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Hidden Genius

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Abstract

The conceptual innovations of brash and transgressive young geniuses, from Pablo Picasso and T.S. Eliot to Jean-Luc Godard and Bob Dylan, often arrive suddenly and conspicuously, and are immediately recognized and celebrated. In contrast, the experimental innovations of cautious old masters often arrive gradually and unobtrusively, and may be long overlooked and undervalued: Auguste Rodin, Alfred Hitchcock, Robert Frost, and Irving Berlin are among those who had to endure long struggles to gain their full critical recognition. Ironically, the very success of these great innovators added to their longtime neglect, as their creation of subtle and realistic new forms that were deliberately intended to appear natural rather than artificial led many contemporaries to dismiss their art as easy, simplistic, and unimportant. The achievements of these innovators were in fact based on deep mastery of their disciplines, and we must understand those disciplines to appreciate their contributions. Recognizing that important innovations need not be blatant, but can be subtle and unobtrusive, can help scholars to correct the error of the longstanding belief that creativity is greatest in youth.

Unobtrusive Innovation

[C]reative articulation can take two almost opposite directions. The artist can strain the medium in an effort to extend its range and thus to discover novel possibilities at the extremes... But he can also make discoveries by refining his medium, by introducing a more subtle calibration which permits him to bring out new shades and nuances never recorded or expressed before... [I]t is in the nature of things that their more dramatic innovations are more easily described and appreciated than their miracles of refining.

E.H. Gombrich (1984, pp. 206-07)

The old masters of innovation have often been creativity's Rodney Dangerfields: they get no respect. Psychologists have consistently asserted that the elderly are past their creative prime. Fortunately, many great innovators have not been burdened by an awareness of their supposed incapacity. Thus the 82-year-old Frans Hals, working at the height of his expressive powers on his magisterial portrait of the regentesses of Haarlem's almshouse in 1664, had no inkling that Harvey Lehman (1953, p. 78) would later find that he was 46 years past the maximum age at which great painters were most likely to produce their greatest work; nor was the 65-year-old Elizabeth Bishop, toiling through thirteen drafts of her exquisite villanelle, "One Art," aware that James Kaufman would later declare that "Poets peak young" (Lee, 2004). Painters and poets working today may be less fortunate, and we have no way of knowing how many potential masterpieces have been lost because of the disheartenment of aging artists who have given up hope after being brainwashed into believing that their chance for creativity has passed them by.

It is now past time for psychologists to repent the ageist errors of their ways, and to give older innovators their due (Galenson, 2018). As they do so, it will be crucial for them to understand the distinctive nature of experimental creativity (Galenson, 2006a, Chap. 2). For

ironically, great experimental innovators have often been overlooked precisely because of their very success in achieving their goals.

Alfred Hitchcock

Technique that calls itself to the audience's attention is poor technique.

Alfred Hitchcock (Gottlieb, 1995, p. 208)

Orson Welles was a flamboyant showman: Andrew Sarris (1968, p. 79) observed that “Every Welles film is designed around the massive presence of the artist as autobiographer. Call him Hearst or Falstaff, Macbeth or Othello, Quinlan or Arkadin, he is always at least partly himself, ironic, bombastic, pathetic, and, above all, presumptuous. The Wellesian cinema is the cinema of magic and marvels, and everything, and especially its prime protagonist, is larger than life.” At 26 the conceptual Welles made his first movie, and in so doing created one of the most deliberately and manifestly revolutionary works in the history of the modern arts, filled with conspicuous technical innovations that startled and surprised viewers. *Citizen Kane* ranked first, as the best movie ever made, in each of the five decennial polls of film critics taken by *Sight & Sound* from 1962 through 2002.

In contrast, Sarris (1968, pp. 57-59) observed that although Alfred Hitchcock was “the supreme technician of the American cinema,” the subtlety of his technique often caused it to be overlooked: “most American reviewers have failed to appreciate the Hitchcockian virtues of vividness and speed as artistic merits.” Nor did Hitchcock's popularity go unpunished: “No one who is so entertaining could possibly seem profound to the intellectual puritans.”

Hitchcock was an experimental director (Galenson and Kotin, 2007), who valued images over words: “We are making pictures, moving pictures, and though sound helps and is the most valuable advance the films have ever made they still remain primarily a visual art.” He devoted his career to cinematic shock therapy—“getting the audience on the edge of their seats” by creating suspense. This required involvement: “Watching a well-made film, we don’t sit by as spectators; we participate.” Technique consequently had to be unobtrusive: “The mark of good technique is that it is unnoticed” (Gottlieb, 1995, pp. 48, 109, 113, 208).

Hitchcock privileged form over content, and throughout his career was irritated by the frequent criticism that his subjects were unimportant, which he compared to “looking at a painting of a still life, say by Cézanne, and wondering whether the apples on the plate are sweet or sour. Who cares? It's the way they're painted.” His goal was not to make his audiences think, but to make them react to the shocks he provided. He did not want to make philosophic or moral statements: “People don't go to the movies to listen to sermons. If that were the case, then instead of buying a ticket they'd put a coin in the collection plate and make the sign of the cross before taking a seat in the stalls” (Gottlieb, 2003, pp. 57, 182).

For much of his career, critics widely regarded Hitchcock as a commercially successful director whose work lacked artistic merit: in a typical judgement, in 1949 Lindsay Anderson remarked that “Hitchcock has never been a ‘serious’ director. His films are interesting neither for their ideas nor for their characters” (LaValley, 1972 p. 58). This perception began to change in the 1950s, with the revaluation of Hitchcock by a group of young French critics who later became important directors. In 1957, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol (1979, p. 152) published a monograph on Hitchcock’s films in which they called him “one of the greatest inventors of form in the entire history of cinema.” In 1962 François Truffaut, who had already become a

successful director, travelled from Paris to Hollywood and recorded 50 hours of interviews with Hitchcock that he published as a book. Truffaut explained that in making his own films he “had started to realize that there must be laws of directing that are never really expressed, and that Hitchcock was the one who had created his laws and that it was with him I had to speak” (Stevens, 2012, p. 690).

Truffaut (1984, pp. 11-12) later recalled that his interview project had been prompted by an experience he had in New York while promoting his film *Jules and Jim*: “I noticed that every journalist asked me the same question: ‘Why do the critics of *Cahiers du Cinema* take Hitchcock so seriously? He’s rich and successful, but his movies have no substance.’” To Truffaut, “it was obvious that [Hitchcock] had given more thought to the potential of his art than any of his colleagues,” and he felt compelled to demonstrate this to American critics.

Truffaut (1984, pp. 14, 17-18) considered Hitchcock’s films a basic source of instruction: “In Hitchcock’s work a filmmaker is bound to find the answer to many of his own problems, including the most fundamental question of all: how to express yourself by purely visual means.” Hitchcock’s films embodied what Truffaut considered a cardinal rule of cinema: “Whatever is *said* instead of being *shown* is lost upon the viewer.” For Truffaut, Hitchcock’s mastery of the camera made him a realist:

One of the charges frequently leveled at Hitchcock is that the simplification inherent in his emphasis on clarity limits his cinematic range to almost childlike ideas. To my mind, nothing could be further from the truth; on the contrary, because of his unique ability to film the thoughts of his characters and make them perceptible without resorting to dialogue, he is, to my way of thinking, a realistic director.

And it was this visual mastery that allowed Hitchcock both to reach a vast audience and to capture human emotions:

Hitchcock is almost unique in being able to film directly, that is, without resorting to explanatory dialogue, such intimate emotions as suspicion, jealousy, desire, and envy. And herein lies a paradox: the director who, through the simplicity and clarity of his work, is the most accessible to a universal audience is also the director who excels at filming the most complex and subtle relationships between human beings.

In the 2012 *Sight & Sound* poll of critics, *Vertigo* unseated *Citizen Kane* as the greatest film ever made. Hitchcock directed *Vertigo* at the age of 59. He would not have been surprised at this appreciation of his late work, for he considered his career a steady process of improvement. Thus he told Truffaut (1984, p. 314) that “your evolution does follow a systematic pattern of constant amelioration from film to film.” Most important for this was the development of a personal style, which evolved from experience: “It must be the result of growth and patient experimentation with the materials of the trade, the style itself emerging almost unconsciously.” This required time and effort: “It takes so long, and so much work, to achieve simplicity.” (Gottlieb, 1995, pp. 62, 115).

Hitchcock publicly declined to deem himself an artist, but privately was annoyed by critics who failed to recognize the skill and seriousness with which he made his films (Kapsis, 1992, pp. 72-73). But Sarris (1968, p. 58) noted that “Hitchcock’s art will always delight the specialist because so much of it is rendered with an air of casualness,” and appreciation of his skill spread from the young French directors to a new generation of American filmmakers: in 2002 a panel of experts polled by *Movie Maker* magazine named him the most influential director in history.

Howard Hawks

I try to tell my story as simply as possible.

Howard Hawks (McBride, 1982, p. 82).

The longstanding neglect of Hitchcock's art was not a unique case. Like Hitchcock, Howard Hawks was an experimental director who disdained pretension: "I think a director's a storyteller, and if he tells a story that people can't understand, he shouldn't be a director" (Breivold, 2006, p. 69). His avowed goal was amusement: "We just made scenes that were fun to do. I think our job is to make entertainment." He considered characterization the key to his films: "if you can do characters, you can forget about the plot....Let them tell the story for you, and don't worry about the plot." He didn't hesitate to change his films in progress: "sometimes you're so far in a picture, and you get an idea that you're going to change a character, so you just go back and change the lines you've written for that character, and start all over again" (McBride, 1982, pp. 8, 32-33). Meta Wilde, who worked for Hawks as a script girl, described his approach as improvisational: he asked his actors to paraphrase their dialogue, putting it in their own words, and encouraged them to be independent in interpreting their characters. She recalled that Hawks was "never satisfied with the final draft of a screenplay" and "never filmed [one] as written," but instead "took ideas from everyone on the set and changed almost every page" (Wilde and Borsten, 1976, pp. 38, 106-07, 290).

In 1954, Truffaut (1994, p. 76) called the 58-year-old Hawks "the most underestimated of Hollywood filmmakers." In 1968, Sarris still considered Hawks "the least known and least appreciated giant in the American cinema" (McBride, 1972, p.33). He praised Hawks for "a pragmatic intelligence rather than a philosophical wisdom," and for his "good, clean, direct, functional cinema, perhaps the most distinctively American cinema of all," while recognizing that Hawks' qualities would never be acknowledged by those critics "who maintain that his art is not really Art with a serving of espresso in the lobby" (Sarris, 1968, p. 55-56).

In 1982, noting that Hawks' career "reveals an almost total lack of public recognition," Gerald Mast (1982, pp. 17-19, 367) wondered: "How could such a giant of such a public industry remain so invisible to the public?" His answer was that Hawks' art was deliberately unobtrusive, rejecting both the "dazzling visual displays of intellectual montage" and the "self-conscious, self-reflexive quest" that marked the films of celebrated conceptual directors. Mast warned that "To understand Spenser, Milton, Joyce, Beckett, or Eliot requires special learning...but the opposite kind of art that is easy and fun requires explication precisely because it is not apparently difficult, because...its accessibility can mask its depth, precision, complexity, and implications." In what could serve as a concise manifesto of an experimental aesthetic, Mast explained that such was the case with Hawks: "The apparent artlessness and naturalness of the Hawks film world is, paradoxically, the ultimate aspiration of its art— to make the absolutely artificial world of patterned human action seem absolutely natural and accidental. The transparent naturalness of Hawks's images...is the ultimate art that conceals art." Hence the irony of Hawks' situation: "Hawks may well have been the most perfectly artful of any Hollywood director at achieving its aesthetic, so perfect at convincing the audience of the artlessness of his art that the artist literally disappeared for every contemporary commentator."

Auguste Rodin

A beautiful execution is the faithful copy of nature.

Auguste Rodin (Elsen, 1965, p. 174)

This paradox of the obscurity of some of the greatest artistic innovations has not been restricted to filmmakers. In 1877, when 36-year-old Auguste Rodin made his public debut by exhibiting a work called *The Age of Bronze*, his statue was considered so lifelike a portrayal of

the model that he was accused of casting it from life. Rodin was both wounded and infuriated by this charge of dishonesty, and engaged in a painful campaign to refute it, writing that “By this doubt the jury has robbed me of the fruit of my work. Just suppose that, contrary to that opinion, I actually worked for a year and a half and that my model was constantly in my studio.” Yet even one influential critic who accepted the sculpture as skillful and honest nonetheless found it of little artistic merit, dismissing it as “a slavish likeness of a model with neither character nor beauty, an astonishingly exact copy of a most commonplace individual” (Butler, 1993, p. 109-12).

A biographer explained that the critics’ difficulties with Rodin’s sculpture “clearly stemmed from their inability to recognize and describe a new style in which naturalism played a stronger role than the traditional narrative and symbolic propensities of sculpture” (Butler, 1993, p. 112) – in short, their judgement of an experimental work by conceptual criteria. Rodin dedicated his career to making sculpture “a close study of nature” (Cladel, 1917, p. 107). He insisted that observation must precede ideas: “One must never try to express an idea by form. Make your form, make something, and the idea will come.” Because his art was based on vision, he had no qualms about changing works in progress: “I often begin with one intention and finish with another” (Elsen, 1963, p. 141). He was always more concerned with improving than completing sculptures: “Only slowly, little by little, by continual effort, can one make anything well” (Elsen, 1965, p. 151). When he was criticized for failing to finish a project, he responded, “And were the cathedrals finished?” (Elsen, 1985, p. 146).

Rodin’s innovations were never accepted by many contemporary critics: in 1889, for example, Edmond de Goncourt wrote that “Amidst the present infatuation with Impressionism, when all of painting remains in the sketch stage, he ought to be the first to make his name and

gloire as a sculptor of unfinished sketches” (Grunfeld, 1987, p. 289). The comparison to the Impressionists was appropriate, for like them Rodin was an experimental innovator who worshipped nature, and founded his art on an awareness of light. Thus Alan Bowness (1995, pp. 173, 176) observed that with *Age of Bronze*, Rodin initiated a new artistic development: “The first reaction was outrage: the figure was so life-like it seemed that it must have been cast directly from the model. But in fact the sculpture’s vitality was the result of art, not of artifice. Rodin had observed how classical and Renaissance sculptors left their body surfaces uneven so that light could play over the slightest undulation...The result was that his figures appeared far more convincing than those of any of his fellow exhibitors.” Bowness credited Rodin with reviving sculpture, which had become a dead art: “young men who fifty years earlier would have turned to painting now looked on sculpture as a more rewarding art.” Rodin did this by crafting a powerful new style based on experimental innovations, that achieved his goal of making style disappear: “There is no good style except that which makes itself forgotten in order to concentrate all the attention of the viewer on the subject” (Elsen and Varnedoe, 1971, p. 120).

Robert Frost

I don't like obscurity in poetry.

Robert Frost (Lathem, 1966, p. 41).

For much of his career, Robert Frost chafed at the widespread critical belief that “my simplicity is that of the untutored child” (Dickstein, 2010, p. 96). In 1922, T.S. Eliot casually dismissed Frost as a poet of “New England torpor; his verse, it is regretfully said, is uninteresting, and what is uninteresting is unreadable, and what is unreadable is not read. There, that is done” (Meyers, 1996, p.199). Bristling at Eliot's condescension, Frost responded that “the

need of being versed in country things was far greater, and often harder to achieve, than the need of being versed in pseudo-intellectual myths and symbols.” Eliot was neither the first poet nor the last to characterize Frost’s poetry as simplistic and provincial. In 1915, Amy Lowell credited Frost for the vividness of his portrayal of people and scenery, but described him as a mere recorder, lacking imagination: “The pictures, the characters, are reproduced directly from life, they are burnt into his mind...He gives out what has been put in unchanged by any personal mental process.” In 1936, Horace Gregory wrote that it had “always been Mr. Frost’s particular virtue to make molehills out of mountains, to dig sharply, clearly, and not too deeply into New England soil” (Gerber, 1982, pp. 23-24, 93). Frost would thus suffer for decades from the general perception of many critics and scholars: “Eliot is the poet of complexity and allusion, whose work is bound up with the whole history of literature itself; Frost is the poet of simplicity and directness, who writes of apple trees and stone walls and leaf-covered roads” (Dickstein, 2010, p. 24).

Frost was yet another experimental innovator (Galenson, 2006b, pp. 150-151) who struggled to gain critical acclaim in the face of a reigning conceptual aesthetic. In time, however, his achievement was appreciated. In 1952, with Frost approaching his 80th birthday, Randall Jarrell (1999, p. 35) wrote that “no poet has had even the range of his work more unforgivably underestimated by the influential critics of our time.” In 1977, Richard Poirier (p. xxii) contended that Frost was “a poet of genius because he could so often make his subtleties inextricable from an apparent availability.” More recently, Matthew Bolton observed that “Frost mastered an art that conceals art,” and explained why his art has so often been undervalued: “The immediacy of Frost’s rhymes, rhythms, and images can lull a reader into thinking that Frost’s verse is somehow easier to write and to apprehend than the work of a ‘difficult’ poet such as

Eliot...The simplicity of Frost's work can lead some readers to adopt simplistic readings of his poems” (Dickstein, 2010, pp. 23-24).

Frost created an experimental aesthetic that made poetry from the familiar – “to give people the thing that will make them say, ‘Oh yes I know what you mean’” (Thompson, 1964 p. 111). Jarrell (1999, p. 233) celebrated his “many, many poems in which there are real people with their real speech and real thought and real emotions,” making the reader “feel that he is not in a book but a world, and a world that has in common with his own some of the things that are most important in both.” Frost believed the ability to achieve this came with age: at 63, he wrote that “Young people have insight. They have a flash here and a flash there...It is later in the dark of life that you see forms, constellations. And it is the constellations that are philosophy” (Thompson, 1961, p. 133).

Irving Berlin

Your song must be perfectly *simple*.

Irving Berlin (Sears, 2012, p. 176)

On the occasion of Irving Berlin's hundredth birthday in 1988, Josh Rubins complained that Berlin's work remained undervalued: “For many urbane listeners, his name immediately, if somewhat misleadingly, calls up an off-putting knot of associations: simplistic refrains, conservative or jingoistic sentiments, popularity with (in Berlin’s own ironic words) ‘the mob’” (Sears, 2012, p. 147-48). In the same year, Murray Kempton illustrated this lack of respect, noting that “the supreme art singers...seldom call upon Berlin,” and offering an example: “Frank Sinatra did an exhilarating ‘Blue Skies’ when he was conscript to Columbia Records, but once

his taste in the ballad was free to exercise full sovereignty, he preferred to explore the more adult profundities of Rodgers and Hart and the Gershwins” (Sears, 2012, p. 145).

“Blue Skies” is an interesting case, for numerous musicians clearly adopted it voluntarily. Benny Goodman recorded the song at least 30 times over a span of more than 50 years. “Blue Skies” also became a standard for other big bands, including those of Earl Hines, Tommy Dorsey, and Duke Ellington. Bing Crosby recorded “Blue Skies” in 1946. Ella Fitzgerald included “Blue Skies” on her 1959 album *Get Happy*, after releasing it the preceding year on her album *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Irving Berlin Songbook*. In 1978, Willie Nelson included “Blue Skies” on *Stardust*, an album of “my favorite ten songs.” More recent interpreters of the song include Cassandra Wilson and Kiri Te Kanawa (Moore, 2000).

These performances appear to respond implicitly to Kempton's dismissal of Berlin's songs as lacking in depth or maturity. A comment by another musician did this explicitly. In 1955, Pete Seeger included “Blue Skies” in his album *The Goofing-Off Suite*, and nearly four decades later he reprinted the song's lyrics in his musical autobiography, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*. Although Seeger was a folk purist who generally sneered at the commercialism of Tin Pan Alley, he called Berlin's song a “gem,” and commented that “if there's a human race here 500 years from now, this will be called an old folk song, just as is ‘Greensleeves’” (Seeger, 1993, p. 222-23).

Berlin was an experimental songwriter (Galenson, 2009). He wanted his music to reach the largest possible audience, and he achieved this by treating familiar themes – “ideas, emotions, or objects known to everyone” – as simply as possible – “Simplicity is achieved only after much hard work, but you must attain it” (Sears, 2012, p. 176). He rejected as pretentious the idea that songwriters were artists, instead maintaining that they were craftsmen and (his highest

term of praise) professionals. Having grown up in extreme poverty, and depending on music to earn a living from a very early age, Berlin was never embarrassed to say that he wrote for money (he told his friend Cole Porter, “Never apologize for a song that sells a million copies”) (Sheed, 2007, p. 14). Yet as much as he professed to measure success solely by sales, Berlin in fact also had higher aspirations. Thus as early as 1910, when he was just 22, he complained to an interviewer that “we are not producing any living songs. These songs I am writing...will be a hit for a week or two...But I cannot think of a song in years that has come to stay” (Bergreen, 1990, p. 46)

Berlin would succeed in writing lasting songs, and a biographer observed that this achievement stemmed from his skill in making songs “in the voice of the average man and woman, as other folk singers before him had been doing for centuries” (Jablonski, 1999, p. 333). Berlin attributed his success to hard work – “The melody doesn't come to you. You sweat it out” – and he had no doubt that his work improved over time (late in his life, he dismissed his early songs: “They were not only bad, they were amateurish”) (Rosen, 2000, p.22; Jablonski, 1999, p. 290). After decades of painstaking effort, he achieved his goal of writing “in the simplest way...as simple as writing a telegram,” and a biographer tellingly compared Berlin’s masterpiece to the greatest work of another great experimental writer: “‘White Christmas’ is the counterpart to Robert Frost’s ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,’ which uses the simplest of rhymes and the barest of imagery to evoke a beautiful but melancholy scene” (Rosen, 2000, p. 4; Furia, 1998, p. 204). Robert Frost once wrote that a poet’s greatest ambition “is to lodge a few poems where they will be hard to get rid of” (Richardson, 2007, p. 118). Among Frost’s works that clearly achieved that goal was “Stopping by Woods,” which he wrote at 48; and among Berlin’s works that did the same in his domain was “White Christmas,” which he wrote at 54.

Rembrandt

We have developed a curious habit of supposing that any artist who fails to begin by shocking...must be third-rate.

Paul Valéry (1989, p. 60).

The technical mastery that makes art disappear has generally been a product of mature experimental innovators. Valéry (1989, pp. 89, 113) wrote passionately of the great artists who possessed “the will to work, the passion for their *craft* in itself, the wish to acquire an increasingly strong, subtle, and skillful grasp of its means,” declaring that “*The further they go the more they know, and know they know.*” He wrote of the development of one great artist: “Rembrandt...after attaining perfection in his early works, rises, later on, to the sublime level, to the point where art itself grows imperceptible, and is forgotten: having attained its supreme object without any apparent transition, its success absorbs, dismisses, or consumes the sense of wonder, of how it was done.”

Rembrandt was a classic example of an experimental innovator. He was a great draftsman, who made hundreds of drawings, but he rarely made drawings in preparation for his paintings (Alpers, 1988, pp. 70-71). Nor did he begin his paintings by drawing in the outlines of an intended image: X-rays of his paintings rarely show underdrawing, but instead reveal that he began by painting directly on the support (van de Wetering, 2000, pp. 23, 165-66). X-ray analysis also shows that he routinely made significant changes in the compositions of his paintings in progress (Bomford, 2006, p. 34). He worked slowly and painstakingly, building up his paintings with layer upon layer of paint (Alpers, 1988, p.16). Svetlana Alpers’ summary of his method serves as a concise definition of an experimental painter: “His habit was not to work

out his inventions in advance through drawings, but rather to invent paintings in the course of their execution” (1988, pp. 59-60).

Rembrandt was greatest in old age. Seymour Slive (1995, p. 78) observed that “During the last years no basic change occurs in Rembrandt’s style. His expressive power, however, grows until the very end.” Slive reflected that in the late works, “We feel that there is something of a deeper meaning that lies behind their formal qualities.” Trying to elucidate what this is, Slive contended that Rembrandt somehow reveals “the world which lies behind visual appearances.” Ernst van de Wetering (2000, pp. 274-79) observed that in his late works, “Rembrandt, through a multitude of both small and larger alterations made in the course of the work, enhanced the composition, adjusted the balance of light and shade, regulated the concentration of lighting, revised the contours,” all done with his distinctive brushwork. Van de Wetering argued that Rembrandt’s ability to create these effects depended on a “professional skill [that] can only be built up through endless practice from an early age on.”

Neither Slive nor van de Wetering could finally provide what they considered a satisfactory explanation of how Rembrandt achieved effects that seemed to transcend the limits of his discipline. Yet like Valéry, both recognized that he achieved this only late in his life, and in van de Wetering’s words with “skill...built up through endless practice from an early age on.” As seen in the examples of Hitchcock, Hawks, Rodin, Frost, and Berlin, there has often been far from universal recognition that skill born of endless practice is a source of great creativity, but discerning admirers of these and other great experimental innovators have recognized that it can be.

Conclusion

Let us try to master the mysteries of technique to such an extent
that people are deceived by it and will swear by all that is holy that
we have *no* technique.

Vincent van Gogh (1959, p. 401).

Many conceptual innovators have announced their arrival by creating spectacular masterpieces that exploded on their chosen disciplines: Arthur Rimbaud, Alfred Jarry, Pablo Picasso, T.S. Eliot, Orson Welles, Jean-Luc Godard, Sylvia Plath, and Bob Dylan are archetypal examples of these brash and transgressive young prodigies who trumpet their triumphs for all to see and hear. In contrast, the contributions of experimental innovators often arrive gradually and unobtrusively, late in their lives. The uncertainty of these innovators often makes them diffident and cautious in presenting their discoveries, making it even easier for them to be overlooked. And ironically, the very nature of their goals often adds to their failure to gain critical respect.

Many experimental artists work long and hard to find novel ways to create accurate portrayals of the world they perceive around them, and often wish to do this as simply as possible, in order to subordinate form to content. These artists specifically seek to make an art that appears natural rather than artificial. And it is those who come closest to this goal, who succeed the most completely at creating art that conceals art, who are most likely to be undervalued. Hitchcock, Hawks, Rodin, Frost, and Berlin are all great modern artists who suffered from this paradox. The towering achievements of these innovators are based on deep mastery of their disciplines; their creativity can best be appreciated by those who have a deep understanding of the relevant disciplines. The sensational innovations of conceptual young geniuses are more readily noticed, but scholars who seek to understand the true relationship

between age and creativity must be more conscientious, and devote careful study to the development of particular disciplines, in order to appreciate the subtle and often unobtrusive contributions of great experimental old masters.

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