate to meet the band's lead singer and songwriter, Chris Simpson. Since its inception, the band had gone through several changes in membership and Simpson was now the only survivor from the original line-up when Magna Carta had made it seriously big with their critically acclaimed album, Lord of the Ages (1973). Before the show, over supper and a glass of wine, in "Cohen-esque" terms, Simpson wryly explained that the reason he was still touring at the ripe old age of 65, was that, back in the '70s, the band had not retained any of their rights to the lucrative Lord of the Ages album. Their one big hit, he pointed out wistfully, was in fact their one big miss and the only money being made off the "fat tail" of any subsequent album sales was by Vertigo Records, which pocketed almost all the album royalties. This was certainly a case where art had failed to yield long-term financial success, leaving Simpson to eke out a living through an ongoing schedule of one-night gigs.

Luck in Art

From the case stories recounted above, business acumen seems at best only loosely correlated with ultimate success. Certainly, there is nothing definitive. Despite being a talented band, Magna Carta never made it beyond one great album. More consistent artists such as Charles Dickens, Andy Warhol and Don McLean all prospered through the application of some remarkable business awareness. Conversely, however, as fledgling stars, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan did not display any marked degree of contractual acumen and yet, subsequently, amassed substantial fortunes. In Rolling Stone's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time, for example, the hapless Dylan's work is the most featured, with 11 albums in all – two of which fall in the top 10 - (9) Blonde on Blonde and (4) Highway 61 Revisited. Following on from The Beatles, Eric

Clapton and The Rolling Stones (with 10 albums apiece), Bruce Springsteen features next, with eight of his albums, including (18) Born to Run and (86) Born in the USA.[33] So much for bad managers! Indeed, in the case of Springsteen, I am not even sure that Appel was such a bad manager. The contract Springsteen signed with him was standard - there was nothing underhand about it. Managers like Appel were merely acting as VCs would today – providing their time and effort, on risk - with the hope of some payoff down the line. That Springsteen sought to back out of the contract when the terms of the agreement no longer suited him was a problem brought about by his newfound success, not the terms of the contract. This said, how then does the role of luck account for these differing stories? Providence is often seen as a random phenomenon raining on the talented and talentless alike. This view, expressed by Machiavelli in 1513, is still relevant today:

> Nevertheless, since our free will must not be denied, I estimate that even if fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, she still allows us to control the other half, or thereabouts. I compare fortune to one of those torrential rivers which, when engaged, inundates the lowlands, tears down trees and buildings, and washes out the land on one bank to deposit it on the other. Everyone flees before it; everyone yields to its assaults without being able to offer any resistance.[34]

Despite his debut album being rejected by 34 recording labels, Don McLean, in a 2005 interview, still acknowledged the role of good luck in his career as a recording artist:

> I would say if anyone wants to go into the music business the thing you've got to do is get a very good transactional lawyer - a contract lawyer. And it's got to be a lawyer you know and he is the person you bring contracts to and he is the person that explains them to you. Not your manager's lawyer and not your manager. This will keep your manager honest and it will allow you to understand in plain English what it is you're signing. I guess I get a bit of credit for having some business savvy but I've had a lot of luck. A lot of things broke right for me and I was able to win a number of legal actions which allowed me to coalesce my ownership of the songs that I created but there was a bit of luck involved, so I wasn't all that savvy.[35]

Steely Dan's Donald Fagen is equally open about the role of luck. “Our success is an accident in a way,” acknowledged Fagen. “We have so many more traditional influences and are more uncompromising than most rock 'n' rollers. We've taken our style from jazz, early 19th and 20th -century serious music, R&B blues and to some

extent white rock 'n' roll and simply played for ourselves. I guess we appeal to a certain audience that dances, a certain audience that likes the back beat and yet another one that can pick up on the nuances. We never expected to sell as many records as we have recently, we just lucked out really."[36]

Bruce Springsteen is also candid about the extent to which fortune shaped his career. In his autobiography, he writes: "Look at it like this: In 1964, millions of kids saw the Stones and the Beatles and decided, 'That looks like fun.' Some of them went out and bought instruments. Some of them learned to play a little. Some got good enough to maybe join a local band." Then, after emphasising how few of those would have made it as successful musicians, he tells of his magical moment at 1988's Hall of Fame ceremony where he "ended up standing between Mick Jagger and George Harrison, a Stone and a Beatle. I did not fool myself about what the odds were back in 1964 that one would've been the acne-faced fifteen-year-old kid with the cheap Kent guitar from Freehold, New Jersey. My parents were RIGHT! My chances were ONE, ONE in a MILLION, in MANY MILLIONS."[37]

Always economic in his phraseology (and certainly less exuberant than Springsteen), Hemingway credited providence in this way: "For a long time now I have tried simply to write the best I can. Sometimes I have good luck and write better than I can."[38] On another occasion, he wrote: "My luck, she is running very good."[39]

The fortunes of the great guitarist Jimi Hendrix were also profoundly swayed by luck. Very few know or appreciate the extent to which Hendrix, so down on his luck as a boy, became so lucky on his touchdown in London in September 1966. Within 24 hours of his arrival, a series of random events radically reshaped his career. That evening he appeared at The Scotch of St James music club, performing in front of a host of musical luminaries, including the lead singer of The Animals, Eric Burdon: "It was haunting how good he was," recalled Burdon. "You just stopped and watched." That same night, Hendrix met Kathy Etchingham, who later became his long-term girlfriend. Etchingharn was well connected and knew members of The Rolling Stones and The Who. As his biographer, Charles Cross, observed: "He had always been the master of invention, but how quickly his life transformed after only one day in England must have caused even him to marvel. The happenings of the clay were also illustrative of how much Jimi's personal life - and his career - were shaped by seemingly random events." Getting recognition for his music and making enough money to live on suddenly became easy. "Jimi had spent twenty-three years of his life struggling with identity and seeking a place in a world where he felt like an outcast. In one single clay in London, it felt like his life had permanently been recast."[40]

One of the more nuanced perspectives on luck comes from Joe Walsh, solo artist and guitarist on the Eagles' 1976 album, Hotel California, who suggested that

at close quarters most circumstances can often seem as if randomly assembled. However, with time and distance, a pattern begins to emerge. “So much stuff just happened,” observed Walsh of his period with the Eagles. “You know there's a philosopher who says as you live your life it appears to be anarchy and chaos and random events, unrelated events smashing into each other and causing this situation - and then ‘this’ happens - and it's overwhelming and it just looks like: ‘what in the world is going on?’ And later when you look back at it, it looks like a finely crafted novel, that at the time it didn't. And a lot of the Eagles story is like that.”[41]

In filmmaking, it's also sometimes difficult to tell which movies will succeed and which won't. One of my favourite films as a student was the ‘1987 black comedy Withnail and I, starring UCT graduate Richard E. Grant. Shot on a shoestring budget, few would have imagined that Withnail would become a cult classic. And yet it did. In 2011, Time Out London named Withnail the seventh-greatest comedy film of all time.[42] In an interview, director Bruce Robinson recalled a conversation with his coproducer on the evening before filming was due to begin. “David Wimbury sat down with me in this empty bar - and had a couple of glasses - and he said something to me that is so true about the film industry. He said: ‘The thing is, Bruce, it doesn't matter how good your script is, how good your actors are, how good you may or may not be as a director, how good the weather's going to be: if you haven't got luck, you're fucked.’ Now I'd made a film without luck and I was fucked, and the thing about Withnail is that we had luck ... And that's why the film worked.”[43]

The apparent randomness of luck is, however, not the full story. An alternative definition, as previously mentioned, suggests that luck is the place where preparation meets opportunity. This derives from the French microbiologist Louis Pasteur, who saw how “chance favours the prepared mind”. In this sense, it is perhaps more accurate to say instead that you make your own luck. Van Gogh is of course an exception here, dying years before the world woke up to his genius. Sometimes, no matter how well prepared you are, the break simply does not come. This notwithstanding, it remains true that opportunity seldom drops out of nowhere onto those sitting passively below. Those who are unprepared are unlikely to meet with opportunity.

The great American landscape photographer Ansel Adams employed Pasteur's dictum as if it were his own. The story behind his famous photo Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, taken in 194 l, exemplifies this notion of luck presiding at the intersect between preparation and chance. On l November that year, as he was driving along US Route 84-285 through New Mexico's Chama River Valley, Adams came across the now famous desert scene with the late evening light glinting off some gravestones in a nearby village. Realising that the light was about to disappear, Adams seized the

opportunity and scrambled to assemble his camera. “I could not find my Weston exposure meter! The situation was desperate: the low sun was trailing the edge of clouds in the west, and shadow would soon dim the white crosses,” recalled Adams later. “I suddenly realized that I knew the luminance of the Moon - 250 cd/ft2. Using the Exposure Formula, I placed this value on Zone VII ... Realizing as I released the shutter that I had an unusual photograph which deserved a duplicate negative, I swiftly reversed the film holder, but as I pulled the darkslide the sunlight passed from the white crosses; I was a few seconds too late! The lone negative suddenly became precious.”[44] It is a story that perfectly captures the essence of luck. In 2006, a print of this outstanding photo was sold at Sotheby's for $609,600.[45]

Success

Having considered the role of business acumen and luck in the co-determination of success, let's briefly examine the question of success itself. How do artists view success? By now, you probably know the answer. Throughout this book I've described how artists incorporate their lives around the process of their art. “There's no retirement for an artist, it's your way of living so there's no end to it,” said the sculptor Henry Moore.’[46] In this sense, art is thus not a means to an end but simply a way of being. It is a destiny, a vocation, a calling. Artists seldom speak of their work in monetary terms, describing it rather as a mechanism of existential delivery. “The only time I feel alive is when I'm painting,” wrote Van Gogh.[47]

‘I’m glad I've been handsomely paid for my efforts but I would've truly done it for free,” claimed Springsteen. “It was the only way I found momentary release and the purpose I was looking for. So, for me, there weren't any shortcuts. It's a lot to lay on a piece of wood with six steel strings and a couple of cheap pickups attached, but such was the ‘sword’ of my deliverance.”[48] R.E.M. lead guitarist Peter Buck has expressed a similar view. “The greatest music has always been made by individuals from unique standpoints, without commercial considerations,” he said. “To me, 'making it' means being able to play and make records, having people appreciate your music, and enjoy what you're doing. Right now, we've made it. If we went on like this forever, I'd be happy.”[49]

Explained in these terms, the final question worth considering is how we link the problem of making money to that of being an artist. After years of reading around the topic, I come back to jazz pianist Bill Evans' response, quoted earlier, in which he concluded that we should focus purely on producing great art. The rest, he said, would take care of itself. “I came to the conclusion that all I must do is take care of the music, even if I do it in a closet. And if I really do that, someone is going to come and open the door of the closet and say, ‘Hey, we're looking for you.’ And this is the way I

approached the whole thing. If I'd spread myself all over the place I would have lost sight of everything. Isn't it terrible that there's a war here or starvation there and what am I going to do as a human being about this whole thing? Well, gosh, if you tried to accept every problem you're just going to go insane. You see you have to choose some field in which you operate at your best capacity and which will then serve as an influence to deter all these other things. If I take care of the music the best I can with my truest beliefs then all these other things will be affected as I desire them to be affected- as much as I can fix them."[50]

What Evans is saying here should not be misinterpreted. Artists are required to operate from the truest of their beliefs. For artists, nothing is more important than this condition, which is the condition of their hearts.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. This final chapter considers luck and ability as the twin concepts commonly employed to explain success.
2. Regarding luck: we examine the propensity to attribute business achievement solely to expertise. As witnessed from examples lifted from VC firms, expertise in itself yields mixed results, suggesting that luck must have a role to play. Correspondingly, success in art also appears to manifest irrespective of any business flair. Thus, for example, while Dickens and Warhol were savvy traders, Springsteen and Dylan - at least at the start of their careers – seemingly were not.
3. Though by definition luck is random, this is not to say that luck cannot be cultivated. With chance being shown to favour the prepared mind, we need to position ourselves with the necessary preparation and practice, for, without these baseline prerequisites, the gift of creativity risks being wasted.

Conclusion

Whereto with Creativity?

> In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.
> BABA DIOUM[1]

Following on from the ideas presented in this book, a number of insights emerge for those seeking a better understanding of creativity and the role that various art forms play, namely:

A. Art is a pervasive part of our lives. It is everywhere: in our music, our books, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the buildings we inhabit. Perhaps having read this book you can now see something of the processes that underpin this art, what it costs (when it's good, no less than everything); and how it may affect you (if you let it).

B. Art also has stories to tell and these are now emerging as the artists of this last generation have begun to script and release their life stories for public scrutiny. Such stories are of immense significance. They help us make sense of the world; they lend us the eyes of these artists. Through their accumulated writings, they help us appreciate the world from a unique and deeply privileged perspective and this in a way that has not been possible to date. For those who have not paid sufficient attention to these stories, now is the time to do so. Properly understood, the art of this fast-passing generation provides a resonating point of reference. We need to appreciate this, bearing in mind though that it does not discount the work of those who came before. Artists practising prior to World War II played a massive role - for example, the painters of the Cubist, Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist periods of visual art, as well as writers such as Hemingway, Eliot and Woolf. They were, however, not the artists of this last half-century and, while I am deeply grateful for their critical and enriching contributions, they are of another era. What does the current period of art mean? What is our generation of artists telling us? As the stories unfold, the narrative of this passing era may now be better understood. We are in a rich and blessed period of exploration.

C. Though it can be argued that the role of art is to entertain and inform, its primary purpose is to educate and to lead us into the light. This being so, based on the disciplines and mindsets disclosed here, what can art teach us? What lessons does art have to offer? I believe that there are several.

Lesson to take home

1. Though not wishing to overstate the case, through the elements described in this book, we are now perhaps a little closer to comprehending how artists think. This has profound implications for those in other disciplines seeking answers. If we are genuinely serious about the cultivation of ideas, then it is these creatives who offer us the best insights available, and we need to pay attention.

2. As a more generalised comment it should be said that artists are de facto ahead of their times. They define the moment; they interpret the signals and offer a vision of the future. This is also what entrepreneurs do.

3. Right now art can and should be working with the STEM disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In his most recent book, Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations (2016), Thomas Friedman makes this very point, observing that while the "supernova" of computing capacity is now increasingly capable of previously impossible technological heavy-lifting, the real breakthroughs will require an integration with artistic insight and flair.[2] This implies a revision from the STEM suite of subjects to one of STEAM, thereby incorporating Art in the process. As with Isambard Brunel in the 19th century and Steve Jobs at Apple, artists can and will continue to embrace technology as a basis of art.

   Brian Eno recently suggested that, following songwriting, the next artistic era would probably be based around gaming.[3] This could well be so, though additional artistic forms will no doubt follow. Art is certainly not over. New forms will flare out from the margins, as they always have.

4. A further point to stress is that the big ideas of "high" art are not possible without the muse. From the research undertaken for this book it is clear that its role is vital, though often misunderstood. Many artists shyly admit to some level of supernatural inspiration, seemingly embarrassed to credit the presence of a divine creative force in their lives. In a secular world, the mention of God has become politically incorrect. Regardless, as sifting through the views of Dylan, Cohen,

Sting, Taylor, Waits and others will show, great art is written from the heavens, the artists serving as lightning rods for this purpose. This is not a new insight; indeed, it goes back to the Ancient Greeks, though right now it appears severely repressed.

5. There has been a lot of talk about the role of collaboration in creativity. Though this might well have merit, there is a strong case to be made for a reassertion of the artist as an individual lone ranger. As Nikola Tesla once put it: "The mind is sharper and keener in seclusion and uninterrupted solitude. No big laboratory is needed in which to think. Be alone, that is the secret of invention; be alone, that is when ideas are born. That is why many of the earthly miracles have had their genesis in humble surroundings."[4] As solitude and absence from external distractions often allows the artist to hear and pay attention to the first indications of creative thought, solitude needs to be respected, understood and facilitated. Collaboration is important but, in art, initial insight is achieved individually, especially when driven by the muse.

6. Another uncomfortable subject is the role of depression, madness and addiction. As this book describes, mental fragility has always been twinned with creativity. If imagination is to be fostered and celebrated, this dimension of the creative mindset needs to be understood and sensitively incorporated into daily practices. Creatives are different from most others and - regardless of the reasons for it - this difference allows them to see and sense things in ways that the more conventional do not.

7. The same applies to the role of outsiders, who need to be accepted and respected if fresh approaches to innovation are to be cultivated. The question of how "outsiderliness" may be nurtured from within is a complex issue, as Bob Dylan has shown. Even as an elder statesman of his generation, he refuses to fit in. To emphasise the point, this 2009 quote bears repeating: "When I started out, mainstream culture was Sinatra, Perry Como, Andy Williams, The Sound of Music. There was no fitting into it then and of course there's no fitting into it now."[5]

8. The role of practice, too, is critical to "setting" the creative table. We need to reach a degree of technical proficiency before the muse arrives and this can only be achieved with hard work. There are very few short cuts here.

9. The related discipline of paying attention needs also to be appreciated. New thoughts and ideas often begin as tiny inklings and, if not given attention, are too easily lost in the chaos of everyday life. There is a need to be aware at all times of these often fleeting feelings if they are not to be lost as stillborn because they are so tentative on arrival, and lost, in a flash, by the hooting of a car behind you. With practice, you can train yourself to be more aware of these often novel thoughts and feelings, tiny moments of inspiration, very brief downloads if you like and, if you pay attention - especially if you jot them down - you can come back to them, expand on them and turn them into something meaningful, something new, which has value. Those totally focused on composing, writing, painting and thinking pay more attention to the fluttering of ideas than most. They have learnt to be alive to them, to grab them as they pass and make something of them - like Paul McCartney with "Yesterday", and Robin Gibb with "You Win Again".

10. Most importantly, creativity is about being yourself, about finding your voice, your authenticity. Few artists of any merit are poseurs. The dedication required is absolute. Creativity, however, is not about giving up on life. On the contrary, it is about connecting with the shimmering force field of creative energy exchange. Those in this force field produce work of the highest calibre and are profoundly moved, if not altered, by the experience. Springsteen understands the transformational capacity of the creative life better than most. In his exceptional autobiography, Born to Run, he challenges his followers to reconfigure their lives accordingly: "All you have to do to taste real life is to risk being your true self ... to listen ... to the [radio j stations filled with poets, geniuses, rockers, bluesmen, preachers, philosopher-kings, speaking to YOU from deep in the heart of your own soul." He continues: "Their voices sing, 'Listen ... listen to what this world is telling you, for it is calling you for your love, your rage, your beauty, your sex, your energy, your rebellion ... because it needs you in order to remake itself. In order to be reborn into something else, something maybe better, more godly, more wonderful, it needs US.'"[6]

    This is not just an injunction. It is a call to arms. The implied transcendence is also something experienced at Springsteen's concerts: the high of the artist connecting with his audience and of mutual surrender to the moment. These forms of energy exchange seem hardwired within our DNA. It is a fundamental component of the deep creativity described by Pollock and Evans: an explosion of the present, communing with orders of being beyond comprehension.

Though such existential intensity is available to all at any time, the problem for artists and non-artists alike is that there is inevitably a "fal1-off" period when we retreat to our lesser selves, returning to the "automatic pilot" of the humdrum. But this is not how we are called to live. The creative person is always striving for more. As Irish avant-garde novelist Samuel Beckett wrote: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."[7]

11. Business now needs to take on these various lessons. It needs to acknowledge, along with most current educational systems, its historical complicity in stifling ideas and creativity; it needs to own up to its dinosaur and often toxic ways of operating, hiring, managing and dealing with failure. And, most certainly, it needs to rethink its approach to creativity. Great ideas do not emerge through rote methodologies. The most constant and irritating thing about creativity in business is its fixation on methods and procedures, and its consequent negation of the importance of heart. This has to change. Business that succeeds in this will win in the long term. Applied properly and thoughtfully, creativity can only reinvigorate business practices. But this is not just a responsibility of business. Schools, universities and other state systems also need to own up and re-equip young people with the necessary skills to think creatively. Partnerships are required. There can be no doubt that the organisations that get this right will be the ones that ultimately flourish and endure. Those that do not will be left behind. And they will perish.

12. Having read this hook, some practices to consider might include: (l) allowing some staff the flexibility to act more creatively, (2) allowing for the inevitability of failure in the development of ideas, (3) hiring more creative types from the liberal arts and other creative disciplines, and (4) having certain sectors of business actually trying to cultivate more creativity through workshops and/ or by copying Silicon Valley practices. Note that these are not prescriptions. Each business must figure out its own best practice according to context and prevailing constraints. Aside from the mindset components and disciplines described in this book, what can be observed is how different the creative process is for everyone. In this sense there can be no "magic formula". All we can see are a suite of generic principles that equate to laying the table.

13. While art can teach business, to be sure, business can teach art too. I worry that some contemporary art has lost the plot - take Tracey Emin's My Bed (1998) for example. (In 1999, Emin's unmade bed- featuring spent condoms, body secretions

and house slippers - was exhibited in London's Tate gallery. In 2014, it was sold at Christie's for £2.5 million.) The valuations attached to such works are ludicrous. At some point, the music must stop. If contemporary art is to be taken seriously, it needs to move on. Certain art dealers and their camp followers will grumble at this complaint. But then, as Goethe reminded us, “everything is hard, before it is easy”.[8] And Steve Jobs would have put it even more bluntly.

14. I believe, too, that there is a lot of creativity in business - much more than is commonly imagined- though this is seldom written up. A number of my good friends in business have related the events surrounding some of their remarkable creative insights - often in quite matter-of-fact tones. From these disclosures, and from what I understand of the creative process, I have little doubt that inspiration is also visited upon those in business, as it is those in art. This is certainly a topic of further research.

15. Consider then the following set of statements as an encapsulation of everything presented here. At base, this book offers insight into the mindset and discipline components of creativity. The “mindset” components can be simplified into three major themes: love, resilience and suffering; the last of which has three sub-themes: (1) the recovery and betrayal of the inner child, (2) the outsider, and (3) depression, madness and addiction. Each of these occupies a chapter, along with resilience (in this book it is termed “grit”), and love (here termed “passion”). Correspondingly, the creative "discipline" components reduce (by order of significance) to proactivity, practice, perspective and serendipity. Once more, each is covered in a dedicated chapter.

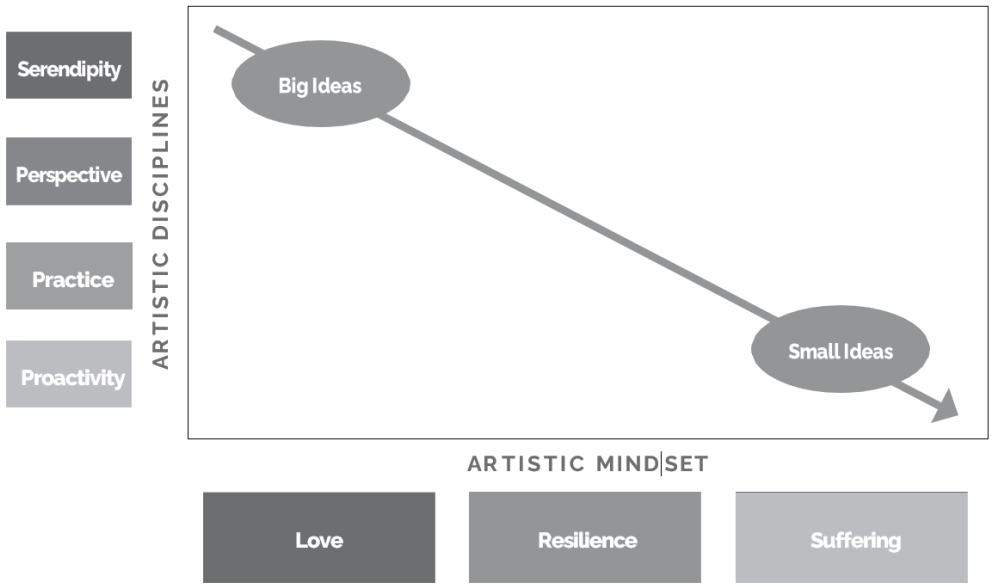

FIGURE 1: *How Artistic mindset and discipline components may combine to yield creative ideas*

Note how the quality of ideas may change from small to big depending on the components brought to bear. While art, suffering is generally a corequisite for all ideas, the development of big ideas is usually catalysed by additional degrees of resilience and love on one side, and by serendipity on the other

This conceptual framework may be further elaborated upon to yield the following in Figure 2:

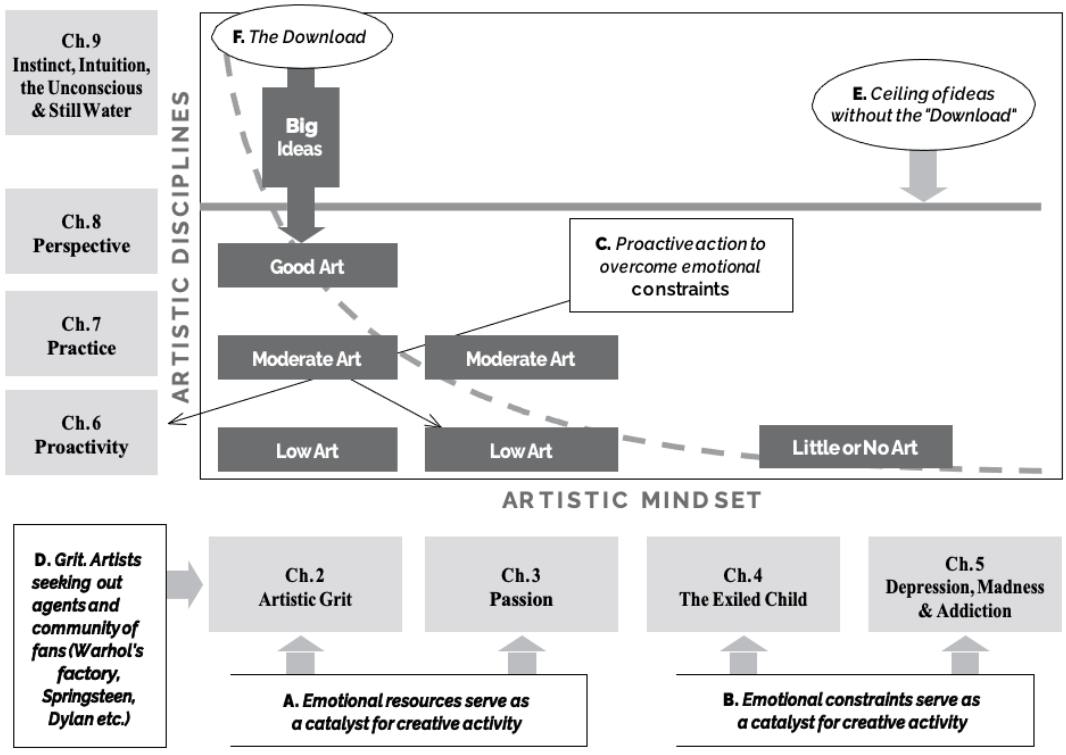

FIGURE 2: *The development of low-to-high-quality ideas within the context of creative practice*

A number of observations are made in the above sketch. (A) Grit and Passion may thus be considered as the key emotional resources necessary to the development of good and especially great ideas. (B) Note how the Exiled Child and the Depression, Madness &Addiction suite of the mindset yields little art in and of itself, but as an emotional constraint, may serve to catalyse creativity, given sufficient Grit and Passion. (C) Proactivity is the initial key to unlocking creativity. Without it there can be no creative output. Productivity overcomes suffering, if engaged with Passion and especially Grit. (D) Grit is required to break through – and is initially employed by the artist to access a sponsor-network through an agent - and then, subsequently, some level of market recognition though a fan-base. (E) There appears to be a ceiling that divides supernaturally derived "big ideas" from just good ones. Big ideas occur when passion is combined with the "disciplines" of inspiration and still water. (F) Under these conditions the so-called "download" of "big ideas" may occur.

16. In the realm of artistic ideas, Figure 2's conceptualisation appears to be the most sensible. It remains unclear, however, whether and to what extent it applies to other forms of idea generation - within the pure sciences, for example. Scientists appear to be less afflicted by suffering,[9] though this may be a gross generalisation - witness John Nash and Newton for example - and readers are redirected towards Chapter 5 on Depression, Madness & Addiction to re-familiarise themselves with the nuances of this argument.

    While the creative processes of the artists explored in this book offer valuable insights, this is by no means an exhaustive study and, in time, fresh perspectives are bound to emerge. It is, however, a foundation for raising awareness about the importance of creativity, as well as recognising and stepping into the creative flow.

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To all UCT colleagues, and to friends near and far, my thanks for their encouragement and support during the period of this work.

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SECTION ONE

Chapter one – The Artistic Sensibility

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CHAPTER TWO – Artistic Grit

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SECTION FOUR

CHAPTER TEN – Success = Talent + Luck

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DAVID PRIILAID (PhD, M.Sc., MBA) is an Associate Professor at the University of Cape Town (UCT) where he convenes the Postgraduate Diploma in Entrepreneurship. He has taught strategy, entrepreneurship and creativity in business for 22 years. Priilaid, who has a doctorate in nonlinear hedonic pricing models, is a prominent writer and keynote speaker and his work has featured in several local and international journals, textbooks and magazines. He is also a published poet and a qualified English and Maths teacher. Between 1987 and 1990, Priilaid served as resident DJ on UCT's campus radio. His formative experience in the arts, coupled with his expertise in entrepreneurship, proved critical to the development of this book.

David Priilaid pulls back the curtain on the process, the passion, the pain and ultimately the pleasure of creating. An insightful read with references to artists such as Springsteen, Dylan, Cohen, Hemingway, Matisse and many more.

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