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‘I and I’: Collaboration and the Double Act of Musical Creation

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Collaboration is essential to musical creation. This is true, paradoxically, even of acts of solo creation. This is so because creation of all kinds is propelled by the phenomenon of doubling. Creation is not singular, but rather binary. It is a function of twinning, pairing, and mirroring. This is evident in creative personalities. The composer, orchestrator and producer—each one is an ‘I’, an ego. While Romantic theories equated creation with the work of the ego alone, i.e. the effect of lonely genius, in truth creation is an effect of genius in tandem. The interaction of ‘I’ and ‘I’ adds a soulful dimension to the work of the ego. It guards against the egomania and ego anxiety that obstructs creative work. The strange looping that occurs between two egos is a precondition of effective creativity. Sometimes that strange looping occurs within a single self. The music of Bob Dylan is a case in point. Sometimes it is duos that create together. Twentieth-century music is inconceivable without the partnerships of Jagger and Richards, Plant and Page, Stravinsky and Balanchine, Cage and Cunningham, Warwick and David, Sinatra and Riddle, Reed and Cale, and Davis and Evans. There are innumerable kinds of collaborations. Some occur between composers. Others involve musicians, bands, producers, arrangers, and managers. Some are flesh-and-blood; some are imaginary. However they take place, collaborations play a crucial if combustible role in acts of musical creation.

I remember it as if it was yesterday. I heard a kind of sound that I had never heard before. It shattered the viscous envelope of tedium that radio seemed to wrap everything in. It was the sound of a harmonica. It was other-worldly. It came from another, better place. What I didn’t know then was that I was consciously hearing the sound of art for the first time. There was something strange and beautiful about that sound. I was too young at the time to know what it was, but it left its mark on me. It was memorable in a way that almost all of the sounds on the radio at the time were not. What I later came to understand was that this was also the signature of art. Art is memorable. The way that it makes an impression on the mind sets it apart from most other forms of human expression. We remember each incident of art long after it has happened. It sticks in our mind.

The song I heard was a beat song. I don't think the radio announcer liked it very much. The radio sound of 1963 was an anodyne archaeology of the nineteen forties, fifties and early sixties. The popular songs of the period were by turns pedestrian and corny. This beat song was different. It stood out. Actually it was less the song than its harmonica riff that was difficult to forget. Where the radio usually induced amnesia, this sound demanded to be memorised. It sank its teeth into the listener's cerebral cortex and would not let go. I was not the only one who was affected in this way by *Love Me Do*.¹ Many musicians, decades later, talked about the lasting impression the song made on them. The song itself was not a great Lennon and McCartney composition. It had been written in 1958, a slight teenaged piece devised by precocious talents. But Lennon's harmonica playing on the 1962 recording turned the song into something else: into art.²

What was it about Lennon's playing that turned an unassuming period beat song into a work with aesthetic qualities? The short answer is that art and aesthetics are a function of the double act of creation.³ What Lennon's playing, the Lennon-McCartney partnership, and art in general have in common is the uncanny double dominated by the slightly eerie, strange or mysterious character of 'two things that are one'. This peculiar 'two-in-one' effect pervades art. It is a cause of aesthetic experience. It lies at the core of the cognitive act of creation and deeply influences the way we recognize artworks. It does not matter whether those works are part of an official canon of art, or whether they are newly minted and everyone is uncertain of how to evaluate their significance. In 1963, the Beatles were pop radio ephemera, not durable pop art. Yet art lasts, and when a song such as *Love Me Do*, which in many ways is a slight song, lasts, the issue of art invariably rears its head. If fifty years has past, and the song is still played, performed and listened to, chances are that there is something more than sloppy, slushy, gushy sentiment at the heart of its appeal.

Art arouses, and the phenomenon of doubling stimulates arousal. Its clarion call in this case was John Lennon's eerie warbling harmonica sound—played on a

¹ The Beatles' *Love Me Do* was released in the UK on October 5, 1962 and in the United States on July 22, 1963.

² Ironically it was released as a single much later in America because the American label boss didn't like the harmonica playing on the recording. D. Rybaczewski, 'Love Me Do History' (n.d.) <http://www.beatlesebooks.com/love-me-do> (Accessed June 16, 2010).

³ The role of doubling in the act of creation is further explored in Simon Marginson, Peter Murphy, and Michael Peters, *Global Creation: Space, Mobility and Synchrony in the Age of the Knowledge Economy* (New York: Peter Lang (2010), 87-98.

chromatic harmonica in the key of C.⁴ The thing that made the sound memorable is the ever-so-slightly off-kilter effect of Lennon's dirty vibrato-like playing. This gave the song's signature musical sound a trembling, shaking character. Harmonica players achieve such an effect by the opening and closing of hands, and the rapid movement of lips between the holes of the instrument. This causes an unstable variation in pitch of the musical note—or in a more figurative sense it turns one note into two notes simultaneously. The note is itself and something slightly different at the same time. The single note has a dual identity. That is the point at which art becomes creative. For that is what creation is, the making of two out of one. All creation has this curious double structure. Naturally this is not something that two bright boys from Liverpool thought much about at the time. But one does not have to have either the name or the concept of something in order to experience it or enact it. Indeed the humour of the two artists, Lennon and McCartney, is exactly the double nature of creation personified.⁵ Humour is the conjoining of incongruities.⁶ So also is a large part of what makes music interesting. What is harmony but two different pitches sounded together? What is rhythm but the joining of temporal contrasts of fast and slow, long and short? The combination of verse and bridge, words and music, semi-spoken croon and conventional melodic singing, massed chorus and lead voice, instrumental and vocal performance, polyphonic melody lines, the overtones of notes, the intertwining of the smooth and gritty vocal grains of harmony singers, the power of music to convey the sense of near and far, the gravitational movement of up and down... one could go on endlessly.

There is a big difference, though, between the latent creative syntax of music forms and their peak aesthetic deployment. The actual size of the steps—from latency to potency to aesthetic realization—is enormous. Most music is not art. Indeed most art music is not art. Art is rare, the guise it takes is often unpredictable, and it lasts. Abraham Moles calculated that all of the works that make up the standard

⁴ P. Missin, 'What harmonica did John Lennon use to play the intro to "Love Me Do" and other songs by The Beatles?' (2002-2010) <http://www.patmissin.com/faq/q29.html> (Accessed 15 June, 2010); G. Panfile, 'Little Child: The Harmonica in Beatle Music'. *The Free-Reed Journal* (1996) <http://www.ksanti.net/free-reed/essays/panfilebeatles.html> (Accessed 15 June, 2010).

⁵ The humour of the Beatles is well recorded. See, for example, John Lennon, *A Spaniard in the Works* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965). The parallels between wit and creativity were brilliantly explored by Arthur Koestler in *The Act of Creation* (New York: Dell, 1964).

⁶ Peter Berger, *Redeeming Laughter* (New York: Walter De Grueter, 1997).

performance repertoire in classical music are the work of 250 composers.⁷ Mozart, Bach and Beethoven each in their own right contribute about 6 per cent. Collectively their works make up 18 per cent of the total standard performed repertoire. The top 10 composers contribute 40 per cent of performed works. The bottom 150 of the cohort of 250 is each represented by one work only.⁸ Collectively the contribution of the bottom 150 is 6 per cent of the total performed repertoire. None of this is the ‘fault’ of uncomprehending audiences or programmers. It is rather the expression of the fact that real artistic achievement is exceptional. To turn the latent double character of musical form into something aesthetic requires music to have the power of aesthetic arousal. Aesthetic arousal is collative. By collative, I mean that it is stimulated by the presence of contradictory properties. One recurring set of such properties is the alliance of novelty and familiarity, complexity and simplicity, surprise and predictability, ambiguity and clarity, variability and stability.⁹ The coincidence of these properties marks music out as art, or imbues music sound with an aesthetic quality. If the music artifact falls on one side of these pairs, it is artless. If it falls on the other side, it is phony art.

The presence of contradictory properties gives rise to the quality of mystery. Mystery attends all of the great works of the absolute spirit—not least of all music. The writer and composer Jan Swafford made this point about Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.¹⁰ Swafford wondered whether the Ninth had attained the kind ubiquity that threatens to gut any artwork. On the contrary, he concluded, great artworks can sustain ubiquity because they have the quality of mystery. We never quite ever stop figuring them out. There is always something more to be said or thought or felt about them. Swafford put it this way: Everyone knows the Ninth. But has anyone understood it? The harder you look, the odder it gets. This is because it enfolds contradictory qualities. Swafford goes on to cite a copious number of instances of this in the work. Let me reiterate here what he has to say about the first movement of the symphony. It is loud, bold, heroic, no? No, it is big and loud all right, but, Swafford points out, it is also wildly unstable, searching and inconclusive—everything heroes

⁷ A. Moles, *Information theory and esthetic perception* Translated by Joel F. Cohen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966 [1958]).

⁸ D.K. Simonton, *Origins of Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 150.

⁹ D.E. Berlyne, *Aesthetics and Psychobiology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, 1971).

¹⁰ J. Swafford, ‘The Beethoven Mystery’, *Slate*, June 30, 2003. <http://www.slate.com/id/2084948/> (Accessed December 11, 2010).

are not. The development section of the middle of a movement is usually a point of maximum tension and drama. Yet in this case it is the most placid part of the movement. Then the recapitulation of the opening theme erupts out of the calm like a scream utilizing a major chord that conventionally should signify nice and happy things but here sounds terrifying. Swafford goes on in this vein—but the point is already made. We have, in this case, a sublime example of the way that creation works through media that pair and unite contradictory qualities. On the level of form, the Ninth Symphony delivers the familiar first movement with development and recapitulation, yet at the same time it inverts the conventions of that form. In so doing, it collates familiarity and surprise, turning them into one seamless and unforgettable thing.

The collaboration of artists is a parallel expression of the contradictory act of creation. Collaboration in its mature shape mimics the underlying uncanny and bifurcated form of creation. It thereby gives the act of creation an existential expression, and takes creation into the complex realm of human personalities. It forces the question of how things that are different become identical, and how something that is identical with its own self, be it a musical note or a human persona, can differentiate into both itself and something else at the same time. That may sound teasingly metaphysical but it also a basic fact of creation. Creation must do something that, at first glance, seems impossible. Let us consider, again, the specific case of Lennon and McCartney. They wrote *Love Me Do* together—though ‘together’ actually meant ‘separately’, which is not unusual in such collaborations.¹¹ The sixteen year old McCartney wrote most of the song. Lennon then added the middle eight. Taken as a whole, the composition is unremarkable. It is Lennon’s harmonica playing on the recorded version from 1962 that makes all the difference. The peak year for the pair’s song writing collaboration was 1963.¹² There was a series of 50:50 co-compositions that year, seven songs in all. After that their collaborative writing falls away sharply, and that drop-off indicates the paradox of collaboration, which might be described as ‘aleness together’.

Collaborations are aesthetically effective because they bring together artists who are opposites in taste and temperament. Lennon and McCartney are a good example of this. Opposing natures working together conjure a union of aesthetic

¹¹ Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head* (London: Vintage, 2008), 58-61.

¹² MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head*, 106.

opposites. This is essential to creation. However, clashes in taste and temperament also destroy collaborative partnerships. There is only so long that the sardonic personality and the sentimental personality can share the same work space. Yet if you manage to combine the sardonic and the sentimental in the same song, you may well achieve something that is art. In short, the very thing that makes collaborations work also makes them fail. *She Loves You*, the famous ‘yeh-yeh-yeh’ song, from 1963 is a matchless example of the marriage of McCartney’s frothy optimism and Lennon’s caustic pain. But while the cohabitation of cheeriness and hurt, in melodic structures, chord patterns and lyrics, is one thing—their prolonged coexistence in actual life is another. The history of the Jagger-Richards partnership, the creative heart of the Rolling Stones, is typical. What began with shared music taste developed into co-composing and co-production. The sobriquet of ‘the glimmer twins’ captures something of the closeness of the pair.¹³ And yet during the Rolling Stones’ classic period, which ranges from the album *Beggars Banquet* (1968) to *Exile on Main Street* (1972), the tight knot is frayed. Richards’ friendship with Gram Parsons and the Jagger-Richards’ collaboration with the producer Jimmy Miller complicate the creative equation. The female muses (Anita Pallenberg, Marianne Faithfull, and Bianca Perez) animate and fracture Jagger and Richards’ friendship, eliciting a baroque geometry of affections. The core creative camaraderie of the great gilded pair is energised and undermined by these other cross-cutting relations in ways that are almost beyond account. Drug use, notably heroin, contributes something as well. It magnifies the isolative side of creation. The propensity of creative souls to disappear into a tunnel is what the fable of genius plays so well to. In any event by the time of *Dirty Work* (1986), what had once been imaginative intimacy had turned into private antagonism and public bickering. The breach, later patched up, was never properly resolved. The truth of creative partnerships is that the personal dialectic of sweet and sour is almost unavoidable. For such partnerships are based on subtle forces of attraction and repulsion. They work like antonyms. They are opposites that seem to go together naturally. So at times they appear to be indissoluble unions. But at other times, the oppositions break out into warfare.

Tensile collaboration is essential to virtually all forms of musical creation. This is true, paradoxically, as we’ll see in a moment, even of acts of solo creation.

¹³ The self-appellation was coined in 1968. The story of its origin is recounted in V. Bockris, *Keith Richards: The Biography* (London: Penguin, 1992), 150.

Creation is a function of twinning, pairing, and doubling. Twentieth-century music is inconceivable without the partnerships of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, Igor Stravinsky and George Balanchine, John Cage and Merce Cunningham, Dionne Warwick and Hal David, Frank Sinatra and Nelson Riddle, Lou Reed and John Cale, Miles Davis and Gil Evans, Elvis Costello and Steve Nieve, Damon Albarn and Graham Coxon. In psychological terms, in the act of creation the other is interiorized in the self. Creation is not an act of ego, but rather an act of alter-ego. It is the simultaneous collusion and collision of self and other, 'I' and 'me', and 'I' and 'I'. It is in the peculiar exchange between alter and ego that musical mimesis is translated into originality, the normal is turned into the exceptional, and the average is remade as the extraordinary. Alter and ego negotiate the creative terrain between initiative and repetition. The act of creation has to interpolate both of these. Initiation by itself is pure idiosyncrasy. Repetition by itself is lame. Ego and alter act upon each other to correct the failings of both. Achieving a creative equilibrium is difficult and rare. This view is quite different from Romantic theories of creation. The Romantic theories emphasise the action of the ego in isolation. Thus, romantically-conceived, creation is the effect of lonely geniuses.¹⁴ But, in truth, creation is the consequence of lonely geniuses together. The interaction of 'I' and 'I' adds the necessary soulful dimension to the work of the ego.¹⁵ It guards against the egomania and ego anxiety that otherwise destroys creative work. The strange looping that occurs between two egos, 'I' and 'I', is a precondition of effective creativity.

¹⁴ In the eighteenth century, even before the rise of Romanticism, writers like the philosopher David Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1748]) had equated genius with isolation from society. Immanuel Kant in *The Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952 [1790]) supposed that genius produced originally, that is without imitating others. In this view also Romantic nature was not subject to deterministic laws—or humankind's manipulation of these laws. Kant cautiously raised the idea of a living nature that propels its own self in his Third Critique. In nature, organisms self-direct, self-propagate, and self-transform. It was Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) who turned this into a full-fledged nature philosophy with aesthetic implications. See Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art* (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1989) and Schelling, *Idea for a Philosophy of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). To do this, Schelling removed nature from the realm of causality—just as Kant had removed the ethical self from that realm in his Second Critique. The aesthetic implication of this was summed up by Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829). In Schlegel's view, the artist tolerates no laws, no bounds, no limits, no definition, no finality of meaning, and no finishing of the work of art. See the selections from Schlegel in David Simpson, *Origins of Modern Critical Thought: German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism from Lessing to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Almost needless to say, theories of the absolute artistic ego have difficulty accounting for acts of collaboration.

¹⁵ On the relationship between ego and soul, see John Carroll, *Ego and Soul* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008).

There is no single form of music collaboration. Some collaborations occur between composers. Some occur between band members, artists and producers, artists and studio musicians, and even artists and managers. Some occur between solo artists and bands, or between different bands. On occasions individual bands and individual artists take on board both the functions of alter and ego. The English pop art-rock band XTC had a phase of great productivity in 1980s with albums such as *English Settlement* (1982). They then reached a creative block, which they resolved by re-making themselves for a time as another band, the Dukes of Stratosphere (1985-1987). This strategy yielded rejuvenation with XTC's memorable *Skylarking* (1986) and the exceptional *Oranges and Lemons* (1989). The strange looping between 'I' and 'I', in whatever form it occurs, permits the ego to function as its own alter. This is more common than might be thought. Successful authors and composers for example have to act as their own editors. They have to know when and where to cut. If they don't, their work ends up as self-indulgent and formless. The great artistic egos are those who have managed to interpolate alter and ego within a single self. The creative persona of Bob Dylan is a case in point. He has had occasional writing partnerships—notably with Jacques Levy, Sam Shepard, and Robert Hunter. But, mostly, his is a case where alter and ego has been internalised as the dialectic of the 'I' and 'I'. His is an example of a minimal self onto which has been clipped various musical personas. These personas are impersonations of musical characters—from folk, blues, rhythm and blues, jazz, rock, Brechtian musical theatre, and various literary, filmic, and painterly ones as well. Out of the interaction of these various personas, emerged something startling original.¹⁶

Dylan's case is as a good an example of the genesis of music creation as any. Its animating force lies in the ironies of human mimesis.¹⁷ Human beings are a mimetic species. They copy everything in sight—not least of all each other. But out of this copying arises originality. Human beings love to act. They love to impersonate each other. They want to get up on stage because they want to be someone else. They wish to put on a mask, play a role, and be a star. It is well known that shy people in particular are attracted to the stage. They clearly have a strong desire to be someone

¹⁶ Peter Murphy, 'Bob Dylan Ain't Talking: One Man's Vast Comic Adventure in American Music, Dramaturgy, and Mysticism'. In E.D.L. Fuente and P. Murphy (eds) *Philosophical and Cultural Theories of Music* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2010), 49-70.

¹⁷ The multi-faceted role of mimesis in art is explored in Peter Murphy and David Roberts, *Dialectic of Romanticism: A Critique of Modernism* (London: Continuum, 2004).

they are not. To do that, they copy others and learn roles. All human life is role playing. All being human is performing. So, in some sense, we are always who we are not.¹⁸ Even shy people learn to be shy—they learn the shy role—before they learn to be outrageous show-offs on stage. Learning to be another, which begins, though does not end, in imitation, is an imaginary collaboration of ego and alter. If this is adeptly handled, the ego does not so much imitate the alter as create a distinctive persona—a style—out of the ego’s assimilation and transformation of the image or model of the alter. The accomplished actor thereby subsumes and re-casts the roles that they play. The style that emerges is mimetic and singular in the same instance. This paradoxical state explains the musical power of an artist such as Dylan. His work ineffably subsumes the twentieth-century American song-book and yet its grain is highly distinctive.

Musical authorship is an impersonation. Where it is successful, authorship moves from a personal voice derivative in tone and character to an impersonal voice that is simultaneously highly personal. Great composers have signature styles that, at the same time, are universal. Composers begin by copying their music heroes. This is an imaginary collaboration. Imaginary collaborations are just as important as flesh-and-blood collaborations. Composers model themselves on their predecessors. They want to be someone who they are not. Then, if they are any good, they will find their ‘own voice’. The Romantics thought of this voice as an expression of the ‘authentic’ self, one’s own original self. But, in fact, a creator’s original self is quite unoriginal. No creative artist begins by producing a masterpiece. Almost every writer’s earliest works are redundant. Prodigies included, it takes all creative artists around ten years to develop a mature style.¹⁹ The creator’s primary self may be idiosyncratic, but it is not original. Creators in the first instance seek out models in the hope of becoming some other self. Normally such modelling is unoriginal. Most imitations are pedestrian or transparent. But, in a minority of cases, after a prolonged process of modelling suddenly and often unexpectedly a breakthrough happens. A distinctive style emerges. Yet, paradoxically, one of the things that make a composer’s style distinctive is that it can be imitated. The most powerfully unique voices have universal appeal. A writer such as Bruce Springsteen emulates musical predecessors

¹⁸ Peter Murphy, “‘I am not what I am’: Paradox and indirect communication—the case of the comic god and the dramaturgical self”, *Empedocles European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 1.2 (2009), 225–236.

¹⁹ D.K. Simonton, *Greatness* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), 67-68.

like Roy Orbison and Bob Dylan. Springsteen's early attempts at this sound artless—because they sound 'like copies'. Then suddenly the apprentice's copies turn into masterful creations. What has happened? In works like *Thunder Road* (1975) or *Born to Run* (1975) the spectres of Orbison and Dylan are present, and yet in an uncanny way—such that each model has become transfigured into a simulacrum of each other. In Springsteen's classic work of the 1970s, the epic song structures of Dylan echo the melodramatic dynamics of Orbison, and vice-versa, in such a way that they merge ineffably. The uncanny 'two-in-one' is realised, and in a way that is unmistakably the signature song craft of Springsteen. Dylan pays ultimate ironic testament to this in *Tweeter and the Monkey Man* (1988) when he parodies himself and Springsteen in exactly the same way that Springsteen emulates Orbison and Dylan. A thin line separates this masterful burlesque and the act of immortal creation. What this is is a master writer showing, with the wink of an eye, how creation works.

What distinguishes lame copying from artful creation is analogy. Analogy is the union of 'the same and the different'. It is the amalgam of initiative and repetition that alter and ego must achieve in order to act creatively. In that union, lies peak creation. What the apprentice learns to do is to replicate something so that it sounds 'the same', even if it never does exactly, and certainly never does immaculately. The differences between original and copy are more a result of a lack of technique than anything. The journeyman, the next step up from the apprentice, learns to do something a little more sophisticated which is to join together one emulated model together with another model. There are endless examples of journeyman creation everywhere in music. To take one example at random, the band Pure Reason Revolution (2009) mixes prog-rock, glam and grunge music. Such mash-ups, at first hearing, often attract critical interest, and yet so often prove to be aesthetically disappointing.²⁰ Compare that with Led Zeppelin's combustible union of rock, blues

²⁰ Pure Reason Revolution, *Amor Vincit Omnia* (Kleve: Superball Music, 2009). Some of the limitations of mash-up aesthetics are noted by Michiko Kakutani who observes that 'the recycling and cut-and-paste esthetic', which first appeared with late twentieth century postmodernism, and has now become ubiquitous across contemporary culture, 'has resulted in tired imitations; cheap, lazy re-dos; or works of "appropriation" designed to generate controversy...' Among the excellent parade of examples cited by Kakutani are the jukebox musicals like 'Jersey Boys' and performers like Lady Gaga, the 'third-generation Madonna'. See M. Kakutani, 'Texts Without Context'. *New York Times*, March 17, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/books/21mash.html?pagewanted=all> (Accessed 15 June, 2010.)

and folk music. The latter's fluency was astonishing.²¹ The band's music amalgamated rock, blues and folk forms with touches of funk, reggae, jazz, Middle Eastern and Asian influences.²² The existential conditions of this are essayed in the history of relations between the band's members (Page, Plant, Bonham, and Jones), and extending to their formidable manager (Grant). This is a history of intimacy turned distant, and amity become uneasy. For the biographer, this makes for a dramatic story.²³ Yet the narrative of attraction and alienation repeats itself through the record of creation. For without the tensile harmony of divergent-convergent tastes, personalities, and styles, the act of creation stalls. It is in this human Petri dish that miraculous musical unions fuelled by enigmatic musical antonyms arise.

What is crucial in artistically successful cases is that the whole of the music is not only greater than but also integrates the sum of its warring parts. The paradox of creation is that the most exquisite aesthetic beauty and harmony is achieved through

²¹ One of the great contemporary writers on music, and a seasoned critic of the limitations of rock and pop music, the philosopher Roger Scruton, has some friendly words for Led Zeppelin, praising the band's harmonic inventiveness (Scruton, 'Soul Music', *The American: The Journal of the American Enterprise Institute*, February 28, 2010). Scruton's general view is correct. Most pop works are artless. This means also that they have no moral significance because they cannot form the soul, in Plato's sense. But that is also equally true of classical works, even if their artlessness is often dressed up in pseudo-artiness. Excruciating music, excused as experimental, is no less painful for that. 'I think of concerts in the 1980s during which I had to sit through the nerve-grinding premiere of some particularly shocking piece of atonal music sandwiched between two rather good works that I genuinely did want to hear. These were works that in many cases, so far as I am aware, still await a second performance, and which will be recorded only when a record company is seeking a tax loss for accountancy purposes' (Heffer, 'Arts funding: fiddles show the way to go'. *Daily Telegraph*, 5 June, 2010). The merciless fact, as noted above, is that there is a handful of great works, irrespective of whether they are classical or pop, that audiences want to listen to repeatedly, whether in concert or on record. The same applies to all intellectual works. Most of what is important in the arts and sciences, the works that shape our souls and our relation to nature, are produced by a small handful of very gifted creators who typically produce a large volume of work, a portion of which is exceptional, and much of which is ordinary and some of which is awful. Most of this work arises out of relative obscurity, and takes time to establish itself. Equally most of the poor works that we encounter in a lifetime also come out of obscurity—and they either remain there or else find some temporary popularity. Both bureaucratic boosters and market boosters promote junk. But Time is very good at sorting the good from the bad. Eventually the junk will be justly forgotten. The Scruton article is available at <http://www.american.com/archive/2010/february/soul-music> (Accessed June 16, 2010); the Heffer piece at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/simonheffer/7806098/Arts-funding-fiddles-show-the-way-to-go.html> (Accessed June 16, 2010); the question of the handful of works that bear repeated attention is further discussed in Peter Murphy, Michael Peters and Simon Marginson, *Imagination: Three Models of Imagination in the Age of the Knowledge Economy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 97-101.

²² The union of musical idioms is a formalistic criterion, and one that is as stringent as any recommended by Hanslick [*On the Musically Beautiful* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1986[1891])] or Stravinsky [*Poetics of Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942)]. In all cases, formalistic criteria lay bare the structural uncanny of artworks. Creative partnerships are the existential equivalent of these.

²³ M. Wall, *When Giants Walked the Earth: A Biography of Led Zeppelin* (London: Orion, 2008).

the medium of bitter existential rivalries, tensions, and aggravations. That the aesthetic Holy Grail is often not reached is a testament to the sheer difficulty of mastering ego conflicts sufficient to translate them into the dialectic of alter and ego in turn sufficient to yield up the seamless fusion of artistic elements requisite for great art. Van Morrison's protean amalgam of rock, rhythm and blues, soul, jazz and gospel forms in works such as *Astral Weeks* (1968), *Into the Music* (1979), and *The Healing Game* (1997) is a case in point. In such instances, the multiplicity of influences is over-determined by the singular vision of the artist such that any combination—any duality—also functions as a sui generis unity, and vice versa. Art produces an aesthetic unity out of diverse idiomatic musical 'truths'. Yet the psychological warfare within the artist, and frequently between the artist and his collaborators, is painfully visible for everyone to see. The various biographies of the artist suggest a terrible war wages within, caught as he is between a public life of performance and a querulous insistence on privacy, and between the absorption and use of a vast field of music influences and a wrathful insistence on the originality of his work and resentment that imitators are stealing his work.²⁴ What one sees here, played out in personal psychological terms, is the tension between the valid, unimpeachable and contrary values of public and private, heritage and genius, tradition and innovation. These only yield creative fruit when they are—somehow—reconciled. While reconciliation is an easy word to invoke in art as in politics, its practical achievement is like extracting teeth without anaesthetic.

The crossing-over of musical structures, material, and forms, as with the uncanny combination of composers, players, and producers, are fertile conditions for musical creation. However, while the porous crossing of boundaries is a necessary, it is not a sufficient condition of lasting invention. From rock operas to folk rock or country pop, musical coupling represents the meso level of creation. Thus The Byrds—in distinction from Bob Dylan—were distinguished journeymen, not master artists. The difference between the two—between master and journeyman—has to do with the uncanny power of analogy. The mimetic creature, the human artist, copies, and in copying creates what has 'likeness', something that is 'same and different' at the same time. From mimesis comes distinction. That is creation. J.S. Bach epitomises great creation. His contrapuntal works are a form of doubling and often quadrupling.

²⁴ C. Heylin, *Can You Feel the Silence? Van Morrison A New Biography* (London: Penguin, 2004 [2002]); J. Rogan, *Van Morrison. No Surrender* (London: Random House, 2006 [2005]).

For every melodic part in these works, there is a contrary part. The genius of the music is that these parts can be radically different in character, and often seemingly indifferent to each other, and yet belong seamlessly to the same, to the one, piece of music. Here we sit on the edge of creation. Each part or implied voice in Bach's deliriously beautiful *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor* is an analogy of the other in the very same sense that the poet compares the human personality to a summer's day, or the pop master compares the ominous narratives of Orbison and the epic surrealism of Dylan.²⁵ The greater the distance between the two things compared, a distance nevertheless convincingly bridged by that very comparison, is the mark of art. In collaborative pairings, similarly, the most powerful collaborations rest on the precarious quality of a great distance in personality or sensibility between the collaborators whose antitheses nonetheless produce a transcendent bonding trait or value or characteristic in common. The precariousness of all of this is underlined by the tenseness and explosiveness of many of these creative relationships.

Dave Davies, the co-leader of The Kinks, looking back in 2009 on one of the group's best-known songs *Waterloo Sunset* (1967), composed by his brother Ray Davies, observed that the song 'has the counterpoint that I loved as kid, a tune that goes up and down, like snakes and ladders—sad, but you know it is going to explode into something good'.²⁶ Creative collaboration mirrors the structure of creation. It echoes something deeper about the nature of creation. The pre-Socratics, the Greek philosophers, were the first to systematically describe the fact that creation invariably involves an uncanny union of opposites.²⁷ They were also aware of how antagonistic such unions are. These unions are common in art, including pop art. A good example is the Oasis song *Don't Look Back In Anger* (1996). It has as an indelibly memorable

²⁵ Because no autograph manuscript of the work has survived, and because it has features uncharacteristic of Bach's body of work, some scholars have questioned whether BWV 565 can be attributed to Bach. Either way, it is a cultural standard endlessly reinvented by everyone from Leopold Stokowski—whose 1927 transcription for orchestra was used in the 1940 Disney film *Fantasia*—to John William's classical-rock hit version for his band Sky, the 1980 *Tocatta*.

²⁶ The Kinks, 'The Making of *Waterloo Sunset*', *Uncut* 140, 2009: 58. Grace Slick's stand-out psychedelic-era song *White Rabbit* (1967) does something similar. It progresses, filled with menace, until it explodes with joy. It is not the menace or the joy that explains the power of the song but rather their combination. Slick brought the song with her when she joined Jefferson Airplane. The group's recording of the song was crucial to their popular success. As one of the band members, the bassist Jack Casady observed: 'Everybody in the band came from drastically different backgrounds. The uniqueness of our sound was a combination of all of those people throwing in their two cents' worth.' (The Jefferson Airplane, 'White Rabbit', *Uncut* 141, 2009: 56.)

²⁷ The long philosophical history of the 'union of opposites', as a driver of social aesthetics, is recounted in Peter Murphy, *Civic Justice: From Ancient Greece to the Modern World* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2001).

agonistic symmetry: The singer's melody line in the song ascends, while the guitarist's chord progression descends. More snakes and ladders: the aesthetic effect of the song is uncanny. Uncanny is another word for haunting. Listeners cannot get it out of their minds; they can't forget it, because it interpolates a strange loop of contrariness. This contrariness is not just structural. It also mirrors the fraught musical partnership of the Gallagher brothers—which in turn echoes Ray Davies's lacerated musical partnership with his brother Dave. Collaborative tension and musical differences are the flip-side of aesthetic snakes and ladders, a condition of its possibility. The gorgeous counterpoint of Brian Wilson's *God Only Knows* (1966) was the inverse image of The Beach Boy's internal antipathies. The great Australian demotic hymn, *Throw Your Arms Around Me* (1985), spirals up out of the equally spectacular warring of the band Hunters and Collectors.²⁸ No creation without strife, as the pre-Socratics understood only too well.

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²⁸ M. Seymour, *Thirteen Tonne Theory: Life Inside Hunters and Collectors* (Camberwell, VIC: Penguin, 2009).