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 THREE – Passion

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[25] Ibid. (p. 470).

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