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**The Performance
Artistry of Bob Dylan:
Conference Proceedings
of the Caen Colloquium**

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The Performance Artistry of Bob Dylan:
Conference Proceedings of the Caen Colloquium

Special Editors

Catharine Mason and Richard Thomas

Special Editors' Column

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Catharine Mason and Richard Thomas, Special Editors

Introduction

Catharine Mason and Richard Thomas

Folklore, ethnomusicology, linguistics, anthropology, literary criticism, and philology: none of these fields can be left aside in a thorough attempt to gain insight into the rich dynamics and designs of Bob Dylan's performance artistry. It is indeed in the combined views and equations of these disciplines that scholars may identify with greater precision the complex subtleties or, shall we say, the subtle complexities of Dylan's creative breakthroughs into an art form uniquely his own and yet soundly embedded in American popular culture. Let there be no confusion: the artist under scrutiny performs not for the mathematician's final analysis, even if numbers and calculations abound in the unfolding meaning of his lyrics. From Dylan's powerful allusions to the divisive increments and common denominators of human experience, from his descriptions of the sole heartbeat to the elaborate use of the formulaic that creates a unison of voice, and from his devotion to both new and old, present and past, the avant-garde and the archaic, emerges that deep-set connection between the personal and cultural that is essential for lasting artistic creation. In light of this complexity, no single academic paradigm could enlighten these dynamics in isolation.

The multi-disciplinary emphasis of the Caen Colloquium, held at the Université de Caen in March 2005 was intended to provide a strongly interdisciplinary approach to Dylan's work. Coming together as specialists of fields as diverse as structural anthropology on the one hand—inspired by half a century of field research throughout indigenous America—and threadbare grammatical analysis on the other, Caen Colloquium participants sought to exchange scholarship on Bob Dylan's body of song. Sharing a fascination with Dylan's creative impulses, we also brought to our analyses the effects of his lyrics on our own personal perceptions of art, music, social life, cultural manifestations, personal struggles, universal meanings, and so on. The Colloquium as event allowed us to share our experiences and

inspiration as listeners and as conscious interpreters equipped with the academic insights, tools, methods, and concepts—as well as the limitations—of our respective fields. The present publication seeks to provide the more objective and scholarly results of that encounter.

To a certain extent, the selection of the disciplines to be represented at the colloquium was methodic. But, as artistically inspired events will have it, the group that gathered might never have been anticipated. With considerable difficulty, we have divided the papers submitted to us into four disciplines: literary criticism, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and linguistics. Two of the papers appear to us as a melding of two disciplines: Mike Daley's study of Dylan's use of intonation provides new paths into both ethnomusicology and linguistics, while Catharine Mason's work on blues poetics also draws from linguistic analysis as it reaches for a literary approach. Whether the papers be clear-cut contributions from the specified disciplines or, as these two papers show, an essentially interdisciplinary venture, the editors have come to believe that ongoing Dylan studies—and song and performance studies more generally—will profit from the input and collaborative inquiries of a truly interdisciplinary approach.

Studies of song must account for a wide array of cultural phenomena. Linguists points to lexical choices, grammar, phonology, syntax, and stylistics; literary critics lead us to consider the sung text, lyrics, word use, intertextuality, fluctuation of literary register, dialogism, and interpretive strategies; ethnomusicologists focus on melody, rhythm, timbre, intonation, harmony, vocalization, instrumentation, and intermusicality; and anthropologists and culture critics are concerned with social groups and their organization, cultural context, history, tradition, transmission, collective meaning, and so on. All four of these fields can be of tremendous benefit for a more thorough understanding of song and performance.

It all began when an American mother (CM) living abroad with her toddler and newborn began listening closely to the songs from Bob Dylan's album *Under the Red Sky* (1990). Feeling a million miles away from her home country, she asked, "what is this guy doing with my language?" The children, at that stage compliant with their mother's enthusiasm, soon began to share in the music that Michael Gray (2000) would come to analyze in relation to the nursery rhyme and folktale traditions to which it so clearly belongs. Soon enough *Under the Red Sky* became an integral part of family poetry and song, alongside the works of Dr. Seuss, Shel Silverstein, Jacques Prévert, and Antoine. But what started as family entertainment quickly became academic inquiry, as CM, a folklorist and linguist at the University of Caen, began to wrestle with the linguistic and musical effects of the Dylan she had come across: What is Bob Dylan doing with language? What

is he doing with language in performance? What is he communicating with guitar chords and harmonica riffs? What is he doing with narrative and rhyme and intonation? What has his audience come to expect of him over the expanse of his long career? How is it that so many musicians—both professional and amateur—of so many generations have found inspiration in his quaintest of riffs, in his bare-boned narratives, in his quirkiest of metaphors, in his alliterations and rhythms and ellipses? Is this internationally famous songwriter truly a poet or is he just clever with words?

It was then that CM met a classicist (RT), also a long-time Dylan fan who was just beginning to recognize in Dylan a literary and aesthetic connection to the Greek and Roman poets he studies, particularly in the way both Dylan and Roman poetry are layered with texts from preceding Greek and Latin traditions. In the spring of 2001, RT had come to give a lecture on Roman poetry at the University of Caen. CM picked him up at the Caen train station, and when she turned on the ignition Dylan's "Idiot Wind" came across loud and clear from the tape deck. Talk of their shared interest led to CM asking RT if he was interested in coming to a conference she was thinking of holding on Dylan's performance art. He readily assented, still not quite sure how this would fit with his academic persona. Well before the Colloquium was actually held at Caen, the two had decided to publish the proceedings of the conference.

Prior to the Caen event, they had approached John Miles Foley, editor of *Oral Tradition*, whose assistance proved invaluable every step of the way. Indeed, Foley's own long-standing and cutting-edge work on performance extended to an academic interest in Dylan. He contributed to the intellectual foundations of the conference, insisting on the need to include ethnomusicologists, to resist the tendency to isolate the lyrics from the music, and urging a serious focus on literary and oral traditions. Thanks are due for these contributions, and especially for his decision to publish the proceedings of the conference in *Oral Tradition*. The present volume, then, like the conference itself, reflects the great variety of fields that easily and naturally intersect with Dylan's work. The papers are ordered so as to reflect that variety. Although each work stands alone, there is also a symbiosis and a sense, as emerged during the days at Caen, in which the parts take on a larger collective significance from the company they keep.

A number of the papers in this volume generally fall under the literary rubric. Gordon Ball, who for over a decade has been nominating Dylan for a Nobel Prize in Literature, puts to rest (as do other contributors), the notion that what Dylan does somehow falls short of being literature. Can song,

particularly “popular” song, constitute literature? And is Dylan’s artistic register and status as a “performance artist” sufficiently elevated enough to qualify him? To the first question, also addressed in the essay by Richard Thomas, Ball notes first that music and poetry can indeed be synonymous. Homer tells his Muse to sing, and Virgil uses the verb “I sing” in the first line of his great epic. Rather than being something new and unliterary, Dylan, in Ball’s view, “has helped return poetry to its primordial transmission by human breath; he has revived the traditions of bard, minstrel, troubadour.” If among other things great literature provides insights into the human experience through words, musicality, and other modes that have a powerful effect on a global audience, then Dylan’s literary excellence is beyond question.

One of the preoccupations of Dylan scholarship has had to do with his intertexts, where his songs come from, and what meanings they derive from their places of origin, be they textual or musical, secular or religious, ancient or modern. The essay by Richard Thomas explores the phenomenon of Dylan’s increasing study of the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome, evident in particular in the Dylan of the last decade (that is, on the last three albums and in his book *Chronicles, Volume One*). When on *Modern Times*’ “Rollin’ and Tumblin’” Dylan sings “I’ve been conjuring up all these long dead souls from their crumbling tombs” he alludes not just to the nineteenth-century poet Henry Timrod, Bing Crosby, or the long-dead bluesmen who are part of the fabric of the songs on this album, he also takes us back 2000 years to the Roman poet Ovid, whose exile poetry is one of the dominant intertexts of *Modern Times*. Thomas’s essay counters the view of those who cannot distinguish plagiarism (a charge also leveled against the poet Virgil in antiquity) from creative reuse. Thomas also looks at Dylan’s re-performance, lyrical renovation, and variation from the perspective of the Homeric rhapsode, a class of singers who, in the centuries following the inscribing of the Homeric poems in the eighth century BCE, re-performed the poems in musical settings.

Christophe Lebold’s contribution studies Dylan from an aesthetic and literary perspective that puts the singer in a tradition related to the acknowledged great poets of the western tradition, but from a point of view specific to Dylan. He considers Dylan not from a textual, “readerly” point of view, but rather from aspects having to do with the combination of his music and lyrics, use of voice, and personae created in Dylan’s lyrics and voice and varied in performance. Dylan is thus shown to be distinct from a writer like Keats, for instance, on the one hand, and Sinatra on the other, as a unique phenomenon inhabiting worlds that are simultaneously literary, musical, performative, and narratological.

Keith Negus's contribution argues for the importance of working with Dylan's melodies, as the lyrics can never be separated and simply read. He looks at issues of orality and performance and the nature and quality of Dylan's voice. Negus rejects the proposition, argued, for example, by Betsy Bowden (2001:1) that "without words most Dylan melodies and chord changes would be boring." He also addresses what emerges in his study as a false dichotomy of opposing folk and blues as "low register" to "canonical high culture," citing Paul Williams' insight (2004:xiii) that "It's all in the riff. That's the secret of Bob Dylan's music . . . the riff calls forth the great vocal performances." Negus shows how riffs¹ shape the songs, with the words chosen to convey the meaning of the song as it arises from the interplay between the vocals and the riffs. Negus also engages the aesthetic—writing about melody, singability, and pleasure—with original observations on what he shows to be the identical melody, with different harmonization, in the "no, no, no" of "It Ain't Me Babe" (1964) and the "yeah, yeah, yeah" of the Beatles "She Loves You" (1963) "over three notes descending within the interval of a minor third, and the same notes at that—G, F sharp, E." From the issue of singability, Negus moves on to what he calls Dylan's "willful disruption of familiar melodies," used as a tool for "undermining the audience's ability to sing along." Finally, Negus discusses the place of personal singing in modern culture. All of these observations, like Negus' paper in general, have much to contribute on the aesthetics of Dylan's song-making and singing.

There is a similar use of the technical to describe the aesthetic in musicologist Michael Daley's paper, which scrutinizes one stanza from the June 16, 1965 studio version of "Like A Rolling Stone," the greatest song of all time according to *Rolling Stone* (November 2004). He applies the methodology of linguist Michael Halliday, who in Daley's words "has found speech intonation, which includes pitch movement, timbre, syllabic rhythm and loudness, to be an integral part of English grammar and crucial to the transmission of certain kinds of meaning." His study is directed at establishing the aesthetic effects of the song, as established by critical responses (including Dylan's own) to the success of the song. He arranges these responses into five thematic areas: strong antagonism (in lyrics, hard vocal timbre, invisibility of narrator), attractiveness (siren-like power of the song drawing listener to the abyss), positive message (chiefly through affirmatory harmonic structures), projecting song (flung out, "vomitic" in

¹ In his *Studying Popular Music*, Richard Middleton (1990:125) states that the riff may be best defined as "short rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic figures repeated to form a structural framework."

Dylan's own words) and effectiveness (the virtuosity in general, including musical pitch). Daley then studies the second verse and chorus of the song "Miss Lonely" ("ah you gone to the finest school all right miss lonely. . .") and chorus from the perspective of intonation, the components of which include tonality (the pattern by which tone groups are distributed throughout speech), tonicity (the placement of tonic prominence, within each tone group), and tone (the tone or pitch contours, of which Halliday detected five types).² What emerges is a system that allows for interpretation based on linguistic usage but which allows interpretation of varying meanings given by the verse in re-performance. Shifts in tonality, tonicity, and tone type can legitimately be held to create shifts in areas of empathy, anger, point of view, and narratological involvement, just as surely as can the shifts in lyrics (for instance in a song like "If You See Her, Say Hello").

Todd Harvey's study of "Man of Constant Sorrow," a song obviously not written by Dylan but one that he recorded three times in 1961, allow him to set Dylan in the traditions of the song that stretch from the beginning of the twentieth century to 1961 and beyond. As with the contributions of Negus and Daley, we find a strong assertion of the need to valorize melodic and other musical considerations along with the lyrics, if we are even to attempt to approximate the essence of Dylan's performance artistry. This tension was very productive throughout the conference and is one of the strengths of the volume. Particularly useful is Harvey's organizing versions of melodies and versions of lyrics, with each feature grouped into distinct variant groups. "Man of Constant Sorrow" may have been composed as early as 1907 by Dick Burnett who, in 1973 when asked in an interview by music historian Charles Wolfe whether he wrote it reportedly responded, "no I think I got that ballet from somebody—I dunno. It may be my song" Different versions of the song have been recorded by both Burnett and Dylan, and Harvey has collected these numerous versions in order to better assess the May 1961 version. In doing so, Harvey finds that "Dylan borrowed lyrics from several local performers, applied aspects of Guthrie's accompanimental style, used [Mike] Seeger's harmonic structure, and fashioned a melody that approximated earlier sources, but fit his developing vocal style." Also valuable, and as close as we can get to being in the recording studios and rehearsals with Dylan, is Harvey's comparative assessment of the then 20-year-old's evolution in the six months from the

² Halliday (1970:125) detected five types of pitch or tone contours: 1) falling; tone 2) high rising, or falling-rising (pointed); tone 3) low rising; tone 4) falling-rising (rounded); and tone 5) rising-falling (rounded).

version in May to what was released on *Bob Dylan* in March 1962.³ A month later, in the third of the 1961 versions, “the song has solidified” as Harvey puts it and “this impression is confirmed by the March 1963 *Folk Songs and More Songs* program, released as part of the *No Direction Home* documentary film. Dylan has made the song his own.”

In a number of the remaining contributions, cultural approaches to Dylan performances are quite varied and include Spanish, Amerindian, and countercultural influences on Dylan’s work. Christopher Rollason begins with an exploration of Dylan’s actual knowledge of Spanish, and treats the place of Spanish and Spanish-American themes, characters, and situations in Dylan’s *oeuvre*, which he shows are quite pervasive. He considers the presence of these themes in songs, from the casual on “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues,” to the pervasive “Senor,” to such works as *Tarantula* for prose, and delves into the extensive reception of Dylan in Latin America and Spain, in music, culture and translation, while providing insights into the singer’s engagement with Spanish literary traditions (with a particular and valuable focus on García Lorca). The hybridity of Spanish and Latin American cultural production, combining “low register” and “high culture” elements to create what is essentially a new art form, also maps well onto this essential element of Dylan’s own creativity and art.

Structural anthropologist Emmanuel Désveaux combs the Dylan corpus for elements, themes, and stylistic devices commonly found in Amerindian traditions collected by field researchers—including himself—from the late-nineteenth century to the present day. He expands his demonstration to an interpretation of Dylan’s more mythical schemes as they reflect worldviews in Amerindian oral traditions. In an interesting study of some of the direct influences of indigenous American cultures on American popular culture, Désveaux also analyzes the transformational processes behind such hybridization.

Laure Bouquerel’s study brings us closer to the immediate context of Dylan’s creative impulse in examining the rise of stardom and the dynamics of counterculture as two factors directly affecting the young performer. The role of Dylan’s stardom in his performance art involves his reaction to various media as well as to his audience. His refusal to play the role played by, for example, his hero and the fad-setting star, Elvis Presley, is seen by Bouquerel as an artistic innovation, unique in Dylan’s portrayal of what she calls the “ordinary star.” It is also, as she argues, an artistic evolution of the cultural context. In a study of Dylan’s image as foregrounded by D. A. Pennebaker in the classic documentary film *Don’t Look Back*, Bouquerel

³ This version was recorded on November 22, 1961.

demonstrates the blurred boundaries between art forms, subject and object, and the personal and cultural as seen in both Dylan's folk stance and Pennebaker's *cinéma vérité*.

Language and meaning are the foci of the three papers that bring this volume to a close. Words as the building blocks of language and syntax as its underlying rules are, as of yet, far too often ignored in the study of folk poetry. Jean-Charles Khalifa has taken a leap forward in his semantic and syntactic tour of the Dylan corpus. When we consider the impact of Roman Jakobson's definition (1987:71) of the function of poetry as "projecting the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination," Khalifa's study provides invaluable insights for literary critics. With a highly scientific approach to Dylan's use of language, our linguist leads us to think more concretely about artistic vision and about Dylan's own achievements in both content and form.

Nicolas Froeliger provides us with a study of French covers of Bob Dylan songs in a search for general rules of adapting songs into another language. He explains the difference between covering and translating, suggesting that it is largely a matter of meter and scansion. This work provides elaborate examples of translation strategies from numerous Dylan interpreters in French, including faithfulness to meaning, rhythm and phrasing, attitude of subject matter, poetics, and musicality. Froeliger more closely examines Dylan covers by Hughes Aufray and by Graeme Allwright in order to identify two predominant approaches to faithfulness: Aufray, as he demonstrates, attaches his work to the sound of the initial words while Allwright is more concerned with meaning.

Focusing on language use and style more specifically, Catharine Mason provides a study of blues poetics as it has influenced the songwriting strategies of Bob Dylan. Beginning with a close listening of Dylan's interpretation of Blind Willie McTell's "Broke Down Engine," the author identifies various stylistic devices adopted and adapted by the younger singer. A description of *songfulness*, blues metaphors, grammatical manipulations, use of the informal register, and the complex poetic and syntactic structures of the AAB song form (thereby coining the phrase "binary blues clauses"), provides the ingredients and orientations of a detailed *explication de texte* of Dylan's "10,000 Men."

Perhaps the most stimulating and challenging part of the Caen Dylan Colloquium was the active participation of artists. A considerable number of singer-songwriters, musicians, interpreters of Dylan songs, and visual artists accepted our invitation to gather and share their art, as well as their intellectual insights with scholars, students, and fans as we sought to further academic and artistic appreciation of Bob Dylan's performance art. All

would probably agree that genuine collaboration between artists and intellectuals provided some of the most rewarding, challenging and inspiring aspects of the Caen event.

In preparation for the colloquium, Steve Young, an internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter from Nashville, Tennessee, stepped into the university classroom to present a musically illustrated lecture on the history of American roots music to students of linguistics. Young and his son Jubal performed mostly original music for us, explaining through narrative and at times with more technical description, elaborate details about the songwriting craft. Jubal Young generously ventured into a couple of French high schools to explain the artistic, historic, and material realities of songwriting in Nashville.

Steve Young's "paper" given at the colloquium provided a more in-depth musical analysis of blues genres, again with outstanding and unforgettable guitar accompaniment and vocals. For two weeks in Normandy, the barriers between concert halls and lecture halls began to crumble, thanks to the articulate insights of Steve and Jubal Young into the history of American music, the aspects and functions of creating and performing, and some personal narratives about the impulse, the inspiration, the frustration, and the regeneration of making art.

Numerous interpretations of Dylan songs were performed by the Youngs, by several members of the colloquium, and by the Ziklights, a local high school rock group of advanced conservatory training. Perhaps the most telling event of the colloquium was the innovative rap interpretation by the Ziklights of "Subterranean Homesick Blues." Unexpected discussions about the role of personal voice in performance, of contextual indices in performance, and of cross-generational transmission were motivated by such youthful performance of this song first released 40 years before.

Charlie McCoy's elaborate and witty personal narrative, describing his artistic collaboration with Bob Dylan in New York and then in Nashville (as evidenced in, for example, "Highway 61 Revisited," "Blonde on Blonde," "John Wesley Harding," and "Nashville Skyline"), provided rich insight into the creative process of studio production. Performing across genre boundaries, McCoy insisted that Dylan opened the doors of Nashville studios for a whole new generation of performing artists. Further testimony into his own experience of the performance arena, with precise reference to the warm welcome provided to him by French audiences, shed light on some of the cultural discussions in the academic papers. McCoy's harmonica interpretation of "Just Like a Woman," along with Steve Young's "musical

paper” convinced us that artistic performance itself must become an integral part of academic vistas in performance studies.

The visual interpretation of selected song lines and titles of Robert Borne’s still photography and that of Zhou Hong’s calligraphy-paintings provided an aesthetic dimension to the colloquium that surprised and stimulated colloquium participants. Unexpected questions emerged that were above and beyond colloquium objectives but floated in the air: What exactly are the rhetorical devices and functions shared by a performing art and a visual art? How might performance define itself as an aesthetic form in light of artistic and critical achievements in the visual artists?

Given the widespread and fabulously cross-cultural influence of Dylan’s performance as an artistic expression as seen in Hong’s work, one is forced to agree that her calligraphed word provides a mirrored reflection of the sung text. In what ways might her ideogrammatic paintings account for, or possibly extend, the performance arena constructed by Dylan? What does her transformation of artistic and language media say about art as process?

Borne’s photographic exhibit provides a closer association between the visual dynamics of Dylan’s song lyrics and a purely visual construction; yet can one claim that his photographs provide mere illustration of Dylan’s narrative and descriptive allusions? Or might we suspect that Dylan’s lines were used as commentary to the pictorial views captured on camera by the photographer? Such questions, though left unanswered, brought about fresh new insights and academic motivation that we hope will lead to further study of Dylan’s artistic achievement.

Indeed, as the colloquium advanced, perhaps more questions than answers were formulated. How does performance connect performer and audience members? How does performance combine and create verbal, social and cultural meaning and practice? How does performance design a new purpose for, as well as experience and vision of traditional art forms? Through such rich and varied academic and artistic insight, colloquium participants were constantly reminded of the contextual and emergent qualities of performance, as they incorporate the essential building blocks of an ephemeral phenomenon. As Foley (1995:80) states,

the phenomenological present conferred by actual performance context—the Rajasthani *bhopo*’s episode before the illustrated cloth “map,” the folk preacher’s retelling of a Biblical tale before his or her congregation, the Serbian *bajalica*’s whispered spell in her client’s ear—vanishes and along with it the unique and primal connection between this particular visit to the performance arena and the traditional sense of having been there before. The face-to-face interaction, not only between performer and audience but also among audience members, cannot be played out in

a written text, no matter how multi-channelled that document may be. Nothing can wholly replace the personal exploration of an oral traditional performance by a person steeped in the signicative geography of the event.

In our endeavor to understand the traditional and social fabric from which the individual performer borrows and adapts the complex dynamics, elements, functions, references, and configurations of a song, we must identify the locus of meaning which guides the complex choices of the performer. An approach to performance as both contextual and emergent places under our microscope the all-encompassing moment of artistic process manifesting in concrete form, the merging of tradition and innovation, and the renewal of human expression as a socially embedded, ritualized, formal event. But what has guided all of the papers presented in this volume is a highly personal and intimate encounter by each writer of Dylan in creativity, composition, and, as always, in performance.

Université de Caen and Harvard University

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Dylan and the Nobel

Gordon Ball

Allow me to begin on a personal note. I'm not a Dylan expert, nor a scholar of music, or classics, or folklore, or, for that matter, the Nobel Prize. My specialty is the poet Allen Ginsberg and the literature of the Beat Generation; I edited three books with Ginsberg and have taken and exhibited a number of photographs of the poet and his Beat colleagues over the years.

For decades I've admired the work of Bob Dylan, whom I saw at Newport 1965; my memoir *'66 Frames* relates my first contact with his music, and he makes a brief appearance in a recently completed chronicle of my years on an upstate New York farm with Ginsberg and other Beats.

In 1996 I first wrote the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, nominating Dylan for its Prize in literature. The idea to do so did not originate with me but with two Dylan aficionados in Norway, journalist Reidar Indrebø and attorney Gunnar Lunde. (Also, a number of other professors have supported Dylan's candidacy at various times in the past.) Mr. Indrebø and Mr. Lunde had written Allen Ginsberg seeking help with the nomination. (The nominator must be a member of the Swedish Academy, or professor of literature or language, or a past laureate in literature, or the president of a national writers' organization.) Ginsberg's office called and asked if I would like to write a nominating letter.

In my 1996 nomination, I cited the almost unlimited dimensions of Dylan's work, how it has permeated the globe and affected history. On the basis of his lyrics alone he deserves the Prize, but the dimensions of his artistic accomplishment are even larger because together with a very considerable body of lyrics there is also music and performance.

Examining the criteria for the granting of the Nobel Prize in Literature, I learned that two general standards had been specified early on. The final will of Alfred Nobel in 1895 stipulated that in literature the honoree's work shall have been "the most outstanding . . . of 'an idealistic tendency'"; and that in each field "during the preceding year, [it] shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind" (Frenz 1969b:VII). According to Horst Frenz in *Nobel Lectures: Literature*, the second stipulation was clarified by Nobel Foundation

statutes to mean that awards should be made “for the most recent achievements in the field of culture” and that older works should be considered only in cases where their importance “has not become apparent until recently” (Frenz 1969b:VII-IX).

However, a review of awards and their presentations since 1901 suggests considerable latitude in terms of recent achievement and revised appreciation of earlier work. While some Nobel presentations focus more on an author’s latest creation (or, as in the case of Faulkner, for example, on a new perspective of his entire *oeuvre*), others seem to take in a whole career. In the case of Icelandic novelist Halldor Laxness (1955), the most recent work cited was published nine years earlier. T. S. Eliot was over a quarter-century removed from *The Waste Land* when he received his Nobel recognition.

So the original criteria for granting prizes call for a literature that is idealistic and of benefit to humanity. Though a recent statement from the Swedish Academy emphasizes literary and artistic values (Allén and Espmark 2001:47), in the earliest years Nobel’s “idealistic tendency” was taken to mean that the award was “not primarily a literary prize” but also one recognizing elevating views of humanity (Espmark 1991:10). However, the senses of “idealistic tendency” have varied over time and can even include “uncompromising integrity” in depicting “the human predicament” (Allén and Espmark 2001:47).

Few would challenge Bob Dylan’s “uncompromising integrity” in depicting the human predicament. Yet many may ask whether the Nobel Committee should break with perceived tradition and grant an award to someone seen largely as a writer and performer of song. Is Dylan’s work truly of sufficient literary quality to join that of time-honored masters of the pen? Can an icon of popular culture, a “song and dance man,” be placed shoulder-to-shoulder with literary giants? Bobby Zimmerman alongside Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Gunter Grass?

In 1900 Nobel Foundation statutes defined literature as “not only belles-lettres, but also other writings which, by virtue of their form and style, possess literary value” (Nobel Foundation 2006).¹ In fact, music and poetry have been historically linked, and Dylan’s work has helped significantly to renew that vital connection. The art of poetry is thousands of years old; it began in performance and has survived in good part on oral strengths, and less through the rather recent convenience of moveable type. In our era Bob Dylan has helped return poetry to its primordial transmission by human breath; he has revived the traditions of bard, minstrel, and troubadour.

¹ Available online at <http://nobelprize.org/nobelfoundation/statutes.html>.

This vital connection between music and poetry had been especially weakened, at least in the United States, from the 1930s into the 1960s by the application of the New Critical emphasis on poetry as written text to be explicated, thus de-emphasizing its orality. In revitalizing this connection it is as if Dylan had heeded Ezra Pound's observation (1913:91) that

. . . both in Greece and in Provence the poetry attained its highest rhythmic and metrical brilliance at times when the arts of verse and music were most closely knit together, when each thing done by the poet had some definite musical urge or necessity bound up within it.

And Pound referred to poetry and music as "twin arts" (91). Greek lyric poetry is said to have been sung and accompanied; indeed, even the figure of Homer singing with harp or lyre (as some conceive) may not be as distant from the blue-eyed son prophesying with his guitar as the millennia between them suggest. For Pound (1913:39), so important was the musical aspect of verse that he proposed:

For practical contact with all past poetry that was actually *sung* in its own day I suggest that. . . universities combine in employing a couple of singers who understand the meanings of words. . . . A half-dozen hours spent in listening to the lyrics actually performed would give the student more knowledge. . . than a year's work in philology.

Let me be clear: I don't mean to say that the Greek "singer of tales" and "the vagabond who's rapping at your door" share an interchangeable identity. Homer was primarily an epic poet (whose "very medium . . . is pervaded by lyric quality," as translator Robert Fitzgerald has noted [1963:490]); Dylan can be seen as much a lyrical one. The music we might associate with the entity or "consciousness" called Homer may have been more elemental: perhaps he intoned, rather than sang; Fitzgerald himself claims not to know the precise relationship between voice and verse and instrument (489). Other scholars, including Robert Fagles and Bernard Knox, conjecture that Homer may have made use of "a rudimentary form of writing" (Fagles 1990:ix), though Knox allows that Homer "probably did sing in performance" (1990:7). In any case, the link between poetry and music is historic. As W. B. Stanford tells us, "In Greek and Roman education music and poetry were kept together in the discipline called *mousiké*" (1996:26). He also asserts that, "poetry's earliest name in Greek . . . primarily meant 'song'; and the poet was called a singer . . . long before he was called a maker" (*idem*).

As to whether Dylan is first a poet or first a musician, the question is open for discussion, as it has been, evidently even in Dylan's mind—as

Christopher Ricks (2003:11-12) has shown in his citations of Dylan's own words on the subject. To excerpt, and place in chronological order:

"The words are just as important as the music. There would be no music without the words." (1965)

"It's the music that the words are sung to that's important." (1968)

"It ain't the melodies that're important, man, it's the words." (1971)

"I consider myself a poet first and a musician second." (1978)

My point, then, is rather modest: that poetry and music share time-honored ground, that the two arts are often bound closely together, and that Dylan's great gifts may be appreciated within such a performative lineage. Poetry and music aren't mutually exclusive.

Moreover, some of the Nobel awards of the past demonstrate that media overlap and merge, yet deserve this highest recognition. The Prize has gone to nine dramatists, whose work depends on performance by others skilled in a mixed-media range of arts and crafts: lighting, acting, set design, music, and dance. Even the literature prize given to Winston Churchill—one of two historians to have received it—was awarded in part for his "brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values" (Frenz 1969:487).

In 1997 the Nobel went to Italian playwright Dario Fo. Some observations by Burton Feldman in his *The Nobel Prize: A History of Genius, Controversy, and Prestige* may apply (Feldman 2000:87):

. . . many consider [Fo] not a dramatist but a writer of scripts for his own performances. He is a vivid and popular actor of farce and satire. . . . In each performance he improvises at will, so that his scripts are never quite available in permanent form, but remain prompt-books. He is the first modern "playwright"—or performance artist—in the Nobel list.

I'd like to say more, a little later, on literary aspects of Dylan's work, and on the relationship between poetry and music. But I began by citing the two original criteria for the Prize, and would like to return to them. Idealism and benefiting humanity often, of course, go hand in hand, and Dylan's idealistic, activist songs have changed the world we live in. In 1963 the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee gave Dylan the Tom Paine Award. (An earlier recipient, Bertrand Russell, was one of three philosophers—not counting Sartre—to have won the Nobel Prize in Literature.) Dylan's award came on the strengths of "Blowin' in the Wind," "Oxford Town," and other

compositions, as well as his going in-person to centers of voter registration in the Deep South (“In the days when you could get shot for it,” Mississippi novelist Barry Hannah has observed [2004:283]). And soon the world was hearing much more: “The Times They Are a Changin,’” “Only a Pawn in Their Game,” and “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll.” An attitude expressed in his 1965 “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” —“but even the president of the United States / Sometimes must have to stand naked” (Dylan 2004c:157)—may have helped revise the American perspective on presidential authority, encouraging inquiry into what became the Watergate scandal of the 1973-74 Nixon White House.

For a generation raised in a time of conformity, Mr. Dylan validated the imagination and independence of thought; his work was central to the creativity of the 1960s in the United States, and has affected others elsewhere. In a *Der Spiegel* interview a few years ago, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, when asked if growing up in Germany he had an “American dream,” replied, “Not an American dream, but my very own dream of freedom. That was for me the music of Bob Dylan” (Noack 2002:32-35).

Nor has Dylan’s idealism been limited to just one period, as later songs have shown: the sentimental fatherly idealism of “Forever Young”; the extraordinary songs of religious idealism such as “Every Grain of Sand”; the expression of an aesthetic ideal—against a torched historical landscape—in the brilliant but fated blues singer Blind Willie McTell, who would recognize that “. . . power and greed and corruptible seed / Seem to be all that there is” (Dylan 2004c:478); the search for a classical character trait, “Dignity.”²

To return to the relationship of poetry, music, and Dylan’s literary value, Rabindranath Tagore (Nobel winner in 1913) set many of his own poems to music. Yeats, quoting a Bengali speaker as he introduced Tagore’s *Gitanjali*, reported that “he is as great in music as in poetry, and his songs are sung from the west of India into Burmah wherever Bengali is spoken”(1916:viii). And the 1923 presentation to Yeats himself noted that in his verse, “There is a greater element of song than is usual in modern English poetry” (Hallstrom 196).

If there is a recognition of this vital linkage of poetry and music in the case of past Nobel winners, the question then arising is whether Dylan’s works—on the page—can rest companionably with enshrined works of literature. The answer is decidedly positive. Dylan’s ability to evoke an entire milieu with a few swift words is reminiscent of Chekhov. The opening of “Just Like a Woman” with its succinct evocation of a whole social scene (“Nobody feels any pain / Tonight as I stand inside the rain” [Dylan 2004c:202]) brings

² I refer here to both the trait and the title of the song.

to my mind that of “The Lady with the Pet Dog”: “A new person, it was said, had appeared on the esplanade . . .” (Chekhov 1968:412). Dylan’s view of life as a journey, as well as his assuming the role of prophet, seer, or *voyant*, recalls the visionary Arthur Rimbaud. And Dylan’s prophecies have been borne out time and again. For example, consider a line from “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” in terms of inner city or even suburban conditions in the United States in recent years: “I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children” (Dylan 2004c:59). From the same composition, is it hard to find a locus for “Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters” (Dylan 2004c:60) throughout our world today?

Dylan’s eclecticism and inventiveness can be compared to Yeats. That is, in Yeats the Celtic and the English coalesce; in Dylan, linguistic and musical idioms of ancient folk music and contemporary rock ‘n’ roll become one: in Bob Dylan, Scots balladeers meet Little Richard. That his imagery has resisted numerous attempts at schematization by hosts of scholars (“People *dissect* my songs like rabbits,” Dylan once remarked [quoted in Brown 1990:20] testifies, above all else, to its power as poetry. Just for arrestingly vivid imagery consider “Tombstone Blues”: “The geometry of innocence flesh on the bone” (Dylan 2004c:170). “Desolation Row” (181) begins:

They’re selling postcards of the hanging
They’re painting the passports brown
The beauty parlor’s filled with sailors
The circus is in town.

Here social criticism joins with surrealism: Dylan’s verse is marked by an eclecticism that moves swiftly from one mode to another, as if intended to keep ever ahead of us. “Desolation Row”—the concept—seems to be a kind of night journey or Dark Night of the Soul, a supra-realistic critical mass of depression that may at best afford the “wisdom that is woe,” as the great American writer Herman Melville once put it (Melville 1967:335). “Don’t send me no more letters no,” our singer concludes, “Not unless you mail them / From Desolation Row” (Dylan 2004c:183).

Dylan can be as grim in his examination of the human condition as Nobel winner William Faulkner; indeed, much of his work (“Visions of Johanna” and “Most of the Time”) displays “the human heart in conflict with itself” that Faulkner, receiving his Nobel, identified as requisite for “good writing” (Frenz 1969:444). Surely in its experimentalism and variety Dylan’s work is as rich as Mr. Faulkner’s fictional narratives: there are love songs that range from bittersweet poignancy (“Most of the Time”) to shocking realism (“Ballad in Plain D”); lean parables on the human condition (“I Dreamed I

Saw St. Augustine”); adaptations of medieval and Renaissance ballads, including “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” (the inspired revision of “Lord Randall’s Son” that captures the sense of doom in the fall of 1962). There are works that seem chiefly aesthetic, or about the power of art, such as “Mr. Tambourine Man”; songs of wisdom (“My Back Pages”); and, as we’ve noted, songs of social protest and songs of prophecy.

One of Bob Dylan’s recent releases, so to speak, is *Chronicles: Volume One*, a finalist for the 2005 National Book Critics Prize in Biography and Memoir and winner of the 2005 Quill Book Award in biography/memoir. I know a little about memoirs; I’ve read a few and have published two. And so I was intrigued to learn of Dylan’s, eager to examine it with certain basic questions in mind. Will I find some of the obfuscation that colored certain earlier autobiographical depictions of his life (especially in interviews)? Will someone who seems not merely to value but to cherish privacy reveal *anything* of significance? He’s invited familiarity in the lines “You may call me Bobby, you may call me Zimmy” (Dylan 2004c:402)—but that’s in song, where we recognize the principle of persona. In memoir, we may like to think, we can get closer to truth.

Overall, I find the value of *Chronicles: Volume One* extraordinary. Although true to form Dylan denies being “the conscience of a generation” (2004a:115), here are accounts from the center of the whirlwind: the unknown nineteen-year old driven from the provinces by a sense of destiny into the heart of New York’s folk music scene; the star in his late twenties, a hostage to fame, shocked at being asked by well-known performer Robbie Robertson, “Where do you think you’re gonna take . . . the whole music scene?” (117).

The early period is especially presented with remarkable recall of vivid detail in personal and historical dimensions alike: the discussion of his early reading, including Thucydides’ *The Athenian General*, “a narrative which would give you chills” (36); the extended portrait of Mike Seeger, “the supreme archetype” of the folk musician who “could push a stake through Dracula’s black heart” (69); the effect on Dylan (“the bells went off”) when first he read Arthur Rimbaud’s formulation of the shifting, unstable nature of the self: “Je est un autre” (288).

The 1953 Nobel award cited Sir Winston Churchill, along with his oratory, “for his mastery of historical and biographical description” (Frenz 1969:487); perhaps Dylan’s three volumes, when completed, will constitute a lasting and complex personal, historically central, and cultural record that only he could offer. As the Nobel presentation to Churchill claimed, “. . . there is something special about history written by a man who has himself helped to make it” (Frenz 1969:490).

Having sketched some of the idealism and the benefits to humanity of the works of Mr. Dylan, having considered them within the context of poetry, having brought his lyrics shoulder-to-shoulder with literary masters before him, and having examined his most recent publication with reference to an earlier Prize, we might note one other concern associated with the granting of a Nobel: that the work so honored meet the test of experience or the examination of experts (Nobel Foundation 2006). Dylan, of course, has satisfied both criteria. As for the former, it is apparent today that Dylan's work has not merely survived over the course of forty-five years, but that—as Faulkner in Stockholm in 1950 predicted of mankind (Frenz 1969:445)—it has prevailed. Just a few of the countless indications: Dylan's performing for the Pope and 300,000 others in 1997, with John Paul quoting from a Dylan song already then a quarter-century old; his appearing on a major American news magazine interview program in Fall 2004, with interviewer Ed Bradley insisting—despite his guest's disclaimer—that in the minds of many people Dylan has been gifted with special insight on the level of a prophet³; his 1974 “Knockin' on Heaven's Door” being adapted for a 1996 Scottish anti-gun campaign in response to the massacre of over a dozen schoolchildren by a single gunman. Indeed, one can see that Yeats' prediction about the future of the verses of Tagore (“. . . travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers . . . murmuring them” [1916:xv]) has been realized many times over by Dylan.

As for meeting the examination of the experts, various academic textbooks, including the Norton *Introduction to Literature* (2001) and the *Portable Beat Reader* (1992), have reproduced his lyrics. The enlarged edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* includes an entry on the “Rock Lyric” (Preminger 1974:979-80), with specific songs by Dylan given as examples of the incorporation of “elements of modern poetry”:

Alienation as objectified in a dissociated modern sensibility . . . Dylan's “Desolation Row” (which refers specifically to Pound and Eliot) . . . Surrealism—used . . . to render a sense of social chaos (Dylan's “Memphis Blues Again”) . . . Highly complex wordplay and intricate themes: Dylan's “Subterranean Homesick Blues.”

Four decades ago, critic Ralph Gleason declared Dylan “the first American poet to touch everyone, to hit all walks of life in this great sprawling society” (1966:28). More recently, Danny Goldberg's *Dispatches from the Culture Wars* concluded with a warning to the American Left that

³ See Dylan, Bob. “Interview with Ed Bradley.” *Sixty Minutes*. WBRA, Roanoke, VA. 5 Dec. 2004.

demonstrates the timelessness of a Dylan theme: “Bob Dylan’s message of four decades ago still works: ‘You better start swimming or you’ll sink like a stone, for the times they are a changin’”(2003:312).

Poet Andrei Codrescu once exclaimed, “Dylan? He’s the best living American poet there is, man!” (quoted in Spitzer 2006⁴) In 1996, poet and distinguished professor Allen Ginsberg told me that Dylan’s works were “prolific and memorable, and memorableness is a mark of great poetry.”⁵ Recommending him for the Literature award, Ginsberg (1996)⁶ wrote:

Dylan is a major American Bard & minstrel of XX Century, whose words have influenced many generations throughout the world. He deserves a Nobel Prize in recognition of his mighty & universal poetic powers.

Ginsberg has spoken of first hearing the young Dylan on Allen’s 1963 return from India, when he was moved to tears by “A Hard Rain”: “it seemed that the torch had been passed to another generation.”⁷ In 1971 he wrote, “for Dylan’s genius . . . one of his greatest works [is] ‘September on Jessore Road.’” And Ginsberg—who had begun composing music himself after the Chicago convention 1968—dedicated his 1975 volume of lyrics, *First Blues: Rags, Ballads & Harmonium Songs*, to “Minstrel Guruji [little guru] Bob Dylan.” Every third line of Dylan’s, he once told me, is one of genius.

The 2000 Polar Music Prize, presented in Stockholm by the King of Sweden, cited Dylan’s “musical and poetic brilliance.”⁸ Mr. Andrew Motion, British Poet Laureate, has noted “the concentration and surprise of his lyrics. . . the dramatic sympathy between the words and the music. . .” (Kelley 2000:7).

Equally important—and a more direct sign of how Dylan has enriched our collective experience—are the many phrases from his lyrics that have become part of our everyday lexicon: “The times they are a-changin, I was so much older then / I’m younger than that now”; “Nobody feels any pain.” According to Professor Daniel Karlin, who also endorsed Dylan’s Nobel candidacy, Dylan “has given more memorable phrases to our language than

⁴ Available online at <http://www.jackmagazine.com/issue7/essaysmspitzer.html>.

⁵ Personal communication.

⁶ See Ginsberg, Allen. “Letter to the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy.” 20 Nov. 1996. [Note: this unpublished letter is one page long.]

⁷ Quoted in Scorsese’s documentary film, *No Direction Home* (2005).

⁸ See “Polar Music Prize.” Royal Swedish Academy of Music. 5 Dec. 2004. Available online at <http://www.polarmusicprize.com/newSite/2000.shtml>.

any comparable figure since Kipling” (Indrebø 2002⁹). Most recently, editor David Lehman, explaining the presence of the lyrics to “Desolation Row” in his *Oxford Book of American Poetry*, wrote that unlike “Some Enchanted Evening” and other standards, “the lyrics have an existence apart from the music” (2006:xix).

The American poet Michael McClure has written, “Bob Dylan is a poet; whether he has cherubs in his hair and fairy wings, or feet of clay, he is a poet” (1974:33). “Dylan,” he explains, “has slipped into people’s dream baskets. He has been incorporated into their myths and fantasies” (34).

Many are the writers who have titled their works with phrases from Dylan, or made dedications to him. For novelist Barry Hannah, author of *Yonder Stands Your Orphan*, Dylan is “a master of spiritual geography” (2004:283); fiction writer Joyce Carol Oates has dedicated her most frequently reproduced short story, “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” to him; activist publisher Raymond Mungo titled his personal history of the 1960s Liberation News Service *Famous Long Ago* (1970).

Recent years have witnessed a surge of new books on Dylan’s work, including a new edition of Michael Gray’s remarkable exploration, *Song and Dance Man III: The Art of Bob Dylan* (2000) and Christopher Ricks’ provocative study, *Dylan’s Visions of Sin* (2003). Though Professor Ricks and I have debated the issue of whether Dylan should be accorded the Nobel, his volume offers, among other things, one of the most extended expositions of Dylan’s poetic gifts I’ve seen. Years ago he reflected (quoted in Brown 1990:20):

Dylan is an artist of a kind we have very few of now. He is like Shakespeare or Dickens—great writers who communicated across class. He has a Shakespearean size and ambition in the themes he explores and what he achieves. I don’t think there’s a British or American poet today more sensitive and imaginative about how he uses language than Dylan is.

Ricks’s summing up of the situation is perhaps better than anyone’s: “If the question is does anybody use words better than he does, then the answer in my opinion is no” (Glaister 1996:1).

At this point I’d like to introduce two further considerations, the second more extended than the first. Late in 1996, after our Nobel Prize nominations were in, Ginsberg remarked to me, “I don’t think Dylan particularly cares about it.” So I’d like to offer a little perspective here: Dylan doesn’t have to win the Nobel. He’s won so many accolades and awards; will winning or not

⁹ Available online at <http://www.expectingrain.com/dok/art/nobel/nobelpress2.html>.

winning one more really matter? If he were to win, of course that would be occasion for great joy and celebration for many—and maybe even Dylan would be pleased. But with or without the Nobel, his work remains triumphant.

According to Ginsberg, novelist William Burroughs once said that the habit of denial, the refusal to acknowledge anything other than the official version of reality, was so strongly ingrained in America several decades ago that if an elephant had appeared on the dais at the inauguration of President Roosevelt and made deposits before walking off, it would not have been reported.

In *Chronicles: Volume One*, Bob Dylan tells us (2004a:5-6) that

things were pretty sleepy on the Americana music scene in the late '50s and early '60s. Popular radio was at a sort of standstill and filled with empty pleasantries What I was playing at the time were hard-lipped folk songs with fire and brimstone servings, and you didn't need to take polls to know that they didn't match up with anything on the radio, didn't lend themselves to commercialism

The songs that affected the young Dylan recently arrived in the Village would, as he puts it, “make you question what you'd always accepted, could litter the landscape with broken hearts, had power of spirit” (14). “Folk songs,” Dylan recalls, “were the way I explored the universe . . .” (18). He further stipulates (34):

Songs about debauched bootleggers, mothers that drowned their own children, Cadillacs that got only five miles to the gallon, floods, union hall fires, darkness and cadavers at the bottoms of rivers weren't for radiophiles. There was nothing easygoing about the folk songs I sang. They weren't friendly or ripe with mellowness. They didn't come gently to the shore. . . . They were my preceptor and guide into some altered consciousness of reality. . . .

I mean to say that Dylan was, first in the folk songs he chose, soon and for decades thereafter in songs he composed, singing of “real” things, regardless of “official” or commercial reality. As William Carlos Williams once said of Allen Ginsberg, “he had something to say” (Breslin 1985:30). That's been one of Dylan's great strengths—telling us what we may not want to know, or what many haven't acknowledged; defying the protocol of accepted discourse, whether it be that within the American folk song community of the 1960s, or within legions of followers who think they have, as Eliot's Prufrock worried, gotten him “formulated, sprawling on a pin” (1962:

line 57), “pinned and wriggling on the wall” (line 58). He has surprised us, moved us, and altered the way we think, feel, speak, and imagine. He has, as the saying goes, moved mountains, helped change the course of history in the United States. He’s not merely a decorative artist, a pretty versifier, but a singer of great substance reviving and re-creating some of our most time-honored poetic traditions as he gives us melody matched by matter; he has inspired, enriched, and disquieted us.

Allow me to close with some personal perspectives. Broadly, literature in my view is aesthetically charged language, and poetry depends on oral performance. Of course there are exceptions and complications and matters of degree, but that’s how I see poetry’s vital core. Though I don’t deny the considerable effect (fortunately) that Ginsberg’s *Howl* has had on the page alone, what’s on paper may only be an approximation, sometimes a dim one, of what’s in the air, in the poet’s—the singer’s—voice. America’s Beat Generation was born overnight, so to speak, at a poetry reading at the center of which was Ginsberg’s first public reading of *Howl*. According to Jack Kerouac in his novel *The Dharma Bums*, it was “wailed” by the poet, “drunk with arms outspread,” and “everybody . . . yelling ‘Go! Go! Go!’ (like a jam session). . .” (1976:14). A decade later, *Howl* did not come alive for me until I heard Ginsberg declaim it.

Poetry and music have shared common ground, from the Greeks to Pound to Ginsberg. Categorize Dylan’s work as you will, but its literary qualities are exceptional; its artful idealism has contributed to major social change, altering and enriching the lives of millions culturally, politically, and aesthetically; the voices acclaiming it are many and distinguished. The Nobel Prize for Literature, which in over a century of being awarded has covered a territory broad and diverse, is a deserved form of recognition for such extraordinary accomplishment.

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The Streets of Rome: The Classical Dylan

Richard F. Thomas

Taming the proud: the case of Virgil

For those of us—and there are a few of us in my neck of the woods—interested in the Roman poet Virgil and in the art of Bob Dylan, the strange days that followed September 11, 2001 were particularly memorable. Dylan’s two-year stint in the Hibbing High Latin Club was at that point unknown to me. In the summer of 2005 a trip to the Seattle Music Experience revealed his early interest, set out on the page of the Hibbing High School yearbook, the *Hematite*, as it is called. The page is also featured in Scorsese’s *No Direction Home*. But even on the first time through *Love and Theft*, even before we had noted the quotes around the title that drew attention to the theft of Eric Lott’s title, before we had been handed the snippets of *Confessions of a Yakuza*, transformed into Appalachian and other vignettes, there was Virgil, loud and clear, in the tenth verse of “Lonesome Day Blues” (itself a Blind Willie McTell title):

I’m gonna spare the defeated, I’m gonna speak to the crowd / I’m gonna spare the defeated, boys, I’m going to speak to the crowd / I am goin’ to teach peace to the conquered / I’m gonna tame the proud // (“Lonesome Day Blues”)

But yours will be the rulership of nations, / remember Roman, these will be your arts: / to teach the ways of peace to those you conquer, / to spare defeated peoples, tame the proud // (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.851-53, [trans. Mandelbaum])

Teaching peace, sparing the defeated, and taming the proud. Too much precision there for accident, even without the album’s title or Junichi Saga’s presence. Now Virgil’s Latin is close to the translation I give, but Latin it is, with the three Roman arts spread over a line and a half:

tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
 (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem
 parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.

The Latin in fact has four Roman qualities: “to rule over people with empire, to institute law in addition to peace, to spare the subjected, and to war down the proud.” If I had given that translation, and it is more “faithful” to the Latin though less poetically put, there might be doubt as to whether Dylan was alluding to Virgil’s *Aeneid* at all. But that is the point: Dylan’s intertext is not created from the Latin of Virgil—though Hibbing High’s Robert Zimmerman may possibly have gotten far enough in his Latin to have read some Virgil back then. Rather, Dylan read, as I have given it, the English translation of Allen Mandelbaum,¹ the best contemporary translation until 2005, when Stanley Lombardo’s excellent new version arrived on the field.²

The cover of Lombardo’s *Aeneid* translation shows a section of the Vietnam wall, including fragments of names of those killed in the war. This reflects recent readings of Virgil’s poem that see it as, among other things, a questioning of the worth of the imperial enterprise. Already, however, Mandelbaum’s 1971 preface let the wrongs of that war into the Roman world of the Virgil he was translating (xiv):

And place, which for me at least had always been the last mode through which I heard a poet, after twelve years lived in the landscapes of Virgil, finally began, even as I was leaving Italy, to reinforce the voice of Virgil. That happened to me at a time of much personal discontent. I had long contemned any use of the poetic word for purposes of consolation. But pride lessens with the years, and Virgil consoled. The years of my work on this translation have widened that personal discontent; this state (no longer, with the Vietnam war, that innocuous word “society”) has wrought the unthinkable, the abominable. Virgil is not free of the taint of the proconsular; but he speaks from a time of peace achieved, and no man ever felt more deeply the part of the defeated and the lost.

Mandelbaum’s preface (xii) also quotes the lines Dylan used, and that context—connecting Roman war to American—may explain how Dylan saw the uses of the Virgilian text.

What does it *mean* that Dylan incorporated these lines from a 2000-

¹ See Mandelbaum 1971.

² See Lombardo 2005. The Virgil quote has been noted by many blogs. Eyolf Østrem cites Mandelbaum’s translation without comment (<http://dylanchords.nfshost.com>).

year old poem into his 2001 song? That depends on the reader. For me the verse activates the Roman poet's conflict about empire: Aeneas fails to live up to his father's urging that he tame the proud but spare the defeated, when at the end of the *Aeneid* he kills his wounded and suppliant enemy. Further, the war in "Lonesome Day Blues" becomes—again, for me—not just the war of the *Aeneid*'s mythological frame, set 1000 years before Virgil's time, but also the Roman civil wars, and the wars against Antony and others on which the empire of Augustus would be founded. Before the intertext emerges and as long as the singer of Dylan's song seems to belong in the time of Robert Zimmerman, the war that has brought desolation to the singer is most naturally the Vietnam War, the defining war of empire and moral failure of our time. The two contexts merge and make the song about no war and every war, as happens so often with time and place generally in Dylan.

But this doubling of the temporal frame is of course too simple, once we add the ingredient of Junichi Saga's *Confessions of a Yakuza* (1997), from which Dylan disperses some twelve undeniable passages across five songs, including two in "Lonesome Day Blues":³

Samantha Brown lived in my house for about four or five months. / Don't know how it looked to other people, I never slept with her even once. ("Lonesome Day Blues")

Just because she was in the same house didn't mean we were living together as man and wife, so it wasn't any business of man what she did. I don't know how it looked to other people, but I never even slept with her—not once. (*Confessions of a Yakuza*, 208)

Well my captain he's decorated—he's well schooled and he's skilled / My captain, he's decorated—he's well schooled and he's skilled / He's not sentimental—don't bother him at all / How many of his pals have been killed. ("Lonesome Day Blues")

There was nothing sentimental about him—it didn't bother him at all that some of his pals had been killed. He said he'd been given any number of decorations, and I expect it was true. (*Confessions of a Yakuza*, 243)

It is not difficult to see the appeal of Saga's work, which blurs the genres of novel and biography, fiction and non-fiction, and whose narrative complexity and shifts, along with its lively use of colloquial language (at least in John Bester's translation) clearly appealed to Dylan's literary sensibility. *Confessions* recounts the life of an early- to mid-twentieth

³ The "theft" was first noted in *The Wall Street Journal* on July 8, 2003.

century gangster, Ijichi Eiji (b. 1904), narrated in his own voice but as “quoted” by the novelist Saga who portrays himself as the late twentieth-century doctor of the dying Eiji. The two passages in question come from late in the novel. The first (208) has to do with Osei (= Samantha Brown), whose stay with Eiji happened during World War II, soon before the American defeat of Japan’s “imperial empire,” to quote from “Honest With Me,” another song that would quote from *Confessions*. The second (243) comes from Eiji’s final narrative chapter, as he recollects Osei turning up in 1951 (238): “The Korean War was going strong, and my new gambling place in Tokyo was doing really well”—why does this sound so much like a line from “Brownsville Girl” or some other Dylan narrative? The unsentimental source for Dylan’s decorated captain is one Nagano Seiji, encountered while Eiji is in prison, and a man who had sliced off a fellow-prisoner’s arm. The pals whose death didn’t both him were the about-to-be arch-enemies of the clearly American singer of “Lonesome Day Blues,” Japanese soldiers who died in the Chinese-Japanese War (1937-45).

So the war that is the backdrop of “Lonesome Day Blues” (“Well, my pa he died and left me, my brother got killed in the war”) is further and utterly mystified, but not finally so. Eyolf Østrem notes Dylan’s use of two passages (uncovered by “Nick”) from Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*):⁴

My sister, she ran off and got married / Never was heard of any more.
 (“Lonesome Day Blues”)

. . . and my sister Mary Ann run off and got married and never was heard
 of no more (*Huck Finn*, ch. 17)

Last night the wind was whisperin’, I was trying to make out what it was /
 Last night the wind was whisperin’ somethin’— / I was trying to make out
 what it was / I tell myself something’s comin’ / But it never does.
 (“Lonesome Day Blues”)

I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead. The stars was shining, and
 the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; . . . and the wind was
 trying to whisper something to me and I couldn’t make out what it was.
 (*Huck Finn*, ch. 1)

The first of these quotes comes from the Grangerford-Shepherdson episode of the novel, which has itself been seen as Twain’s metaphor for the broader

⁴ http://dylanchords.nfshost.com/41_lat/lonesome_day_blues.htm

Civil War. It is also noteworthy that the tale Huck is here spinning is just that, a fiction. If Dylan's Twain reference complicates our identification of the singer's "my brother got killed in the war," making us move maybe from Vietnam back to the American Civil War, the Virgilian lines which immediately follow the reworking of *Huck Finn* force us back even further, to the wars of Virgil's youth, the civil wars that tore the Roman republic apart and led to the establishment of the Roman empire, the paradigmatic empire of the West. The singer is an American from the twentieth century ("I'm forty miles from the mill—I'm droppin' it into overdrive"), but he is also Aeneas, also the Japanese warrior speaking within the narrative of a 1989 Japanese gangster, and, perhaps closest to home for Dylan/Zimmerman, he is Huck Finn. Dylan was wearing a Huck Finn hat before he became Dylan, more or less, but the creative renaissance that has been going on since *Time Out Of Mind* (and before it in terms of performance) has brought Twain's world into focus with Dylan's. Mississippi, Missouri, the river flooding or not, from its source in the Highlands, "Cold Irons" or North Country, north of Hibbing or north of anywhere and nowhere, down to New Orleans, a place that still defies identification other than as a place of loss and trouble—these were always the places of Dylan's creative exploration, as they were of Twain's.

Back to Virgil and the Classics. The examples of *Huck Finn* and *Confessions of a Yakuza* show that Dylan is quite freewheeling in his intertextuality, and is unbounded by song, or even by album in the case of *Time Out Of Mind*, *Love and Theft*, and *Modern Times*, the third part of the trilogy. As with the voice of Ijichi Eiji, so that of Aeneas, and the Aeneas who will bring empire, spare the defeated and tame the proud, may legitimately be seen elsewhere in these songs. On December 22, 2001 *Rolling Stone* published Mikal Gilmore's interview of Dylan, who said of *Love and Theft* that, "the whole album deals with power . . . [T]he album deals with power, wealth, knowledge and salvation." He follows, "It speaks in a noble language [including Latin perhaps?]. It speaks of the issues or the ideals of an age in some nation, and hopefully, it would also speak across the ages."⁵ *Some nation?* That obviously includes imperial Rome and imperial Japan. If so, we can invoke not just the pure intertexts of Saga and Virgil, but other reflections as well. The ending of "Bye and Bye," whose lyrics suggests the interchangeability of time ("Well the future for me is already a thing of the past"), may also work for the world of Rome, the world in which Virgil saw Augustus, descendant of Aeneas in his own propaganda, turn republic into empire: "I'm gonna establish my rule through civil war /

⁵ See Jonathan Cott, *Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews* (2006:426).

Gonna make you see just how loyal and true a man can be.” And in “Honest With Me” empire comes up again: “I’m here to create the new imperial empire / I’m going to do whatever circumstances require.” From Aeneas and Augustus to Bush this works with any and no empire, with the issues of “some nation” “across the ages.”

The Last Outback at the World’s End: Into Exile with Ovid

One of the immediate classical resonances on *Modern Times* comes in the first song, “Thunder on the Mountain.” Particularly in the wake of “Lonesome Day Blues” the sixth verse of “Thunder on the Mountain” pointed straight to Ovid, and his *Ars Amatoria*: “I’ve been sittin’ down studyin’ the art of love / I think it will fit me like a glove.” But that was just the beginning. On October 10, 2006, Cliff Fell, a New Zealand poet and teacher of creative writing, wrote in the *Nelson Mail* (Nelson, New Zealand) of a striking discovery. He happened to be reading Peter Green’s Penguin translation of Ovid’s exile poetry,⁶ the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (*Black Sea Letters*), while listening to *Modern Times*:

And then this uncanny thing happened—it was like I was suddenly reading with my ears. I heard this line from the song “Workingman’s Blues 2,” “No-one can ever claim / That I took up arms against you.” But there it was singing on the page, from Book 2.52 of *Tristia*: “My cause is better: no-one can claim that I ever took up arms against you.”

Fell experienced what many of us experienced, though in an inverted way, when we heard in “Lonesome Day Blues” the familiar lines from *Aeneid* 6; as he read on in Ovid he came across further lines that were entering his consciousness from listening to *Modern Times*:

Bob Dylan, “Ain’t Talkin’” Heart burnin’, still yearnin’ In the last outback at the world’s end.	Ovid, <i>Black Sea Letters</i> , 2.7.66 I’m in the last outback, at the world’s end.
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Bob Dylan, “Workingman’s Blues #2” To lead me off in a cheerful dance.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> , Book 5.12.8 or Niobe, bereaved, lead off some cheerful dance.
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Bob Dylan, “Workingman’s Blues #2”	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> , Book 5.13.18
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⁶ See Green 2004. This translation contains the *Tristia* and the *Black Sea Letters* (*Epistulae ex Ponto*).

Tell me now, am I wrong in thinking That you have forgotten me? Bob Dylan, "Workingman's Blues #2" My cruel weapons have been put on shelf / Come sit down on my knee You are dearer to me than myself / As you yourself can see.	May the gods grant ... / that I'm wrong in thinking you've forgotten me! Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> , Book 2.179 Show mercy, I beg you, shelve your knee / cruel weapons. Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 5.14.2 wife, dearer to me than myself, you yourself can see.
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I e-mailed Cliff Fell, who then brought up our conversation and the current article I had mentioned to him in a radio show, which consequently made it onto the best and most thorough Dylan website, www.expectingrain.com. This in turn led to an e-mail to me from Scott Warmuth, Dylan aficionado, who had followed up on Fell's discovery and added further Ovidian intertexts:

Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" Every nook and cranny has its tears.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 1.3.24 every nook and corner had its tears.
Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" all my loyal and my much-loved companions.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 1.3.65 loyal and much-loved companions, bonded in brotherhood.
Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" I'll make the most of one last extra hour.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 1.3.68 let me make the most of one last extra hour.
Bob Dylan, "The Levee's Gonna Break" Some people got barely enough skin to cover their bones.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 4.7.51 there's barely enough skin to cover my bones.
Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" I practice a faith that's been long abandoned.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 5.7.63-64 I practice / terms long abandoned.
Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" They will tear your mind away from contemplation.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 5.7.66 tear my mind from the contemplation of my woes.
Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" They approve of me and share my code.	Ovid, <i>Black Sea Letters</i> 3.2.38 who approve, and share, your code.

At this point I ordered from Amazon.com one of the two available used copies of Peter Green's out-of-print 1994 Penguin translation of Ovid's exile

poems. I can now add the following further intertexts:

Bob Dylan, "Ain't Talkin'" Who says I can't get heavenly aid?	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 1.2.12-13 Who says I can't get heavenly aid when a god's angry with me?
Bob Dylan, "Spirit on the Water" I want to be with you any way I can.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 5.1.80 I want to be with you any way I can.
Bob Dylan, "Ain't talkin'" They will jump on your misfortune when you're down.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 5.8.3-5 Why jump / on misfortunes that you may well suffer yourself? / I'm down.
Bob Dylan, "Workingman's Blues #2" Now the place is ringed with countless foes.	Ovid, <i>Tristia</i> 5.12.19-20 I'm barred from relaxation / in a place ringed by countless foes.
Bob Dylan, "Spirit on the Water" Can't believe these things would ever fade from your mind.	Ovid, <i>Black Sea Letters</i> 2.4.24 I cannot believe these things could fade from your mind.
Bob Dylan, "Workingman's Blues #2" Them I will forget / But you I'll remember always.	Ovid, <i>Black Sea Letters</i> 4.6.42-3 <i>Them</i> I'll forget, / but <i>you</i> I'll remember always.

There is much else on *Modern Times* beyond these nineteen undeniable correspondences that shows Dylan identifying his singer with the exiled and aging Ovid. Where Ovid wrote (*Black Sea Letters* 4.9.95-96) "No man, no child, no woman has had grounds to complain on my account," Dylan followed with (Workingman's Blues #2) "No man, no woman knows / The hour that sorrow will come." And Ovid's (*Black Sea Letters* 4.14.7) "I don't give a damn about where I'm posted from this country" becomes in Dylan's "Thunder on the Mountain," "I don't give a damn about your dreams." And finally we have a sense from Dylan of marvel at the extent of the world, also of the debatability of its being round ("Ain't Talkin'"): "The whole wide world which people say is round." The phrase "whole wide world" is common in Green's translation (*Tristia* 3.10.77, 4.8.38, 5.7.44, 5.8.24-5; *Letters from the Black Sea* 4.9.126). The culture and age behind Dylan's sentiment that "the whole wide world which people say is round" points right to a world (third-century Greece and Rome following) that had proven in theory and practice, but maybe didn't quite believe, that the world was indeed round.

Fell noted the appropriateness of the intertexts: Dylan, 65 years old, in the inner exile he has created for his own protection, invokes the Ovidian exile poetry, coming at the end of the career of Ovid. Indeed, the last words of the last song, “Ain’t Talking,” and therefore the last words of the third album of the trilogy, suggest a finality, a closing of the book, and they are straight from Ovid (see above), as Dylan puts himself “in the last outback, at the world’s end.”

The 2001 *La Repubblica* Interview

Dylan rarely gives interviews, particularly in recent years. Earlier in the fateful 2001, in fact three days before the release of *Love and Theft*, on September 8, the Italian paper *La Repubblica* published an Italian version of the interview. The interview itself took place in July of 2001. An English version of it⁷ turned up on the www.expectingrain.com website, where it was joined by an English translation of a Swedish summary, and other bits of furniture.⁸ On May 22nd, 2006, two days before Dylan’s 65th birthday, the actual interview, consisting of seven mp3’s, was posted on the website www.whitemanstew.com (no longer available online).⁹ Where it has been all these years it is hard to say, and one has to conclude that the release is somehow deliberate.

Whether or not that is so, the interview shows that the Dylan of *Love and Theft*, even without the evidence of “Lonesome Day Blues,” has been thinking about Greek and Roman literature and his place in it. Already in “When I Paint My Masterpiece,” the *New Morning* outtake that came out on *Greatest Hits, Vol. 2* (1971), there is a turning back to those who came before: “Oh, the streets of Rome are filled with rubble, / Ancient footprints are everywhere.” The song moves from the Coliseum, where Dylan imagines himself “Dodging lions and wastin’ time,” and goes back through time to a story he perhaps picked up in his Latin Club days: “Train wheels

⁷ The English version is translated by David Flynn and can be accessed at <http://home.worldonline.dk/justesen/index/romeint.html>.

⁸ Note Dylan’s brilliant conflation of two disparate Ovidian sites as he creates an exquisite verse, based on both intertexts, but achieving its own lyrical heights in ways that take the verse to a high literary and pathetic level.

⁹ The exact URL was <http://www.whitemanstew.com/category/music/page/3/>, though this site is no longer available online. Any quotes from the review are my own transcriptions of the interview.

runnin' through the back of my memory, / When I ran on the hilltop following a pack of wild geese." The wild goose chase surely alludes to one of Rome's most famous myths of its early history, one of the scenes on Aeneas' shield in Book 8 of the *Aeneid*, that is, the geese of Rome's Capitoline Hill, whose honking alerted the Romans to the invading Gauls.

Thirty years later the Rome interview goes back to those days:

My songs [on *Love and Theft*] are all singable. They're current. Something doesn't have to just drop out of the air yesterday to be current. This is the Iron Age, you know we're living in the iron age. What was the last age, the age of bronze or something? You know we can still feel that age. We can still feel that age. I mean if you walk around in this city, people today can't build what you see out there. You know when you walk around a town like this, you know that people were here before you and they were probably on a much higher, grander level than any of us are. I mean it would just have to be. We couldn't conceive of building these kind of things. America doesn't really have stuff like this.

The "current" can be a long time before yesterday, as the Virgilian and Ovidian lines show. Dylan deflects a question that might have taken the interview deeper. Asked whether he reads books on history, he responds "Not any more than would be natural to do." A similar deflection occurs a few minutes later when he is asked whether he is "still eagerly looking for poets that you may not have heard of or read yet" The reply comes after a long pause: "You know I don't really study poetry." More importantly, Dylan in this interview also shows he has become familiar with the major Greco-Roman metaphor of mythical-religious cultural change, the equivalent of Eden and the Fall in the Judeo-Christian system. At first sight it looks as if Dylan is simply including us in the actual Iron Age (following the various Stone Ages and Bronze Age) that began in Europe at the beginning of the first millennium BCE. But some minutes later in the discussion the subject comes up again, when he is asked about a reference he had made on the liner notes of *World Gone Wrong*:

Interviewer: In the same liner notes you talk about the new Dark Ages in the contemporary world.

Dylan: Well, the Stone Age, put it that way. We've talked about these ages before. You've got the Golden Age which I guess would be the Age of Homer, then we've got the Silver Age, then you've got the Bronze Age. I think you have the Heroic Age some place in there. Then we're living in what people call the Iron Age, but it could really be the Stone Age. We could be living in the Stone Ages.

Unfortunately none of the interviewers saw where he had been headed, or what he was really talking about, and one cracks a joke (“Maybe in the Silicone Ages?”), to which Dylan replies with a laugh “Exactly.” And the topic shifts to the internet, the mask back on.

From a scientific point of view Homer (c. 750 BCE) in fact belongs to the Iron Age, while the Trojan War (c. 1100) belonged to the Bronze Age. The system Dylan refers to is not that one, however, but rather the myth of the ages found in Hesiod (c. 700 BCE), in whose poem the *Works and Days* (109-201) is our first record of the five ages of the world, seen from the perspective of the present, the debased Iron Age, as Dylan noted. The progression is as Dylan has it, from ideal Gold (Eden) through Silver then Bronze, with the Age of Heroes preceding the Iron Age. Hesiod puts the Trojan War in the Age of Heroes, doubtless motivated by the existence, in pre-publication form, of oral versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The overall myth is of central importance in Greek and particularly Roman poetry, for instance in Virgil’s fourth Messianic eclogue in which he predicted a return to the golden age that would accompany the birth and maturation of a miraculous boy, mistakenly identified with Christ by the early Christians. That is why the thirteenth-century Italian poet Dante could have Virgil as his guide, at least until the legitimately Christian Beatrice took over. Ovid has a version of it, without the Bronze Age, at the beginning of his *Metamorphoses*, “the scary horror tale . . . next to the autobiography of Davy Crockett” in Ray Gooch’s library, if we care to believe *Chronicles: Volume One* (p. 37), to which we soon turn.

Depending on our view of that, Dylan’s use of classical texts and images seems to be somewhat recent, as compared say to his relationship with the Bible, which has been there from very early on. The idea of Eden and the Fall makes it likely that he would in his reading eventually encounter the Hesiodic version or some variant of it. “Gates of Eden” itself (1965) seems devoid of anything classical, but “Changing of the Guards” from *Street Legal* (1978) may be another matter. In an interview for *SongTalk* in 1991 Paul Zollo put it to Dylan:¹⁰

Your songs often bring us back to other times, and are filled with mythic, magical images. A song like “Changing Of The Guard” seems to take place centuries ago, with lines like “They shaved her head / she was torn between Jupiter and Apollo / a messenger arrived with a black nightingale....” How do you connect with a song like that?

Dylan pauses before replying, enigmatically, “A song like that, there’s no

¹⁰ See Jonathan Cott, *The Essential Interviews* (2006:371).

way of knowing, after the fact, unless somebody's there to take it down in chronological order, what the motivation was behind it." And later "To me, it's old. [Laughs] It's old." In part it too is as old as Hesiod, where the cultural change away from Golden Age towards Iron is also figured at the divine level as the father-slaying that happens when the son Jupiter (Zeus) takes over not from Apollo, but from Saturn (Kronos). We therefore have an intimation of that system, with the woman torn between the old and the new, with conflicting loyalties in the changing of the guard. As with the war of "Lonesome Day Blues," the cultural change is not quite that of Genesis (though "Eden is burning"), not quite that of Hesiod (though we have Greco-Roman gods), but quintessentially Dylan's own hybrid that embraces both and much else besides. Generally, then, Dylan's contact with Greece and Rome is a more recent phenomenon, though in his own creative fictions it is already a thing of the past, as we shall see.

In Ray Gooch's library

What can we make of this remarkable scene from the second chapter of Dylan's *Chronicles: Volume One* (2004:35-39)? "The Lost Land" suggests myth and fiction, a world outside of history, but that in the setting of Dylan's "autobiography" is around 1961. Dylan has recently arrived in New York City, and is staying at this moment with Ray Gooch and Chloe Kiel, a colorful couple whose identity has been doubted by some readers and reviewers. The description of the two on p. 267 is virtuoso descriptive writing, not just of Ray, who "was like a character out of some of the songs I'd been singing"—or maybe memoirs he was writing? Dylan finds himself "looking for the part of my education that [I] never got," and so takes us on a tour of Ray's books. The reading he does is the reading we know he did at some stage, and presumably already in high school—"the poetry books, mostly. Byron and Shelley and Longfellow and Poe." It is the other books he seems to have just browsed rather than read: "I would have had to have been in a rest home or something in order to do that." Some he started, such as *The Sound and the Fury*: "didn't quite get it, but Faulkner was powerful." Of Albertus Magnus, St. Albert the Great, the German friar and encyclopedic writer from the thirteenth century, he says "Magnus seemed like a guy who couldn't sleep, writing this stuff late at night, clothes stuck to his clammy body." He adds that, "a lot of these books were too big to read, like giant shoes fitted for large-footed people." Is Dylan letting his Latin in (magnus = "big, large")?

However big the book of Magnus, "it was lightweight compared to

Thucydides.” The great Athenian historian of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (431-404 BCE) seems to be at the peak of Dylan’s Parnassus, receiving three mentions in two pages. Dylan gets the title of the work wrong (*The Athenian General*, not necessarily a mistake), but no matter, for he captures the relevance of the Greek historian (36):

It was written four hundred years before Christ and it talks about how human nature is always the enemy of anything superior. Thucydides talks about how words in his time have changed from their ordinary meaning, how actions and opinions can be changed in the blink of an eye. It’s like nothing has changed from his time to mine.

The Penguin translation of Rex Warner gives the following for the one of the most famous passages of Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* (1.22):

It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever [sic].

Nothing has changed from Thucydides’ time to mine, says Dylan. What is his time? Somewhere in 1961, if we can bring ourselves to imagine that his book is straight autobiography. But the comment works better for 2004, when Dylan was writing the book and when many of us were connecting events of those years, including imperial adventures, with similar events from antiquity. Not least of these events was the Athenian expedition against Sicily, which ended in disaster. Thucydides’ narrative “would give you the chills” says Dylan. Certainly some of us got the chills in 2003 when we recalled Thucydides 6.24 and the unwise decision of the Athenians to invade Sicily: “The result of this excessive enthusiasm of the majority was that the few who were opposed to the expedition were afraid of being thought unpatriotic if they voted against it, and therefore kept quiet.”

Other classical works encountered in the “library” of Ray Gooch include *The Twelve Caesars* (presumably the work of Suetonius), “Tacitus’ lectures and letters to Brutus,” “Pericles’ *Ideal State of Democracy*,” Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, “the scary horror tale,” and “Sophocles’ book on the nature and function of the gods.” It is curious that three of these are non-existent books, but in subtle ways: Tacitus wrote a dialogue about orators (including the long-dead Brutus, to whom Cicero wrote actual, surviving letters);

Pericles, who *was* an Athenian general, wrote nothing that survives but looms large in Thucydides, whose work includes the general's famous funeral oration, which does treat the ideal state of Athenian democracy; Sophocles only wrote tragedies, but they are often about the nature and function of the gods. Dylan's style is exquisite in these pages, and we see his typical humor, as with the comment on "Magnus," in placing the *Metamorphoses* "next to the autobiography of Davy Crockett," or with Alexander the Great's strategy of having his men marry local women: "After that he never had any trouble with the population, no uprisings or anything." Gooch's library is like a Dylan album cover, with messages and intertexts. Davy Crockett matters. Mark Twain would have been too obvious, so he put in another nineteenth-century purveyor of the Americana that is so central to Dylan, humorist Davy Crockett. Gooch's library is also like the creative essence of Dylan's mind, unfettered by catalogs or by order. Like the characters and scenes of "Like A Rolling Stone," "Desolation Row," or "Idiot Wind," the book-titles and what they evoke come at us in a stream of consciousness manner that goes to the heart of what Dylan is, not just what he may or may not have seen in an apartment in Greenwich village a couple of light years ago.¹¹

Even the non-classical books in Ray Gooch's library have connections to Latin and other foreign languages. Finally, Dylan says he read Graves' strange book, *The White Goddess*, now mostly a textbook for Wiccans and Pagans, and notes that "Invoking the poetic muse was something I didn't know about yet" (p. 45). Invoking the muse puts Dylan into a relation with other texts, since for Virgil and others the Muses are the connectors to other traditions, and particularly in his later work that is what Dylan is up to. The Muses are also slippery. When initiating the poet Hesiod at the beginning of

¹¹ This aspect of Dylan's surreal humor, consisting of absurdist juxtaposition, has become a trademark feature of his *Theme Time Radio Hour*, for instance in Episode 11, "Flowers," where he gives us the following: "Tonight we're going to be talking about the most beautiful things on earth, the fine-smelling, colorful, bee-tempting world of flowers, the Bougainvillea, the Passion Flower, the Butterfly Cleradendron, the Angel's Trumpets, the Firecracker plant, we're going to be talking about Rosa rugosa, the Angel Face, All that Jazz, the Double Delight, the Gemini [Dylan's zodiac sign] and the Julia Child, we're going to be talking about the Knockout Shrub, the New Dawn, the Mr. Lincoln—and that's only the roses—we're also going to hit on the Silver King, the German Statis, the Globe Thistle and the Joe Pie Weed, the Violet, the Daisy, the lovely Chrysanthemum, the Arrow and the Tansy, we'll be hitting on the Bachelor's Button, the Coxcomb and the Lion's Ear, the Love in the Mist and the Victoria Sorghum [laughs],—I just made that one up—we're going to be talking about Flowers, on Theme Time Radio Hour." The list is arranged to form a poem, almost a talking blues of flower names.

the *Theogony* (27-28) they tell the poet “We know how to speak many false things that seem like the truth, but we also know, when we wish, how to sing the truth.” On the threshold of Ray Gooch’s classical library, that is pretty much the outlook of Dylan (p. 35): “If you told the truth, that was all well and good and if you told the untruth, well, that’s still well and good.”

Intertextuality/Intratextuality: An Italian poet from the 13th century

Like Dylan, Virgil was accused of plagiarism. There is an anecdote in Suetonius’ *Life of Virgil* 46 on the poet’s response to the critics’ charge of plagiarizing Homer: “Why don’t they try the same thefts? They’ll find out it’s easier to snatch Hercules’ club from him than a single line from Homer.” Dylan successfully stole three from Virgil, embracing T. S. Eliot’s maxim “immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.” Poems that are layered with intertexts reveal depths of meaning through our recognition of those texts as we import other contexts that work together with new images, metaphors, and other poetic or musical effects. That is true of Virgil, Dante, Milton, and as we saw, it was true of “Lonesome Day Blues” and much else on *Love and Theft*. This way of writing indeed seems to be particularly a feature of the mature Dylan, starting with *Time Out Of Mind*. In his December 5th, 2004, *60 Minutes* interview he says of “It’s Alright, Ma,” “I don’t know how I got to write those songs.” When asked if he can still write like that he replies that he cannot: “I did it once, and I can do other things now. But, I can’t do that.”

Ray Gooch’s library included Dante’s *Inferno*, with “The cosmopolitan man” written on the title page (36). This suggests a familiarity with that Italian poet prior to the epiphany in “Tangled Up In Blue,” which clearly suggests a discovery:

And every one of them words rang true / And glowed like burnin’ coal /
Pourin’ off of every page / Like it was written in my soul from me to you /
Tangled up in blue.

There is debate about who the Italian poet is, Dante (1265-1321) or Petrarch (b. 1304, so not quite of the thirteenth century). Dylan himself seems to have pointed to the latter.¹² Others favor Dante, and his poem on the effects of

¹² Dylan: “I like that song. Yeah, that poet from the 13th Century.” McGregor: “Who was that?” Dylan: “Plutarch. Is that his name?” McGregor: “Yeah.” (Craig McGregor interview, 12 March 1978.) Published in *New Musical Express* on 22 April 1978. This from Eyolf Østrem, “A Day Above Ground Is A Good Day” from Bob

Beatrice in *Vita Nuova*. Given our Virgilian theme, it might be worth mentioning Canto 21.94-99 of *Purgatorio*, where Dante and Virgil meet the Roman poet Statius, who is unaware he is in the presence of his own Muse. Statius (died 96 CE) was one of the epic successors of Virgil (died 19 BCE), and in Dante's vision the *Aeneid* functions much like the book Dylan read:

The seeds of my ardor were the sparks which warmed me from the divine flame by which more than a thousand others have been warmed; Of the *Aeneid* I speak, which was mother to me, which to me was nurse, in my poetry; without it I would not be worth a penny.

Whatever the identity of the Italian poet, like the books in Ray Gooch's library it is part of the general intertextuality Dylan shares with European poetry, particularly before the Romantics. The texts that feed into such poetry include those of the writer himself. Intratextuality allows internal narratives and connections to suggest themselves.

Time Out Of Mind's "Highlands" is a case in point. As many have noted, the song has an obvious debt to Robert Burns' "My Heart's in the Highlands," with its chorus:

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe;
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

Dylan alerts us in a general way ("where the Aberdeen waters flow"), and the Burns poem comes in strongly at one point in the song:

Well my heart's in the Highlands, with the horses and hounds /
Way up in the border country, far from the towns /
With the twang of the arrow and a snap of the bow.

Dylan's debt is in fact fairly slight, just the five words with which he and Burns begin, and he has almost deliberately avoided further intertexts, replacing the objects of the hunt (deer, roe) with its agents (horse, hounds, arrows, bow), but because of those opening words, and because of markers absent from Burns ("Aberdeen waters"), the presence of Burns' poem is strongly felt. But something is happening here, for Burns himself wrote of the song (as he called it), "The first half-stanza [the five words in question]

Dylan's album *Love and Theft*, which can be accessed online at http://www.dylanchords.com/professors/a_day_above_ground.htm.

of this song is old; the rest is mine,”¹³ words that Dylan could say of his own “Highlands,” over 200 years after Burns. Kinsley also notes that “the Air is *Fáilte na miosg* (*The Musket Salute*),” from Oswald’s *Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* of 1740, almost twenty years before the birth of Burns. Burns’ song-poem is melancholic in its dwelling on absence and on a place now only in the memory, but it hardly rises to a level of aesthetic beauty or meaningfulness that gives its melancholy a power to affect us, as the melancholy of our three authors does. The constant “aabb” rhyme, the simplicity of the repeated frames, the lack of any profound thought, these all keep it on an unsophisticated level, and it flirts with sentimentality, even achieves it perhaps, as much folk music does. At the same time it is an eighteenth-century pop-folk song, and a pretty one at that. Dylan seems to have found it, took what he wanted and discarded much else, but in the process has tied himself to the tradition in which Burns was writing—a tradition within which Dylan himself has always been working.

But the location is otherwise unspecified, and the Highlands where Dylan has already arrived in his mind at the end of the song is a refuge from a world Dylan has outgrown, though he wishes this were not so, wishes someone would “push back the clock” for him: “All the young men with their young women looking so good / Well, I’d trade places with any of them / In a minute, if I could.” He’s listening to Neil Young, “Thrasher” I would guess, has to turn up the sound, which annoys those in the vicinity. Then there is the scene in the Boston restaurant, a scene where the singer has an encounter with what looks like second-wave feminists. The exchange is a complete failure, with the two speaking at cross-purposes. The setting suggests the possibility of a pick-up, but this is completely frustrated.

A quarter-century earlier Dylan spoke of walking into another establishment, and in that instance he seems to have been more successful.¹⁴

“Highlands”:

I’m in Boston town, in some restaurant

I got no idea what I want

“Tangled Up In Blue”

¹³ Cf. J. Kinsley, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Kinsley 1968:1334), from Burns’ manuscript *Notes of Scottish Song*, ed. J. C. Dick (London 1908:48).

¹⁴ These excerpts have been taken from two songs: those lines in non-bold are taken from the song “Highlands,” off Dylan’s record *Time Out Of Mind* (1997); those lines in bold have been taken from the song “Tangled Up in Blue,” off the album *Blood on the Tracks* (1975).

She was workin' in a topless place

And I stopped in for a beer

Well, maybe I do but I'm just really not sure

Waitress comes over

Nobody in the place but me and her

It must be a holiday, there's nobody around

And later on as the crowd thinned out

She studies me closely as I sit down

I muttered somethin' underneath my breath,

She studied the lines on my face.

She got a pretty face and long white shiny legs

I just kept lookin' at the side of her face

In the spotlight so clear.

She says, What'll it be?

I say, I don't know, you got any soft boiled eggs?

She looks at me, Says I'd bring you some

but we're out of 'em, you picked the wrong time to come

Then she says, I know you're an artist, draw a picture of me!

She was standing there in back of my chair

Said to me, don't I know your name?

I say, I would if I could, but,

I don't do sketches from memory.

Well, she says, I'm right here in front of you, or haven't you looked?

I say, all right, I know, but I don't have my drawing book!

She gives me a napkin, she says, you can do it on that

I say, yes I could but,

I don't know where my pencil is at!

She pulls one out from behind her ear

She says all right now, go ahead, draw me, I'm standing right here

She was standing there in back of my chair

I make a few lines, and I show it for her to see

Well she takes a napkin and throws it back

And says that don't look a thing like me!

I said, Oh, kind miss, it most certainly does

She says, you must be jokin.' I say, I wish I was!

Then she says, you don't read women authors, do you?

Least that's what I think I hear her say,

Well, I say, how would you know and what would it matter anyway?

Well, she says, you just don't seem like you do!

I said, you're way wrong.

She says, which ones have you read then? I say, I read Erica Jong!

Then she opened up a book of poems

And handed it to me

Written by an Italian poet

From the thirteenth century.

And every one of them words rang true

And glowed like burnin' coal

Pourin' off of every page

Like it was written in my soul from me to you
 She goes away for a minute and I slide up out of my chair
 I step outside back to the busy street, but nobody's going anywhere
She lit a burner on the stove and offered me a pipe

Viewed through the previous success, although “Tangled Up In Blue” in the end focused on the loss of relationship, though with the hope of rediscovery.

Smooth like a rhapsody: Homer, Dylan, and performance variation

Seen from the perspective of Homeric poetics, Dylan works like a blend of rhapsode (performance artist) and a poet on the cusp of oral and literary cultures. The pre-literate oral tradition became the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* through the creative genius of a poet/performer—let's call him Homer, and let's put him in the eighth century BCE. These Homeric poems were then transcribed and were surely *read* as we read them, but they continued to be sung/performed over centuries by rhapsodes (lit. song-stichers), whose performances introduced some variation and fluidity into the fixity of the text. This variation may be detected within textual variants that emerge in the third century BCE, hundreds of years after the original versions. At that period a number of scholars worked on restoring the “original” text, but in the process introduced or removed detail that changed the Homeric poems in trivial or non-trivial ways.

The transcribing of Homer's oral poetry, roughly coincident with the invention of the Greek alphabet, may be seen to be parallel with Dylan's writing and recording of the studio version of a song. At that point, as was true with the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* after their transcription, there is a canonical text. The process is somewhat like the process whereby folk song is passed on, and in both cases an authoritative text limits the scope for change. Of course, Dylan's compositions are only rooted in the prior tradition and are not versions of it *per se*, but the relationship is clear, whether from Guthrie's version of “Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Foot” to Dylan's “Kingsport Town” or Dylan's appropriation of Charley Patton in “High Water.” Dylan's composition is of course transformational, and with the exception of all but two of the songs on *Bob Dylan*, and the songs on *World Gone Wrong* and *Good As I Been To You*, is inspired by his various traditions, never or rarely just giving versions of them.

Homeric performance by the rhapsodes, along with the transmission of the text over a number of centuries, introduced variation that might have been in competition with a set, written version, possibly coming together in

Athens in the sixth century BCE after Pisistratus, the sixth-century BCE tyrant of Athens. In a sense Dylan is an amalgam of Homer and the rhapsode. Like Homer, he is the original creator and original performer of his narratives and lyrics, the seeds of which may be found in a whole range of texts from the Bible to the blues. Those versions are available to others, who in a sense also function like rhapsodes, generally departing very little from the studio versions, and for the most part with a reverence for the original, reperformance of which is the aim. But Dylan himself is also a rhapsode who has performed his enormous corpus with powers of memory that seem Homeric in scope over the last 45 years. In a memorable three-concert stand at the Boston Orpheum on April 15-17, 2005, he sang 40 different songs, repeating only one (“Highway 61 Revisited”) in addition to framing his closing encores with the traditional “All Along The Watchtower,” with just one middle-concert “Like A Rolling Stone” closer, and each night throwing in untraditional lead-off encores, “Mississippi,” “Blind Willie McTell,” “It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry.” It is as such a performer that he clearly defines himself. The studio version, to which he does not listen after it has been put down (if we are to believe the Rome interview of 2001) does not constrain him, however, so the creative process continues from band to band and tour to tour, with endless variations of arrangement, vocal style, and, in some cases lyrics. This is what distinguishes Dylan from singers of similar longevity, such as the Rolling Stones, or Springsteen.

The most intensive meaningful variation of lyrics is found in the songs that have seemed most autobiographical, especially the songs of *Blood On The Tracks*, and particularly when the status of a relationship is at stake. It is as if Dylan is responding to biographical readings by essentially changing, and at times radically transforming, the singer’s point of view. In the year he produced *Blood on the Tracks*, ten years after its original release, a live version of “It Ain’t Me, Babe” makes it clear that nothing has changed, with its emphatically enunciated variations “No, no, no it *sure* ain’t me, Babe” and “But it *still* ain’t me, Babe.” Similarly, by the onset of the Christian period in 1978, “She opened up a book poems and handed it to me” on “Tangled Up In Blue” had become “she opened up the Bible and started quotin’ it to me.” The *Real Live* version (1984) creates a completely different and now playful narration: “She was married when they first met to a man four times her age” (can’t be Sara Lownds, right?). Or on the same version: “Then he drifted down to New Orleans where they treated him like a boy / He nearly went mad in Baton Rouge he nearly drowned in Delacroix.” Gray (*Song and Dance Man III*, 651) has however noted that in recent years the lyrics have settled back to their canonical text—though the

Fall 2006 tour has the “She was workin’ at the Tropicana [rather than “in a topless place”]” verse. The story of the variations on *Blood On The Tracks* is well known. What we officially heard from the release on January 20, 1975 differed in quite distinct ways from what appeared on March 26, 1991, when *The Bootleg Series Volume 2* presented versions of “Tangled Up In Blue,” and “Idiot Wind,” while *The Bootleg Series Volume 3* yielded a version of “If You See Her, Say Hello.” Bootlegs of the so-called “Acetates on the Tracks” were widely distributed. The Minneapolis sessions also produced *Blood On The Tracks* versions of “Lily Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts.” So, after more than 15 years we were given the generally angrier or harsher New York lyrics and less upbeat arrangements that Dylan had changed some when he returned to Minneapolis after recording the entire album in a few days in New York in September of 1974.

I select just two instances of performative variation, with parallels from the Homeric and the Virgilian texts. The New York “Lily Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts” has an entire verse that would be dropped from the Minneapolis version, although it was included in *Lyrics 1962-1985*, where it stands as verse 12:

Lily’s arms were locked around the man that she dearly loved to touch, / She forgot all about the man she couldn’t stand who hounded her so much. / “I’ve missed you so,” she said to him, and he felt she was sincere, / But just beyond the door he felt jealousy and fear. / Just another night in the life of the Jack of Hearts.

I myself did not hear this version until a number of years after 1975, after the narrative of the Jack of Hearts et al. had become hard-wired. What does omission or inclusion do? Essentially the stanza slightly demystifies the Jack of Hearts, offers a glimpse through the mask, by giving us his point of view or focalization: “he felt she was sincere . . . he felt jealousy and fear.” Without this stanza this is a song where mystery is much of the point, where the main actor, sometimes merging with the card itself, is generally “face down like the Jack of Hearts,” where he is seen only from the outside, through the thoughts of Lily Rosemary and Big Jim: “I know I’ve seen that face before,” “she’d never met anyone quite like the Jack of Hearts,” “she was leaning to the Jack of Hearts,” “she was thinking about the Jack of Hearts.” Inclusion of the verse transforms the song through the shock of telling us something about the Jack, and it is easy to see why Dylan, author of this song, of Jokerman, of Jack Fate’s benefit show, took it out, so that nothing would be revealed.

Numerous passages in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were in the third and

second centuries BCE either removed or athetized by Alexandrian scholars of that age (Zenodotus 325, Aristophanes of Byzantium c. 257-180, and Aristarchus c. 216-144 BCE, the first self-ordained professors of the West), either because they had been in fact been added by interpolators or because they could be argued to have been so added, and did not fit received opinions about what Homer should/could have written. The presence or absence of many of these lines has similarly radical effects on our reading of the narrative and on our involvement with those poems. Since ancient discussion of the lines are preserved (in the “Homeric scholia”), we know, for instance, that Zenodotus excised from his text some lines at *Iliad* 12.175-81, in which the poet sings of the difficulty of describing the clash of battle. Here is Pope’s version:¹⁵

Like deeds of arms through all the forts were tried; / And all the gates
sustain’d an equal tide; / Through the long walls the stony showers were
heard, / The blaze of flames, the flash of arms appear’d. / The spirit of a
god my breast inspire, / To raise each act of life, and sing with fire! /
While Greece unconquer’d kept alive the war, / Secure of death, confiding
in despair; / And all her guardian gods, in deep dismay, / With unassisting
arms deplore the day. / Even yet the dauntless Lapithae maintain / The
dreadful pass, / and round them heap the slain.

The ancient scholar omitted the lines, but Aristophanes and Aristarchus put them back in, though by athetizing them recorded their view that the lines were not genuine. What they and a number of modern editors and commentators objected to was the presence of the narrating poet’s voice, very unusual in this poem, particularly in such a random part of the poem rather than at the beginning, for example, where we expect to find that voice. And as with Dylan’s song, the absence or presence of the lines makes a difference.

Moving from Greece to Rome, from Homer to Virgil, one of Dylan’s Latin poets, we have an example of a passage present in some manuscripts, absent in others. Book 2 of the *Aeneid* tells the story of the fall of Troy. Helen, the Greek beauty kidnapped by Paris, cousin of Aeneas, survived the fall, and Virgil’s readers might have expected Trojan Aeneas, who also survived to found Rome, to have mentioned Helen in his recounting the story to Dido, Queen of Carthage—the song within the song that is *Aeneid* 2-3. Here is Dryden’s translation of some of the 22 lines of Latin (*Aeneid* 2.567-88):

¹⁵ See Pope 1720.

Thus, wand'ring in my way, without a guide, / The graceless Helen in the porch I spied / Of Vesta's temple; there she lurk'd alone; / Muffled she sate, and, what she could, unknown: / But, by the flames that cast their blaze around, / That common bane of Greece and Troy I found.

Aeneas contemplates killing her:

Trembling with rage, the strumpet I regard, / Resolv'd to give her guilt the due reward:

Before the narrative has to deal with the dilemma of Rome's hero and the founder of the Latin race killing a woman, his divine mother appears and tells him to get on with the business of leaving Troy. Most editors now believe that the lines are not genuine, or were not meant for publication, but this possibly does not detract from an essential truth: our reading of the poem and of the character of Aeneas is very much conditioned by whether or not we encounter the passage in our text.

I return now to Dylan and the end, and to his complex manipulation of how we hear and read what is the most transformed song on *Blood On The Tracks*, the song of break-up, "If You See Her Say Hello." From the December version that ended up on the album, as everyone knows, there was an extensive change in the third verse:

If you get close to her, kiss her once for me / Always have respected her for doing / what she did ("for busting out," / *Lyrics 1962-1985*) and gettin' free / Oh, whatever makes her happy, I won't stand in the way / Though the bitter taste still lingers on from the night I tried to make her / stay.

In the 1992 published version of the New York outtake from 1974 we heard a more bitter and caustic song:

If you're making love to her, kiss her for the kid / who always has respected her for doin' what she did / Oh, I know it had to be that way, it was written in the cards. / But the bitter taste still lingers on, it all came down so hard.

The change from "If you're making love to her" to the less specific and less wounded "If you get close to her" delivers a more delicate touch to the song. As Les Kokay and others have noted, by the time of The Rolling Thunder Revue, at the Lakeland Florida Civic Center on April 18, 1976, the song had been completely rewritten and had become savage and unambiguous. And nine days later at Florida State University he sang it again, with further

differences:¹⁶

If you see her say hello, she might be in North Saigon / in outer space
 She left here in a hurry; I don't know what she was on / I could have got her
 to her place (gotten over to her place?)

You might say that I'm in disarray and for me time's standing still
 Oh I've never gotten over her, I don't think I ever will

A bright light from me I saw, a shattering of souls / I saw salvation in her
 soul

Just one of them reckless situations, which nobody controls.

Well, the menagerie of life rolls by, right before my eyes / goes by, I try
 not to go

We all do the best we can, which should come as no surprise / (.....)
 grow(?)

If you're making love to her, watch it from the rear

You'll never know when I'll be back, or liable to appear

For it's natural to dream of peace as it is for rules to break / like it is for
 rules to break

And right now I've got not much to lose, so you'd better stay awake

Sundown, silver moon, hitting on the days / shining on the haze (hate?)

My head can't toler..stand no more, what my heart don't tolerate / My heart
 can't understand no more, what my head don't tolerate

Well I know she'll be back someday, of that there is no doubt

And when that moment comes Lord, give me the strength to keep her out

The fourth verse with its ending of “Maybe I'm too sensitive or else I'm getting soft” was gone and the attitude to the addressee-rival has become menacing, but the regret and the feelings are still there.

For whatever reason, Dylan did not perform the song for almost 18 years, but on July 3, 1994 in Paris, the first concert of a European summer tour, he opened with “To Be Alone With You” (all other concerts of that year opened with “Jokerman”) and followed up with “If You See Her, Say Hello.” Back in the U.S., he performed it ten times between August 24th and November 12th. In the years since it has come back into his arsenal, with the fourth verse back in, while the third is gone forever from versions I have heard. As a result, the addressee is no longer a rival, and there is less at stake. To begin with, the versions of the lyrics were those of *Tangled Up In Blue*, but over time we find variations in the lyrics that seem to defy our

¹⁶ See Les Kokay, *Songs of the Underground: A Collector's Guide to the Rolling Thunder Revue 1975-1976*. Private publication (2000). Available at <http://www.bjorner.com/RTR%20Tour%20Guide%20Letter.pdf>.

reading it as a single representation of emotion, even from the point of view of the lyrics, as a single song. The second verse gives us a whole range of possibilities, from “She still lives inside of me (my mind) / I’ve never been alone” to “I’ve got to find someone to take her place, you know I don’t like to be alone.” As for his forgetting her, we get “Don’t tell her it isn’t so,” but also “I only wish it was so.” In the fourth verse, “I’ve never gotten used to it, I’ve just learned to turn it off” is rounded out by the original lyrics, but also by the hilarious “Her eyes were blue, her hair was too, her skin so sweet and soft.” In New York City on August 13, 2003, it was protracted (I think) to “sort of, sort of . . . soft.” Dylan perhaps adds these lyrics just in case his audience was wondering if her hair was still red; no, he informs them, it’s now blue—or was that a different girl? Difficulty of comprehension seems to be part of Dylan’s game. We also find “I’ve never gotten used to it, it took me her long load (?) / Suddenly I believe you know, it’s harder on the road.” This same version (performed in Augusta, Maine, August 4th, 2002) also provides one of the most negative endings, even more so than in Florida in 1976. Now we have “If she’s passing back this way, and you know it could be quick, / Please don’t mention her name to me, b’cause the mention of her name makes me sick.” This alternates with more or less the original, more hopeful ending, with variations such as “if she comes up with the time,” to a more middle-of-the-road possibility such as (in the same New York City concert) “If she’s passin’ back this way, Lord and I sure hope she don’t, / Tell her she can look me up, I’ll either be here or I won’t.”

This is obviously more varied and delivers a wider range of meanings than do the classical instances we have seen. But there is a common element in that both deal with the possibility of change and evolution through performance, a feature that is shared for instance with folk music, but not so much with poetry in recent centuries. At the end of the day Dylan defies identification, and perhaps “singer-songwriter” works fine for him, as it does too for Homer or Virgil. Dylan has been dressing in the costume of mid-nineteenth or early mid-twentieth century Americana, the world that his songs have brought back to life. But he has also been going back much further in his mind’s time. I don’t expect him to turn up in the toga or with any old laurel leaves on his head, but that doesn’t matter since he’s already back there in my mind and that’s good enough for me.

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A Face like a Mask and a Voice that Croaks: An Integrated Poetics of Bob Dylan's Voice, Personae, and Lyrics

Christophe Lebold

This paper seeks to more closely examine the specific literary pleasures experienced by listeners of Bob Dylan's songs. In doing so, this analysis posits that such pleasure is a response to the concurrence of three literary activities: Dylan's poetic texts are first written and then performed; Dylan's poetry is rhythmically re-written by the voice; and Dylan uses the songs to *write* himself—in other words, to construct a series of numerous and competing personae. This essay argues that close reading of the lyrics must therefore be supplemented by a “poetics of the voice” and a detailed analysis of the theatricality of what might be called Dylan's “games of masks.” While a stylistic approach to Dylan's lyrics reveals a thrust towards *writerly* openness and new poetical idioms that fuse oral traditions with “high” poetry, the aesthetic and semantic uses Dylan makes of his voice are equally sophisticated. In this analysis, Dylan's voice will be approached from several angles: as an object of pleasure; as an instrument of writing that allows Dylan to create a form of oral free verse; and as a complex sign that the artist uses for pathos, self-parody, and/or to enhance his fatalistic and stoic vision of a fallen world in which “everything is broken.”

The study of Dylan's “masks” will show that the musician uses archetypal poetic identities (prophet, trickster, man of sorrow, and so forth) as fictional figurations of himself that he then offers to the audience. These lyrical personae can be approached as texts that may become objects of analysis in their own right. A persona is indeed an enclosed structure with an internal coherence, an artifact composed of signs, codes, and discourses. In Dylan's case, the *personae* emerge from the lyrics and interact with his public image, constantly ratifying or parodying it, thus enabling the artist to ceaselessly construct and deconstruct a fictional “Bob Dylan.” The songs thus eventually come to fictionalize his biography in a theater of identities that brings into play a participatory game: the audience is made to interrogate Dylan's postures and impostures and to construct apocryphal

versions of his life/lives, thus further enriching in fiction the many literary pleasures derived from the songs.

Today, the critical recognition of Bob Dylan stands at an all-time high. Yet his primary artistic medium, songwriting, is still largely spurned by mainstream literary studies. For many, it remains hard to conceive that an oral form that is hybrid by definition—and, in this case, popular—might turn out to be as artistically challenging and rewarding for the audience and the critic—in terms of intellectual and aesthetic pleasure—as the open forms advocated by the poetical avant-garde of the twentieth century. In the past fifty years in mainstream academia—especially in Europe—all dominant critical discourses have held the written word in higher regard than the oral; experimentation has been favored over tradition and the “impersonal” mode thought more worthy than the “lyrical” mode. More generally, academic opinion-makers have been partial to so-called “difficult” texts: the literary merits of a given literary work have been thought proportional to its resistance to reading, and the violence with which it attacked linguistic and artistic structure has been thought to be the ultimate test of poetical strength.

Within this ideology of the arts—an inheritance of modernism, no doubt—the song as an artistic form was obviously deemed of less than secondary importance. The three well-known faults of that musical medium for literary critics can be summarized as follows: first, the fact that the historical affinity with the lyrical mode makes songs the ideal vehicle for complacent, second-rate romantic poetry; second, that songs are not meant for the page and therefore, their literary potential is restrained by the corset of a traditional poetical system (stanza-rhyme-meter) that can be easily put to music; and finally, that as a performer, the songwriter establishes no clear barrier between “entertainment” and “art”—his potential audience is therefore far too extensive. As a result, songs are still often perceived as objects for mass consumption, the epitome of the standardized cultural product that is formally and ideologically closed and might generate little more than escapist satisfaction.

This adverse academic climate naturally fuels the interest of any literary critic who might wish to research Bob Dylan’s work. However inclined one might feel to rehabilitate the literary merits of songs, it will be well advised, nevertheless, to carry out this task within a methodological framework that acknowledges the specificity of the song form. The cultural context, aesthetic functioning, and actual mode of consumption of songs must be taken into account—not to mention the specificity of Bob Dylan’s particular use of the medium, which bears little in common with, say, that of Frank Sinatra.

It is now generally accepted that Bob Dylan's songs cannot be approached with the tools and methods that are usefully applied to Keats' odes. Bob Dylan's audience usually does not actually *read* the lyrics, for example, although the script of the lyrics might be *consulted* by fans at some point and thus become an actual supplement to the original oral text. Many literary critics still subject Dylan's lyrics to New Criticism-type close readings, as though the words were fully autonomous from their music and performance. Such studies that focus on Bob Dylan's verbal abilities can be useful in the canonization of his work, but what those studies fail to understand is the specificity of the literary pleasures that are granted by a song. When the oral and hybrid qualities of those texts are ignored, the songs are relegated to domains of literature that are already fully mapped out; Dylan's work is then considered as poetry that just happens to be set to music and performed. Such an approach fails to rise to the challenge that Bob Dylan's songs send to the literary critics.

Within this context, a literary approach to Dylan's songs can prove both welcome and enlightening, provided it is remembered that the poet is a performer and much of the poetry lies in the performance and music. Critics should operate within a new poetics in which songs are not considered as poems set to music, but as complex forms where lyrics are never autonomous, but are in constant interaction with a series of non-verbal elements: the music, the voice of the performer,¹ and the *personae* (the fictional or semi-fictional identities that the artist constructs in the lyrics and in his public appearances). Indeed, lyrics, music, live voice, and persona are perceived simultaneously during the performance. As these elements interact, a complex and dynamic oral artistic form emerges: the performed song.

Bob Dylan's literary talent is not confined to the writing of lyrics, but extends to the way the lyrics are performed, which shows a fascination for a rhythmical language that is inherently literary. As well, the "fictions" of himself and the identity games that Dylan encodes within his songs are highly theatrical. Dylan writes lyrics that are inherently poetic, in other words, but also "writes" rhythm with his voice and uses his songs to "write himself" and create personae. The song, therefore, is a form where several inscriptive activities overlap and interact: it is a poetical form of writing that

¹ In itself, the voice of the performer is a complex element and requires its own "poetics of the voice" that would include not only an analysis of the actual qualities of the voice, but also an analysis of the voice's engagement with language (phrasing), the performing style, the negotiation between melody (*melos*) and language (*logos*), and the uses of the voice as sign.

operates within the formal constraints of songwriting (the stanza/meter/rhyme system) and often pushes that system to its limits; it is a rhythmical form of writing that uses the voice as an instrument to intervene in the text and that actually writes rhythm (gratuitously or to emphasize meaning); and, last but not least, the song is an auto-fictional form of writing that creates the series of “texts” known as Bob Dylan’s personae, which are central to Dylan’s art and without which many songs would be diminished in their potential significance.

This hypothesis of the song as a hyper-literary object is more daring than it seems. Nobody denies that Dylan’s art partakes of a form of oral poetry, as does the blues, for example; that the song itself is an object whose “literariness” outweighs the musicality, however, remains open to debate.

A Literary Genius: So What?

The first concern for a literary critic remains the inherent literary value of the lyrics, which hangs under the suspicion that songs belong to a paraliterary realm. Close readings of Dylan’s lyrics fully demonstrate that he produces full-fledged literary texts that are tightly woven and held together by the texture of a demanding and richly evocative *écriture* that manifests an extraordinary command of language. What is more, he does this within the constraints of the stanza/meter/rhyme system. To use a distinction developed by the French literary critic Roland Barthes, Dylan’s songs are more often than not *writerly* rather than just *readerly* (Barthes 1970:11).²

I would now like to examine the song, “It’s All Over, Now, Baby Blue” as an example of Dylan’s literary mastery. The song’s lyrics work as an exhortation for a great departure and introduce numerous wanderer-type figures and other social misfits. Using one of the most fundamental postures of the Dylan ethos, the song invites us to an open voyage and an open future, to a rupture with established values and forms. Aesthetically, it calls for the listener to accept the song as a space without narrative continuity or artistic

² Indeed, the semantic openness and sophisticated imagery in most Dylan songs, as well as the constant blending of poetic idioms of various origins, requires a great deal of hermeneutic activity on the part of any listener even remotely interested in the lyrics. This active engagement with meaning and with the poetic fabric of the words is what Barthes sees as a *writerly* activity that draws on the reader’s—or, in this case, the listener’s—creative faculties and imagination, thus empowering him and replacing the reassuring reading pleasure provided by closed forms with a more unsettling, though rewarding, literary bliss.

rules—to open up to the spontaneity of free association and discursive possibilities.

The particular stylistic idiom that Dylan resorts to most often at this stage of his career used blends the concise stanzas of the ballad form and the oral turns of phrase and direct statements of the blues with striking bursts of imagery (“crying like a fire in the sun,” “reindeer armies,” and so on) that are reminiscent of symbolist and surrealist poetry. The intertexts range from the Gospels to Gene Vincent and Rimbaud, but the language is fully Dylanesque and bears the mark of his literary and rhetorical idiosyncracies: visions, clever epigrams, and direct addresses to the listener.

The great stylistic vigor of the text lies in the free alternation of three different speech-acts: invective, narration, and aphorism. The listener hears an unpredictable alternation of short narrative vignettes that appeal to the imagination—exhortations and invectives that rhetorically draw the listener into the song, as well as generic assertions and laconic epigrams that endow the song with an aura of wisdom. The last stanza, for instance, consists of two successive exhortations (“leave your stepping stones behind,” “forget the dead you’ve left”) with a hidden epigram (“[the dead] will not follow you”) and a striking vignette (“the vagabond who’s rapping at your door / is standing in the clothes that you once wore”), followed by one last exhortation (“strike another match, go start anew”) and the refrain, a reminder of the reality principle and an invitation to resignation (“and it’s all over now, Baby Blue”).

With these juxtapositions Dylan thus creates an “open structure” that conveys in the song a powerful textual dynamism that is reinforced by the quick succession of characters. One figure is dispelled by the next, from the rootless orphan in the first stanza to the homeless hobo in the last—not to mention the herd of migrating reindeer or the experimental artist without a paintbrush or canvas.

In spite of this onward thrust, the four stanzas thematically cohere around the motif of impermanence and instability: an end of games leads to new beginnings; stable structures (the floor, the sky) dissolve, distinctions (inside/outside, self/others) are blurred, and identities are subverted (the orphan—the ultimate victim figure—is armed, the sailors are sea-sick, the vagabond confronts the sedentary in the doorframe, like a mirror image). At the semantic core of the text, we find cracks (in the sky) that come to symbolize a disintegrating present, and gaps and vacancies (the empty hands, the empty room, the empty doorframe) that symbolize a future that remains to be invented, the most conclusive example of which is the blank sheet that the painter uses as a canvas.

Despite these well-established points of semantic anchorage, the lyrics are full of semantic tensions, ambiguities, and indeterminacies. The sheer juxtaposition of images is enough to create a subliminal tension and a feeling of danger, as when evocations of fire (“fire in the sun” and “strike another match”) surround visions of inflammable materials (the carpet, blanket, and sheets). Here one could also cite Christopher Ricks’ (2003:24) remarkable analysis of how, in the second stanza, the proximity of the semantic fields of gambling and that of voyage creates a semantic ambiguity that expands the meaning of words, transforming the turn of phrase “[you’d] better” into a “better/gambler” and invoking common “sense” as well as the American currency (“cents”) and “coins” in the next line:

The highway is for gamblers / better use your sense [cents] /
Take what you have gathered from coincidence. . .

What one is ultimately confronted with in the text of this song is how Dylan, with very simple literary means (the juxtaposition of apparently disconnected images), adds semantic layer over semantic layer, reaching an unprecedented wealth of evocation in a form that remains both fresh and direct.

Dylan’s best lyrics constitute a literary artifact in their own right. One might even add that, thanks to the use of plain statements and direct address to the audience, Dylan’s lyrics urgently call for a hermeneutic and imaginative response on the part of the listener (or reader) that is not unlike the work-in-reading activity (*lecture travail*) that Roland Barthes claims is the characteristic of *writerly* texts (1970:15). At any rate, the listener is no longer just a consumer, but is made a *producer* of the meaning of the text. However diverse the poetical projects that Dylan has launched in his career (preaching in songs, short-story songs, blues songs, symbolist songs, lyrical songs, and so on), his striking literary abilities have always led him into the realm of the *writerly*.

Nevertheless, as tempting as it may be for the literary critic, the manifold “literariness” of “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue” cannot be located solely in intricate and artful linguistic patterning and language manipulations. The song is, indeed, fully dependant on Dylan’s use of voice and “masks.” The wandering characters in the song (vagabond, orphan, empty-handed painter . . .) that appear and interact in the lyrics are given an added power of evocation when examined in the context of Dylan’s fabricated selves, and the singer’s strong vocal engagement with the song clearly highlights the song’s manifesto quality and its mood of exhortation.

The celebration of instability and new beginnings in “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue” finds its full significance only when it is related to the poetry of metamorphosis that underlies Dylan’s artistic project. The fundamental gesture behind Dylan’s *œuvre* is indeed the permanent construction and deconstruction of himself. Dylan, ever in search of a new “mask,” has successively been a (non-)protest singer, a beat-like symbolist poet, an absurdist rocker with a touch of the Shakespearian clown, a country-music everyman in a bucolic fiction, a wounded man and lyrical poet in the early seventies, a Christian preacher announcing the apocalypse, and again, an everyman, who carries the fate of mankind and our mortality in the persona of the vagrant blues artist, whose continuous touring, year after year, becomes more and more allegorical of our ontological rootlessness.³

At any rate, the instability in Dylan’s identity finds a further echo in the tonal instability of his singing voice. In “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue,” Dylan oscillates between scansion, a slight lilt, and actual singing. This deliberate hesitation, which comprises Dylan’s distinctive “singing” style, is a form of what modernist high-art calls *sprechgesang*. The singer purposely glides, in a continuing *portamento*, from one note to the next, spanning all intermediate notes, without ever “properly” hitting the actual notes that structure the melody. In “Baby Blue,” the elusive nature of his vocal technique—this ability to escape a precise tonality or a predictable rhythm—sonically reinforces the central motifs of a disintegrating world and of collapsing stabilities.

A Poetics of the Voice

Although it is a challenge to try and describe the intricacies of Dylan’s use of his voice, any attempt at a critical apprehension of Dylan’s songs requires a strong methodological poetics of the voice. His vocal art is threefold: the voice functions simultaneously as an object of pleasure and interpellation, as an instrument of rhythmical writing, and as a meaningful sign (insofar as Dylan uses the timbral qualities of his voice to add meaning to the song).

As in all forms of oral literature, the voice is an object of pleasure that plays a great part in the listener’s enjoyment of the song, and that strongly

³ I don’t mean to suggest that Dylan’s *œuvre* is carried forward by a conscious autobiographical thrust, but that, as is the case for all major lyrical artists, Dylan’s chief aim is to explore the issue of subjectivity, to explore what it means to be a “subject,” and to allow the audience to interrogate their own subjectivity through the lyrical identities the poet constructs.

contributes to the song's pragmatic efficiency. For example, the interpellations in "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" add an incalculable weight to the actual presence of a voice and therefore of a body. The voice interpellates us in a way that the written text cannot; even when listening to a recording, the living voice puts us in the presence of Dylan's absent body.

In addition to the functions of pleasure and interpellation, Dylan's voice is used as an instrument for writing that, through a series of interventions in the text, casts a secondary rhythmical structure onto the lyrics. The accelerations in delivery, the ruptures in rhythm and tonality, and the vocal painting that isolates certain words, indicate a strong resistance to the musicality of the song form and carry out an actual rhythmical re-writing of the text. With the pauses, accelerations, unexpected clusters of words and original re-shaping of connected speech thus generated, Dylan writes rhythm onto the score of the original lyrics.

One of Dylan's favored techniques is stretching the line far beyond the meter used in the song by adding line after line (the first line of "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" is a good example). This technique adds a sense of urgency, vocal virtuosity, and danger to the performance and is much loved by fans. Also recurrently used are ruptures in the lines and a-grammatical cuttings of connected speech, which often create new, unexpected meanings or erase existing meanings (telling instances of these manipulations may be found in "Sugar Baby" or "Man in a Long Black Coat").

These techniques tamper with the musical regularity of the meter and stanzaic structure. In Dylan's songs, not all lines are equal; the artist alternates regular, rhythmically charged lines that provide the musical structure of the songs and more lightly stressed lines—sometimes almost floating lines—that seem independent from the overall rhythmical framework. This alternation and pitching of lighter lines against "heavier," more balanced ones allows Dylan to develop a form in song that is close to free verse in poetry. Dylan's vocal writing thus enables him to loosen the constraints of the stanza/meter/rhyme system while retaining the qualities of concision and tightness that the form provides.

Aside from the performer's delivery, the tonal quality of Dylan's voice intervenes in the construction of meaning in the songs. His timbre and the limitations of that timbre are part and parcel of his poetic project. The distinctive nasality of his voice, for instance, allows him to emphasize or distance the "dylanicity" of his performance, opening up innumerable possibilities of auto-pastiche. As well, the natural limits of his pitch-range make Dylan, as a singer, a heroic and poignant figure. Hit-and-miss notes in concert are moments of great poignancy and pathos and Dylan-the-performer knows how to make best use of them. His so-called "bad" voice is

a sonic echo of the recurring theme of human imperfection and of the motif of the fall of man (into sin, old age, or wretchedness). Dylan's more recent broken voice enables him to present a worldview at the sonic surface of the songs—this voice carries us across the landscape of a broken, fallen world. The anatomy of a broken world in “Everything is Broken” is but an example of how the thematic concern with all things broken is grounded in a concrete sonic reality. Again, the broken timbre is but a sign, an index of an ontological brokenness.

Thus the complexities of Dylan's use of his voice serve to please, interpellate, write rhythm, and add layers of meaning to the songs. In its quirky virtuosity, as well as in its exaggerations, in its outbursts of sincerity and its ability to obfuscate and mask, Dylan's voice also contributes to the construction of the personae. For the listener, this voice and its particular uses in a song conjure a strong vision of Bob Dylan.

A Theater of Identities: Method in Identity Madness

The third scriptural activity that can be located in the songs is Dylan's auto-fictional writing. Whenever Dylan uses the “I” pronoun—and even in the rarer cases when he doesn't—he is constructing alter-egos, highly elaborate fictional identities that mirror and distort his own identity and create an ambiguity (inherent in most lyricism between the “I” in the song and the author and performer). As a writer who is also a demiurge, Dylan doesn't just create a fictional universe that is fully his own; he also invests a great deal of his creative energy into the creation of a whole universe of identities—a personal palimpsest—where one Dylan hides another.

“Masking” games are indeed an integral part of Dylan's artistic project. His personae are works of art and fiction, even though Dylan's audience is invited to take part in the creation of his “masks.” One might even argue that the masks constitute the center of the work. Dylan's personae amplify the pathos—or the irony—of some songs; they are also a major source of the literary and fictional pleasures that we take in the songs. In the progression of his artistic development, Dylan's fictional input is less and less invested in actual narratives within the songs and more and more in the construction of invented identities, which are small works of art in their own right. Indeed, one might, as Stephen Scobie (2004:26) invites us to do, analyze Dylan's personae as texts in their own right. Again, what we need in order to avoid empty rambling about Dylan's poetry of metamorphosis is both methodological rigor and a model for understanding how the personae

are constructed and how they function. For there is method in Dylan's (identity) madness.

The personae can be seen as emerging when a given "mask"—a conventional identity, most often based on a stereotypical lyrical figure (the prophet, the trickster, the forlorn lover, the man of constant sorrow, and so forth)—meets a given enunciative position. This process involves a specific way of calling on the listener. In "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue," for example, the use of invective, exhortation, and of generic truth enables Dylan to rhetorically construct a posture of authority, which—added to the motif in the lyrics of a quasi-apocalyptic disintegrating world—evokes the prophet. Every mask is thus inherently linked to a type of discourse; the mask of the prophet, or that of the "man of constant sorrow," are used as mouthpieces for a moral or lyrical discourse, even if the postures from which those discourses are articulated are later parodied or deconstructed.

Indeed, the chief mechanism behind Dylan's "games of masks" is to put together enunciating postures that will be, once they are established as stereotypes in his work, revealed as impostures. This is how the prophet persona is pastiched and/or parodied in songs like "Quinn the Eskimo" or "Rainy Day Woman #12 & 35," just as the songs from the album *Time Out of Mind* set Dylan's persona of man of sorrow in situations of hyperbolic strife (a house in flames, a sinking boat, an accelerating physical degradation) that defuse the inherent pathos of that persona and thus establish a humorous version of the character beside the serious one. The result is a tonal ambiguity throughout the album, between pathos and irony and tragedy and comedy. Such configurations bring forth an actual ethical proposition on the part of Dylan the moralist.

In delving further into the intricacy of these identity games, we find that the lyrical identities constructed in the songs are also engaged in a playful dialogue with Bob Dylan's public persona—his image in the collective unconscious—either validating, invalidating, or parodying it so that the songs are partly used as a means for the artist to be constantly constructing or deconstructing Bob Dylan. Eventually, Dylan attains an elusive and protean identity in the practice of what could be named a palimpsest of identities, or personal palimpsest. Here, one might mention in passing the mischievous pleasure with which Dylan has been inverting his protest singer persona for more than thirty years.⁴

⁴ This attitude reaches a climax in songs like "Highlands" or "Things Have Changed." In the former song, the speaker appears totally disengaged from the outside world and lost in an inner landscape of his own making. The courage and conviction displayed in the so-called "protest" phase of Dylan's career is negated here when a

The ever-present sense of irony does not exclude the actual use of songs as a space of true lyrical or autobiographical confession. There is a constant tension between Dylan's trickster mood and his taste for intimate truth. Indeed, the constant biographical allusions are blurring strategies that convey the resonance of an actual confession in some songs; the fictions of himself that Dylan painfully constructs (and deconstructs) are as many potential self-portraits. As he seemingly avows,

You could not tell by the look of him / But he was famous long ago /
For playing the electric violin / On Desolation Row

In "Man in a Long Black Coat" (to examine one of the trickiest examples of actual confession through masks), Dylan uses a tonality that is reminiscent of a blues lament and a dramatic blueprint that is taken from the traditional ballad known as "The Carpenter's Wife." He lends his voice to a cuckold husband whose wife has been taken away by a mysterious and evil stranger. "The carpenter" from the original ballad (and the fallen trees of Dylan's lyrics) reminds us of the artist's real patronym—Zimmerman (the carpenter) and thus validates the use of the artist's biographical trajectory as an intertext to the song (Dylan is himself an abandoned husband, as is widely known), making it even more poignant.

This gray area between fictional and true (referential) identity takes on more complexity in the next three stanzas of the song, when Dylan introduces and confronts three characters that are as many potential versions of himself. The author indeed seems to project existing versions of his public personae onto the characters of the original ballad. The suffering abandoned husband, the man in the long black coat, and the fanatic preacher can be read—via a tight network of allusions—as stylized versions of, respectively, the aging and broken Dylan of post-seventies decaying fame ("broken idol," as he says himself elsewhere on the album), the mid-sixties amoral Dylan of *Don't Look Back*, and the God-fearing, relentless preacher of the Christian

decidedly cowardly speaker chooses to cross the street to avoid "a mangy dog" and when his powerful exhortations of yore become a rambling "monologue." The man that once raised his voice against corrupt judges and masters of war is now admonished in his turn when a social worker asks if he has "registered to vote," a clear and ironic inversion of his early sixties persona. In "Things Have Changed," the inversion is even more obvious: the speaker is a burned-out artist who dreams of selling out; the circle opened in "The Times They Are A-Changin'" is completed as Dylan playfully betrays the expectations of the last bunch of fans who still insist on seeing him as an apostle of social reforms: "I used to care," he concedes, "but things have changed." Mischievous pleasures indeed for an artist who raises the game of hide and seek to the level of art!

period. The song thus becomes the locus of a vast theater of identities where several versions of Dylan compete.

“Man in a Long Black Coat” is but one example of how, with his manifold “masks,” Dylan comes to develop a personal mythology—a mythology of the person, or a mythology within the person, within the “I”—that conveys theatrical and literary pleasures to his audience. The plausible or larger-than-life versions of himself that Dylan creates in the songs—as stereotypical as they may be—are deliberate and full-fledged fictions and are to be enjoyed as such. As fans, we follow the evolution of the personae in the course of his “games of masks,” as we would the developments of a saga that is at once biographical and purely imaginary. We enjoy the fabrications, the mystification, and the built-in mythomania as the distinctive pleasures of auto-fiction.

Dylan’s audience thus become spectators of the imaginary biographies that Dylan unfolds throughout his career for entertainment value, but also for real metaphysical and moral purposes. For this theater of identities is also participatory, in that the artist invites us to crack his biographical code, to unearth the true from the false, and to construct apocryphal versions of the artist’s life. We have already mentioned that the song lyrics are *writerly*; it seems that Dylan’s biography is also *writerly*. Each listener who chooses to get involved with the whole of Dylan’s *œuvre* is confronted with the personae and auto-fictional games of the artist and is thus compelled to construct a version of Dylan’s biography—a fictional, apocryphal biography—adjusting and modifying biographical data according to Dylan’s own perception of his identity games. Dylan’s writing of himself therefore invites us to “write him” in turn, and eventually, to write ourselves with the personal fictions and potential biographies to be found in Dylan’s work. As in all forms of lyricism, the presence of a “subject”—of a voice or a mask—is a proposal presented to the reader/listener to explore his own subjectivity. Just as the “I” pronoun of lyrical poetry is necessarily re-uttered by the reader when he or she reads a lyrical poem, making the reader endorse the subjectivity that this “I” carries, Dylan’s personae and masks are, ultimately, spaces where our identity and that of the artist might meet and coalesce.

Dylan can thus be inscribed in the contemporary reflection on identity as a *construct*. Alongside many contemporary artists, pop artists, and writers, he produces fiction using his identity and his life as basic material. In the process, identity is defined as a symbolical and participatory “game of masks.” As fictional, theatrical, and lyrical pleasures, Dylan’s “masks” convey pleasures that fully literary approaches—and any other type of approach to Dylan’s work that does not take his auto-fictional games into account—would largely miss.

The guidelines presented here for further study into the nature of Dylan's art attempt to eradicate all prejudice against the song form, so that the song can be understood as an aesthetic object of great value and of high literary interest. Songs can be used as an outlet for multi-layered inscriptive activities. Dylan's songs, for example, have manifold textuality—they contain literary texts, which are actualized in performance and become vocal texts that exist in connection with that other text, the persona (itself only partly verbal). Despite this complex functioning, the popular status of Dylan's art is not at stake; the songs are multiply-coded and can be appreciated in an initial listening and enjoyed in the arena of a live performance. Despite such spontaneous reactions, Dylan's lyrics also sustain further and deeper aesthetic and linguistic probing. And, as we have seen, they quite often necessitate intricate listener involvement to reveal their full significance.

Even though the manifold pleasures conveyed by Dylan's songs can certainly not be boiled down to literary pleasure alone, Dylan—alongside many of the other folksong revival musicians and poets of the '50s and '60s—redefines lyricism as a mode that explores all forms of tension: his lyricism is thrust towards the listener with the sheer power of Dylan's voice and interpellation; it is strained in the inner workings of a problematic subjectivity; and it provides an infinitely enjoyable tonal tension, caught as it is between irony and pathos.

Even more interesting is that Dylan redefines the literary experience itself. His songs remind us that a "literary" experience necessarily implies a form of writing, an *écriture*, but that the experience of reading as we know it is not the *ultimate* literary experience. Dylan's artistry places song back into a position where the poetic impulse emerges with new urgency, worlds apart from the fetishist love of the page or of the book as an object.

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Living, Breathing Songs: Singing Along with Bob Dylan

Keith Negus

Resonances and retentions of a living oral tradition are activated each night when Bob Dylan performs in concert and are continually renewed and referenced in his vocalizing and in the breath of the audiences who sing with him. In some respects, Bob Dylan might not seem to be the most obvious artist to sing along with—after all, he is not usually perceived as someone who goes out on stage to entertain and engage in dialogue with a crowd. Yet in other respects he is heir to the legacies of social, communal, and ritual music-making that refracts from contemporary pop and rock back to folk and blues, street-sung broadsides and work songs, the melodic observations of medieval troubadours, and the sacred rhythms of Christianity and Judaism. There are many characteristics common to the rich sonic tradition that I am attempting to signal with these brief words; the most notable of these is the way melody in popular song works at the intersection of speech and singing, the elevated and the mundane. Here song begins where talk becomes music, where the ordinary becomes special.

Despite the fact that Dylan's songs have very singable and memorable melodies, most of the writing about Dylan's art has been concerned solely with the words. In many studies, Dylan's lyrics are often interpreted as providing insight into his life. Yet we only have to look at a range of musical biographies to know how little the life of the artist seems to tell us about the art. In this regard, many accounts of Dylan's life are simultaneously perplexing and reassuring by revealing the ordinariness of his early years as well as how large periods of his life have consisted of normal, everyday routine. After all, many people have experienced traumatic marital breakups. However, very few of them have produced anything remotely like Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*.

Many writers manage to discuss Dylan's songs with barely a mention of his vocal gestures, let alone the more traditional concerns of ethnomusicology and musicology such as melody, rhythm, chords, texture,

timbre, and so on. The assumption in many of the writings on Dylan is that the words are more important than the music. This is apparent in the writings of two of the most prominent and frequently cited of professional Dylanologists, Oxford Professor of poetry Christopher Ricks (2003) and independent Dylan scholar Michael Gray (2000). There are, of course, many others who have devoted their energies to studying Dylan's lyrics on the page—as I write, the most recent addition to this literature is Larry Smith's *Writing Dylan* (2005). Having trawled through numerous books on Dylan, it has been interesting to register just how many authors do acknowledge that the songs are more than words, but then quickly and conveniently ignore this fact in order to discuss the songs purely in terms of the lyrics set out on the page.

I will examine one example as an indication of this methodological oversight and the possible reasoning behind it. Michael Gilmour (2004) sets out to understand the significance of biblical references in Dylan's art. In explaining his approach he makes reference to the following comment made by Dylan: "Some people, when it comes to me, extrapolate only the lyrics from the music. But . . . the music has just as far-reaching effect" (cited in Gilmour 2004:7). Dylan remarks on how people neglect the performance and the "feel" of the music. Gilmour then decides to ignore such views, patronizingly remarking, "But with all due respect to the songwriter . . . we will focus on the written word in this book" (7). Gilmour then explains why he prefers to do this, using a type of reasoning that is typical of writers who dissect Dylan's lyrics (*idem*):

One advantage of the written format is that the reader has the opportunity to slow down, reflect, and cross-reference in a way that the recorded songs do not permit, much less the live performance of a song in concert. Oddly enough, we might even have an advantage over the songwriter himself to a degree.

Putting aside the arrogance of that last sentence, such an approach completely misunderstands how the popular song works in performance. Songs are not something we read slowly on a page, "reflecting and cross-referencing" as we go. Songs are experienced in the very way that they unfold as music in time, connecting with our bodies in a manner far removed from the intellectual contemplation and reflection implied here.

Related problems are apparent in another attempt to "read" Dylan. In Aidan Day's *Jokerman: Reading the Lyrics of Bob Dylan*, the writer does acknowledge the importance of Dylan's voice, but dismisses its significance as a musical instrument in these terms (Day 1989:2):

Typically, the voice engages the line of the melody but its simultaneous jarring, atonal separation from the music, together with the relentless subordination of musical elements to the exigencies of verbal order, opens a space which registers a distance and an unease involving both singer and listener. The singing voice at once solicits and rebuffs. The gratifications it offers are uncomfortable ones.

Again, such an approach is inaccurate and misleading. First, it is highly debatable that the music is subordinate to the verbal order. If anything, the words in Dylan's songs are frequently chosen—or edited during songwriting—to suit the music. This seems apparent from accounts of Dylan's recording sessions¹ and from listening to officially available and unofficially distributed recordings of studio out-takes and rehearsals. It is for this reason that the words often work as sounds, and thus for their phonetic, rhythmic, and evocative character, rather than their semantic or representational value. Words are chosen for the sonorous quality of the rhymes within the music or, as Dylan comments in *Chronicles* (2004:173-4): "The semantic meaning is all in the sounds of the words," a point that reading literary scholars often seem unable to hear.

A further problem here concerns what Day refers to as the "atonal separation" of the vocal melody from the music. All of Dylan's songs have a distinct tonal centre of some kind; all melodies work in relation to more or less distinct keys, scales, or modes. I must therefore assume that Day is using the term "atonal" loosely in order to emphasize the idea that Dylan's voice jars on the listener. Although it is common for those who dislike Dylan's art to dismiss his voice as "grating," I don't really see why we should take this view too seriously in attempting to understand his performance art. Day adopts an aspect of modernist high art aesthetics when he argues that Dylan "solicits" and "rebuffs." Day's position becomes most clear when he asserts that the "gratifications" Dylan offers are "uncomfortable" ones.

Ultimately this claim seems little more than a subjective judgment and an aesthetic ideology posited as a general proposition. Such an argument neglects the ways in which Dylan's melodies, rhythms, and voice draw his audience in and how Dylan's voice intimately engages with his listeners. This claim also ignores how the tunes quite cleverly—and occasionally deceptively—draw us in with their many melodies and hooks, using the well-developed rhetoric of the popular song form. The vast majority of Dylan's songs concern love, loss, and human relationships. Their melodies and delivery are more likely to encourage intimacy rather than distance—

¹ See Heylin 2000.

such a sense of intimacy can be experienced at a concert or even when listening to a recording. It would be quite possible to find many documentations of the ways in which listeners have sought comfort and solace in the songs of Dylan.

This is something that the Chaucer scholar Betsy Bowden acknowledges when referring to her own personal experience of listening to Dylan's recordings. In *Performed Literature* (2001), she argues that the persuasiveness of Dylan's vocal performance arises from his ability as a singer to shift and slide between pitches and to sing with an irregular meter. Bowden assumes that this is somehow subversive because it doesn't strictly correspond to what has been transcribed onto manuscript paper in songbooks. This "irregularity," of course, draws directly from the folk musical traditions that heavily influenced Dylan. As a result of the influence of folk music, the characteristics outlined by Bowden have become stylistic features of much popular music. Yet we should also recognize that in performance, much art music functions according to a particular use of the voice and tuning so that wind, brass, or string instruments deviate from (and subvert the pure pitch implied by) a notated score. There has been overwhelming scholarship to support the fact that notated scores of various kinds are only a very approximate guide, at best, to what we hear when we listen to music. Just because Dylan's various vocal inflections, bluesy slides, microtonal shifts of pitch, and irregular rhythms and phrasing cannot be clearly notated using Western classical musical notation does not mean they are not worthy of extensive study.

Although she acknowledges sonic complexities in Dylan's vocal performance, Bowden, like Day, is explicitly dismissive of the music. She asserts that there's not much for sociologists and musicologists to say about Dylan's songs, and states (Bowden 2001:1): ". . . without words most Dylan melodies and chord changes would be boring." Over the next few pages I will refute such a claim and illustrate that there is much that culturally informed musicology and ethnomusicology can contribute to our understanding of Bob Dylan as a performing artist. To do this I must first take issue with the sweeping generalization implied in the comment about Dylan's "boring" melodies and chords. If the melodies are judged this way, this claim is made according to a very specific (and unstated) high art and modernist aesthetic. Those who judge Dylan's melodies "boring" have not taken into consideration the aesthetics of folk music traditions or the various other practices that fall within the categories of postmodernism, minimalism, or post-minimalism.

That seemingly simple word—"boring"—is actually a sign of some of the issues that those of us studying popular music have to continually

grapple with. When much high theory confronts popular culture and folklore, it often reaches the pejorative conclusion that these musical styles are formally simplistic and repetitive. Hence, the assumption is made that this form of music must be “boring.” A number of writers have attempted to deal with this issue by arguing that popular culture is just as formally complex as canonical high culture. Christopher Ricks (2003) does this with his detailed analysis of Dylan’s lyrics, finding connections to Tennyson, Shakespeare, Rossetti, Blake, the Bible, and Homer—but not managing a single mention of Lennon and McCartney, the latter point noted by Anthony Quinn (2003) when reviewing Rick’s book *Dylan’s Visions of Sin*. The search for complexity in popular culture, allied with the scholar’s desire to legitimize their project within the academy, again leads us away from salient qualities of Dylan’s art. What we should be thinking about are the pleasures, practices, and aesthetic value of repetition and formal simplicity, as well as the ways in which these elements function for us as musicians and as listeners. We should also be thinking about recognizing Dylan’s place among orally performed song traditions before we read him as a “poet” to be scrutinized on the page. With this in mind, we might benefit from accounts of the value of simplicity and gain an understanding of how hard Dylan works to achieve this seeming simplicity, in contrast to the studies that make his art appear overly complex and distanced from everyday experience. In thinking in this direction, my concern in what follows is with the seductions of the melodies, and the ease with which apparently “simple” and “repetitive” tunes allow us to participate.

One such deceptively simple melodic scheme is the “riff,” which can be defined as a short, melodic, rhythmically repeated phrase. In Paul Williams’ most recent book, included as part of his series of studies of Dylan as a performing artist on stage, he highlights the riff when pursuing his guiding principle that Dylan’s “finest work has been done . . . outside of the confines of the recording studio” (1992:xiv). He emphasizes the riff as the key to how Dylan’s music works in concert. Williams writes (*idem*): “It’s all in the riff. That’s the secret of Bob Dylan’s music . . . the riff calls forth the great vocal performances.” Regarding concert performances, Williams (2004:pxiii) states that

When . . . the band is directed to vamp on the riff for long non-vocal passages, the riff itself starts speaking to the song’s listeners as though these were whole new verses of evocative, mind-blowing, Bob-Dylan-in-his-prime lyrics.

Acknowledging how Dylan has been able to achieve a similar effect through the distinct voices that he gives to harmonica solos, Williams stresses how, on good nights, Dylan is able to do this through the riff.

Not all Dylan's songs are riff-based, of course. But in the many that are, it is that short, melodic, rhythmically repeated phrase that drives the selection and articulation of words with music; it is this cyclical, non-goal-directed repetition of musical phrases and verbal sounds that draws us into a very particular sonic experience, allowing us to "enter" the song. The riff becomes the song, and words and vocal melody are held in tension, intimated by (and implicated in) the riff. In many of Dylan's songs, their riff-based character becomes ever more pronounced in live performance, but there are many studio recordings providing ample evidence of how Dylan's songs are built around riffs ("New Pony," "Maggie's Farm," "Seeing the Real You at Last," "Everything is Broken," "Tweedle Dee Tweedle Dum"). The observations of Simon Frith (1996:166) in *Performing Rites* seem pertinent here: "a song does not exist to convey the meaning of the words—rather, words exist to convey the meaning of the song." The riff shapes the song, and the words are chosen to convey the meaning of the song as it arises from the interplay between voice and riff. Perhaps this is why Williams hears patterns of unformed words in the riffs.

Williams' comments on this subject provide me with a route into offering some ideas about Dylan's melodies and how they resonate in people's lives. There is, paradoxically, something quite profound about the way a seemingly simple tune can allow large numbers of people to participate in singing along with the melody, often without being fully aware of what the words mean, or without even worrying about whether they are singing the words correctly. In his discussion on the importance of the riff, Williams writes of his experience of hearing Dylan's words in his head, even when Bob is not singing.

In approaching the issue of melody, it is important to acknowledge that many discussions of melodies carry with them assumptions of the qualities that characterize "good" melodies that are entirely derived from the study and criticism of Western art music. In contrast, Gino Stefani (1987:21-23) argued that scholars of popular music should develop an approach to melody that is connected to the musical experiences of *listeners*, arguing that melody should be treated as

that dimension of music which everyone can easily appropriate in many ways: with the voice by singing, whistling or putting words to it; with the body by dancing, marching etc. . .melody. . .is what people appropriate most in music. . .there is no doubt that the most prominent feature (is) that

it is “singable”. . . . Oral melody is the voice of pleasure: nature teaches us so from childhood.

From our earliest memory we learn to love what might be dismissed as simple, boring, and repetitive melodies. John Lennon instinctively knew this, which is perhaps why he recycled the melody of “Three Blind Mice” in so many of his songs, a “refrain which is so fundamental to John’s music” (Mellers 1976:176) and readily apparent in the songs “All You Need is Love,” “Oh Yoko,” and “My Mummy’s Dead.” The nursery rhymes that children sing, dance, clap with, and march to, often entail chants on one pitch or short diatonic walks up and down the scale, such as rising or falling thirds and fourths. According to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Ringer 2001:363), the descending minor third is a “universal manifestation of the melodic impulse” and a characteristic of children’s singsongs around the world.

All of these familiar pitch movements are prevalent throughout Dylan’s songs. But I am not implying a search for archetypal melodic patterns as another analytical route for pinning down Dylan’s music. I do not want to suggest an approach to melody (following Stefani) as a beautiful structure to be appreciated for its grace or formal qualities (or critiqued for how it “fails” according to such criteria), nor as an isolated sonic structure or text. Melody must be seen as something that connects with, and is embedded into, people’s lives. This can be illustrated with reference to the song “It Ain’t Me Babe,” first released in 1964. A number of writers have noted that the “No, No, No” refrain of this song can be heard as a response to the Beatles “Yeah, Yeah, Yeah” in “She Loves You,” released the previous year. Whether or not this was a conscious response, and whether there was any irony entailed or intended is, I think, a matter of debate. Nonetheless there were many ways that Dylan and the Beatles musically commented on each others’ work throughout the 1960s, from complementary homage (Lennon’s “You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away” and Dylan’s band arrangements on “Bring It All Back Home”) to more ironic or sarcastic references (McCartney’s “Rocky Raccoon” and Dylan’s “4th Time Around”). Bowden (2001:104) is just one of the commentators who have made this point about the two early songs:

The Beatles had until then sung simple love-song lyrics in adapted gospel style; Dylan, adapting blues style, exactly reversed the sentiments. “She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah,” they sang, and he sang “No, no, no, it ain’t me babe.”

Both The Beatles and Dylan sing “yeah, yeah, yeah” / “no, no, no” with the same three pitches descending within the interval of a minor third (G, F sharp, and E). They are quite obviously harmonized differently. The Beatles melody is more directly related to the underlying chords, while Dylan’s is a typical bluesy folk melody that bears only a tenuous “functional” relationship to the chords. Either way, the melodies of the main chorus hook are the same.

In approaching the songs of Dylan and The Beatles, a musical analyst may not wish to detach the melody from the chords, rhythms, instrumentation, and so on. But, drawing on Stefani’s suggestions, we can think of melodies as tunes that are heard, appropriated, and sung independently from the chords and harmony sung by listeners in their everyday lives, whether or not they are listening to a recording. When audiences sing along at concerts, the performer can recognize and discern the very tangible way that the melodies of the songs have connected with the public. This connection can be heard on the performance of “It Ain’t Me Babe” on the album *Real Live*, recorded in England and Ireland during the summer of 1984, when Dylan stands back from the microphone and allows the crowd to sing the “no, no, no” refrain.

People have been singing at Dylan concerts at least since the 1970s. Andrew Muir (2001) has suggested that Dylan’s live arrangements and willful disruption of familiar melodies are an attempt to subvert and undermine the audience’s attempt to sing along. But, if this is the case, then Dylan’s motivation is not always consistent. After a concert in Barrowlands, Glasgow in June 2004, one of the Dylan websites (www.expectingrain.com) had a number of contributions from people who had been at the gig and who remarked upon the singing and how Dylan responded to it. According to audience members, the fans were singing along with “Just Like a Woman,” “It Aint Me Babe,” and “Like a Rolling Stone,” in particular. According to one fan, Dylan was pointing at the audience and conducting them during “Like a Rolling Stone.” Then he said something like this (there are minor variations in how four people recounted what he said): “We’ve played that thousands of times and people try to sing along, but nobody can ever do it” or “we’ve done that song a thousand times and no ones kept up like that.” Apparently, he then mimed the opening lines of “All Along the Watchtower” while the crowd sang.

Singing along symbolically and quite tangibly affirms the relationship between artist and audience. When the audience participates in singing the song, artists often stop singing and let the audience take over. Singing along with choruses is also one of the clearest examples of how the words of pop songs become detached from their semantic significance within the song’s

lyrical narrative or argument. These are quite clearly not reducible to the words read on paper. The “no, no, no, it ain’t me babe” refrain becomes a phrase in itself, appropriated and incorporated into the breath of many singers. The phrase can resonate as a defiant riposte to whomever or whatever is troubling individual audience members in their lives at that moment, and, at the same time, it is a celebration of the magic of Dylan’s song.

During live performances of “Like a Rolling Stone,” the chorus tends to elicit two types of response: some members of the audience sing the words and melody, while others cheer in response to the line “How does it feel?” Listening to different performances of “Like a Rolling Stone,” it is clear just how the sentiment of the song—the *feel*—changes according to the performance. Directed at “you,” the song can sound either like a withering put-down, a sympathetic statement of solidarity, or a melancholic lament of regret. In concert, the phrase “How does it feel?” is no longer addressed to a character embedded in a lyrical narrative. Instead, it is transformed, becoming “how does it feel?” in the here and now of the concert. The refrain becomes a multi-vocal celebration of how it feels to be part of the moment and the history of Dylan singing this song.

It is also important to acknowledge that when audience members sing, it’s quite possible for them to sing along with songs (at a concert or with a recording) and be unaware of the full lyrics, or the correct lyrics. In some cases, you can sing some words and make the most suitable noise for words that you might have forgotten or have no knowledge of. In addition, we should not underestimate how people sing along with songs without opening their mouths. The audience might also sing along—aloud or in the mind—without necessarily agreeing with the apparent sentiments. Sheila Whitley (1992) has remarked that although many men and women have gained great pleasure from Mick Jagger’s voice and Rolling Stones performances, they do not necessarily sympathize with the misogynist lyrics of some of the songs. George Lipsitz (1990) has made a similar point about the apparent conservatism of the lyrics to many country songs. Personal belief and lyrical content are in contradiction only if you assume that songs communicate via the semantic meaning of the words alone, and that participation implies agreement with a song’s semantic content.

Singing a song is one of the most embodied ways of putting ourselves into music and appropriating songs, whether chanting them when we are engaged in routines in our homes or when walking down the street. Singing while moving throughout our day is indeed how we appropriate and embody simple melodies. In these ways we tangibly enter the song and the popular

song enters our own lives. This act is continuous to this same song enactment in childhood, where we put ourselves into melody and rhythm and allow melody and rhythm to enter our lives. In Iona and Peter Opie's introduction to *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (1997:42), we read: "It's probably a fact that every one of us could recite a string of nursery rhymes before we knew the meaning of the words which form them." It is worth remembering that most nursery rhymes were not actually written for children in the nursery. They were popular songs, slogans, satires, chants, riddles, and bits of ballads that eventually found their way into the nursery, as nursery rhymes increasingly became an institution associated with the modern notion of childhood and the child was thought of as something distinct from the adult. It can prove quite disconcerting to discover the meaning of some of those rhymes we once chanted as children.

Many of Dylan's songs utilize "the chant," to use Richard Middleton's (1990) terms, or the "incantation" in Wilfred Mellers' (1984) terminology. The chant has been an integral part of human cultures from children's games and work songs to secular festivities and sacred rituals. The chant unites us in the playground, helps our team score the winning goal, helps us get closer to our god, unites us at a political rally or demonstration, and enables us to celebrate all manner of events in our lives. Richard Middleton (1990:229) has observed that the singing of popular songs invests ordinary words that might seem banal and mundane with "affective force and kinetic grace" leading to what he calls the "magical musicalization of the everyday."

Middleton refers to Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" as a chant. It is basically sung on one pitch, the note C (a flattened/blue third in A), with occasional drops down to the note A (pitched a minor third below). This minor third interval recurs throughout Dylan's music and is a familiar melodic interval to many of us, (recognizable in the opening two notes of the vocal melody of "Hey Jude" and the Oasis song "Live Forever," for example). As Peter Van der Merwe (1989:121) has remarked,

One of the great puzzles of music is the mysteriously satisfying quality of the minor third. . . . Why should such an awkward interval like the minor third . . . come so readily to the human voice? Why should it have the air of what can only be called solidity? The primeval chant consisting . . . of nothing but a falling minor third appears in places as different as the Catholic liturgy and the school playground.

The musical influences on Bob Dylan's chants are quite easy to detect and have been acknowledged by Dylan over the years. "Subterranean Homesick Blues" owes a debt to Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey

Business,” with some elements from Woody Guthrie’s “Taking it Easy.” It is also possible to hear the influence of Louis Jordan, who is acknowledged as an influence by both Berry and Dylan. “Subterranean Homesick Blues” is a stream of caustic observations that draws on Chuck Berry’s stream of discontent and is influenced by the writings of Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg (sometimes described as a blend of beat poetry and rhythm and blues).

There are many other Dylan songs, and popular songs in general, that make use of the chant and that use this minor third drop. Of course, there is a lot more to Dylan’s melodies than chants. Dylan’s use of the chant provides just one focus, which I have adopted here as a means of exploring the way popular melodies work at that special moment when speech turns into music and when ordinary language becomes elevated. At such moments—whether we sing the song to be transported in the midst of the daily routine, or when gathered at the concert—the song is breathed alive. The singing transforms it into a ritual embodiment of the music. This act at once creates a feeling of attachment, or belonging to, something or someone outside of ourselves. At the same time, it is a connection that doesn’t necessarily imply semiotic understanding or agreement with the semantic meaning of the song. It is, more often than not, a non-representational experience, materially felt on and within the body as the voice participates. All of these experiences are missed entirely by those who simply read Dylan’s lyrics on the page.

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Vocal Performance and Speech Intonation: Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone"

Michael Daley

This paper is drawn from a larger study of Bob Dylan's vocal style from 1960 to 1966. In that six-year span, I found that four distinctive sub-styles could be delineated.¹ The last of these, beginning in 1965 and continuing until Dylan's motorcycle accident in July 1966, is probably his most well-known sub-style. This sub-style seems to lie in a middle ground between song and speech, with a great deal of sliding pitch and rhythmically free text declamation. This is also the time period when Dylan had his greatest commercial and critical success, peaking with the release in July 1965 of "Like A Rolling Stone." In addition to the song's commercial success, a number of commentators have pointed to it as an artistic peak, many of them citing "Like A Rolling Stone" as the most important single performance of Dylan's 44-year (at the time of writing) recording career.

My intention here is to analyze a recorded performance of a single verse of one of Dylan's most popular songs, observing the ways in which intonation details relate to lyrics and performance. The analysis is used as source material for a close reading of the semantic, affective, and "playful" meanings of the performance. This reading is then compared with some published accounts of the song's reception.

For this analysis, I have drawn on the linguistic methodology formulated by Michael Halliday. Halliday has found speech intonation—which includes pitch movement, timbre, syllabic rhythm, and loudness—to be an integral part of English grammar and crucial to the transmission of certain kinds of meaning. Patterns of intonation are shared by the fluent speakers of a given language and the understanding of basic intonational gestures precedes words both in infant language acquisition and in

¹ A shorter version of this paper appeared as a chapter in my Master's thesis (1997), entitled "'One Who Sings with his Tongue on Fire': Change, Continuity and Meaning in Bob Dylan's Vocal Style, 1960-66" and in *Bob Dylan Anthology 2: 20 Years of Isis* (Barker 2005).

evolutionary brain development. That is, intonation is a lower brain function than word recognition, and thus develops as a perceptual tool much earlier. Speech intonation is a deeply rooted and powerfully meaningful aspect of human communication. It is plausible that a system so powerful in speech might have some bearing on the communication of meaning in sung performance. This is the premise by which I am applying Halliday's methods to this performance.

The musical object in question is the originally released studio recording of "Like A Rolling Stone," a performance that has generated much discussion among Dylan's commentators and fans. I begin with a short history of the song's reception among critics and fans, as well as some assessments of Dylan himself.

"Like A Rolling Stone" was recorded on June 16, 1965 and was released as a single on July 20th of the same year, later appearing on the album *Highway 61 Revisited*. It was an immediate success, eventually climbing to number two on the *Billboard* pop chart and number one on the *Cashbox* chart. The song was somewhat different from the top ten fare of the time, however. At a length of over six minutes (it was chopped for radio play) it was significantly longer than the two-and-a-half to three minute standard length then dominating pop radio, with a raucous guitar and organ-based arrangement and four verses of dense, rapid-fire verbiage. It is generally agreed upon by commentators that the lyrics—at least on the surface—recount the privileged upbringing and subsequent fall into desperate poverty an unnamed "Miss Lonely." The narrator's accusations and unflattering observations are couched in a series of declarative statements and questions, culminating after each verse in the famous refrain: "How does it feel / to be on your own / with no direction home / a complete unknown / like a rolling stone" (there are slight variations in the refrain from stanza to stanza). Perhaps the most strikingly unique aspect of the record is Dylan's vocal performance, with its use of nasal, sliding pitches and a speech-like, highly rhythmic declamatory style. Dylan later described, in somewhat stylized terms, the genesis of the song (to Jules Siegel, quoted in Scaduto 1973:244-5):

I wrote it as soon as I got back from England. It was ten pages long. It wasn't called anything, just a rhythm thing on paper—all about my steady hatred directed at some point that was honest. In the end it wasn't hatred. Revenge, that's a better word. It was telling someone they didn't know what it was all about, and they were lucky. I had never thought of it as a song, until one day I was at the piano, and on paper it was singing "How does it feel?" in a slow motion pace, in the utmost of slow motion. It was like swimming in lava. Hanging by their arms from a birch tree. Skipping,

kicking the tree, hitting a nail with your foot. Seeing someone in the pain they were bound to meet with. I wrote it. I didn't fail. It was straight.

Whether or not one chooses to take Dylan's comments at face value, they provide us with a sense of the artist's own perception of his creative process and the degree to which the endeavor succeeded. They also give us a glimpse into the visual and gestural correlatives of Dylan's sonic sense; he refers here to outward movement, directed towards a specific point. These metaphors, I suggest, are not arbitrary. They are in fact strongly indexed to the metaphorical constructs of much of the reception of "Like A Rolling Stone," as well as *to* the gestural aspects of Dylan's use of vocal pitch in the performance.

In addition to the popular acclaim accorded to Dylan's recording, a steady procession of commentators on Dylan's life and work have offered their own assessments. The larger works from which the following quotations are drawn include Dylan biographies, shorter articles, and more scholarly analytical works, in the cases of Mellers and Bowden (Scaduto 1973:245):

When you heard "Rolling Stone" back then it was like a cataclysm, like being taken to the edge of the abyss, drawn to some guillotine of experience. . . . [Dylan was] biting off a word, spitting out venom, spreading a virulent emotion, infecting the listener. . .

Patrick Humphries (Humphries and Bauldie 1991:57):

. . . steamrolling all that had gone before and spiraling onwards through outrageous rhymes and meter, lyrics flung like accusations, affronting yet compelling, that age-old fascination which lures unwary travelers right to the heart of darkness. . .

John Herdman (1982:14):

Rock bottom intensity of feeling. . . he tells us what he feels himself, he projects himself with eerie immediacy into the feelings of others, and in so doing he shows us what we feel too.

Paul Nelson (1966:107):

The definitive statement that both personal and artistic fulfillment must come, in the main, by being truly on one's own.

Betsy Bowden (1982:104):

. . . the absence of any personal pronouns [sic] sucks the listener into the song . . . the song's "you" gets thoroughly conquered in both sense and sound. . .

Wilfred Mellers (1985:140):

Although the words are dismissive, the music—with its jaunty repeated notes and eyebrow-arching rising thirds . . . is positive in total effect.

"Hugh Dunit" writing in *The Telegraph*, a Bob Dylan fan magazine (quoted in Williams 1991:153):

. . . his birth cry is the primal demon voice that whoops out the surging refrains of this song. . . each is a searing, vituperative taunt, designed to needle to the bone. But the tone of the words (as sung) and music is unmistakably joyous, celebratory. [Dylan] is exultant, free, on his own, ecstatic that he is as he once was, a complete unknown—unknown because unknowable.

While these assessments are rather broadly variant in tone and content, some recurring themes are discernible. I have grouped some salient metaphors and descriptors from the critical history of "Like A Rolling Stone" (including Dylan's own commentary) into five main thematic areas below:

Thematic area 1: Strong antagonism

"venom"

"dismissive"

"affronting"

Thematic area 2: Attractiveness

"sucks the listener in"

"lures unwary travelers"

"compelling"

siren song metaphor

"drawn to some guillotine of experience"

Thematic area 3: Positive message

"joyous . . . exultant . . . celebratory"

"personal and artistic fulfillment"

Thematic area 4: Projecting

Thrusting outward

"spitting out venom"
 "lyrics flung"
 "directed at some point"
 "whoops out"
 "spiraling onwards"

Thematic area 5: Sureness/effectiveness

Virtuosity

Intensity of feeling

Expressivity

"I wrote it. I didn't fail. It was straight"

Thematic area 1 parallels the mood and content of the lyrics as they appear on paper—a strong antagonism is conveyed through the constant, invasive questioning and damning judgments of the invisible first person (who may or may not be identified as Dylan himself). I would doubt, though, that the lyrics alone create such a strong mood of condemnation. Dylan's overall vocal timbre here is quite hard and nasal, the kind of vocal sound that might accompany a "tongue-lashing" by someone who clearly feels that they are in the right, perhaps directed at a child or some other person in a position of lesser power. Such a tone suits this classic monologic text, where the life history and inner thoughts of "you" are co-opted by the narrator who is himself invisible, that is, unnamed, not described: an inviolable, inscrutable disembodied voice.² Much of Dylan's expressive output around the time that "Like A Rolling Stone" was recorded displays a similar style of interpersonal communication.³

² Mikhail Bakhtin described monologism, as opposed to dialogism, in this way: "Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force" (quoted in Brackett 1995:7). Although I would characterize the lyrics as monologic, the song in performance takes on a dialogic character by virtue of the many layers of sound and the complexities of mass commercial dissemination.

³ This kind of discursive control and venomous rhetorical skill can be observed in action in the classic film *Don't Look Back*, a documentary about Dylan's 1965 British tour immediately preceding the composition and recording of "Like A Rolling Stone." A sequence in the film captures a conversation between Dylan and "the science student," a young amateur journalist. Dylan immediately takes the student to task, questioning his inner motives, "turning around" the responses, toying with and effectively crushing his young victim with rhetoric. This seems to have been a favorite game at the time for Dylan and his cronies, a way of weeding out the unhip.

Thematic area 2 groups together references to the “attractiveness” of the performance, its power to draw the listener towards something that, when it is named at all, is vaguely dangerous or forbidding. Humphries seems to refer to the ancient Greek myth of the Sirens, who lured travelers towards destruction with an irresistible song. Scaduto, perhaps specifying the nature of the destruction, refers to a “guillotine of experience,” which might suggest that the listener experiences some irrevocable change in worldview once drawn into “the abyss.” These types of metaphors are difficult to reconcile with the sense of the lyrics as written, so it seems that this theme of “attractiveness” might be connected in some way with thematic area 5, which is concerned with virtuosic control. The “abyss” might be the potentiality of the listener herself being targeted for this kind of vitriol, while at the same time she is drawn to the source by the sheer mastery with which the antagonism is delivered.

Thematic area 3, headed by “positive message,” primarily comes from Paul Nelson’s 1966 essay, which suggests that all of the characters in “Like A Rolling Stone” are actually all in some way Dylan himself. This theme was taken up in the *Telegraph*, whose author connects the performance with a projection of Dylan as triumphantly breaking the chains of his safe, successful “folksinger” career in favor of some new, uncharted musical terrain in the rock milieu. Thus the “story” of the verses is just a scaffolding upon which to hang the exultant chorus. Rather than chalking up this interpretation to creative critique, though, I would suggest that this, too, is an impression based on performative factors more than lyrical sense. The band’s performance certainly helps matters along in this regard. There is nothing careful about the way the studio musicians barrel through the song, in spite of Al Kooper’s famous story (found in his autobiography, *Backstage Passes*) that this song marked the first time he ever played the organ. Dylan, too, contributes sloppily transcendent rhythm guitar and harmonica flourishes. The harmonic structure of the song itself can also be seen as a series of affirmations, with the verse consisting primarily of stepwise climbs from the I to the V chord, which is held until a satisfying return is made to the tonic I. The inevitable perfect cadences that begin each line of text are contradicted only once in the form, when a IV chord intervenes at the pre-chorus. This IV chord then reverses the movement of the previous lines, falling stepwise down to the I until the upward movement is restored with an extended II – IV – V climb. The choruses condense the stepwise climbs of the verses into terse I – IV – V statements that Dylan might have associated with the irony-free rock n’ roll aesthetics of “Twist and Shout” and “La Bamba.” I submit, then, that the commentators who associate “Like A

Rolling Stone" with joy, celebration, and liberation might be hearing these values primarily as embodied in the music, despite the fact that their critical faculties might impel them to look to the lyrics first.

Thematic area 4 might be fruitfully compared to thematic area 2 in that they both seem connected to gesture, space, movement, and energy. Whereas area 2 contains metaphors of attraction, area 4 refers to outward projection, ostensibly from the same source that attracts. The references to "spitting out" and "lyrics flung" directs our attention towards the mouth, and indeed Dylan referred to this song on a number of occasions as "vomitific." Could this thematic area, along with area 2, be related to various listeners' connections with the corporeality of the performance? We hear Dylan's mouth as he sings, but we can also envision his facial expression, perhaps his bodily movements as well. This we can deduce from the aural landscape of the recording, which gives us information about Dylan's vocal timbre, the speed of enunciation, and other details, but I believe that it is in the area of pitch that we will find the greatest correlation to gestural metaphors. As we will see, much of Dylan's vocal pitch use in "Like A Rolling Stone" finds him taking a syllable and describing a kind of arc, with a medium or short rise and a longer fall. This somewhat parallels the spatial path of an object thrown into the air. And since Dylan performs this arc repeatedly, sometimes several times in a single line of text, it follows that a listener might hear the words as "flung," or even "spiraling outwards," as each arc is succeeded by another.

Thematic area 5 contains metaphors of "sureness" and "effectiveness," connected with what might be thought of as virtuosic expressive control. Robert Walser has traced the eighteenth-century origins of the term "virtuoso," a word that is popularly thought of as referring to technical mastery. Walser points out that this technical mastery was always in the service of expressive and rhetorical control.⁴ The ways that this virtuosity is manifested in "Like A Rolling Stone" are twofold. As I hope to demonstrate, Dylan uses vocal pitch to emphasize the lyric sense—this may be interpreted as a rhetorical use of performative virtuosity. But his division of phrases does not always serve the "sense" of the discourse; on the contrary, his re-alignment of points of emphasis in the lyrics, again through pitch use, can be understood as *playful*. The virtuoso makes meaningful performances, but he also shows off what he can do. By sometimes obscuring meaning, he displays his mastery.

A close reading of Dylan's vocal performance in "Like A Rolling Stone" will allow for a better understanding of the metaphorical

⁴ See Walser 1993.

constructions that followed in its wake, in the form the critical responses recounted above. This close reading will consist mainly of an analysis of pitch use in the second verse and chorus based on Michael Halliday's linguistic method. First, though, a word on Halliday's method.

Through much of the history of linguistic inquiry, the written word has occupied a privileged place as an object of study. Languages are traditionally analyzed primarily in terms of their grammars; this reflects the popular belief that words and sentences constitute the essential part of human verbal communication. As such, spoken language is routinely transcribed to written form for analysis. Of course, popular knowledge also tells us that "*how* you say something is often as important as *what* you say." Every native speaker of English performs the language in some way that communicates things that the written word cannot. The scientific understanding of this "sonic sense" of speech, however, has developed slowly and fitfully until recent years.

As early as the 1930s, work began to be undertaken towards the understanding of speech intonation, the universe of sonic details that accompany every utterance. These details include large and small gradations in pitch, timbre, amplitude, and rhythm. The British linguist Michael Halliday has formulated a cogent system for understanding speech intonation in the context of a "functional" English grammar in his 1970 monograph *A Course in Spoken English: Intonation*, and his larger work from 1994, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Since Halliday's work on the nature of speech has constituted one of the starting points for my own research, I include here a thumbnail explanation of his theory as it applies to the present work. The following short explanation is a paraphrase of some of the ideas put forth in Halliday's 1970 and 1994 publications, with an aim towards setting the stage for the analysis here.

Tonality

Intonation in English is organized in units Halliday calls *tone groups*. Halliday (1970: 3-4) says of the tone group:

The tone group is one unit of information, one "block" in the message that the speaker is communicating; and so it can be of any length. The particular meaning that the speaker wishes to convey may make it necessary to split a single clause into two or more tone groups, or to combine two or more clauses into one tone group.

The pattern by which tone groups are distributed throughout speech, called tonality, is crucial to the sense of an utterance. The speaker divides up the stream of spoken words into groups, and this reveals to the listener how to mentally organize the information. Almost always, tonality follows a predictable course, with tone groups basically corresponding to grammatical clauses. But when it is disrupted, as in Bob Dylan's 1965 studio performance of "Like A Rolling Stone," grammatical sense can be fundamentally altered.

Tonicity

Each tone group has a *tonic syllable*, a place of prominence that the speaker seeks to mark as most important and that carries the most pronounced pitch change. It often carries the burden of "new information" in the clause and, as such, the normative place of a tonic syllable is on the last word in a clause. Placement of the tonic syllable in places other than this is understood to be contrastive. The placement of tonic prominence is referred to as *tonicity*.

Tone

Halliday has identified five basic tones, or pitch contours, in English. Tone interacts with tonality (distribution of tone groups) and tonicity (placement of tonic prominence) to create meaning in English intonation. Following are the tones identified in Halliday's system:

Simple Tone Groups:

- tone 1 falling
- tone 2 high rising, or falling-rising (pointed)
- tone 3 low rising
- tone 4 falling-rising (rounded)
- tone 5 rising-falling (rounded)

I have transcribed the lyrics of the second verse and chorus of "Like A Rolling Stone" using an adaptation of Halliday's notation for speech intonation. The second verse is not dissimilar to the other three verses in style, but I chose it because it seemed to me to contain the widest variety of playful inflections and pitch gestures. The tones themselves (the numerals that begin each tone group) were chosen on the basis of their resemblance to

Dylan's use of sung pitch, as shown here. Each tone group is set off in a separate line of text and framed in double slash marks; syllables with tonic prominence are underlined, and rhythmic feet are divided by single slash marks.

- a) // 5 ah you // (rising, then falling, tone)
- b) // 1 gone // (falling tone)
- c) // 1 to the / finest //
- d) // 1 school //
- e) // 1 all //
- f) // 1 right //
- g) // 1'^miss / lonely / but you / know you / only / used to / get //
- h) // 5 juiced in / it //
- i) // 1 ^no/body's / ever / taught / you / how to / live out / on / the street //
- j) // 5 ^and / now you're / gonna / have to / get / used to //
- k) // 5 it //
- l) // 1 ^you / say you'd / never //
- m) // 1 compro / mise //
- n) // 1 with the / mystery / tramp but / now you //
- o) // 1 realize //
- p) // 1 he's not / selling / any //
- q) // 1 alibis //
- r) // 1 as you / stare in / to the / vacuum / of his / eyes //
- s) // 1 and say //
- t) // 1 do you / want to //
- u) // 1 make a / deal //
- v) // 1 how does it / feel //

w) // 1 how does it / feel //

x) // 1 to be / on your / own //

y) // 1 ^with / no di / rection / home //

z) // 2 a com / plete un / known //

aa) // 2 like a / rolling / stone //

Below I have transcribed the same verse and chorus "grammatically," using line breaks to mark off likely clause divisions:

ah you gone to the finest school all right miss lonely
 but you know you only used to get juiced in it
 nobody's ever taught you how to live out on the street
 and now you're gonna have to get used to it
 you say you'd never compromise with the mystery tramp
 but now you realize he's not selling any alibis
 as you stare into the vacuum of his eyes
 and say "Do you want to make a deal?"
 How does it feel?
 How does it feel to be on your own
 with no direction home
 a complete unknown
 like a rolling stone?

The verse begins with a tone 5 (line a). This being a tone group unto itself, it would be plausible to refer to this speech function as an initiating call; tone 5, in this case, has a meaning of "insistence." This *is* the second verse, after all, which can be thought of as constituting an expansion of the ideas begun in the first. Thus the highly tonicized first pitch gesture of this verse might be interpreted as a kind of fanfare; musicologist Philip Tagg characterizes such strong upward pitch sweeps as "a call to attention and action, a strong movement upward and outwards . . . energetic and heroic" (Tagg 1979:14).

What follows is a rapid-fire series of Tone 1s. The use of the Tone 1 pitch fall here is unremarkable in itself, but it is the *tonicity* characteristics that are unusual here. The listener is bombarded with a series of tonicized words (tonic prominence is used in normal speech as a pointer to the *new* information in an utterance) and Dylan gives tonic prominence to nearly every word in the first part of the first line. This overloading of new information pointers renders the text as forceful and intrusive upon the listener. There is a sense of an intoxicating sensory overload.

Right away a general non-alignment of tone groups as sung with the grammar of the written lyric is evident. This manifests itself in the distribution of tone groups in many different places within the grammatical clause, as well as the placement of tonic prominence on syllables other than the last lexical item in the clause. In tone groups e) and f) this unusual, seemingly indiscriminate use of tonality breaks up the cohesion of the phrase “all right,” a phrase that has become fused, or indivisible, through popular use. The phrase is rendered contrastive to its usual meaning and marks the word “all” as a piece of new information. This would force the clichéd phrase to be processed in terms of its actual meaning, rather than as a purely “textual” conjunctive phrase, which it has become in popular usage. Thus the listener hears “all right” as an emphatic confirmation of the text immediately preceding. This technique seeks to renew the cliché, something that Dylan has done lexically in other songs by substituting unexpected words in common phrases.⁵

It would be grammatically plausible to segment the first line of this verse into two clauses as follows:

ah you gone to the finest school all right miss lonely
but you know you only used to get juiced in it

The second clause would usually be distributed over one tone group. This does not happen here, though not because of the overloading of tone groups that occurred in the first clause. Instead, the last part of the first clause (“miss lonely”) is included in the second clause’s tone group, which itself cuts off at “get,” rather than being completed with “juiced in it.” Thus the normative placement of the tone group on the clause is shifted backward by one phrase. This has the effect of presenting a grammatically incoherent group of words as a single package of information. This clouds the meaning of the clause somewhat, but perhaps more importantly it constitutes a poetic strike against grammar, at least as it appears in straight written narrative. Clearly Dylan, like Chuck Berry and others before him, is reveling in his virtuosic master of the medium of sung text.

The next couple of lines contain relatively little in the way of pitch playfulness, even though symmetry would suggest that the pitch falls should continue at the same rate. Dylan, however, refuses to do the expected. When the chorus begins, tonic syllables seem to be in their proper places. But Dylan throws in a few more curveballs. Curiously, the last two lines are sung in contours similar to tone 2. This would seem to introduce a mood of

⁵ See Ricks 1987.

questioning—tone 2 most often indicates uncertainty. But this coincides musically with the melodic resolution to the tonic, or home note, so the overall effect is that of closure.

Close reading of the vocal performance of a song, as I have attempted here, can yield a good deal of information about how meaning is handled beyond the lexical and grammatical levels of the lyrics. In the case of the second verse of "Like A Rolling Stone," these prosodic details can be seen in the context of that song's reception; intonational play and emphasis in the performance might be connected to perceptions of virtuosic expressive control, a sense of "expressivity" or "intensity of feeling," and gestural metaphors such as "flung" and "spiralling outwards." On the other hand, certain aspects of reception can be more precisely connected to other facets of the musical object: a sense of strong antagonism might be traced mainly to the lyrics, while a feeling of celebration and joy may be connected to the general raucousness and energy of the band's performance.

Though I am certain that pitch in sung language does hold meaning in a significantly patterned way, I am also aware that singing is not speech, and other factors do enter the semantic and affective landscape of musical expression. Nonetheless, a look at Dylan's use of pitch in this song, through the lens of linguistic speech intonation, goes a long way toward explaining the precise nature of Dylan's communication of meaning in sung performance. One need only observe the many gestural and metaphorical correlations between the linguistic aspects of the performance and the effects of that performance (as recounted in the reception history) on listeners. A certain thoroughgoing nature of Dylan's aesthetic is suggested here, with musical, linguistic, gestural, and (perhaps subsuming all of these) metaphorical aspects all articulating a cohesive, deeply embedded system of drives and directions. Postponing any further investigation into this broader inquiry for now, this analysis of vocal performance in the second verse of "Like A Rolling Stone" reveals much common ground between speech and song in the transmission and reception of meaning, though the precise nature of this shared sign-system may only be understood through further interdisciplinary inquiry.

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Never Quite Sung in this Fashion Before: Bob Dylan's "Man of Constant Sorrow"

Todd Harvey

In the liner notes to Bob Dylan's first, self-titled record, Robert Shelton (1962) writes: "'Man of Constant Sorrow' is a traditional Southern mountain folk song of considerable popularity and age but probably never sung quite in this fashion before." This statement suggests two main points for researching the song that I will examine in the course of this paper. I will first describe how "Man of Constant Sorrow" evolved up to the time of Dylan's recording, followed by a discussion of the process through which Dylan learned his version and internalized the song, making it his own. Parallel to this discussion of musical influences, I will talk about intellectual property and copyright, issues of central importance to folk music in the twentieth century. Shelton's statement holds great value both as an aesthetic and as a legal evaluation.

My scholarship about Dylan dates to the early 1990s, at the end of my graduate work in music composition, when I became interested in the 1960s folk music revival. Dylan represented an obvious choice for study because his output has been documented practically from the beginning of his career. As I began to collect Dylan recordings it became obvious that the vast majority of his early repertoire was drawn directly and mimetically from traditional American roots music. Through these recordings I had the opportunity to listen, in a sense, as Dylan learned his repertoire, at first imitating sources and then composing original songs.

In 1999, I became a post-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The Center operates Folkways, the legendary folk record label, and houses an extensive folk music archive. The tangible result of my fellowship was the 2001 book *The Formative Dylan: Transmission and Stylistic Influences, 1961-1963*. In the book, I attempt to demonstrate the root material for 70 early Dylan songs: the first three Columbia LPs, songs subsequently issued by Columbia from

these studio sessions, publishers, demos, and the Folkways releases. In this discussion, however, I have taken a minimalist approach, and will focus on a single song, “Man of Constant Sorrow.”

Methodology

To understand the development of “Man of Constant Sorrow” and to establish Dylan’s place in that development, I have gathered all available documentation, scouring discographies and indexes for the purpose of analysis and comparison. Somewhat akin to the historic-geographic approach that a number of early twentieth-century folklorists applied to tales and songs, my methodology is perhaps more closely related Bernard Bronson’s *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads* (1959-72), which indexed and categorized extant print and recorded sources for each member of the ballad canon. My approach has five steps: 1) gather versions of the song; 2) transcribe and compare the melody and lyrics (as they are available) of these versions; 3) organize versions of melodies and lyrics first separately and then together to arrive at variant groups; 4) look for historical or geographic connections first between individual versions and then variant groups; and 5) construct a history of the song from this research.

To date, I have identified 54 print and recorded versions of the song that might influence my study. I have compiled these into a “bibliodiscography” and graphed them onto a lyric/melodic matrix. If my source is a recording, I transcribe the text and the melody using Western musical notation.

Conceptually, I divide musical elements into first- and second-level categories. Melody and lyrics are first-level elements because they are the traits most often transmitted from performer to performer. I separate melody and lyrics because a performer may have a gift for remembering lyrics, yet have a limited vocal range. In this case, the melody would be altered greatly in the transmission process while the lyrics would remain intact.

I consider mode, range, contour, and rhythm to be the identifying characteristics of melody, but their importance, relative to one another, varies. Many of the pre-1950 versions of “Man of Constant Sorrow,” for example, utilize a Dorian mode, while many of the post-1950 versions utilize major or minor modes. This is the result, I believe, of changing instrumentation; with a string band accompaniment, it is easier to sing in a major or minor key, in which case individual aesthetic choices have overridden transmission. I have organized these different melodies into eight variant groups, of which three have emerged as predominant.

Lyrical, two couplets comprise each "Man of Constant Sorrow" verse and the last syllable of each couplet rhymes. My "lyric matrix" tracks the position and pairing of 80 individual couplets. The lyrical similarities that emerge suggest relationships between versions, again leading to variant groupings. Since performers rarely quote lyrics verbatim, a "match" may not be literal. On the other hand, I find that certain place names and other key words carry added weight.

Instrumentation, key, tempo, and vocal inflection are second-level elements, often serving as identifiers to performance context or sub-genre. They are important but not crucial to source identification.

History of the Song

Music historian Charles Wolfe summarized the existing literature about "Man of Constant Sorrow"—including his own scholarship—in a 2002 *Bluegrass Unlimited* article entitled "The Original Man of Constant Sorrow: The Mystery of Emry Arthur." Wolfe confirms earlier findings that Emry Arthur, his brother Henry, and a third musician made the first commercial recording of "I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow" in 1928. Originally from Monticello (in south-central Kentucky), Arthur learned the song from local musician Dick Burnett, who composed it perhaps as early as 1907 (Saunders 2001:26) and in 1913 published the lyrics as "Farewell Song" in a volume entitled *Songs Sung By R. D. Burnett, The Blind Man. Monticello, Kentucky*.

It should be noted that in a 1973 interview with Wolfe (Wolfe 1973:8), Burnett (then aged 95) responded to the direct question "Did you write it?" with "No, I think I got that ballet from somebody—I dunno. It may be my song" Scholars are willing to follow Wolfe's assumption that Burnett wrote the song because no earlier versions have surfaced, and because anecdotally informants who knew Burnett agree that it was his song. I accept that Burnett may have written "Man of Constant Sorrow," but the fact that, thus far, my research has uncovered neither melodic nor lyric precedents necessitates further study.

According to Wolfe, the six works in Burnett's songbook represented the most requested in this wandering musician's repertoire. Similarly, though sales of recordings and their resultant popularity are difficult to judge, the 1928 "Vocalion" issue of Emry Arthur's "Man of Constant Sorrow" is today, according to Wolfe, among the most commonly found of Arthur's discs, suggesting a degree of popularity. Wolfe and other writers

assert that these two versions of the song—the Burnett and the Arthur—represent the originating variant from which all others derive.

The six verses in Burnett’s lyric do not provide a narrative. Instead, they sketch a portrait of a troubled character, and to my ear take place in a single moment of parting:

- 1) a man declares himself “of constant sorrow” and leaves his home;
- 2) he says that he attracts trouble and must wander alone;
- 3) he bids goodbye to his lover and prepares to board a train, perhaps to die;
- 4) he asks her to bury his body, and remember him in death;
- 5) he says again goodbye to his home, and reiterates his troubled nature;
- 6) he says goodbye to his friends but promises redemption in heaven.

About half of the sources I have gathered most certainly predate Dylan’s. They appear in print or recorded form between 1913 and 1961, the date of the first extant Dylan recording of the song.

Arthur’s lyrics closely follow Burnett’s. Because Arthur recorded the song while Burnett only printed lyrics, Arthur’s is the most influential early variant. Melodically, it is in Dorian mode. While it follows no strict meter, the rhythms are consistent from verse to verse.¹

Other variants existed in the first half of the century. Francis Richards performed the song for Cecil Sharp in 1918 (Sharp 1932:233-34) and the same variant appeared in Norman Lee Vass’s 1957 performance (Shellans 1968). Sarah Ogan Gunning composed perhaps the best-known variant, entitled “I’m a Girl of Constant Sorrow,” commonly performed and recorded during the 1960s by artists such as Peggy Seeger and Bonnie Dobson. The existing documentation, however, suggests that Burnett made the oldest known printing and that the Burnett/Arthur influence supersedes other, more contemporary variants.

A new “Man of Constant Sorrow” variant appeared with the 1939 copyright registration by Lee and Juanita Moore, from Bluefield, West Virginia. It retained most aspects of the Arthur melody, but varied the text in the song’s later verses and changed verse order. In 1950, the Stanley Brothers recorded the same variant for Columbia Records.² Carter Stanley was issued a copyright to the song in 1953, but there seem to be no significant differences between the Moore and Stanley copyright registration manuscripts. According to available evidence, the Stanley Brothers were performing an established variant of the song.

¹ See Figure 1.

² See Figure 1.

Their 1959 recording departed more significantly from Arthur's, and the song's inclusion in the Newport Folk Festival set lists from this period suggests that it was a staple of their repertoire. The Stanley Brothers' high profile, the result of major record company distribution, made them the primary transmitters of this new variant.

By the early 1960s, a new variant emerged in folk revivalists' performances and recordings, and unlike earlier variants it may be described through a set of shared characteristics rather than through a set of shared materials. First, performers drew from more eclectic sources. Joan Baez's 1964 printing, for example, used lyrics from Arthur and Stanley, and also from the Richards 1918 version. Second, performers tended to use the first two couplets as bookends, to begin and end the song. Third, performers tended to use established lyric material, but to sing fewer couplets and ignore verse order as established by the Arthur and Stanley variants. Fourth, many performers utilized a new, minor key melodic variant. Between 1960 and 1962 alone, recordings by Peter, Paul and Mary, Mike Seeger, Judy Collins, Carolyn Hester, Roger Lubin, and Bob Dylan were issued.

Dylan's Versions

I have heard four Dylan versions of "Man of Constant Sorrow": the *Minneapolis Party* home tape (May 1961); the *Bob Dylan* session II recording (November 22, 1961), subsequently released on that LP; the *Minnesota Hotel* home tape (December 22, 1961); and the video recording taped for the *Folk Songs and More Songs* program (March 1963). Additionally, I have studied the May 1962 copyright registration manuscript. Scaduto (1996:42) and Heylin (1996:9) both suggest that Dylan knew the song before arriving in New York, though no documentary evidence supports this assertion. Dylan's musicianship evolved significantly during the year of 1961, and I believe that a comparison of these four versions demonstrates Dylan's learning process as well as his development in technique and repertoire.

The May 1961 recording was made during a brief visit to the Twin Cities. My copy contains 25 songs. Songs written or recorded by Woody Guthrie comprise almost half of the set; his influence is heavily felt through the choice of songs, Dylan's affected accent, and his guitar accompaniments. The non-Guthrie songs give evidence of Dylan's eclectic tastes. They include the Carter Family's "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," Reverend Gary Davis's "Death Don't Have No Mercy," and "Man of Constant Sorrow."

Dylan's performance style on the *Minneapolis Party* tape in some ways supersedes his song choice. It is safe to assume, for example, that he knew the Carter Family's 1935 "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" recording, and one might think that his performance would reference that most famous recording of the song. Yet Dylan performs "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" and "Man of Constant Sorrow" back to back, playing the two songs in the same key with similar tempos, affecting the same accent, and utilizing almost identical guitar accompaniments.

The signature gesture of this accompaniment is a cadential phrase in the bass line.³ It is idiomatic to the guitar, and certainly not original to Dylan. He plays the gesture dozens of times throughout the set, sometimes fumbling with it as though it is newly learned. "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Man of Constant Sorrow," "This Land is Your Land," "How Di Do," "Car Song," "Don't You Push Me Down," "I Want My Milk (I Want it Now)," "This Train Is Bound for Glory," and "Talking Fishing Blues" all feature the same gesture, one of many accompanimental similarities between these songs.

Dylan appears to have learned this particular phrase from Guthrie's recordings and by playing it purposely imitated Guthrie. It appears again in "Song to Woody," clearly a re-composition of Guthrie's "1913 Massacre"; however, Guthrie's guitar accompaniment in "1913 Massacre" is significantly more accomplished. Just as Dylan's "James Alley Blues" in the *Minneapolis Party* tape features a slowed-down and simplified version of Richard "Rabbit" Brown's 1927 performance, the guitar for "Man of Constant Sorrow" represents Dylan's student approximation of Guthrie's unique style of accompaniment.

Only in the broadest sense does Dylan's May 1961 melody resemble the Arthur variant.⁴ In terms of range, both rarely stray from the space between the tonic and dominant. Rhythmically, both have long and short durations in essentially the same places. Dylan's melody and that of the Stanley Brothers variant similarly share broad commonalities, but a closer examination of melodic contour and the harmonic sequence makes it clear that Dylan's melody derives from a source other than the two most prominent early variants.

Dylan utilizes the same harmonic sequence found in Mike Seeger's 1962 Folkways recording (V – I – IV – V – I). In the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, Cohen and Seeger published a transcription of the

³ See Figure 2.

⁴ See Figure 1.

1931 Arthur recording using this harmonic sequence. It is an approximation, as Arthur's Dorian melody does not lend itself directly to the key of E major, but it reveals Seeger's harmonic inspiration. As well, Seeger writes in his Folkways liner notes, "Text is from Ralph Stanley's recording. Tune is a composite of [Arthur and Stanley] with a mixture from the singing of Lee Moore's wife, Juanita, whose show I recorded at New River Ranch in 1956" (Seeger 1962). Seeger also writes that the LP's tracks had been in his repertoire for a few years, dating to the late 1950s. Because Seeger was highly regarded by his fellow revivalists,⁵ and despite the disseminating power of the Stanley Brothers' recording, I believe that Seeger is most directly responsible for the song entering folk revivalists' repertoires, and that Dylan, at the very least, used Seeger's chord changes.

Like his contemporaries, Dylan sings unconventional lyrics, not adhering to any of the established variants. While six of his ten couplets derive from Arthur or Stanley, he practically ignores their verse ordering. Dylan's version is shorter, with fewer verses. Like other folk revivalists, he bookends the first two couplets. Unlike his contemporaries, however, Dylan composes new material. He changes, for example, the main character's birthplace (commonly given as Kentucky) to Oklahoma, in this manner making it fit his assumed persona of a vagabond from the West. Among all versions, Dylan's text resembles most closely the one by Peter, Paul and Mary. Given that they moved in the same circles, the similarity is not surprising. To arrive at his May 1961 version, then, I believe that Dylan borrowed lyrics from several local performers, applied aspects of Guthrie's accompanimental style, used Seeger's harmonic structure, and fashioned a melody that approximated earlier sources but fit his developing vocal style.

Six months is a long time to a young performer, and by the end of 1961 Dylan's musicianship had improved to the point that he was ready to make a solo recording for Columbia Records. There were two sessions for the *Bob Dylan* LP, November 20th and 22nd. Near the end of the first session, he made one complete take of "Man of Constant Sorrow." Two complete takes and a false start followed in the second session, with the final complete take being issued on the LP (Krogsgaard 1995).

We hear a new "Man of Constant Sorrow" lyrical arrangement in the Columbia release. Again, Dylan composes a new and unique verse. Again, he bookends the first two couplets and changes the singer's birthplace from Oklahoma to Colorado. His verse order is unique and significantly varied from the May performance.

⁵ See Dylan's comments about Seeger in his text *Chronicles: Vol. One* (2004).

The melodic phrase structure remains in the new arrangement, with two phrases per verse.⁶ Rhythmically, the new version retains an elongated pitch beginning each of the phrase's two periods. In the new version, however, each phrase melodically descends one octave from 5th scale degree above the tonic to 5th scale degree below: D to D in the key of G major. Additionally, many rhythms are syncopated, with words coming in a rush to land on or just before the beat. The result is more speech-like, foreshadowing this signature characteristic of Dylan's vocal rhythms in years to come.

The guitar accompaniment is likewise transformed. A new bass gesture sounds the recording's first notes. Dylan still uses a "brush-pick" technique, but the guitar playing is restrained underneath his singing, the bass part sounding only once per bar in most measures, then enlivening under the harp solo.

One month after the November Columbia sessions, Dylan was again in the Twin Cities and was again recorded at a house party, this one dubbed the *Minnesota Hotel Tape*. The arrangement is essentially the same as the Columbia session. There are minor variations in lyrics, rhythm, melody, and guitar accompaniment, but the song has solidified. This impression is confirmed by the March 1963 *Folk Songs and More Songs* program released as part of Scorsese's recent documentary *No Direction Home*. Dylan has made the song his own.

Of the 26 songs on the December tape, five are from the newly recorded but not yet released LP, surely a topic of conversation at the Hotel. Only three songs, including "Man of Constant Sorrow," are on both this tape and the May house party recording. The medley of songs about venereal disease is attributed to Guthrie, for example, but Jack Elliott was actively performing the songs in New York and provides a more likely source than Guthrie. In other ways, as well, Guthrie's influence seems to be waning. New songs from disparate sources have entered Dylan's repertoire, and this diversity is heard in his performing style. No longer, for example, do we hear several songs in a row with the same guitar accompaniment.

Periodically, from 1962 to 1964, Dylan went to the offices of his publishers, first the Duchess Music Corporation and then Witmark and Sons, to make demo recordings. These recordings were transcribed both for publication and for copyright registration. Duchess Music Corporation submitted 13 Dylan songs for copyright registration in May 1962. The manuscripts were received at the Copyright Office, Library of Congress, on May 7th. Nine were copyrighted that day. Each credited Dylan with full

⁶ See Figure 1.

authorship ("Words and Music by Bob Dylan"). The remaining four were copyrighted on June 11th, 1962. Duchess had inscribed these with "Arrangement of Music & Additional Words by Bob Dylan." "Man of Constant Sorrow" was among these four.

Incidentally, Peter, Paul, and Mary registered a copyright to the song two months earlier, in March 1962, and theirs is also classed as "revised with additional lyrics." In total, I located only four registrations prior to Dylan's. Searching the copyright catalog from 1898 to the present using various alternate titles, I found the Moore, Stanley, and Peter, Paul, and Mary registrations, plus a 1956 registration by Thomas Phillips for what is essentially a Tin Pan Alley variant of the song with a unique melody and lyrics.

Dylan's "Man of Constant Sorrow" copyright registration manuscript, EU 723453, contains four verses that match Dylan's late-1961 arrangement of the song, but also contains two appended verses, presumably the "additional words." Verse 5 derives from the song "Stealin,' Stealin'," which Dylan performed on the December *Minnesota Hotel Tape*. It is hard to imagine how the implied rhythms in this barrel-house lyric, best known through the Folkways reissue of the Memphis Jug Band's 1928 recording, could be performed with Dylan's late-1961 "Man of Constant Sorrow" melody. Verse 6 reminds me of Dylan's "Milk-Cow Calf's Blues" or some of the verses from "Corrina, Corrina." I have not found the exact lyric in any other song and I would not be surprised if Dylan composed it. The 1962 copyright registration manuscript text was published in Dylan's *Lyrics, 1962-1985*. As evidenced by his copyright registration, Dylan felt compelled to add material so that he might make a claim, but in reality his melody was unique and half of his lyrics had never been copyrighted before.

The methodology of collection, transcription, and analysis has proven useful in tracing the development of "Man of Constant Sorrow." It has allowed me to demonstrate that three variants predominated, each representing a different American vernacular genre: Emry Arthur was from the early twentieth-century string band tradition; in 1950 the Stanley Brothers were in the vanguard of bluegrass music; and Peter, Paul, and Mary were among the 1960s folk revivalists who recorded the song. Although nearly a dozen unique variants exist, these three disproportionately influenced the song's course through the twentieth century, and not surprisingly each was disseminated as a sound recording.

Typical of Dylan in this developmental, formative period, early performances of a song reveal their roots, but as he becomes more comfortable with the material, he transforms it to reflect his developing

personal style. Dylan drew from traditional elements of the song, but as a folk revivalist he was not bound to a single variant. Having at his disposal recordings and printings of early performers as well as contemporaries, he crafted a unique and distinct version. I ultimately conclude, in agreement with Robert Shelton, that the song was “probably never sung quite in this fashion before.”

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Figure 1: Four versions of “Man of Constant Sorrow”

Arthur (1931)

I am a man of con - stant sor - row I have seen trou - ble all my days.

Stanley Brothers (1950) D=A

I am a man of con - stant sor - row I've seen trou - ble all my days.

Dylan (May 1961)

I am a man of con - stant sor - row, I've seen trou - ble all my days.

Dylan (November 22, 1961)

I am a man of con - stant sor - row, I've seen trou - - ble all my days.

Figure 2: Dylan, May 1961, cadential figure in bass line

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**“Sólo Soy Un Guitarrista”:
Bob Dylan in the Spanish-Speaking World—
Influences, Parallels, Reception, and Translation**

Christopher Rollason

“Sólo soy un guitarrista” - Bob Dylan, Tarantula (1966)
“La guitarra. . . como la tarántula, teje una gran estrella”
- Federico García Lorca, “Las seis cuerdas,” (1931)

Spanish Manners: An Introduction

This paper aims to examine the relationship between Bob Dylan’s work and the cultures, literatures, and musics of the Spanish-speaking world. The relationship is bidirectional, taking in Spanish and Latin American influences and themes in Dylan’s production, as well as the influence and reception of that work in the Hispanophone universe. I further consider not only direct influences but also literary and musical parallels, and also briefly examine the translation of Dylan into Spanish. What I am offering is a case-study in intercultural relations, not an excursion into theory, and I shall not be explicitly entering into issues of ethnoliterature, ethnomusicology, cultural studies, or translation studies. I do, however, stress by way of introduction that I believe Dylan’s work is a particularly interesting case of a hybrid cultural object, the result of a fusion, not so much between a bipolarised “high” and “low” culture as between *three* different cultures—intellectual culture, mass culture, and folk or traditional culture. Much in Spanish and Latin American cultures, both literary and musical, is similarly—and fecundly—hybrid in its make-up, building bridges between the official culture and more popular elements. Meanwhile, today Spanish is one of the few languages that can seriously compete with English: as the transculturation scholar Dora Sales Salvador wrote in 2005, “both English and Spanish have taken on the role of global *lingua franca* as well as literary

language.”¹ Given all this, to study the links and connections between the Hispanophone cultural area and Bob Dylan’s work should prove a fruitful and illuminative exercise.²

The Spanish Moon: Spain and Latin America in Dylan’s Texts

The Songs

In his 1975 song “Abandoned Love” Dylan sang: “The Spanish moon is rising on the hill,”³ and over his career references to things Spanish and Latin American have been scattered through his work. In his prose text of 1963 “My Life in a Stolen Moment,” recalling his University of Minnesota days, Dylan actually claims some knowledge of Spanish: “I did OK in Spanish though but I knew it beforehand.”⁴ Be that as it may, the 1974 song “Something There Is About You,” which speaks of youthful times in Duluth, the town of Robert Allen Zimmerman’s birth, mentions a character called Danny Lopez.⁵ Dylan thus relates a Hispanic name to the idea of beginnings. Other Dylan characters find themselves south of the border. In “Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts,” Big Jim thinks he has seen the Jack of Hearts “down in Mexico”; the Brownsville Girl too disappears, in the song that bears her name, “way down in Mexico.” “Goin’ to Acapulco,” “Romance in Durango” and “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues” (located in

¹ From Dora Sales Salvador, “The Translation of Indian Literature in Spain: Documentation’s Turn” (2005:68).

² I will here make two brief terminological clarifications. First, where I refer to “popular culture” I may, in accordance with context, be referring either to traditional (folk or artisan) culture, or to the broader field encompassing both that area and more recent mass culture: however, when I say “popular culture” I am using the term in a sense closer to Walter Benjamin than to Marshall McLuhan. Second, regarding the term “Latin America,” I am aware that, in strict semantic terms, it includes Portuguese-speaking Brazil and French-speaking Haiti as well as the eighteen Spanish-speaking republics; I shall nonetheless, for the sake of convenience, use the term to mean “the Spanish-speaking territories in the Americas.” It should also be noted that all translations of texts and titles from Spanish (and in one case Catalan) in this essay are my own.

³ All quotations from Dylan’s lyrics are taken from Dylan 2004b.

⁴ See Dylan (1988:100). Prose text is not included in Dylan 2004b.

⁵ The text in Dylan (1988) omits the acute accent on the “o” of “López.”

Ciudad Juárez) are all explicitly set in or near Mexican cities. “Durango,”⁶ in particular, addressed in the first person to a woman called Magdalena by an unnamed gunman, refers to Mexican culture (“past the Aztec ruins and the ghosts of our people”) and history (“We’ll drink tequila where our grandfathers stayed / When they rode with Villa into Torreón”). “Señor (Tales of Yankee Power),” though it does not name Mexico, is surely set there, and has often been read as a critique of US intervention in Latin America.⁷ That subject is visibly taken up in its economic aspect in “North Country Blues” (“it’s much cheaper down / In the South American towns / Where the miners work almost for nothing”), and “Union Sundown” (“the car I drive is a Chevrolet / It was put together in Argentina / By a guy makin’ thirty cents a day”). Argentinian cultural or political motifs feature in “Farewell Angelina” (“little elves . . . dance / Valentino-type tangos”), that song’s double “Angelina” (“Tell me, tall men, where would you like to be overthrown, / In Jerusalem or Argentina?”), and “The Groom’s Still Waiting at the Altar” (“She could be respectably married / Or running a whorehouse in Buenos Aires”).

Across the Atlantic, Spain features in the Dylan song canon via “Boots of Spanish Leather,” with its “mountains of Madrid” and “coasts of Barcelona”: those boots originally walked out of the folksong “Black Jack Davey,”⁸ with its gypsy theme,⁹ which Dylan covered years later on *Good As I Been To You*. “Cross the Green Mountain,” his song of the American Civil War from 2003, has the lines “Heaven blazin’ in my head / I dreamt a monstrous dream,” which recall Francisco Goya’s famous etching “El sueño de la razón engendra monstruos” (“The sleep of reason produces monsters”). Elsewhere, “Spanish” appears as an adjective, whether pointing to Spain as such or things Hispanophone in general, as in the Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands’ “Spanish manners.” Dylan even sings a few words in Spanish on two recordings—the already-mentioned “Romance in Durango” (“No llores,

⁶ Co-written with Jacques Levy. The title refers to the Mexican state of Durango, whose capital is also called Durango.

⁷ See my essay on this song, entitled “‘Señor’: A wasteland with no easy answers” (1999). This essay is included on the “Bob Dylan Critical Corner” website available at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6752/rollason.html#wasteland>.

⁸ See my essay “Boots of Spanish Leather” (1998), also on the “Bob Dylan Critical Corner” site, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6752/rollason.html#Boots>.

⁹ I use “gypsy” rather than “Roma” or “traveler,” because that is the word Dylan uses.

mi querida / Dios nos vigila . . . / Agárrame, mi vida”—“Don’t cry, my darling / God protects us . . . / Hold on tight, love of my life”), and the traditional “Spanish is the Loving Tongue,” set in Sonora, Mexico (“Mi amor, mi corazón”—“My love, my heart”). It may not, then, come as a total surprise to learn that in the late 70s/early 80s there were rumours of Dylan making an entire album of songs in Spanish.¹⁰ This album, which would have had official release only in the Spanish-speaking world, would have consisted of Dylan classics, translated into the “loving tongue” and performed by the master himself. There was even talk of the songs being rendered into Spanish by none other than Robert Graves, a long-term resident of Majorca whom Dylan, in *Chronicles Volume One*, recalls meeting once.¹¹ The project, however, was foreclosed by Graves’ death in 1978.

The Prose Writings

The references in the songs are joined by further Spanish/Latin American allusions in Dylan’s prose writings. The *Planet Waves* liner notes give Duluth another Spanish connotation, calling it the place where “Goya cashed in his chips”; the notes to *World Gone Wrong* mention Evita Perón. *Tarantula* name-checks a whole roll-call of figures and images from the history and culture of Spain: Goya again (“the Goya painting seeking poor Homer”), Lorca (“dead babies in Lorca graves”), Cervantes (Sancho Panza), Pablo Casals, the flamenco (“down these narrow alleys of owls and flamenco guitar players”), the *malagueña*, and, in a more sinister register, General Franco.¹² There are also Latin American allusions, including probably Dylan’s only Peruvian reference in “el dorado,” on the very first

¹⁰ See Francisco García, “Spanish Album Incident,” an essay published in *The Telegraph* in 1991, and later, in Spanish, on the “Kaw-Liga’s Shelter From The Storm” (www.geocities.com/kawligas/), a Spanish-language Dylan site of which he was webmaster but which unfortunately no longer exists. García further states that another candidate for rendering Dylan into Spanish-language song was the Nicaraguan-born poetess Claribel Alegría, Robert Graves’ neighbour on Majorca, but this too came to nothing.

¹¹ Dylan (2004a:45). On the same page, Dylan expresses his admiration for Graves’ ethnographical study *The White Goddess*.

¹² Dylan 1994:63, 56, etc.

page,¹³ and a Cuban gibe (“wonder why Castro hates rock’n’roll?”).¹⁴ What is most arresting, though, is the considerable number of Spanish phrases (26 in all) that are scattered, capitalized and unglossed, across four of the episodes, all relating to a Spanish-speaking character called María. I give one example, from the section: “*Tus huesos vibran, eres como magia, no sere tu novia, tu campesina, tu forma extraña, sólo soy un guitarrista*” (“Saying Hello to Unpublished Maria”).¹⁵ Translated, these phrases read: “Your bones vibrate, you are like magic, I won’t be your girlfriend, your peasant woman, your strange form, I’m just a guitarist” (we may especially note the last). In the text of *Tarantula* as published, accents and tildes are lacking, as are the double question marks used in Spanish, but in 24 of the 26 cases the Spanish is otherwise correct. Indeed, in some cases it is very idiomatic, as in the use of *la chota*, a Mexican slang term for “the police.” *Tarantula* displays in these passages a sophisticated, idiomatic Spanish which must surely have been supplied by a native speaker, no doubt with an inside knowledge of colloquial Mexican Spanish. *Chronicles, Volume One* also offers numerous Spanish/Latin American allusions. Goya appears again, twice: in the remark “Goya himself would have been lost at sea if he had tried to sail the new wave of art,” and in a straight allusion to his paintings, alongside those of Velázquez and Picasso. Dylan further says of the Brecht-Weill song “The Black Freighter”: “It was like the Picasso painting *Guernica*.” South America is present in the mention of “Simón Bolívar’s biography,” and Dylan even declares: “When I left home, I was like Columbus going off into the desolate Atlantic. I’d done that and I’d been to the ends of the earth—to the water’s edge—and now I was back in Spain, back where it all started.”¹⁶ Here again, things Hispanic are associated by Dylan with beginnings, with bringing it all back home.

Across the Borderline: Dylan’s Reception in Latin America

I shall now examine the history of Dylan’s reception in Spain and Latin America, integrating objective aspects (tours, critical reception, influence on musicians) with more speculative considerations analogies

¹³ Dylan 1994:1.

¹⁴ Dylan 1994:65.

¹⁵ Dylan 1994:30.

¹⁶ Dylan 2004a:90, 269, 274, 37, 108.

between Dylan's work and local literary and musical traditions. Dylan has toured in Latin America to date four times, performing in four Spanish-speaking countries plus Brazil (Brazil, 1990; Mexico, 1991; Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, 1991; and Argentina, Chile and Brazil, 1998). Response to his work in Latin American intellectual, literary, and musical circles has been favorable and substantial. I shall now consider that response in three countries where he has performed, Argentina, Chile and Mexico, and one, Peru, where he has not; also suggesting parallels and analogies in those countries' own cultural contexts that help explain a certain sense of affinity.

Dylan's work has had a considerable impact in Argentina. The crowd at his debut concert in Buenos Aires, on 8 August 1991, was estimated to be as high as 5000 (Olivero 1991). Argentinian singer-songwriters such as León Gieco and Andrés Calamaro have explicitly acknowledged their debt to Dylan. Argentina is, we may note, a country whose culture has been notable for its tendency to creatively fuse high-cultural and folkloric aspects. The tango began as an eminently plebeian genre, in the whorehouse environment mentioned by Dylan in "The Groom's Still Waiting at the Altar," but later attained quasi-classical status with Astor Piazzolla. Much Argentinian poetry has operated in popular or semi-popular genres; the country's greatest writer, the renownedly cerebral Jorge Luis Borges, was also an outstanding scholar of Argentinian popular culture, and, indeed, allowed some of his poems to be set to music as tangos for a recording by Piazzolla himself.¹⁷

Argentina's national poem is the epic *El gaucho Martín Fierro*, composed in octosyllabics by José Hernández in 1872 in a simulacrum of popular language; it was a notable best-seller in its time (Hernández 2001). The gaucho motif is closely related to the profession of the "payador," a fusion of guitarist and storyteller whose verses, typically improvised, were much in demand in the "pulperías" or popular hostelryes. Hernández's career is chronicled in an essay by Borges, who argues that, although in the gaucho genre "we do not find . . . a poetry made by gauchos," nonetheless "gaucho poetry is genuinely popular";¹⁸ a formulation which could also be applied to Dylan's poetics. *Martín Fierro* narrates a story akin to a Dylan song: the

¹⁷ See Allen B. Ruch 1994, "Astor Piazzolla: *Borges and Piazzolla*" on the website called "The Modern Word," which can be accessed at http://www.themodernword.com/borges/borges_borges&piazzolla.html. "The Modern Word" is a literary site devoted to a number of twentieth-century writers, including Borges.

¹⁸ "No se trata . . . de una poesía hecha por gauchos . . . [pero] la poesía gauchesca es . . . genuinamente popular" (Borges and Guerrero 1983:15).

hero is a gaucho who returns from conscription into the military to find his homestead destroyed, and becomes an outlaw. Borges himself, intriguingly, also made a hero out of an outlaw not unknown to Dylan, chronicling the saga of Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid in a chapter of his 1935 volume *Historia universal de la infamia (A Universal History of Infamy)*.¹⁹

In Chile, Dylan has won a substantial public. The Chilean poet Jorge Teillier cites Dylan as poet in one of his volumes;²⁰ in 1993, another poet, Raúl Zurita, was charged in the Chilean press with plagiarizing from “Highway 61 Revisited”;²¹ in a newspaper article that asked Chilean poets for their views on Dylan as Nobel candidate, Nicanor Parra, himself a Nobel prospect, praised the qualities of “Tombstone Blues” (Parra 2000). Dylan’s writing is, indeed, similar to that of Chile’s most renowned poets. Gabriela Mistral, the only Spanish-speaking woman to be awarded the Nobel (1945), wrote of tormented landscapes that might recall Dylan’s in “Where Teardrops Fall” or “Moonlight.” Chile’s other Nobel, Pablo Neruda, speaks in his most famous poem, “Alturas de Macchu Picchu” (“Heights of Macchu Picchu”) (Neruda 1992:125-141) in a bardic, prophetic tone that parallels “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”; he also writes on the Dylanesque outlaw theme in his play, *Fulgor y muerte de Joaquín Murieta (Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta)* (Neruda 1973), which tells the true story of a Chilean adventurer lured to California by the 1849 Gold Rush, who, after the murder of his lady companion by pernicious “yanquis,” took to the outlaw’s life.

Dylan’s work also invites comparison with the two giants of modern Chilean song, Violeta Parra (1917-1967) and Víctor Jara (1938-1973).²² Both of these songwriters exemplify the relative looseness of the divide between intellectual and non-official culture in Latin America. Jara was a

¹⁹ “El asesino desinteresado Bill Harrigan” (“The disinterested killer Bill Harrigan”) (Borges 1971:65-72).

²⁰ Jorge Teillier, *En el mudo corazón del bosque*, Santiago: Cuadernos de la Gaceta, 1997. In a poem entitled “Cuartetos imperfectos a Heidi Schmidlin” (“Imperfect quartets for Heidi Schmidlin”), Teillier addresses the dedicatee: “Heidi, a quien un día retrató Durero,/cuyo rostro es un poema de Dylan” (“Heidi, whom [Albrecht] Dürer once portrayed/Whose face is a poem by Dylan”).

²¹ See Enrique Lafourcade, “Poeta de la macaca” (“Poet of inebriation”), *El Mercurio*, 3 September 2000; Claudio Aguilera, “Plagios literarios: peligrosa tentación” (“Literary plagiarisms: a dangerous temptation”), *La Tercera*, 28 October 2000 (information supplied by Andrés Urrutia, personal communication).

²² See Manns 1997 and Plaza 1976. Both volumes include song lyrics.

song composer but also a lecturer in communications studies at Santiago's Universidad Técnica del Estado. Violeta, a woman from an intellectual background, and Nicanor Parra's sister, traversed Chile collecting traditional music: her own compositions in the popular style have become folk music classics. On 15 September 1973, Víctor Jara's brutal murder in the Santiago stadium at the hands of Pinochet's thugs converted him into a martyr. The "nueva canción chilena" ("new Chilean song") movement of which both were part, had similarities with the American protest-song movement of the early 1960s; their work, though consistently more political than Dylan's, has features in common with it, drawing on the resources of both popular tradition and "official" poetry.

Peru, where Dylan has never performed, nonetheless offers strong evidence of interest in his work. In May 1991 the publication *Meridiano* featured an enthusiastic essay by Alejandro Ferreyros Küppers, concluding with a quotation from the Nobel-winning Mexican poet Octavio Paz: "La fijeza es siempre momentánea" ("the fixed is always fleeting"), approvingly applied to Dylan. In October 1998, a symposium at Lima's Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos on "Twentieth-century Poetics" included a contribution entitled "Bob Dylan, una poética de transgresión" ("Bob Dylan, a poetics of transgression") by Carla Vanessa Gonzáles, who also invoked Octavio Paz; in 2002, the same Carla Vanessa entitled her on-line collection of poems "Sueños de Carla"²³ ("Carla's Dreams"), a clear reference to Dylan's song, "Series of Dreams," a text quoted in her epigraph alongside lines from César Vallejo, Peru's national poet. These invocations of Paz and Vallejo suggest that even in Peru—which is off his tour circuit—Dylan is perceived not just as a poet in Latin American intellectual circles, but as one who can be named in the same breath as the masters. In recent years, the Peruvian press has regularly carried articles on Dylan, and on 18 November 2004 the publication *Caretas* published a long and favorable review of *Chronicles*, praising the book as "the testimony of one who looks his life square in the face, as it is, without excuses or shame."²⁴

²³ Carla Vanessa Gonzáles' poems are collected and available online at <http://www.geocities.com/yo.carla/>. The lines quoted from "Series of Dreams" are: "Dreams where the umbrella is folded / Into the path you are hurled / And the cards are no good that you are holding / Unless they're from another world"; those from Vallejo are "Y tú, sueño, dame tu diamante implacable, / tu tiempo de deshora" ("And you, dream, give me your implacable diamond / your untimely time"), from his poem "Trilce XVI" (1922).

²⁴ "El testimonio de quien mira su vida de frente, tal y como es, sin venias ni vergüenzas (Klinkenberger 2004:88-89).

We may also compare Dylan's fusion of high-cultural and folk elements with the work of the distinguished Peruvian writer José María Arguedas, who, born into a family of European origin, learned Quechua before Spanish, and whose career combined ethnology with fiction. Arguedas' most famous novel, *Los ríos profundos* (*Deep Rivers*, 1958),²⁵ integrates long passages of Quechua song, quoted in both that language and in Spanish, throughout the novel. Dora Sales Salvador, who has devoted a major study to Arguedas' novel, writes: "the musical intertext, incorporated through the Quechua songs woven into the narration, substantially modifies the form of the novel, creating a whole elaborate musical thread which marks the rhythm of the narrative discourse."²⁶ What Arguedas does by musicalizing the novel parallels Dylan's work bringing poetry into music, and one may also liken Arguedas' labor to Dylan's practical ethnomusicology on *Good As I Been To You* and *World Gone Wrong*.

The link found in Peru with Octavio Paz takes us to that poet's native Mexico, and it may surprise that Dylan has only once toured that country "so far from God, so near the United States," which has featured prominently in several of his songs. Nonetheless, just after Paz's death, on 24 April 1998, in an obituary in the newspaper *Público*, Juan José Doñán named Dylan among "los lectores y devotos pacistas" ("Paz's devoted readers") (Doñán 1998); certainly, Dylan's Aztec imagery in "Romance in Durango"—"the face of God will appear / With his serpent eyes of obsidian"—might recall similar details in poems by Paz. More strangely, Dylan's writing at times shows curious similarities with Mexico's leading women poets. The later poems of the postwar writer Rosario Castellanos employ an acerbically colloquial register that often resorts, Dylan-like, to the dramatic monologue.²⁷ Dylan's surrealist mode too has its female Mexican parallels: his "Series of Dreams," already mentioned, mirrors on a smaller scale, in title and dynamics, the remarkable seventeenth-century poem "Primero sueño" ("First dream"), the

²⁵ See Arguedas 1981 in references.

²⁶ "El intertexto musical, incorporado mediante las canciones quechuas entretejidas en la narración, modifica sustancialmente la forma de la novela, creando toda una elaborada hilación musical que marca el compás del discurso narrativo." - Dora Sales Salvador, *Puentes sobre el mundo: Cultura, traducción y forma literaria en las narrativas de transculturación de José María Arguedas y Vikram Chandra* (Bridges over the world: Culture, translation and literary form in the narratives of transculturation of José María Arguedas and Vikram Chandra), Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2004:543.

²⁷ See, for example, "Kinsey Report," in Castellanos 1985.

masterpiece of Mexico's first woman poet, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Dela Cruz 2004). In addition, 1988 saw the publication in Mexico of a long study by Jaime Pontones that is probably the only original book on Dylan to have appeared in Latin America (Pontones 1988).²⁸

Boots of Spanish Leather: Dylan's Reception in Spain

If we now move “across that lonesome ocean” and consider Spain, we may reasonably affirm that Dylan has long been popular among listeners and well-regarded among critics in that country. The history of Dylan's reception in Spain up to 1999, and, notably, his tours, has been chronicled by Francisco García in his volume of 2000, *Bob Dylan en España: Mapas de carretera para el alma* (*Bob Dylan in Spain: Road maps for the soul*), a book that meticulously lists every known newspaper report of every concert.²⁹ Dylan has toured Spain in 1984, 1989, 1993, 1995, 1999, and 2004 (plus two one-off dates in 1991 and 1998). He has to date played 37 concerts there, in a total of 24 localities covering 12 of the 15 autonomous regions on the mainland. His debut 1984 concert, in Madrid, was attended by four ministers from the then socialist government, one of them Javier Solana, later to be NATO's secretary-general (García 2000:37). The second concert of that first tour, in Barcelona, attracted Jordi Pujol, head of Catalonia's regional government (García 2000:42). These VIP presences make it clear that Dylan's debut was perceived as a major event. Indeed, his 24 July 1995 concert in Barcelona was actually attended by a princess, the Infanta Cristina (García 2000:124), though it is not recorded whether she discussed “what's real and what is not.”

²⁸ Pontones 1988. *El Blues de la Nostalgia Subterránea. Bob Dylan: infiernos y paraísos* (Subterranean Homesick Blues: Bob Dylan, hells and heavens.) Mexico City: Posada.

²⁹ See García 2000. This book includes: full details of all Dylan's Spanish tours up to 1999, with all localities listed and a digest of press reports; a discography of Dylan's official and unofficial Spanish releases, again up to 1999, with full-colour illustrations showing every sleeve; and interviews with eleven Spanish-speaking Dylan experts or aficionados (musicians, writers, journalists, and so on). For more details, see my review, posted in 2000 on the “Bob Dylan Critical Corner” website available online at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6752/multilingual.html#Mountains>. All of Dylan's Spanish concerts up to 17 July 2004, with exact dates and venues, are listed in the special edition of the Spanish version of *Rolling Stone* published in June 2004 under the title “Bob Dylan: Cuaderno de la gira” (“Bob Dylan: the tour logbook”).

Dylan has a strong and faithful following among the Spanish intelligentsia, as reflected in a steady stream of books and press articles, and among the prominent “dylanitas” (as the word goes) are literary figures such as novelist Mariano Antolín Rato and poet-novelist Benjamín Prado.³⁰ Of the main English-language books on Dylan, the only one that has been translated into Spanish is Antony Scaduto’s *Bob Dylan*.³¹ By way of compensation, however, there have been a fair number of Spanish-language Dylanological originals. In particular, a set of four volumes has appeared under the imprint “Los Juglares,” (Ediciones Júcar, Madrid), by, in order, Jesús Ordovás (1972), Mariano Antolín Rato (1975), Danny Faux (1982) and Vicente Escudero (1992). More recently, both *Love and Theft* and *Chronicles* have received ample coverage and acclaim in *El País* and other national newspapers: both Spanish- and Catalan-language reviews of *Chronicles* have laid great stress on the book’s literary qualities.³²

The bulk of Dylan’s work has appeared in authorized Spanish translations (in Spain only, with one exception). *Tarantula* has been translated no less than three times, once in Argentina—apparently the only official Latin American translation of anything by Dylan—and twice in Spain. *Chronicles* appeared in early 2005 in simultaneously issued Spanish and Catalan translations (Dylan 2005a and 2005b). There have been numerous cover versions released of Dylan songs over the years in Spanish (and also in Catalan, Galician, and Basque), and the majority of the lyrics have been translated into Spanish and published in book form. One should, of course, distinguish between a cover version intended to be sung, which retains rhyme and rhythm but will inevitably take liberties with Dylan’s meaning, and a printed translation, which is intended to correspond as closely as possible to the original sense but will be obliged to sacrifice rhyme and make Dylan’s songs look like free verse. The systematic

³⁰ See Prado 1995. Prado’s volume of poems, *Cobijo de la tormenta*, takes its title directly from Dylan’s “Shelter from the Storm.”

³¹ See Scaduto 1971. Translated by Ángela Pérez as *La biografía de Bob Dylan*, Madrid: Ediciones Júcar, 1975. The studies written by Michael Gray, Stephen Scobie, and Greil Marcus remain to be translated.

³² For reviews of *Chronicles*, see the works of Manrique 2005, Fresán 2005, Iriarte 2005, and, in Catalan, see Castillo 2005, available online at <http://www.avui.es/avui/diari/05/feb/10/k100310.htm>.

translation of the lyrics³³ began with the two-volume set *Escritos, Canciones y Dibujos* (*Writings, Songs and Drawings*), translated by Carlos Álvarez and published in Madrid (Dylan 1975). This was an authorized, bilingual Spanish/English volume, translating all of Dylan's *Writings and Drawings*, prose texts included, as well as the lyrics for *Planet Waves* and *Blood on the Tracks*. This Álvarez translation is no more than adequate: its Spanish texts contain a fair sprinkling of errors, do not always communicate the songs' linguistic particularities and cultural connotations, and offer no compensatory enrichments.

For more than two decades there was no authorized translation of the lyrics from *Desire* onwards. That gap was eventually filled, albeit in rather unorthodox fashion, by, once more, Francisco García, this time in collaboration with Antonio Iriarte (Dylan 1999).³⁴ This book, bringing the story up to *Time Out of Mind*, had the authorisation of Dylan's copyright administrators, but in return for two rather stringent conditions: no English parallel text, and a severely restricted print-run. It thus appeared as a limited edition of 250 copies,³⁵ offering a beautifully presented Spanish text only. This is a far more professional, careful and interesting volume than the Álvarez effort, but the conditions imposed deprived it a priori of two of that translation's practical advantages, namely, bilingual format and ready availability. Despite these constraints, this García-Iriarte production remains impressive in its quality and rigour. Many elements, inevitably, are lost in translation—not only rhyme and rhythm but ambiguities, puns and cultural allusions. The “eye for an eye” pun in the song “I and I” cannot be reproduced in Spanish, nor can the shock effect of the non-rhyme—where “lake” fails to call up the expected “snake”—at the end of “Man Gave Names to all the Animals.” These losses, however, are partly compensated by the sonority and verbal force of the Spanish translators and also by some felicitous localizations adding extra connotations—as in “What Can I Do For You?”, where, for “I know all about poison, I know about fiery darts,” the translation has: “*Sé todo sobre la ponzoña, sé todo sobre las saetas ardientes.*” This brings in, by rendering “darts” as “*saetas*,” an additional layer of reference by suggesting, in full consonance with the song's religious

³³ At the time of writing, there did not, however, appear to be any authorized translations of Dylan lyrics into Catalan.

³⁴ Translated by Antonio J. Iriarte and Francisco J. García Cubero. I reviewed this volume at length on the “Bob Dylan Critical Corner” website in April 2000.

³⁵ 200 numbered and 50 unnumbered.

theme, the Andalusian “*saeta*,” a flamenco-related devotional chant performed at Easter to recall Christ’s passion.

The García-Iriarte volume is to date the last officially sanctioned Spanish translation of Dylan lyrics (there is as yet no official translation for *Love and Theft*). It was, however, announced in early 2005 that the Spanish-market rights to *Lyrics 1962-2001* had been acquired by Global Rhythm, publishers of the Spanish and Catalan versions of *Chronicles*. A full new, bilingual Spanish translation of the lyrics was thus expected for 2005.³⁶

Lorca Graves: Dylan and the Spanish Poetic Tradition

I have so far considered Dylan’s impact on Spain, but there is good reason also to believe that Spain has itself affected Dylan’s songwriting, through the influence of that country’s remarkable poetic tradition. As in Latin America, the conceptual divide between classical and non-classical music is in Spain relatively non-rigid: composers such as Falla and Rodrigo have freely used folk and flamenco sources. Flamenco—a multimedia spectacle combining text, music and dance—has long been treated as a serious object of study, and in Andalusia there is a whole tradition of erudite “flamencólogos.” The Spanish poetic tradition, too, has drawn deeply on popular roots. The old “romances,” Spain’s equivalent of the Anglo-Scottish ballads, have been an inspiration to poets, from well before Luis de Góngora in the seventeenth century onwards. Folk influences were a major determinant on the nineteenth-century writers Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer and Rosalía de Castro; the latter took the daring step of writing the bulk of her distinguished poetry not in Spanish but in the then marginalized Galician language. However, the key Spanish poet to invoke in connection with Dylan is, beyond all doubt, Federico García Lorca.³⁷

Lorca (1898-1936) was executed in the village of Viznar near Granada by Franco’s fascists, soon after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. As we have seen, Dylan’s *Tarantula* speaks of “Lorca graves,” and, conversely and intriguingly, Lorca has a poem, “Las seis cuerdas” (“The six strings”), which compares a guitar to . . . a tarantula!: “La guitarra . . . como la tarántula, teje una gran estrella” (“The guitar, . . . like the tarantula,

³⁶ It is not yet known whether there will be a Catalan version of *Lyrics*.

³⁷ For a brief study of the Dylan/Lorca connection see Ruiz Rivero 2000.

weaves a great star”).³⁸ Lorca’s poetry was strongly influenced by Andalusian and gypsy traditions, notably the flamenco singing style known as the “cante jondo.” Indeed, Lorca was something of a part-time “flamencólogo,” lecturing on the “cante jondo,” and, notably, the “duende”—a kind of spirit of place, associated with deep, often painful emotion and in some sense the Spanish and Andalusian equivalent of the blues.³⁹ Lorca wrote: “Spain is in all ages moved by the ‘duende,’ as a land of age-old music and dance where the ‘duende’ squeezes early-morning lemons, and as a land of death, a land open to death.”⁴⁰ This emotive identification of place and music suggests analogies between Spain’s South and America’s South, striking a chord with those who know Dylan’s “Blind Willie McTell,” which hails the blues as the spirit of a “condemned” land.

In 1928, Lorca published an entire volume of “romances,” or modern-day ballads,⁴¹ with titles such as “Romance de la Luna, Luna” (“Ballad of the Moon, Moon”) and “Romance sonámbulo” (“Ballad of sleepwalking”),⁴² under the name *Romancero Gitano* (*Gypsy Ballads*).⁴³ Other Lorca volumes include *Poema del Cante Jondo* (*Poem of the Cante Jondo*, 1931), and *Poeta en Nueva York* (*Poet in New York*), published posthumously in 1940, a title which might recall Dylan’s own “Talkin’ New York.” The latter volume

³⁸ Federico García Lorca, “Poema del Cante Jondo” (1931), in García Lorca 1989.

³⁹ For an account of these lectures, with extracts, see Josephs and Caballero, “Introducción” in García Lorca 1989.

⁴⁰ “España está en todos tiempos movida por el duende, como país de música y danza milenarias donde el duende exprime limones de madrugada, y como país de muerte, como país abierto a la muerte”—Lorca, “Teoría y juego del duende” (“Theory and play of the ‘duende’”), lecture given in Madrid in 1933. Quoted and commented on in Josephs and Caballero, “Introducción,” 51-52; full text available online at <http://www.analitica.com/biblioteca/lorca/duende.asp>.

⁴¹ A detailed four-way comparison could be established between Lorca, Dylan and their respective ballad traditions. We may note here that Lorca’s essay on the “duende” includes a transcription of an ancient ballad, “Dentro del vergel” (“In the orchard”), which is narrated by a young man on the verge of death to his mother, which in significant ways recalls “Lord Randall,” the Anglo-Scottish ballad that was Dylan’s point of departure for “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall.”

⁴² We may compare Dylan’s own title “Romance in Durango.”

⁴³ See García Lorca 1989a in references.

includes an ode dedicated to Walt Whitman, and first appeared in New York in a bilingual English-Spanish edition.⁴⁴

In addition, Lorca's creative interests extended beyond poetry to music. He played flamenco guitar, composed guitar pieces, and was also a pianist. In 1931, accompanying the singer "La Argentinita" on piano, he recorded ten traditional Spanish songs he had both collected and arranged. Lorca's work fascinates Spanish musicians to this day, and many of his poems have entered the flamenco repertoire.⁴⁵

There is good cause to postulate a considerable, and fertile, influence of Lorca on Bob Dylan's poetics. The mention of Lorca in *Tarantula* dates from 1966, but internal evidence suggests that Dylan is likely to have known the Spanish poet's work rather earlier.⁴⁶ Lorca combines aspects of the traditionalist and the avant-garde, in a fashion paralleled by the presence of both elements in Dylan. Some of Dylan's most arresting imagery from the mid-1960s is remarkably similar to Lorca's, though at no point could one speak of straight transposition or imitation: it is, rather, a question of poetic method.

Dylan's image "peel the moon and expose it," from "Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?", has a striking parallel in a Lorca poem from 1921 which ends with the lines: "*Si mis dedos pudieran / deshojar la luna*" ("If my fingers could / peel the moon").⁴⁷ *Poeta en New York* seems to have left its traces on Dylan. Lorca's volume is written in an experimental free-verse mode, favoring a long irregular line that resembles those employed (albeit rhymed) by the mid-60s Dylan. There is a powerful similarity in the use of surrealist imagery. The poem "*Norma y paraíso de los negros*" ("Norm and paradise of the blacks") contains the lines: "*azul donde el desnudo del viento va quebrando / los camellos sonámbulos de las nubes vacías*" ("blue where the wind's nudity breaks / the sleepwalking camels of the empty clouds"), which recall "Gates of Eden," with its "four-legged forest clouds." "La aurora" ("Dawn") offers the disturbing image: "*A veces las monedas en enjambres furiosas / taladran y devoran abandonados*

⁴⁴ See García Lorca 1940 in references.

⁴⁵ See Josephs and Caballero, "Introducción," 60-61.

⁴⁶ Stephen Scobie relates how, in August 1966 Allen Ginsberg gave Dylan a box of poetry books by various authors, Lorca among them (Scobie 2004:194).

⁴⁷ "Si mis manos pudieran desahojarse" in García Lorca 1971. García Lorca's essay on "duende" includes the phrase "la luna pelada" ("the peeled moon"), which is even closer to Dylan's "peel the moon." "Pelar" and "deshojar" are, in this context, synonyms.

niños” (“Sometimes furious swarms of coins / drill into and devour abandoned children”), which links to the atmosphere of “Gates of Eden” (“curbs ‘neath holes where babies wail”) and “It’s Alright Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” (“money doesn’t talk, it swears”). “*Luna y panorama de los insectos*” (“Moon and panorama of the insects”) speaks of “*los paisajes que se hacen música al encontrar las llaves oxidadas*” (“landscapes that become music when they find the rusty keys”), in tones that might suggest “Visions of Johanna,” with its corroding cage and skeleton keys.

Lorca’s sexual orientation is well-known. And though in 2005, Spain stood in the vanguard of gay and lesbian rights as it prepared to legalize same-sex marriage, in 1936 the poet’s identity was not so comfortable in the Francoist civil war zone. Meanwhile, it is at least possible that Dylan’s “Standing in the Doorway,” composed in 1997, 61 years after Federico’s martyrdom, may carry within it a hidden tribute to the Andalusian poet. The song’s narrator says he is “strummin’ on my gay guitar,” and on the surface, “gay” might seem to have its old meaning of “joyful.” However, the phrase “gay guitar” draws attention to itself, and may be pointing to Lorca. The song has a number of details suggesting Spain, especially Andalusia: “walking through the summer nights,” “under the midnight moon,” “the dark land of the sun,” “live my life on the square.” The moon is the Lorca image par excellence; the repeated line “standing in the doorway crying” could suggest an Andalusian lament. The line “Maybe they’ll get me and maybe they won’t” evokes someone hounded, a wanted man fearing that the killers will close in on him. The song’s gypsy connotations converge with Andalusia and Lorca. Dylan’s line “eat when I’m hungry, drink when I’m dry,” though derived at first remove from the traditional song “Moonshiner,” as covered by himself,⁴⁸ ultimately points back to Romany lore: virtually the same words appear in the mouth of a gypsy character in Walter Scott’s *Quentin Durward*.⁴⁹ From one viewpoint, “Standing in the Doorway” is a song drenched in the American blues tradition, its very title being a blues stock-in-trade; and yet, if we consider the similarities between blues and “duende,” its final line, “blues wrapped around my head,” could also mark Dylan’s homage to Andalusia and Lorca.

Dylan’s concert of 18 April 1999 in Granada, provincial capital of the village where Lorca died, was sponsored by a cultural foundation, “La

⁴⁸ Recording of 1963, released in 1991 on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3*.

⁴⁹ “I eat when I am hungry, drink when I am thirsty, and have no other means of subsistence than chance throws in my way” (Scott 1947:210).

Huerta de San Vicente (Fundación García Lorca).” Laura García Lorca, the poet’s great-niece and chair of the Foundation, visited Dylan backstage; in her hands was *Federico’s own guitar*, made in 1908, for Dylan to see and even play, just before he went on stage (García 2000:153-4)! This was, admittedly, after Dylan had recorded “Standing in the Doorway”; and yet so moving a detail might suggest that to imagine Lorca’s ghost under that song’s surface may not be too far-fetched.

The River Bridge: Conclusions

If Dylan’s poetics draw heavily on popular and unofficial traditions, so too do those of Lorca and many other Spanish-language poets. Of the poets mentioned in this paper, Mistral, Neruda and Paz were all Nobel laureates;⁵⁰ meanwhile, Dylan is himself a Nobel nominee. The study of Dylan’s interaction with the Hispanophone world is of particular and double interest: firstly, it is an object-lesson in the complexities of intercultural relations; secondly, both terms of the comparison strongly manifest the desire to build bridges between official and non-official cultures, to connect across the divide.

I shall conclude with an image from Peru, from the pages of José María Arguedas (whom we have met above). At the end of *Los ríos profundos*, the boy narrator, liberated from his oppressive boarding school, finds emotional sustenance contemplating the Pachachaca river (whose name means “bridge over the world”) from, exactly, its bridge. Arguedas writes: “The Pachachaca moaned in the darkness at the bottom of the immense ravine. The bushes trembled in the wind . . . Past the hanging bridge of Auquibamba will flow the river in the evening.”⁵¹ Dylan, too, has used a similar image, in “Up To Me”: “When the dawn came over the river bridge, I knew that it was up to me.” To explore the fortunes of Bob Dylan in the Spanish-speaking world, and the presence of that world in his work, is

⁵⁰ In 1945, 1971, and 1990 respectively. The Spanish-speaking world has so far had ten Nobel literature winners (nine male and one female; five Spanish, two Chilean, one Colombian, one Guatemalan and one Mexican).

⁵¹ “El Pachachaca gemía en la oscuridad al fondo de la inmensa quebrada. Los arbustos temblaban con el viento. . . Por el puente colgante de Auquibamba pasará el río, en la tarde” (Arguedas, *Los ríos profundos*, 254). For the symbolic significance of this episode and the image of the bridge, I here gratefully draw on Dora Sales Salvador’s fine analysis of this passage (2004:556-7).

to follow in the footsteps of Dylan himself and of a long line of Spanish and Latin American poets, affirming communication and understanding within and between cultural systems and across barriers, and incessantly and successfully building “bridges over the world.”⁵²

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Amerindian Roots of Bob Dylan's Poetry

Emmanuel Désveaux

(Trans. from French by Valerie Burling)

Bob Dylan is a recognized author whose sources of inspiration have already given rise to several studies, the most monumental surely being *Dylan's Visions of Sin* by Christopher Ricks (2003). According to Ricks, Dylan's sources can be found in the Bible and in the Anglo-American literary corpus, in writers ranging from Shakespeare to T. S. Eliot and including Milton and Yeats. Such cultural self-centeredness could seem surprising to a French reader to whom other names immediately spring to mind, such as Baudelaire (Dylan is a skillful inventor of oxymorons, a prominent element in *Les Fleurs du Mal*), Verlaine, and Lautréamont, especially in his early period. Moreover, Bob Dylan's inspiration is by no means restricted to the tradition referred to by Ricks, even if it is enlarged to take in the broad spectrum of Western literatures in their entirety. Robert Zimmerman, a Northerner, is indeed fascinated by the Old South. And this very fact quite naturally explains the important place assigned in his work—and one that he readily acknowledges—to the Afro-American heritage. It is our intention here to bring to light another source of inspiration, the cultural tradition of Amerindians.

Such an approach may seem far-fetched in that, at first sight, Indians are strikingly absent from Dylan's corpus. Only on rare occasions are they mentioned explicitly: in the title of the instrumental "Wigwam,"¹ for example, or in the expression "broken treaties"² that is so hackneyed in the United States that it has become almost inoffensive. Another reference can be found in a line from the traditional "Shenandoah"³ (itself an Indian word) that Dylan arranged and recorded early on. This song speaks of the Mississippi River and contains the line "Indians camp along her border." But intuition

¹ From the album *Self Portrait*.

² From the song "Everything Is Broken" (*O Mercy*).

³ From the album *Down in the Groove*.

leads one to think that the first inhabitants of the New World are not really absent from Dylan's work, which here and there resounds with echoes of a latent Indian-ness.

Geography will help us to track down these buried references. Dylan frequently expresses his attachment to the northern regions of his origins. In a song entitled "California,"⁴ he admits that he misses the climate of the North where, if nothing else, four seasons prevail. Indeed, the theme of distinctly separate seasons is omnipresent in his work. These lines make seasonal changes explicitly meaningful:

If not for you / Winter would have no Spring //
("If Not For You," *New Morning*)

Similarly, Dylan writes of winter landscapes, of frozen lakes and blizzards⁵ and, of course, we find summer in at least two of his songs, "Summer Days"⁶ and "In the Summertime."⁷

These examples of Dylan's attachment to his native region may well be connected with Indian-ness as expressed through an ideal feminine figure of Indian origin. The long hair of the girl in the song "Girl of the North Country,"⁸ a penultimate tribute to Dylan's homeland, endows this mythical beauty with an undoubtedly Indian character. This is brought to bear all the more so as the description of her powerful beauty is limited to just this one detail. Such an attribution of Indian-ness to long hair, common in American folklore most generally, is made explicit by the singer-songwriter in "Summer Days,"⁹ a song written four decades later and in which Dylan sings "Got a long-haired woman, she got royal Indian blood." In this song, the poet's personal voice comes to the fore in his play on ambiguity, "royal" and "Indian" being incompatible. In addition to the widespread vision of long-haired Native American women as regal, the figure of the Indian mistress, if

⁴ From *Bringing It All Back Home*.

⁵ From "Never Say Goodbye," *Planet Waves*.

⁶ From the album *Love and Theft*.

⁷ From the album *Shot of Love*.

⁸ From the album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.

⁹ From *Love and Theft*.

not wife, to the white man belongs to the folklore of Dylan's native region after having long been a reality (White 1991).

Such indications encourage us to explore the Dylan corpus further in search of themes and images used by the writer and which, in the light of my extensive studies of Indian myths, cultural systems, and structural relations, may very well have their roots in Amerindian folklore. Even though these contributions may be hybrid, in other words a synthesis of Native and European elements (Gruzinski 1999), I also consider it possible, in strict accordance with my own application of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, that these elemental occurrences are the result of a logical transformation, above all a matter of reversal, whether total or partial (Désveaux 2001:66). That being the case, I would like to propose an initial inventory of thematic and elemental migrations between Indian tradition and Dylan's poetic imagination. So we begin:

Example 1

Soon as a man is born, you know the sparks begin to fly.
He gets wise in his own eyes and he's made to believe a lie.
("What Can I Do for You?" *Saved*)

At Big Trout Lake, in the far northwest of Ontario, the Ojibwa people I have lived with¹⁰ have spoken to me of a spark flying in the fire as revealing the presence—invisible of course—of a person being talked about; the spark is thus able to expose a liar or a slanderer. Moreover, according to my Ojibwa informants, a spark can also signal a death; the above lines thus provide a structural reversal of the Amerindian motif by the theme of birth.

Example 2

I bought my girl
A herd of moose.
("Lo and Behold," *Basement Tapes*)

The hunter providing for the woman seems to prove a universal theme. It should be noted that in the northern Algonquian area, the subject of hunting takes on a highly erotic charge (Tanner 1979; Désveaux 1988), which could very well have poured over into the folklore of the Northern regions of Dylan's home. Insight into structural transformations in folkloric transmission points to a distortion in the Dylan text, as well as a precision.

¹⁰ Our fieldwork at Big Trout Lake took place in the early 1980s (Désveaux 1988). Mentions of Ojibwa mythology will henceforth refer to the same work, unless otherwise indicated.

First the distortion: unlike caribou, moose do not live in herds; they are solitary animals. Nonetheless, for our informants, the word “moose” takes on an emotional and sexual connotation clearly captured in Dylan’s lines. *Nimosom*, “my little moose,” is a pleasant way of referring to a person with whom one is intimate, possibly outside of marriage.

Example 3

My woman got a face like a teddy bear.
 (“Honest With Me,” *Love and Theft*)

According to our Ojibwa informants, when one comes across a female bear in a forest and she reacts aggressively, the best way to get out of trouble is to find her genital organs and stroke them until she reaches orgasm. In this way, the female bear is equated with woman as sexual partner. Such behavioral relations correspond well with the Western attachment to the “teddy bear”—in other words, the prototype soft toy designed for children to use as a mother-substitute, indeed the idealized lover of one’s fantasies according to Freudian teaching.

Looking to other Amerindian traditions, however, more specifically those of the Pacific Northwest, one finds further mythical references to bears as portraying aggressive traits in women. Dell Hymes has written extensively on the omnipresent female character of Grizzly Woman, especially with reference to Victoria Howard’s Clackamas Chinook portrayal of her. He draws our attention, for example, to Howard’s Grizzly Woman figure in “Thunder Boy and his Mother” as the only figure in Clackamas mythology to have two faces, a phenomenon that he interprets as describing her sexual ambiguity. Hymes (1983) writes: “Animals in myth were a way of thinking about traits of character, motives of personality. The female bear was a way of thinking about the integration of feminine personality.” Hymes stresses the fundamental ambiguities of the Grizzly Woman figure as a strong metaphor of the unpredictable and deceitful behavior of woman in her relationship with man. Such an interpretation indeed sheds light on Dylan’s use of “teddy bear” with respect to the female lover in “Honest with Me.” Sexual ambiguity and female aggression are made explicit in the line “She’s tossin’ a baseball bat in the air” while *teddiness* is clearly a mask disguising more masculine traits.

Example 4

Of the two sisters, I loved the young.
 (“Ballad in Plain D,” *Another Side of Bob Dylan*)

In Amerindian mythologies, the theme of the two sisters is very frequently encountered in close association with that of the right choice. Here, at first glance, and in the framework of a Western conception, Dylan takes the easy way out, in both sexual and narrative terms, by showing his preference for the younger sister. But the line takes on quite another meaning if we read it in the light of Amerindian marriage customs. It is well known that for Indians, sororal polygyny¹¹ was, if not the norm, at least a structural possibility, always open and legitimate, a fact that can be seen quite clearly in kinship charts (Désveaux 2002) and in myths, notably those of the Ojibwa (De Josselin de Jong 1913:20-23). Love for the younger sister can thus be interpreted either as an ultimate attempt to choose despite forceful societal constraints—

For her parasite sister, I had no respect,
Bound by her boredom, her pride to protect.
Countless visions of the other she'd reflect,
As a crutch for her scenes and her society.

—or as a kind of right of access to feminine sexuality including its deliberate limitations, in the name of sentiment:

Through young summer's breeze, I stole her away
From her mother and sister, though close did they stay.
Each one of them suffering from the failures of their day,
With strings of guilt they tried hard to guide us.

Whatever the outcome, Dylan clearly attempts in this song to describe the lover's motives with respect to the difficulties imposed by social norms.

Example 5

Got ice water in my veins.
("Standing in the Doorway," *Time out of Mind*)

This ice-cold water flowing in the poet's veins recalls *Wiitiko* (*Windigo*, *Winnigo*), the monstrous creature that haunts the imaginative world of the Algonquins in the subarctic forests (Marano, 1982). This character was originally a human being, obliged by famine to eat human flesh. As a result, the monster could never give up his taste for flesh. This appallingly dangerous creature, banned from society ("I got nothing to go back to now"), wanders alone through the forest, ready to attack humans again. At Big Trout

¹¹ In the jargon of anthropology the expression means polygamy that involves sisters being married to a single man.

Lake, the Wiitiko has a heart of ice. We note that the Wiitigo figure made its way into American popular culture as *Wendigo*, one of the Marvel Comics villains fought by Hulk.¹² What is unique and striking in Dylan's lyric is that the image does not convey an expression of self-control or coolness, as in common usage of the term "a heart of ice." The singing persona is expressing his feelings of desperate alienation as an outcast. There is no detached coolness in these lines:

Don't know if I saw you, if I would kiss you or kill you
It probably wouldn't matter to you anyhow.

"Standing in the Doorway" is clearly an elaboration of an experience of ostracism, the impossibility of going back, as that endured by the mythical creature of Wiitigo. The line "Got ice water in my veins" expresses a reaction to a life of lonely erring ("I've been riding the midnight train"), namely the transformation of warm blood to ice.

Example 6

There is a bird's nest in your hair.
("Dead Man, Dead Man," *Shot of Love*)

It must be acknowledged that this image, which belongs to Dylan's Newborn Christian period, is especially appropriate in its given context of Christ's head crowned with thorns. However, a curious innovation is found in the fact that the crown of thorns is replaced by a bird's nest, thereby superimposing Christian and pagan registers. Dylan may also be playing on the common expression of "bird's nest hair," adding a popular dimension to this complex motif.

The complexity I wish to point to is discovered in the bird-nester as a central theme in Amerindian mythologies.¹³ This myth, which may be read in a multiplicity of transformations as transcribed from British Columbia to

¹² See http://www.geocities.com/marvel_monsters/wendigo/wendigo.html. It is entirely possible that Amerindian elements identified in Dylan's texts have been handed down through other uses made of them in such works of popular American culture.

¹³ In his four volumes of *Mythologiques*, Lévi-Strauss provides an intricate description of the profound unity of all Amerindian mythologies, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Comparing narrative texts of individual tellings, he identifies reversals of whole plots, or in some cases segments of them, as they are passed on from one local mythology to the next. For him, structural units provide the common frame upon which all these plots are all built. The bird-nester myth serves as a guideline in his exploration of the mythology of the entire hemisphere (Lévi-Strauss 1971).

Brazil, portrays a hero, who must climb to the top of a tree or a mountain to collect eagles' feathers or eggs, as the victim of his father, his father-in-law, or his elder brother. The parallel of images, consciously or unconsciously created by Dylan, may be drawn out with the image of Christ who must also climb upwards onto the cross to fulfil his oath. Completing such a structural hybridization, we find the Amerindian hero reversing the situation to his advantage, just as Christ does, through death, thereby strengthening his position towards God and humanity.

Example 7a

Man gave names to all the animals,
In the beginning, long time ago.

(“Man Gave Names to All the Animals,” *Slow Train Coming*)

In the foregoing lyrics, we find ourselves again in the realm of religious connotation. These two lines clearly refer to a passage from the Old Testament: “And Adam gave name to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field” (Genesis 2:20). Dylan's rephrasing of the Biblical text by replacing the Hebrew character with the more general “man,” brings to bear, again consciously or unconsciously, Lévi-Strauss's teaching regarding the capacity of the human mind to classify, hence name, each natural entity. Such generalization, combined with other elements, brings the naming phenomenon as described in the Dylan text closer to an Amerindian ontogenesis. In effect, we discover the transformation of a classical theme in Amerindian mythologies—that of the procession of the animals—whose function, as demonstrated by Lévi-Strauss, was to set out, by naming them, the different animal species. The fact that humans give names to animals is an indication of their sole superiority over them. In the same spirit, and again keeping in mind the aetiological description of animal traits commonly found in Amerindian mythologies, the following lines, in which the different kinds of animals are defined by their attributes, whether in terms of habitat, locomotion, or means of defence may be quoted:

Example 7b

I can drink like a fish,
I can crawl like a snake,
I can bite like a turkey,
I can slam like a drake.

(“Please, Mrs Henry,” *Basement Tapes*)

Dylan once again provides a cross-over of two traditional views of natural phenomenon, the Western one as represented by Biblical scripture and the

Amerindian one, each serving as a subtext for the other, each strengthening the other. Indeed, both worldviews are mutually perpetuated through Dylan's perception of the animal kingdom.

It is probably on *Under the Red Sky* that this cultural interplay reveals itself most creatively, the entire process being strengthened by Dylan's inclination to exploit cosmological designs for deeper ontological as well as metaphysical meaning. Two songs deserve special attention here for their reference to man's relation to the sun. The first one is "2 by 2." A take-off on the popular children's song "One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians," providing a formal reference to Indian-ness, one also finds, at the beginning of the lyric, a striking use of a motif that recurs frequently in Amerindian mythology:

Example 8

One by one, they followed the sun.
("2 x 2," *Under the Red Sky*)

In Northern Algonquian versions of the myth (Savard 1985; Désveaux 1988:63-65), one tells of how a trickster comes across a wide path in the bush. Unable to identify the prints, he follows them for a while but to no avail. He thus decides to set a snare on the path. He discovers that the path is that of the Sun when, the next morning, daylight does not come: the sun has been trapped in the snare. In an effort to remedy the situation, the trickster sends animals, one after another in a sort of procession, along the path toward where he put the snare. One by one, all but the last of them fail to free the sun from the snare due to the fact that, at a certain point along the trail, their fur is burnt by the blaze of the sun. The last animal to be called upon is the mouse, who is able to dig a hole and thus approach the sun without being burnt. He is able to undo the snare very quickly and therefore release the light-giving celestial body. This narrative context finds much resonance in another of Dylan's songs:¹⁴

Example 9

Gon' walk on down that dirt road 'til I'm right beside the sun
Gon' walk on down until I'm right beside the sun
I'm gonna have to put up a barrier to keep myself away from everyone.
("Dirt Road Blues," *Time out of Mind*)

It is interesting that whereas the mouse strives to get close to the sun for the benefit of all, Dylan's adventure is carried out for individual salvation.

¹⁴ I thank Catharine Mason for having drawn my attention to these two passages.

While the mouse saves humanity from darkness, the singing persona of "Dirt Road Blues" stands beside the sun, seeking a barrier to protect himself from society. The reversal of the Amerindian context found in Dylan's walk towards the sun makes it no less pertinent to Amerindian mythology scholars. First, Dylan's relation to the sun as a shield from society is not to be perceived as a desirable one. These lines from "Standing in the Doorway" suggest that the reversal may be a dialectical inversion of cosmic and human values:

You left me standing in the doorway crying
In the dark land of the sun.

Such individual isolation, even when experienced in the light of the sun, yields darkness. It becomes clear, in any case, that in both Dylan's and the Algonquian version of movement towards the sun, the path leading to this powerful celestial body relates an individual's relationship to society. Moreover, both versions provide a parallel description of cosmological forces in the well-being of humanity.

Dylan's fascination with cosmological schemes is evident in his numerous mentions of both the sun (50 to be counted) and the moon (36). The moon, generally associated with the color red, appears in connection with complex female figures. A close reading of the song "Under the Red Sky" (from the album of the same name) should provide support for this argument. At first glance this song clearly issues from European folklore. Its structural framing seems to be taken from the tale of Hansel and Gretel in its numerous, widespread versions. The words of the bridge come straight from an old English children's song.¹⁵ I am nonetheless convinced that gleaning the text for Amerindian elements will prove worthwhile. It is first important to point out that the motif itself of a boy and girl, being explicitly or not brother and sister, is quasi-universal. The working hypothesis to be demonstrated here is that the fusion of two traditions, the European and the Amerindian one, of parallel motifs, results in cultural manifestations that are structurally grounded and not merely blended. Such an analysis may be found in the last part of *Histoire du Lynx* (1991), in which Lévi-Strauss demonstrates the same type of process in converging traditions of French folktales imported by the *coureurs des bois* and the mythologies of Plateau Indians. Structural analysis of "Under the Red Sky" in light of such demonstrations is all the more

¹⁵ "There was a man lived in the moon, / lived in the moon, lived in the moon, / There was a man lived in the moon." I would like to thank Richard Thomas for having drawn my attention to this song.

interesting as its dynamic images mark the crossroads of two great Amerindian mythemes.

Example 10

There was a little boy and there was a little girl
And they lived in an alley under the red sky.

In a widespread Ojibwa tale (Désveaux 1988:69-70), a man suspects his wife of adultery with a snake from the underworld. He decides to go out into the underworld to reveal her disloyalty. Conscious of the danger attached to his venture, indeed knowing that his fate is sealed, he warns his two children: “When the sky in the west is red, I shall be dead.” A tale of orphans living under a red sky seems more than a coincidental occurrence in the Dylan corpus when one discovers that the themes of the red sky and clouds of blood are indeed recurrent in Dylan’s poetry. Here is just one example:

Example 11

Well, the road is rocky and the hillside’s mud,
Up over my head nothing but clouds of blood.
(“Cold Irons Bound,” *Time Out of Time*)

The Ojibwa storyteller goes on to tell how the children will have to run away from their mother, who is transformed into a rolling head during a fight in which the father dies.¹⁶ We have here a thematic element—the rolling head—that is omnipresent in indigenous America.¹⁷ What’s more, the fact that the little boy and the little girl (Is she his sister? She most probably is.) live in an alley suggests that their fate is sealed, and specialists agree that destiny is the distinctive feature of mythical heroes. The fate of the little boy in Dylan’s “Under the Red Sky” draws us even closer to Amerindian myth origins as seen in what follows:

Example 12

There was an old man and he lived in the moon.

¹⁶ The occurrence of the red sky motif is common not only in myth tellings. Frances Densmore collected the lyrics of an old Ojibwa song entitled “The-Woman-of-the-Red-Sky” that was sung in praise of a woman for going to war with her husband (Cronyn 1934:21).

¹⁷ Such a chase is likewise widely manifest in popular American culture today. It can be seen, for instance, in Spielberg’s first *Indiana Jones*. Setting aside all other considerations, every movie house car chase—and the last part of practically every Hollywood crime film is punctuated with such an event—is an avatar of this mytheme.

Here we find the theme, in reverse, of the Ojibwa version of another pan-American myth, which deals with a couple of orphans, in effect a boy and a girl. In the Ojibwa story, the boy acquires the status of a demiurge by establishing all the different periodicities that give rhythm to human life, including the a-periodicity known in death, and ends up transformed into moon-spots. The first two verses of the song seem like a variation on the theme, with which Dylan is constantly playing around. In effect, the poet introduces a concentration of time ("someday") absent from the Indian versions (well-known to specialists as well as to Amerindians familiar with their literary traditions). The old man in the moon inscribed in the Dylan text embodies the figure, remodeled, as it were, of the little boy from the Ojibwa story who is destined to become a demiurge before his sister's gaze, both protective and filled with wonder, leading us to yet another leakage of Amerindian influences into Dylan's work:

Example 13

Someday, little girl, everything for you gonna be new.

The next line, which mentions a diamond and a shoe, immediately recalls the European treatment of the Cinderella theme, which also emerges from an English nursery rhyme called "Little Girl and the Queen."¹⁸ European overtones are likewise found in the following lines as they may refer to Hansel and Gretel:

Let the wind blow low, let the wind blow high,
One day the little boy and the little girl were both baked in a pie.

Obviously well-grounded in European literary references, these lines nonetheless contain underlying Amerindian echoes. The American pie is very much like the North American bannock, a sort of round loaf of leavened bread cooked in the open air, compared to the sun by my informants at Big Trout Lake. In the same vein, but from a broader American perspective, we are reminded of the myth of a couple composed of brother and sister, which exists in countless versions from Alaska to Amazonia. These versions liken the couple to the Greek Dioscuri, in other words to the Sun and Moon, and relate their incestuous love and especially its physical consummation as producing the eclipse. Two things ensue from this event: menstruation, which corresponds to the lunar cycle, and the spots on the moon at night that reflect

¹⁸ Richard Thomas, personal communication.

the bleeding emblematic of the female condition. In “It’s Alright, Ma, (I’m Only Bleeding),”¹⁹ Dylan was already flirting with this theme:

Example 14

The handmade blade, the child’s balloon
Eclipses both the sun and moon.

Here the child’s balloon functions perfectly in its role: it prefigures the image of the moon and its spots. The metaphorical value of the verb “eclipses” becomes a literal acceptance. As for the expression “the handmade blade,” we are tempted to put forward an interpretation that may seem rather risqué. Beyond the imagery of a primitive tool, which would refer back to the Indian civilizations as precursors of Euro-American ones, it can also be seen, through a kind of overlapping process, as a suggestion of incest, connected with male masturbation.

Let us, again, return to “Under the Red Sky” to draw attention to the fact that its demiurgic dimension is suddenly interrupted in the last verse. The song enters a regressive phase confirmed by the mutation of “old man” into simply “man”:

One day the man in the moon went home and the river went dry

“The river went dry” reflects, of course, an opposing view to that found in the well-known expression “as long as the rivers flow,” a guarantee of the perpetuation of the world according to the traditional saying ascribed by Americans to Indians. In fact, what Dylan is talking about is a sort of heating-up, synonymous with drying-up, but also with the abolition of normal periodicity based on lunar, in other words monthly, cycles. The introduction in a minor key of another theme from Amerindian mythology, that of the freeing of birds in summer (“let the birds sing, let the birds fly”) suggests that the man leaves the moon to return home on a summer’s day.

Beneath the outward appearance of a simple effacing process, what we really find is the total and dramatic breakdown of all the efforts made by mythological heroes to set up the world and its temporalities. The fact that these heroes were children straightaway introduces into Dylan’s lines the prospect of their comparative powerlessness, which is paradoxical for them. Amerindian mythologies always refer to the setting up of the world and its temporalities. Here Dylan uses the force of conviction and the constituent power of all mythic discourse to turn it round on itself. The drying-up of the

¹⁹ From *Bringing It All Back Home*.

river takes on the dimension of a cataclysm. The ending of *Under the Red Sky* therefore describes a tragic fatality, which recalls the spirit breathing through the poetry of Racine.

Indeed, as in Racine's work, this potential cosmic disturbance reflects the difficult relations established between men and women by a superior willpower. As we have just seen, "Under the Red Sky" is an ultimate expression of Indian-ness in Dylan's use of the lunar paradigm by attaching it to that core combination of elements in Indian mythology, which brings together the phenomenon of menstruation and the couple composed of brother and sister,²⁰ both as the origin of differentiation between the sexes and as the impossibility of going beyond it, except in death. In Dylan's songs, the moon is almost always red or glowing red. We know that the cyclic character of female sexuality directly relates to fertility. Beyond the question of whether or not a partner is available, it plunges the man into an ontological bewilderment as regards his heritage. Moreover, for Indians, as I have shown elsewhere, the respective perspectives of procreation by the sexes by no means coincide (Désveaux 2001:159-61). Dylan seems to intuitively adhere to this lesson. The whole of the work (the biography aside) of the author of "All Along the Watchtower" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" testifies to a position out of step with the female values of reproduction as expressed by our societies, while paternity is held in suspension in his work.

Despite Richard Thomas' overestimation of Anglo-Saxon written literary influences in Dylan's work, there is no doubt that the special place occupied by Dylan in the pantheon of American popular music is due to the fact that he is one of the rare artists, perhaps even the only one, to have built a lasting bridge linking popular and scholarly cultures. Without embarking on a detailed discussion of the vast amount of literature on the subject, we shall keep in mind one thing that has generally been demonstrated: popular culture is based on orality, scholarly culture on the written word. With this as a starting point, we shall now examine the possible channels through which Dylan has been exposed to the Amerindian influences demonstrated above.

A first hypothesis leads us to envisage a certain Robert Zimmerman, alias Bob Dylan, pushing open the door of some public or private library, or some bookshop, coming across books containing transcriptions of Amerindian stories and reading them. He also consults monographs written by professional ethnographers. Here we are placing ourselves in the register of scholarly culture. The *Chronicles* provide evidence that justifies such a vision (Dylan 2004:35-39): Dylan describes his formative years in New York

²⁰ We recall, of course, the poignant "Oh, Sister."

as those of a voracious reader, highly eclectic in his tastes. Everything leads us to believe that he has never stopped reading all his life.

Without seeking to minimize the contribution made by the scholarly tradition to the singular cocktail of elements that comprise Dylan's poetry, we wonder, however, whether it may not be more fruitful to look more deeply into the reasons for this influence of Amerindian folklore. We must consider the powerful attraction exerted on Dylan by popular culture, or rather cultures.²¹ With such a perspective in mind, we must also return to Duluth and to Hibbing and examine a local culture impregnated with Indian influences of which, consciously or not, he became the inheritor and interpreter. Dylan was born and raised in a region where a strong Amerindian presence still prevails today. A great many reservations are scattered around Duluth, on both the American and the Canadian sides of the border. From the point of view of a possible native heritage, whose depths remain to be probed, we must keep in mind that the region also holds a strategic character, since it is a point of transition between the wooded areas and the Great Plains, and between the traditional Ojibwa territories and those of the Sioux.²² Moreover, it is a region where relations between Indians and Europeans lasted for more than two hundred years, from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, in other words during the whole of that period in history formerly described by Lévi-Strauss as Conradian, with reference to the author of *Heart of Darkness*. The French anthropologist was referring to a period during which interactivity between Natives and Whites took place from day to day, independently of the future historical situation unknown to them at the time, that is, when one side would definitively dominate the other, a situation of which we are aware only in hindsight (Lévi-Strauss 1986).²³ The fact that

²¹ A passage from *Chronicles, Volume One* throws light on Dylan's fascination with oral culture as a source of knowledge. It recounts his meeting with Sun Pie (for us an especially meaningful name), who apparently runs a small country gas station near Houma, in Louisiana. Their conversation touches particularly on Indians and their Asian origins (203-09). But here again the borderlines between categories of knowledge are somewhat hazy, since on certain points, notably the Indians' conception of the nature of war, Sun Pie shows a range of reference worthy of that of an experienced anthropologist.

²² In a filmed interview well known to specialists, Dylan claims to have a Sioux uncle. Spitz asserts that it's a built-up story (1989:17). True or untrue, in any case it's a symptom.

²³ "We too often neglect a period in history the length of which, according to the regions of the world, varies by a few decades or a few centuries, during which native cultures and those of their invaders or colonizers have cohabited, forming relations

both sides interacted daily implies that they shared, in part at least, their respective cultures. Later, admittedly, it was highly probable that those designated by history as the conquerors would be led to reject this period from their own history and to expurgate their cultural heritage. Nonetheless, traces of it would always remain.

If this were the case, the Dylan corpus would simply be a pointer, an indication of a vast field of research into the content and contours of these local cultures, a field that clearly remains to be explored. For, contrary to generally accepted ideas—especially here in Europe, it must be added—American popular culture is not homogeneous in its geographical distribution or practice. The present study seems to reach back through Dylan's work to the strata of culture from his childhood years, that part of his regional culture that is based on Amerindian influences. In this sense the approach I have taken resembles that of Elaine Jahner, who describes a phenomenon that she calls "cognitive style" and identifies in the neighboring region of the Great Plains. The objective thus becomes one of identifying those factors of an oral tradition, produced over a long, composite period, that shape the cultural elements of that tradition. For it is just such factors that acquire a structuring function that can allow us to understand the way in which a fairly widespread community portrays the world (Jahner 2004:1).

For Dylan specialists, however, the mystery remains as to why there is so little claim to this Amerindian heritage and why it is still an obscure facet of his work. This study puts forward a possible lead that calls for further investigation (or, if convincing arguments to the contrary are found, abandonment): the Amerindian substratum identified in select texts from the Dylan corpus may well be the vector of expression for the most intimate part of the poet's creativity, that is, his problematic view of biological fertility. After all, Dylan's personal ideas on the subject might be nearer to those of Amerindians than to those of Western cultures—namely that paternity is not a question of genetic transmission, but of the taming and adoption of a being biologically produced by a woman, with whom, in return, the status of the child is in a perpetual process of negotiation (Désveaux 2001:158-60).

Keeping all of this in mind, let us now pay another visit to my Indian friends. In the summer of 2005, I went back to Big Trout Lake to visit my

which were sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, and when the fate of the former group was not yet definitively sealed. Such was the case for the relations between Algonquins and Whites from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is that period, which we could call 'Conradian,' as it so greatly resembled the one that Conrad knew and described later beneath other skies, that the participants in the Algonquian Conferences bring to life again with an erudition put to use in the service of a tireless curiosity." (Trans. by Valerie Burling).

Ojibwa friends. Standing in front of the worn plywood building at the tiny airport, Laurence Childforever recognized me at first glance. He beckoned to me and offered to take me into “town” in his brother-in-law’s pick-up truck. I eagerly accepted and climbed into the vehicle just as the local radio was quietly playing the chorus of Dylan’s “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door.” I took the liberty of turning up the volume and discovered that it was not the original version but one by a native singer, a woman who quite possibly belongs to one of the great many Pentecostal churches on the Indian reservations in the North. Over the years the song has become a standard there. The Indians have appropriated it, unless of course one should argue that it represents a re-appropriation. Indeed, in Amerindian myths, knocks on a tree (one, for example, which the bird-nester climbs) always prefigure death. In the America of today, eschatologies are still meeting and mingling; therein, perhaps, lies the beauty of this continent.

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Bob Dylan, the Ordinary Star

Laure Bouquerel

This paper provides a study of Bob Dylan's public image as a star performer and what he represented for his audiences within the framework of 1960s counterculture. I will begin with an interpretation of his public image at the rise of his career in an effort to better understand how Dylan came to be considered a social symbol and a representative of a historically specific counterculture as the voice of a young frustrated generation. This study will focus primarily on D. A. Pennebaker's documentary *Don't Look Back*, which portrays a 23-year old Dylan on his 1965 English tour. Ultimately, we will see how this film brilliantly captures the paradox of Dylan's star popularity in light of his refusal to portray the star his audience wanted and expected. This was not only a personal struggle but a cultural contradiction.

In addition to featuring a counterculture celebrity, Pennebaker's film itself falls into the genre of counterculture films. Such films are indeed quite different from what had been done before. Not only did American cultural symbols shift in the 1960s (Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan, for example, became as famous as Marilyn Monroe had been in the '50s, becoming not only stars, but social icons) but the aspirations and principles of countercultural films moved to the opposite end of Hollywood's artifices. In effect, counterculture films are based on the idea of realism and experimentation: a formal freedom inspired by the French *Nouvelle Vague*.¹

Filmmakers of this period grew fascinated with popular musicians and often pursued them as subjects for their films. The portrayal of Bob Dylan

¹ The French *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) is a blanket term for a group of French filmmakers of the late '50s and '60s (François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, and so forth) who rejected classical visual and narrative forms. Most of them engaged in their work with the social and political upheavals of their time.

was one of the most successful of the '60s concert films, despite the fact that after this period of his career, Dylan steered clear of media coverage.

One of the most interesting features of *Don't Look Back* is the way in which Dylan is more often shown offstage—in the wings of the stage or in his hotel room—than in front of his audiences. Moreover, many sequences unfold in which he is confronted with the obscurities and contradictions of his public image. We often see him speaking with audience members and journalists, for example. These public confrontations clearly intrigued Pennebaker, who chose to place them in the forefront of his film. This point of view reveals a paradox, as such confrontations lead the viewer to question how Dylan's public image is to be defined. This analysis will show that Dylan's rejection of media categorization and his refusal to participate in the logic of popular demand represents a blatant rejection of the star system itself. As he portrays himself in *Don't Look Back*, Dylan has made himself truly indefinable.

Nonetheless, Bob Dylan was (and is) a star. Despite his resistance, he has become a popular icon and his objective identity cannot be detached from such a system. In his refusal to portray the star in the film, he was attempting to simply be the individual he was—a young, somewhat naïve and vulnerable artist on the rise to success. This “ordinary star” persona comes through forcefully in *Don't Look Back*.

Bob Dylan's career represents an intermediating symbol between the concept of public image (as defined by the star system), and the concept of art itself (with a message and an identity). It is clear that many of Dylan's song lyrics challenge oppressive systems. In a similar manner, Dylan also opposes the stifling of human dignity by challenging the flow of the star system; he refuses to allow his personal (and artistic) identity to be reduced to a matter of definition as determined for, and by, public opinion.

In order to further advance this study, I will now take a closer look at the historical evolution of the star system. The concept of “star,” as put forth in this paper, relates to an ideological point of view of an individual's public image as it satisfies expectations created within a given socio-cultural context. Richard Dyer provides an example of this phenomenon in his study of the Hollywood star system, entitled *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. In this book, Dyer treats Marilyn Monroe as an incarnation of a contemporary popular aspiration of freedom from the moral pressures of the '50s to live a fulfilling sexual life. Monroe's notoriety increased with respect to public expectations and can be regarded as symbolic of the sexual identity upheaval of the time. Sex outside of marriage and without the strong dictates of religion in everyday life was considered a sin. Mainstream American values of the 1950s obligated individuals to choose between a strict moral

code and their sexual urges. Marilyn Monroe's image provides a sort of solution: a "public" fantasy, free of culpability, a compromise between social and personal sexual identity.

Dylan's fame was a direct result of the star system of the '50s inasmuch as it was an integral part of the advent of the "rock 'n roll star system." Understanding expectations and aspirations of American society of the '50s—and especially the contradictions within the mainstream societal value system—will help us understand how Dylan was publicly perceived at the beginning of his career. In this way, we will be able to better understand in what ways Bob Dylan's role as star suggests a paradox.

Elvis Presley provides a good example for understanding the concept of the star as it developed in the '50s. Elvis represented a social phenomenon that gave way to a new expression of selfhood, as did the art of Dylan. In fact, the first waves of mainstream opposition to imposed moral codes of sexual behavior, authority, and personal identity made popular by the music and performances of Elvis opened up new attitudes about the body. The combination of two cultural media—music and image—and its massive distribution (in television, cinema, photography, album covers, and so on) had a major impact on popular attitudes concerning sex and the body. This is, of course, part and parcel with rock n' roll. Elvis' career is symbolic of the new performing phenomenon in which this combination of music and image becomes the norm: rock n' roll indeed became a "visual music" through the filmed and widely televised performances of Elvis. In this way, rock n' roll was one of the factors that effectively turned the moral code of 1950s America upside down, threatening the status quo and the accepted moral values of the time. Television critic John Crosby (Gillett 1970:35) voiced a typical conservative point of view of the era when he asked: "Where do we go with Elvis Presley? Certainly to obscenity, which is prohibited by the law."

Despite such opposition, the public intuitively identified with the image of Elvis because he was seen by many to embody a "magical resolution" of the racial problems of White America. As has been exhaustively detailed in numerous other texts, Presley brought black music to mainstream society in an acceptable (white) package.

Richard Dyer proposes a view of the star phenomenon with respect to audience reception, which can be applied to Elvis as well as to Bob Dylan:

Stars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act out matters to enough people. Though there is a sense in which stars must touch on things that

are deep and constant features of human existence, such features never exist outside a culturally and historically specific context.²

Within the counterculture of the 1960s, the youth of America divided into several different movements in the wake of the critique of traditional moral and social codes. The new phenomenon of boredom and the growing refusal to accept it led the younger generation to create new models of behavior and interpersonal relationships that were expressed corporally. In the '50s, many people in the Western world suffered from a sexual frustration that often led to social dysfunction. Richard Dyer provides further insight into this phenomenon (2004:22):

Sex was seen as perhaps the most important thing in life in 1950s America. Certain publishing events suggest this: the two Kinsey reports (on men, 1948: on women, 1953), the first issues of *Confidential* in 1951 and *Playboy* in 1953, both to gain very rapidly in circulation; best-selling novels such as *From Here To Eternity* 1951, *A House Is Not A Home* 1953, *Not As A Stranger* 1955, etc [...] Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* quotes a survey by Albert Ellis, published as *The Folklore of Sex* in 1961, which shows that “[i]n American media there were more than 2 times as many references to sex in 1960 as in 1950” (Friedan 1963:229), and she considers that “[f]rom 1950 to 1960 the interest of men in the details of intercourse paled before the avidity of women—both as depicted in these media, and as its audience” (*ibid*:230). Nor is this just a question of quantity; rather it seems like a high point on the trend that Michel Foucault has discussed in *The History of Sexuality* as emerging in the seventeenth century, whereby sexuality is designated as the aspect of human existence where we may learn the truth about ourselves.

Elvis is a product of this cultural context, in the same way as Marilyn Monroe had been. His public image makes him a sexual icon, and Presley himself played an important role in this process of liberation. Indeed, people identify with a sexual ideal: Elvis was the man whom men would dream of being, and the man women would dream of having. Elvis' notoriety is indeed based in part on his erotic appeal, focusing attention on both his body and his image. Rock 'n roll is profoundly related to the releasing of sexual mores, the letting go of corporal restraints. This is largely due to the fact that this genre of music is highly rhythmic and composed, to a great extent, for dancing. The cultural impact of rock n' roll has been enormous inasmuch as it serves as a form of cultural communication.

² From Dyer's *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (2004:17).

It is quite clear that the 1950s youth generation embarked on a cultural revolution, inspired by rock n' roll as it challenged deep-set moral codes and sexual taboos. In the '60s, Dylan found himself in the midst of a number of ideological and political battles. Ironically, folk music became popular by way of the media's rules of communication largely resulting from the rock 'n roll movement. Such rules were based on the "star system," a visually symbolic system where communication was founded on the public image of the performer. This foundation of cultural signs is where the contradiction starts. Dylan was presented and perceived as a *rock* star by the media and by his fans. From a cultural and revolutionary point of view, Elvis Presley plays Dr. Jekyll (that which is "shown"), and Bob Dylan portrays Mr. Hyde (that which boils with anger inside and which reveals the "true identity" of the younger generation). This metaphor leads us to Foucault (2004) who considers, with regard to sexuality, that searching below the surface for what is concealed brings us closer to the "truth" than contemplating what is openly disclosed. Foucault deals with sexuality as a powerful expression of identity.

In this way, the duality between Bob Dylan and Elvis Presley suggests a metaphor of Foucault's theory in that it symbolizes the sexual identity of mainstream American youth. Foucault (2004:29) adds that what is below moulds the surface. Identifying Bob Dylan as a rock star necessitates a sexual dimension that becomes part and parcel of his "authenticity." It is, indeed, his authenticity which seduces his young listeners, and, perhaps more importantly, at a time when it was becoming more and more acceptable to rebel against sexual frustration. The star paradox that Dylan embodies is manifested in the parallel between the expression of sexual frustration, which is a personal matter providing drive and impulse, and that of social frustration, which inevitably seeks an outlet.

The evolution of Dylan himself as a child of the 1950s is quite telling. His idols were stars and their images inspired rebellion. For example, Dylan presented himself as a fan of James Dean who embodied teenage angst. He was also a fan of Elvis, who was devoted to the transmission of African American musical culture in a society suffering from segregation.

In the end, Dylan has moved away from the type of image Elvis projected. Indeed, Elvis became a "commercial star," a fabrication of Hollywood in contradiction to the ideological symbolism of his emergence. Dylan ultimately turned to other, lesser-known American musical roots to help find his voice. From this point of view, folk music became a tool of expression for Bob Dylan, and the budding star remained devoted to the

blues of great masters such as Leadbelly, Odetta, and the countless other blues and roots music stars of the era.

Before reaching the status of representative of a social culture, Dylan himself was influenced by the images of other celebrities. The most concrete example is his admiration for Woody Guthrie. His identification with this folk legend was at least partly mimetic. In a biography written by Sylvain Vanot (2001:8), we can see one description of this admiration:

After the fulgurating discovery of the disc of Guthrie, Dylan reads his autobiography: *Bound for Glory*. It is a revelation. He first passionately reads this book and then he did too with the books written by his new idol: he learns two hundred of his songs. He takes his voice inflections, carries the same cap as him. He learns playing the harmonica. [...] The young Dylan admires the effective simplicity of his poetry, but he also admires his marginal life style and his unrestrained “donjuanism.”

This process of identification is based on the desire for freedom acquired through sexual fulfilment. Merging the notions of sex and freedom, Dylan was to become the example for the new generation just as Guthrie had been for him.

The filmic collaboration between Bob Dylan and D. A. Pennebaker does not seem to be a mere stroke of good fortune. Indeed, the two men were travelling similar roads. Pennebaker is one of the pioneers of *cinéma vérité*, the film genre that revolutionized the documentary by setting aside film narration and doing away with the direction of actors and subjects in order to give way to spontaneous and uninterrupted observation. D. A. Pennebaker is one of the first directors associated with this tradition of filmmaking. In 1959, with his associate Richard Leacock, Pennebaker joined Drew Associates, a group of screenwriters created by Robert Drew (an advocate of the use of film techniques in journalism). Drew Associates developed the first hand-held 16mm camera with synchronized sound. It is precisely at the beginning of the 1960s, with the advent of these important technical innovations, that Pennebaker and the other members of Drew Associates contributed to the founding of the *vérité* tradition.

The search for authenticity in structure and content in the '60s can be found in artistic innovations in music, film, literature, and the fine arts. Pennebaker's work proposes a “pure,” untouched, unscripted representation of the star, which parallels Dylan's portrait as a musician who rejects the media artifices by reaching into folk traditions for inspiration. But the collaboration, albeit an unconscious one, does not stop there. This search for formal authenticity corresponds to the goal of preserving a marginal step to escape the traps and limitations of classification. Marginality also comes into

play in Dylan's clear refusal to imprison himself in a commercial classification system. From this point of view, artists such as Pennebaker and Dylan insist on the importance of evolving in their artistic expression as an integral part of personal fulfilment.

The process of "purification," which is tied up in this search for authenticity and which is reflected in the folk ideals of the time, provides a recurring theme in the structure of *Don't Look Back*. Pennebaker's project is one of demystification, without denial of the magical moment of performance. The filmmaker reveals the technical concerns and difficulties, events, decisions, and preparations that go into the making of a performance. By shooting scenes around songs being sung in hotel rooms, for example, he reveals for his viewers the various ways in which the performer and his art evolve apart from the stage, the radio, and formal performance. In fact, he discloses the intimate space inhabited by Dylan, and in the process, the performer can be seen as a typical, ordinary young man. The evaporation of the frontier between Dylan and the public leaves little space for artificial constructions of the star. This way of operating is based on an ideal of truth and freedom from artifice which Dylan and Pennebaker both share as artists.

Dylan and Pennebaker offer a model of formal liberation in *Don't Look Back*. Form is only the visible part of the iceberg because it clarifies the base of this cultural revolution as being a major desire for release from constraints, not only physical, but also intellectual, artistic, and political. In this way, Pennebaker and Dylan both represent the continuity and the destruction of the "Elvis phenomenon."

It is possible to say with certainty that music in this era (as well as film) played an integral part in the movement of liberation from constraints not only in content, but also in form. However, the concept of the star did not evolve similarly. Actually, the concept of the star might not have evolved at all concerning the passage from the '50s to the '60s. Notoriety creates myths, today as much as in 1965. Thus the reception of *Don't Look Back* illustrates that the intentions of Dylan have been wrongly interpreted. Dylan is perceived as a star just as Elvis was, surrounded by female fans and involved in all of the inter-workings of the media game. *Don't Look Back* exemplifies the changing processes of reception that were very much in parallel with the changing notion of stardom at the time. This film shows Dylan's reactions to this shift. The famous arrival scene at the London airport, in which Dylan is greeted by a crowd of fans and journalists, is a good example of Dylan's incomprehension of journalistic objectives.

Another well-known scene in *Don't Look Back* that illustrates this shift takes place in a bar where Dylan is giving an interview to a British

journalist. In this scene, the journalist constructs Dylan as a star but Dylan outright refuses to play the role and creates a sense of disquiet in pointing out the absurdity of the questions asked of him; he brazenly inverts the roles of interviewer and interviewee by challenging the pragmatic meaning of his interviewer's questions. This shift of focus creates an empty dialogue that demonstrates the paradoxical status of the star. We also find in this scene a direct parallel between the incomprehension between former and current generations—a genuine confrontation between authority and authorized unfolds. The journalist questions Dylan about his purposes but Dylan claims that he has no agenda and that he has no message to deliver, thereby rejecting the rebel image that the media attempts to impose upon him. He openly denounces the press by saying that the media have much to lose by publishing “the truth.” He informs his interviewer that he is highly sceptical of the ins and outs of media objectives. Forty years later, in *Chronicles, Volume 1*, Dylan would assert his lack of commitment to any “causes” as he had done in songs such as “Maggie’s Farm” and “Ballad of a Thin Man.”

Dylan’s remarks in this scene are very pertinent to an understanding of the evolution of the star system. The media creates stars according to guidelines designed to appeal to a specific audience. Contrary to Dylan, James Dean got something out of the image of rebel that the star system built for him. Dylan does not agree with such journalistic strategies of classification and refuses to be stereotyped. Pennebaker zooms in on the expression on his face—the journalist is uncomfortable. This view can be interpreted as a bias on Pennebaker’s part but, in the end, what stands out is that the journalist clearly does not have control of “his” interview. This occurs because the “star” simply refuses to play his assigned role.

Another interesting parallel between the reactions of Dylan to his stardom and those of his audience is featured in other aspects of Pennebaker’s film. Just as Dylan reacts passionately to controversial events of individual lives and universal concern through his songs, the public reacts passionately to his songs. In this way, public reaction is not without cues from the star system including its basic forms of idolatry. Dylan, however, is genuinely surprised by the reaction of the public, and in return, the public—including the media (and including Pennebaker)—is surprised by this “negative feedback” from their star. There is thus an echo, a kind of misunderstanding between the reactions of Dylan and the reactions of the public. It should be noted that Dylan represents much of the social unease of his generation without ever claiming to do so. Herein, we ultimately find the paradox of the “ordinary star”: the star phenomenon is necessary to popular reception and expression but at the same time also poses a threat to artistic authenticity. Dylan’s career provides an example of a very famous artist who

has fought to keep his autonomy. This paradox of “the ordinary star” can also be defined in this way: notoriety requires one to adapt to standard models because it is a question of being in agreement with the media system and the general public which it influences.

Bob Dylan’s rebellious personality can be compared to the attitude of an adolescent. Indeed, this shift intensifies the distance between the new and former generations in the countercultural context. There are two specific phenomena, one for each generation: the idolatry of the 1950s based on artifices—let’s call it the “Elvis syndrome”—combined with “popular marginality,” or the search for individual truth as it originated in 1960s counterculture. Fusion is clearly impossible. The scene of the inverted interview in *Don’t Look Back* is a telling instance of this.

Star-struck young women, with their wide eyes and flustered gestures, are an essential sign of popularity—indeed one of the pillars of the star system. Dylan’s rebellious way of thinking and behaving, along with his voice, his lyrics, and his hip appearance, clearly made him sexually appealing to young women of the time. In *Don’t Look Back*, Pennebaker shows him signing autographs for female fans who had been waiting hours in front of his hotel. Counterculture refuses the principle of appearance as distorting the truth and counterculture art is founded on a refusal of taboos. Therefore, imagery derives new forms of communication and *cinéma vérité* becomes representative of this part of history: the films of Pennebaker (and Leacock), among others, have an informative value, combining minimalist aesthetics with, for example, the sensation of JFK’s encounter with the American public in the film *Primary*. This art form also lends a direct apprehension of the stage upheaval of Jimi Hendrix’s ritual-like burning of his guitar in the film *Monterey Pop*. Such excess is highly symbolic. In the same way, the visual aspect of Dylan’s career is of utmost importance to an understanding of his reception.

Dylan thus serves as an intermediary between the former generation and the new one, with all the upheavals that such a role implies. He symbolically plays out the adolescent as the transition from childhood (dependence) to adulthood (independence). He is halfway between “mediatization” (over-exposure) and intimacy. This opens the way to independent productions, moving from Elvis to Dylan in terms of production and—from a cinematographic point of view—moving from Marilyn (Hollywood artifice) to Pennebaker (*cinéma vérité*). Much more than a simple passage, these transitions mark radical ruptures. Dylan plays the role of intermediary between these phenomena. He is neither completely star (according to the criteria of the 1950s), nor a simple bystander of his times.

Yet, he is both. He is as we see him in *Don't Look Back*, with his non-stop attempts to override the media game that consists of regarding successful artists as sacred objects, in order that he may express himself authentically. In sum, Dylan is simultaneously both actor and spectator, interviewed and interviewer, surprising and surprised.

Dylan thus becomes a symbol of the complex transition of the statutes of social icon between the 1950s and 1960s. Today he is considered as an icon for a revolutionary era because he represents the rough and risky passages from one cultural epoch to another. For these reasons it is unsatisfactory to regard him as a “mere” star.

To conclude, Bob Dylan's public image represents both the continuity of—and a break with—Elvis Presley, in terms of symbolic forms. He embraced the values of the path paved by Elvis in the process of counter-cultural liberation from social and moralistic constraints. In comparing these two stars to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, we are, of course, confronted with an individual archetype, and ultimately with a society full of contradictions.

This metaphor (as well as Pennebaker's film) shows the awakening of the younger generation of the 1960s. It is a question of breaking with the rules of conventional behaviour established up to that point, and most specifically with behavior established by the rules of “morality” and organized religion. Dylan refuses to yield to the standardization of the star system and insists on being master of his changes. He confronts himself with the concept of the star system, defined as a phenomenon dedicated to regulate the contradictory aspirations of the population. Dylan seems to have aimed at excluding himself from all classifications of “folk singer” when, in 1970, he produced his country album *Self Portrait*. In his attempt to do away with an undesired image and cultivate a voice true to his own artistic impulse, the singer strives for a new form of intimacy with his public. He likewise affirms his freedom. He rejects the image of star whose life must be public property with the intention of practicing his art on his own terms.

Dylan is therefore the symbol of the political rupture between the generations, as a young person who refuses to yield any longer to the rules of behavior and a value system dictated by the former generation. But, once again, Dylan is most obviously a star of the 1960s. This fact is the crux of the paradox. Thus Dylan provides us with the antithesis of a star by refusing categorization, yet reaching the status of a *popular star* inasmuch as he is representative of the desire of the very audience for whom he performs not to be categorized. Bob Dylan is involuntarily marginal and unifying at the same time.

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A Semantic and Syntactic Journey Through the Dylan Corpus*

Jean-Charles Khalifa

The original title of this paper, as presented at the Caen colloquium, was “Dylan-esque Syntax,” which was meant as a joke of sorts, the idea being to scare the audience into submission before the first line was even spoken. Of course, there is no such thing as “Dylan-esque syntax,” in the sense that we are by no means dealing with a language that is separate from (American) English and has a distinct, separate syntax (even though it may be argued to have a distinct, all but separate phonology). What I intend to do is simply apply some of the tools of linguistics, especially corpus linguistics, to the songs recorded by Dylan over the past 44 years, and, in line with the general theme of the colloquium, see if the findings can teach us something about his artistry. I will then leave it to true Dylan scholars to interpret some of the data I am presenting, in the context of their own approaches to Dylan’s writing and poetry. I would like to add, in the way of an introduction, that it is indeed the lyrics I will be concerned with, not the music, even though I am aware that the question of *music as syntax* is of paramount importance to some theorists.

The corpus compiled simply brings together as many of the Dylan lyrics as I managed to compile. As always with the “Bard of Hibbing,” it is impossible even to approach exhaustiveness: there are 401 songs in total, which doesn’t quite cover the whole body of the officially recorded songs. Still, for my purposes in this study, this selection will be taken as representative enough, if not close enough to completeness. I simply copied all the songs back to back into one single file (which proved to be something of a headache), saved it in “.txt” format, and ran it through a concordance program¹ to see what would happen.

*Many thanks to my friends and colleagues Geoff Pitcher, Charles Holdefer, and to Jean-Marc Gachelin for his invaluable advice on dialectology.

¹ The program I used is the SCP (version 4.0.8.), developed by Alan Reed (freeware). A concordance program (or concordancer) is a piece of software to facilitate

The concordance program displayed the basic figures about the file: 111,555 words, and a 8,170-word vocabulary. There are of course a number of ways of viewing these raw figures; the only significant figure is the vocabulary count, and on that criterion alone—compared to Shakespeare’s alleged 25,000 to 30,000-word vocabulary—Dylan might indeed appear as a poor writer. On the other hand, random comparisons with other classic writers yield results that make him compare very favorably (James Joyce’s *Dubliners*: 67,000 words, with a 7,600 word-vocabulary, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*: 121,000 words and 6,500 word-vocabulary provide comparable examples). Another significant figure in textual analysis is the type-token ratio ($111,555 / 8,170 = 13.65$ in the case of the Dylan corpus), which measures lexical density and richness. It should be pointed out, however, that such a ratio will prove different for specific literary genres. Indeed, we are dealing with song, which makes extensive use of repetition in verses and choruses. Very little comparative use can then be made of that ratio, until we further investigate other bodies of song.

I found it a lot more interesting, as it were, to take a quick look at word frequencies and ranks; but here again, the raw data had to be pre-evaluated since, and not surprisingly, the program reported back to me that the most frequent word in the corpus was “the”! However, once the words were sorted out by categories, and certain grammatical items (i.e., determiners, conjunctions, pronouns, and the auxiliaries *have*, *be*, and *do*) set aside, a much more interesting picture emerged. Here is a list of the top 10 lexical nouns in the corpus: *man*, *time*, *love*, *baby*, *night*, *day*, *mind*, *eye*, *lord*, and *heart*. The list itself, however, would hardly be worth commenting on if we didn’t have a reference corpus for assessing it. To this end, I have chosen the British National Corpus (B.N.C.) for reasons of simplicity (it is easy to use online, and there are interfaces available where frequencies within word classes are readily obtainable).² Of course, it might be objected that the American National Corpus (A.N.C.) would have proven a more appropriate yardstick, but this system was not easily accessible at the time of the study; moreover, as we will only be considering the top of the lists, regional variations are negligible and may not have made any visible difference.

corpus exploration and statistical data.

² The British National Corpus can be accessed at <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/ucrel/bncfreq/>.

Comparative Frequencies within Word Classes

We started out our investigation with lexical nouns; the following is a comparative table, a linguistic hit parade, as it were, of the top 10 nouns in our Dylan corpus and in the B.N.C.:

Bob Dylan Corpus ³	British National Corpus
1. man (425)	1. time
2. time (392)	2. year
3. love (254)	3. people
4. baby (364)	4. way
5. night (232)	5. man
6. day (210)	6. day
7. mind (149)	7. thing
8. eye (172) ⁴	8. child
9. lord (143)	9. Mr
10. heart (182)	10. government

Table 1: Nouns

I will not try and comment on all the items, each of which no doubt might elicit numerous literary or textual interpretations from scholars and specialists in various fields. In Dylan's corpus, numbers 3, 4, and 10 are clearly reflections of the predominance of the love theme in the songs, while number 9 is a reflection of a religious theme. Some of the items are nevertheless very striking, as is, for example, number 1, *man*, also in the top 10 nouns in the B.N.C. In the case of Dylan's use of this noun, a strictly linguistic approach proves very telling. Indeed, a simple study of its distribution in context brings out, significantly, its overwhelmingly *generic* use. Quite simply, whether we have *a man*, *one man*, or *men*, what Dylan is actually referring to is *mankind*. Some examples of this:

- [1] / How many roads must **a man** walk down / Before you call him **a man**? / How many times must **a man** look up / Before he can see the sky? ("Blowin' in the Wind")
- [2] Now, too much of nothing / Can make **a man** feel ill at ease / ("Too much of Nothing")
- [3] / **No man** alive will come to you / With another tale to tell ("This Wheel's on Fire")

³ Absolute values are given in brackets for the Dylan Corpus, to be compared to word count; I didn't find it useful to give such values for the B.N.C.

⁴ As well as sad-eyed 16 / blue-eyed 8 / one-eyed 2 / cross-eyed, black-eyed, and so forth.

- [4] But he was never known / To hurt **a honest man**. (“John Wesley Harding”)
 [5] /Silvio / I gotta go / Find out something only **dead men know**// (“Silvio”)

The second item on the list that strikes me as interesting is number 8, *eye(s)*, which also occurs in a significant number of compound adjectives (i.e. *blue-eyed*, *sad-eyed*, *cross-eyed*, and so forth). However, it does not feature in the top 10 nouns in the B.N.C.; indeed one has to go way down the list to find it, in the 43rd position. At first sight, it would be tempting to treat it as a simple manifestation of the love theme, as in the case of numbers 3, 4, and 10 above. But a look at the collocations shows that there is a lot more to it: the associations are almost always negative and/or threatening, whether they be adjectival (*sad-eyed*, *evil eye*) or verbal (*my eyes they burn*, *his serpent eyes*, and so forth). Very seldom do we find conventionally positive happy collocations like *blue-eyed*,⁵ *into your eyes where the moonlight swims*, and so on. Some other examples follow:

- [6] *But with **the cold eyes of Judas** on him, / His head began to spin /* (“The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest”)
 [7] *See **the cross-eyed pirates** sitting / Perched in the sun /* (“Farewell, Angelina”)
 [8] *Call girls in the doorway / All **giving me the eye** /* (“Call Letter Blues”)
 [9] *But **there’s violence in the eyes**, girl, so let us not be enticed /* (“Precious Angel”)
 [10] ***Your eyes are filled with dead men’s dirt**, your mind is filled with dust /* (“The Death of Emmett Till”)

The third item I would like to address in some detail is number 7, *mind*. As a linguist, all I have to say is that it stands out because it is comparatively rare in large corpora (you have to go way down the B.N.C. list to about number 150). On a more interpretive note, however, this lexical item cannot be explained by love or religious themes, but may point either to the intellectual and cerebral side of Dylan’s writing, or at the swirl of impressions and feelings the poet or the characters experience in turn. A good clue to Dylan’s experience of such processes is found in the following quotation:

What happens is, I’ll take a song I know and simply start playing it in my head. That’s the way I **meditate**. A lot of people will look at a crack on the

⁵ And even so, most occurrences of “*blue-eyed*” are to be found in “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” (1963), where (according to my own personal communication with expert Charles Holdefer) they refer more to a state of vulnerability or innocence under assault.

wall and **meditate**, or count sheep or angels or money or something, and it's a proven fact that it'll help them relax. I don't **meditate** on any of that stuff. I **meditate** on a song.⁶

Let us now turn our attention to verbs. Again, if we take the B.N.C. as our reference corpus, this is what the picture looks like:

Bob Dylan Corpus	British National Corpus
1. go (749)	1. say
2. know (616)	2. get
3. see (476)	3. make
4. come (445)	4. go
5. say (385)	5. see
6. tell (298)	6. know
7. make (259)	7. take
8. think (252)	8. think
9. want (243)	9. come
10. look (233)	10. give

Table 2: Lexical verbs

Nothing really remarkable here: perception, cognition and utterance verbs (PCU) feature prominently, as do motion verbs; of course, one can always ponder the presence of *want* here, but in fact, this item is not very far down the B.N.C. list (number 23). On the other hand, it might surprise some that *give* isn't here, but it is not very far down the Dylan list either (number 12). Since this analysis is obviously not taking us anywhere, let us turn to modal verbs, which yield very different results:

Bob Dylan Corpus	British National Corpus
1. can (763)	1. will
2. will (357)	2. would
3. could (233)	3. can
4. would (162)	4. could
5. must (126)	5. may
6. might (103)	6. should
7. may (97)	7. must
8. should (57)	8. might
9. shall (44)	9. shall

Table 3: Modals

Here it is striking to see that *can* is indeed even more frequent than the three modal verbs which follow it (*will*, *could*, *would*) combined, which is

⁶ *L. A. Times*, "Rock's Enigmatic Poet Opens a Long-private Door." April 4, 2004.

quantitatively enormous, and enormously significant, especially if we combine *can* + *could*.⁷ It can partly be explained by the co-occurrence of this item with perception verbs like *see* and *hear*, which indeed appear very frequently in the corpus.⁸ But I might venture a more general interpretation, starting with an inversion of the analysis as we look more closely at Dylan's limited use of *will* in his texts. Linguists often say that *will* is all about **predicting**, either on the basis of some observed property of the grammatical subject (*he will sit for hours doing nothing; And he asks for a rope and a pen that will write* [Black Diamond Bay (1976)]), or on the basis of the subject's volition (*will you marry me? Yes I will, I will not go down under the ground* ["Let Me Die in my Footsteps" (1991)]). The crucial value involved here is obviously *prediction*, and I would like to elaborate on this use in pointing out that there is only a fine line between prediction and prophecy, for, in social terms, what prophets do is provide people with the delusion of having some grasp of the future. And indeed, as we all know, the younger Dylan was almost immediately hailed as a prophet, a fact that, we also know, made him increasingly uncomfortable. As he confirmed in a CBS interview in Dec. 2004,

It was an explosive mixture that turned Dylan, by 25, into a cultural and political icon—playing to sold out concert halls around the world, and followed by people wherever he went. Dylan was called the voice of his generation—and was actually referred to as a prophet, a messiah. Yet Dylan says he saw himself simply as a musician: “You feel like an impostor when someone thinks you’re something and you’re not.” What was the image that people had of him? And what was the reality? “The image of me was certainly not a songwriter or a singer,” says Dylan. “It was more like some kind of a threat to society in some kind of way.” What was the toughest part for him personally? “It was like bein’ in an Edgar Allan Poe story. And you’re just not that person everybody thinks you are, though they call you that all the time,” says Dylan. “You’re the prophet. You’re the savior. I never wanted to be a prophet or savior. Elvis maybe. I could easily see myself becoming him. But prophet? No.” He may not have seen himself as the voice of the '60s generation, but his songs were viewed as anthems that sparked a moment. “My stuff were songs, you know? They weren’t sermons,” says Dylan. “If you examine the songs, I don’t believe you’re gonna find anything in there that says that I’m a

⁷ In which case they become more numerous than all of the others combined!

⁸ *Hear* is in fact number 12 on the list (205 tokens).

spokesman for anybody or anything really.” “But they saw it,” says Bradley. “They must not have heard the songs,” says Dylan.⁹

What we also know was that, as early as 1964, Dylan seemed to be taking great pains to avoid being considered a prophet or being trapped in a prophet’s attire. A well-known quotation to illustrate this point:

In a soldier’s stance, I aimed my hand / At the mongrel dogs who teach /
Fearing not that I’d become my enemy / In the instant that I preach /¹⁰

My claim is that there is probably a deliberate avoidance of *will* on Dylan’s part. The last (maybe the first and last) prophetic song in the Dylan corpus is quite obviously “When the Ship Comes In,” written around 1963, and which has 27 *wills* in 48 lines! The picture that emerges is also that of a deliberate preference for *can*, which of course, in linguistic analysis, has at least one feature in common with *will*: the notion of the *property* of *capacity* of the grammatical subject. Indeed, there are contexts in which the two modals are interchangeable (He will / can sit for hours doing nothing). But it is easy to see how *will* goes one step further than *can* to predict the actualization of the property or capacity. What Dylan strives to do is maintain his visions one step short of actualization. The typical song in that respect, in my view, remains “Blowin’ in the Wind,” which unsurprisingly does contain a lot of *can*’s.

Let us now end this part-of-speech tour with a quick look at adjectives:

Bob Dylan Corpus	British National Corpus
1. good (138)	1. other
2. little (136)	2. good
3. old (118)	3. new
4. hard (116)	4. old
5. new (99)	5. great
6. true (99)	6. small
7. last (97)	7. different
8. dead (84)	8. large
9. high (83)	9. local
10. far (79)	10. social

Table 4: Adjectives

⁹ CBS News, 5 December 2004.

¹⁰ “My Back Pages,” 1964.

I must confess at this point that this table came as something of an anticlimax to me when I first compiled it, as my remembrance of Dylan texts as a teenager was and remained one of rich impressions and flamboyant imagery. I had lived under the linguistic delusion that all that flamboyance was conveyed by a profusion of adjectives. In actual fact, what we can see from table 4 is that the top 10 adjectives are desperately commonplace. However, the discrepancies between the two columns deserve a few comments. First, we may simply observe that in the B.N.C. there are only six out of 10 that are Germanic, the bottom four being Latinate; nothing comparable to the left-hand column, where all are Germanic. In the Dylan corpus, you'd have to go very far down the list to find a couple of Latinate adjectives (*different* and *strange*); this trend, incidentally, is by no means limited to adjectives, since the whole of Dylan's vocabulary is massively (95%) Germanic. But it is indeed in his use of adjectives that the difference is most blatant and significant; adjectives typically describe properties of individuals, and it is well-known that (see table 5) the Latinate member of each pair will always refer to a property that is one or several notches more *abstract* in meaning than its German counterpart. Compare:

GERMANIC	LATINATE
deep	profound
dark	sombre
clever	intelligent
hard	difficult
high	elevated

Table 5: Germanic vs. Latinate adjectives

What this points to is a marked tendency for Dylan's adjectives to describe very concrete properties of very concrete objects. We'll leave that aside, pending further research on adjective-noun collocations, and just end with one more remark on table 4: the only adjectives that stand out with respect to our reference corpus are numbers 7 and 8, *last* and *dead*, neither of which are to be found even in the top 50 in large corpora. From a thematic point of view, *last* is not interesting, as it is most often associated with *night* or *time*, only reflecting the deictic anchoring (the *here and now*) of the stories told. *Dead* is a lot more revealing of the underlying obsessions that pervade Dylan's lyrics, and is probably to be associated with the religious theme, all the more so as the majority of tokens are in fact nominalized adjectives, *the dead*, in Biblical and/or eschatological contexts.

Now, returning to the contradiction I pointed out earlier between the feeling of flamboyance of the texts and the very disappointing nature of the adjectives found in the corpus, what I would like to show is that the feeling

is more than just a feeling, the flamboyance is here indeed, but linguistically speaking it is not conveyed by the noun + adjective combination, but by the noun + noun combination, which is the next point I would like to develop.

Complex Noun Phrases

Let me first briefly return to what I pointed out earlier about the Latinate vs. Germanic opposition. Obviously, the very existence of an opposition is made possible by the simple fact that the two series co-exist in the lexical stock of English. The same obtains when we move from word to phrase and then on to clause and sentence, that is to say, the domain of syntax (*syn* = with, together; *tassein* = to arrange), the rules governing the grouping of words to build up meaning. And it is one of the defining features of English to include syntactic patterns that pertain both to Germanic and to Romance languages. For instance, there are in English three ways of combining nouns into complex noun phrases, two of which are typologically Germanic, and one typologically Romance:

PATTERN	N OF N	N 'S N	N Ø N
TYPE	Romance	Germanic	
EXAMPLE	<i>the trunk of the tree</i>	<i>the tree's trunk</i>	<i>the tree trunk</i>

From a semantic point of view, and to cut a very long story short, the difference between these three patterns has to do with the tightness of the relation between the two nouns. To grasp this phenomenon, the further to the right one moves in the table, the tighter the relation is. With the prepositional pattern, the relation is said to be constructed by the speaker in discourse, but it is pre-constructed in the N Ø N pattern, to the point in which we get items that are lexicalized as separate dictionary entries (*police station*), and, at the tail end of the process, are fused as a single graphic unit (*ashtray*, *bookstore*). The genitive pattern stands somewhere in between those two extremes, and in context will pattern sometimes with one, sometimes with the other.

What is most interesting in the Dylan corpus is the distribution of the three constructions. The overwhelming majority of compounds are of the N of N type; we find over 1,000 of these, which is enormous, as opposed to a little less than 400 (390) of the N Ø N type, and only about 200 N's N. It will prove enlightening to look at examples of each of these patterns in turn, beginning with the last one.

About 25 per cent of Dylan's uses of genitives are to be found in only two songs, "Maggie's Farm" (1965) and "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" (1973) and, interestingly, are associated with 47 proper names (including Maggie, of course), accounting for another 25 per cent. This suggests strong constraint with proper names and no real choice, as it were: *Maggie's farm*, *Big Jim's wife*, *Lily's arms*, but one would not say **the farm of Maggie*, **the wife of Big Jim*, **the arms of Lily*.

As for N Ø N compounds, most of Dylan's uses are highly conventionalized and lexicalized (*patron saint*, *jigsaw puzzle*, *milk cow*, *cannon ball*, *railroad track*, *light bulb*, and so forth, thus behaving like single Ns). Since the poet's creativity is in this domain close to nil, his non-conventionalized compounds are predictably few and far between; they are, nevertheless, truly remarkable, and the flamboyance is indeed here: *voice vacancies* ("Ballad in Plain D" [1964]), *white diamond gloom* ("Where Are You Tonight" [1978]) *cyanide hole*, *leather cup* ("Desolation Row" [1965]), *charcoal gipsy maidens* ("Blind Willie McTell" [1991]), *corpse evangelists*, *confusion boats* ("My Back Pages" [1964]), and not to forget *the jingle jangle morning* of "Mr Tambourine Man" (1965).

The bulk of Dylan's semantic creativity, and his most breathtaking and long-lasting imagery is conveyed by the N of N type. This is all the more remarkable as the nature of the relations between the two Ns in this pattern is normally quite restricted, while being virtually infinite in N Ø N combinations. In this analysis, we find Dylan inventing and piling up layers upon layers of signification, for a genuine idiosyncratic effect. Examples are just too numerous, and the following provides only a short selection:

I've been ten thousand miles in the **mouth of a graveyard** ("A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall")

Father of wheat / Father of cold and **Father of heat** / **Father of air** and **Father of trees**, the **pierce of an arrow** ("Eternal Circle")

Rivers of blindness ("Where Teardrops Fall")

Puts both his hands in the **pockets of chance** / **bordertowns of despair** ("Dignity")

King of the streets, **child of clay** ("Joey")

The **disease of conceit** / The **tombstones of damage** ("Ballad in Plain D")

In a **city of darkness** ("Ain't no Man Righteous")

Furrows of death ("Two Soldiers")

With a **firebox of hatred** ("Train a-Travelin'")

In this **ocean of hours** ("Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie")

The **crossroads of my doorstep** ("One Too Many Mornings")

This linguistic manipulation must, of course, be related to Dylan's extensive use of the preposition *like* (more than 500 occurrences in the

corpus), which also constructs predictable (*shining like the moon above* [“Brownsville Girl,” 1986]), or unexpected (*the wind howls like a hammer* [“Love Minus Zero/No Limit,” 1965]) relations between nouns.

Moving on from word to phrase, and eventually to clause level, my last point will be a brief investigation of Dylan’s distortions of conventionalized syntax.

Archaic and Non-Standard Forms

One of the most salient features to be noticed in Dylan’s songs is quite obviously the repeated use of constructions such as:

For the times **they are a-changin’** /
 Women screamin,’ **fists a-flyin,’** babies cryin’ / Cops **a-comin,’** me **a-**
runnin.’ / (“Talkin’ Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues”)
 Yes, and if I could hear her heart **a-softly poundin’** / Only if she was lyin’
 by me, / (“Tomorrow is a Long Time”)
 Then you heard my voice **a-singin’** and you know my name / I’m **a-**
wonderin’ if the leaders of the nations understand / (“Train A-Travelin”)
 There’s seven breezes **a-blowin’** / All around the cabin door (“Ballad of
 Hollis Brown”)

This pattern is the remnant of a thousand year-long evolution, and the “a-” has nothing to do with the indefinite article, but is the weakened form of the preposition *on* (*in*). The construction is still present in eighteenth- and even nineteenth-century prose, but dies out in standard English in the twentieth century. Still, it remains very much alive to this day in the most conservative dialects, both British and American. What is striking is that I have found 274 occurrences in the Dylan corpus, which is simply enormous. The only thing I can say at this stage, pending further research, is that he simply interiorized this archaic syntax, handed down from folksongs that regularly featured it, and that he is either using it as a signature or a message in a bottle; but again, I’ll leave it to specialists of oral traditions to decide.

Another interesting feature I’d like to discuss is the use of *do*-auxiliary in affirmative sentences without any obvious emphasis. Seventy-five, or 11 per cent of all occurrences of *do* in the corpus, belong in this category. We should obviously distinguish between the first two of the series, and the last three:

Her and her boyfriend went to California, / Her and her boyfriend **done**
changed their tune (“Sign on the Window”)

Been shooting craps and gambling, momma, and I **done got broke** /
 (“Broke Down Engine”)
 Next animal that he **did meet** / Had wool on his back and hooves on his
 feet (“Man Gave Names To All The Animals”)
 Outside in the distance a wildcat **did growl**, / Two riders were
 approaching, the wind began to howl. (“All Along the Watchtower”)
 Achilles is in your alleyway, / He don’t want me here, / He **does brag** /
 He’s pointing to the sky / And he’s hungry, like a man in drag /
 (“Temporary like Achilles”)

Of course, the *done* + V pattern belongs to the AAVE variety of English (quite characteristically, Dylan sang a lot of old blues and still relates a lot to the old bluesmen; see for instance his cover of “Broke Down Engine”). What is even more interesting is that the pattern is typically British in origin and can be traced with some certainty to the Southwest of Great Britain (Dorset, Somerset, Southern Wales, Cornwall). Dialectologists point out that those areas seem to preserve a tendency of Elizabethan English; again we can only assume that it travelled across the Atlantic with the folk ballads that Dylan studied, and that is partly why the constructions seem to crop up so regularly in the song corpus.

Interestingly, one of the salient features I noticed in Dylan’s songs as a teenaged listener was his use of the regular past tense marker for the verb *know* to derive *knowed*, a phenomenon which can also be traced to the Southwest of England:

It ain’t no use in turnin’ on your light, babe
*That light I never **knowed*** (“Don’t Think Twice, It’s Alright”)
*If I’d **knowed** how bad you’d treat me,*
Honey I never would have come. (“Man of Constant Sorrow”)
*I investigated all the people that I **knowed**,*
Ninety-eight percent of them gotta go. (“Talkin’ John Birch Society Blues”)

One may of course simply dismiss the phenomenon as a vulgarism (which is what many grammarians do), explain it away by a will to use folk language in folk songs, as a reference to Woody Guthrie (*I thought you **knowed***, “Hard Travelin’”); yet the truth remains once again, that it is a rural archaic British form Dylan is using.

Conclusion

This short-guided tour of Dylan’s language sometimes leaves the linguist with the feeling that one may be dealing with a sort of Creole. The

overwhelming use of Germanic vocabulary alongside Romance syntactic patterns and the use of typically British archaic constructions to tell stories that are so American in nature, for example, reveal a Dylan seemingly striving for a language that bridges gaps and allows him to experiment with his broad range of influences brought together in a personal vision. Yet, looking back at the verbs in the corpus—the massive presence of verbs of physical or mental perception on the one hand, and of discourse on the other hand—points to an ambitious vision of universal focus as well, relating to both impression and expression. Might we say that such bold endeavours are to be connected to the very definition of art and artistry?

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Nothing's Been Changed, Except the Words: Some Faithful Attempts at Covering Bob Dylan Songs in French

Nicolas Froeliger

As a professor, I would like to, one day, manage a course the way Dylan organizes a song, as a stunning producer rather than an author. And it would start just like he does, all at once, with his clown mask, with a mastery of each concerted detail, and yet improvised. The opposite of a plagiarist, but also the opposite of a master or a model. A very lengthy preparation, but no methods, no rules, no recipes. (Deleuze 1977:14-15)

The above quotation, written by one of France's foremost twentieth-century philosophers reflects a typical French approach to Bob Dylan's works in that it makes room for everything but the lyrics. Even for those native French-speakers who value his works to the point of obsession, such a barrier is always present; it is not the words, but the way they are sung, that truly matters.

So what happens when someone tries to put those songs that are so much more than words into another language, for someone to sing them? As in other countries, attempts to interpret Dylan's songs in a foreign language have been made on many occasions over the years, including three full-length albums: two by Hugues Aufray (1965b and 1995) and a more obscure one by Serge Kerval (1971).¹

Most of the more scattered recordings are unavailable today. A few, on the other hand, now belong to the French musical landscape. All have had to face the dilemma of using a form that is foreign, both in language and in culture, and striving to transplant meaning while paying dues to the original (the name Dylan is always mentioned in these recordings, if only as a commercial argument).² Criticism being easier than art, accusations have been numerous. Often the interpreter may be mocked for being too literal,

¹ See discography for more details.

² Some of these albums' titles are *Aufray chante Dylan* (Aufray 1965b), *Serge Kerval chante Bob Dylan* (Kerval 1971), and *Aufray trans Dylan* (Aufray 1995).

like Richard Anthony, who saw it fit to sing the line from “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “*Combien d’oreilles faut-il aux malheureux*” (“How many ears must one man have?”). On the other hand, the artist may be blamed for showing utter disrespect for the original lyrics³ or for paring down the artistic potential of the original, mostly in regard to the images and metaphors. The following comes from the first French book on folksong (Vassal 1972:283):

As a whole, *Aufray chante Dylan* remains a highly questionable record. Whereas the French lyrics by Pierre Delanoë⁴ are, formally speaking, about right, they have lost half the power contained in the originals Besides, Hugues Aufray’s voice, husky as it is, is unable to convey the suffering, the pain or the wit of the author. It only offers an insubstantial echo of the initial version . . . [my translation]

Thus, the question remains: how are we to adapt performed art? According to which criteria will the adaptation be evaluated? It is my contention that one cannot simultaneously be faithful to the original and produce a genuine work of art. As evidence for this, I will refer to the lengthy discussions I have had on these matters with three individuals directly involved in those cover efforts: singers Graeme Allwright (2004), Hugues Aufray (2005), and lyricist Boris Bergmann (2005). Since the songs in question involve much more than lyrics, I will focus on the performed versions, rather than on the adapters themselves. Though my examples deal mainly with Bob Dylan songs, the rules I infer are meant to be more general.

Adapting Is Not Translating

What does “faithfulness” mean in this context? In the realm of translation, a faithful target text strives to reproduce the sense and form of the original. It is not necessarily a literal translation where form would take precedence over meaning, but instead a balanced effort in respect to those two aspects. In adapting songs, however, respecting those two constraints

³ For instance, the 1971 Kerval effort at interpreting Dylan received this comment: “folksong purists considered the adaptations by Luc Aulivier, Boris Bergman, and Pierre Delanoë unforgivable betrayals” (Troubadours de France, s.d. [translation mine], online at <http://troubadoursdefrance.iframe.com/>).

⁴ Actually, Hugues Aufray co-wrote the adaptations, but got much less recognition and credit for them, leading to some bitterness.

verges on the impossible. One may therefore limit one's efforts, simultaneously respecting those two constraints and still claim faithfulness.

Applying the tools and criteria of translation to adaptation leads to one more caveat: adaptation is not merely translation. Let us look at a Dylan-related example. Marguerite Yourcenar, famous not only as a writer but also as a translator (notably of Virginia Woolf), once put six lines of "Blowin' in the Wind" into French, mixing the first and third verses along the way. The result is as follows:

Bob Dylan

How many roads must a man walk
down?
Before you call him a man
How many years can a mountain
exist
Before it is washed to the sea
The answer my friend is blowing in
the wind
The answer is blowing in the wind

Marguerite Yourcenar

*Sur combien de chemins faut-il
qu'un homme marche
Avant de mériter le nom d'homme?
Combien de temps tiendra bon la
montagne
Avant de s'affaisser dans la mer?
La réponse, ami, appartient aux
vents
La réponse appartient aux vents*
(Yourcenar 1991:1-102)⁵

As a translation, the result is brilliant: it is simultaneously accurate, imaginative, and poetic. "*Mériter le nom d'homme*," for instance, blends the meaning of the generic English "you" and of "call" into a general "*mériter*"; and "*la réponse appartient aux vents*" is an intelligent way to redistribute the elements of meaning, while using the plural to emphasize the diversity and elusiveness of the answers to those various questions. As regards poetic craft, the elision of the possessive in "*la réponse, ami*" has quite a strong effect: far better than Richard Anthony's (1965) or Graeme Allwright's "*mon ami*" (Allwright 1991) or Hugues Aufray's "*Mon enfant*" (1995).

When I showed these lines to Graeme Allwright, however, he smiled and made only one comment: "impossible to sing. . . ."⁶ Indeed, the tools of an adapter may be the same as those of a translator, but the rules and quality criteria are quite different. A translator puts words on paper; for an adapter, the lyrics must also be performable. Orality is first and foremost. As obvious as it is, that distinction is often overlooked.

⁵ We owe this information to Jérôme Pintoux/Zimmerman's *Furniture and Voice: Abécédaire Bob Dylan, Un Extrait*, available online at http://www.remue.net/revue/TXT0404_JPintouxDylan.html.

⁶ See Allwright 2004.

If you are looking for translations, good or bad, you have to open your eyes and look at the packaging (what used to be the inner sleeve, before CDs): on the internet,⁷ in the press (journalists, notably those of highly literate *Rock'n'Folk* monthly in its heyday, were very gifted), or on bookshelves (the publisher Seghers released a French version of Dylan's *Writings and Drawings* in 1975 . . . it has never been reprinted, though when you look at those translations you quickly understand why). More often than not, the result will not look at all like the lyrics to a song. A striking example is to be found on the first Tracy Chapman record:

Tracy Chapman ⁸	Liner notes translation
"Talking about a revolution"	
Don't you know	<i>Sais-tu</i>
They're talkin' about a revolution	<i>Qu'ils parlent de révolution</i>
It sounds like a whisper	<i>Sur le ton du murmure?</i>

The problem here is not so much one of approximation ("ils" should be "on," and "de révolution" should be "d'une révolution" or "de revolution," for instance), but mood; the French words look like a sentence delicately uttered while sipping tea in a fashionable high society salon. The effect is ludicrous. Why the translator did not write "*Tu vois pas qu'on parle de révolution, dans un murmure?*" I can only guess. Yet, as un-poetic as it is, the meaning is mostly there, and that is what one requires of a translation. However, to adapt for the human voice requires the same tools but a different set of rules. That is why we will try to examine those adaptations in French using our knowledge of translation. Here, poetic choices will not be constrained by the rendering of metaphors and other images, but by meter and phrasing.

⁷ Some French-speaking internet users set up sites French translations of Bob Dylan songs. Those highly unprofessional endeavors have a lot to tell us, naïve as they look. For instance, that of "All Along the Watchtower" gets the English lyrics completely wrong, and then gives an (obviously) inaccurate French translation. These efforts are an attempt to reach out, however, and to make converts. Countless critics have written about the religious background of Dylan's work. But it seems to me that this religious attitude is no less obvious in his audience's reaction, and maybe especially so in France, the country of *laïcité*. (*Laïcité refers to an institutional system wherein there is a clear separation between all religions and the State, and in which all matters of creed have to remain strictly personal.*)

⁸ From Tracy Chapman's self-titled album *Tracy Chapman* (1998).

Meter and phrasing

As Pierre Delanoë writes in his liner notes to *Aufray chante Dylan*, “Some difficulties had to be overcome, starting with the transition from English, a language of few words, to much more prolix French” (Delanoë 1965 [translation mine]). Indeed, to say the same thing in French takes longer than in English.

An example of this problem can be found in the chorus to Graeme Allwright’s cover of “Who Killed Davey Moore?”:

Who killed Davey Moore?

(Bob Dylan)

Who killed Davey Moore? [5 feet]

Why an’ what’s the reason for?

[7 feet]

Qui a tué Davey Moore?

(Lyrics by Graeme Allwright)

Qui a tué Davey Moore? [7 feet]

Qui est responsable et pourquoi est-

il mort? [11 feet]⁹

Changing the meter of the chorus has a major consequence. Since the singer now has to sing the same melody with a greater number of feet, his singing will obviously be more hurried than Dylan’s. And, in this particular instance, it dramatically changes the atmosphere of the performance. Indeed, when hearing Dylan’s version, the overall feeling is one of weariness. One has the impression that the song is being sung the morning after the boxer’s death, as the singer and characters of the song return home and try to come to terms with the guilt pertaining to their respective parts in the boxer’s end. As sung by Dylan, “Who Killed Davey Moore” is a mourning song, which turns into strident protest only momentarily during the very short—and thus very striking—chorus.

In the French version, however, we are right in the middle of the ring, the boxer dead before us, and the singer is describing some kind of on-the-scene trial. Therefore, every accused party has to defend itself in front of the crowd. Thus the highest intensity is reached at the conclusion of each plea, at the end of each verse, for example (“*Ce n’est pas moi qui l’ai tué / Vous ne pouvez pas m’accuser*”). In the original, the same character appears to be

⁹ Interestingly, when I discussed this with Graeme Allwright, he was actually surprised, because he remembered the lyrics as “Who killed Davey Moore? / How come he died and what’s the reason for it?” (the same number of feet as his own version, if you downplay the final “it”). This is quite characteristic of his approach to adapting songs in general, and it is one of the features that make him an endearing artist: he considers himself as much less important than the song itself. His main purpose is to serve the song, a display of modesty that is not altogether frequent in his trade.

repeating his plea before closing his door and going to sleep (“It wasn’t me that made him fall / No you can’t blame me at all”).

Preoccupation with meter is, of course, universal. Dylan himself has informed his listeners: “I’m not thinking about what I want to say, I’m just thinking ‘Is this OK for the meter?’” (Hilburn 2004). This essential criterion explains some interesting shifts in numbers: in the French versions, Hattie Carroll is younger by one year (her name also loses one “L” in the process, while William Zanzinger becomes William Huntzinger¹⁰), and Hollis Brown has six children instead of five, because of the number of bullets at the end of the song. Likewise, on Nana Mouskouri’s rendition of “Farewell Angelina,” we have “*Deux cent bohémiennes sont entrées à la cour*” instead of “Fifty-two Gypsies now file past the guards,” which turns it into a perfect alexandrine, a much criticized option in general, as we shall see.

A further difficulty lies in the dynamic differences in the way French and English are pronounced, and, of course, sung. As Edward Sapir (1921:4) says,

The dynamic basis of English is not quantity, but stress, the alternation of accented and unaccented syllables. This fact gives English verse an entirely different slant and has determined the development of its poetic forms, and is still responsible for the development of new forms. Neither stress nor syllabic weight is a very keen psychologic [*sic*] factor in the dynamics of French. The syllable has great inherent sonority and does not fluctuate significantly as to quantity and stress. Quantitative or accentual metrics would be as artificial in French as stress metrics in classical Greek or quantitative or purely syllabic metrics in English.

Those dynamic differences were one of the main problems encountered by those who adapted Dylan in French. On *Aufray chante Dylan*, adapter Pierre Delanoë—who, according to singer Hugues Aufray, “saw things in a much more Cartesian way”¹¹—apparently wanted to carry Dylan’s words over into a classic French frame using a ternary scansion,

¹⁰ Because the adapters did not have the printed words, they had to write them down themselves with the help of American writer Mason Hoffenberg (Hugues Aufray’s cousin). The choice of the name Huntzinger makes a connection with General Huntzinger, one of the villains in the Dreyfus affair. In 1995, William Zanzinger will get his true name back. (Hugues Aufray, *op. cit.*)

¹¹ See Aufray 2005.

whereas Hugues Aufray considered that the asymmetrical nature of the original verses was to be respected.¹²

The result is a compromise. In the first option, the lines are much closer to French alexandrines than to the original, and the record was harshly criticized for “making the lyrics straighter than they originally were, with a ternary, waltzy phrasing, whereas Bob Dylan’s lyrics have predominantly a binary scansion.”¹³ In the second option, the singing carries the stress and syllabic weight of the original over into French. Hugues Aufray thus claims to be the first to have used the English tonal accent in French. It is especially evident in “*Cauchemar psychomoteur*” (“*Comme j’avais beaucoup marché*”). Six years later, Serge Kerval would do the same thing on his own record. The following is taken from the liner notes to his record (Jouffa 1971 [translation mine]): “In [the album] *Va ton chemin j’irai le mien* (*Most Likely You Go Your Way*), Boris [Bergmann] showed him how to groove in French the way Dylan does in English.” This manner of peppering French words with English tonic accents would later become a trademark of singer Francis Cabrel.¹⁴ On Cabrel’s records, what an uninformed audience mistakes for a French southwestern county accent is actually of American origin, via Hugues Aufray and Serge Kerval. Its most extreme illustration in French, though, is to be found on Jean-Michel Caradec’s song “*Pas en France*,” a tribute to Bob Dylan’s way of singing.

So, the problem of adaptation is first a structural one: what to keep out and what to change in the dynamic structure of the language itself. One first and foremost has to deal with the musical form, which conditions one’s choices and tends to reduce the wealth of possibilities offered by the original. The words will only come later, but those very words confront us with a difficult dilemma. Assuming yet again that we want to remain faithful to the original, are we going to stick to the original meaning or to the original sound?

¹² See Aufray 2005. On adapting the lyrics for that record, see *Je Chante—La revue de la chanson française* (Aufray 2003:56).

¹³ See Bergmann 2005.

¹⁴ A hard-core Dylan fan, Cabrel incidentally made an extremely surprising cover of *Shelter from the Storm* in 2004, due to the fact that the melody, chord structure, rhythm, arrangements, number of verses, and lyrics are quite different, yet there is a distinct Dylan feel about it.

Sonic Equivalence

Apparently, the easier solution is to drop the initial words and let the original sound guide you, especially in regard to the rhyming scheme. In French pop music, the most extreme example may be one of Ringo's (formerly of the duet Sheila et Ringo) versions of the Buggles song, "Video Killed the Radio Star," which in French became, "[*Dites moi*] *Qui est ce grand corbeau noir?*"¹⁵ (With one more foot in English than in French.)

There is some logic to this kind of phonetic translation. Rhyming may sound old-fashioned in contemporary poetry, but in songwriting they are still the order of the day. So, getting the cover to rhyme with the original may seem quite natural. However, it often leads to awkward results, as when "Knocking on Heaven's Door" becomes "Knock, Knock *ouvre toi, porte d'or,*" on Hugues Aufray's *Trans Dylan* (Aufray 1995).¹⁶ Sonic equivalence is not only a matter of rhyming, however. On the same record, Hugues Aufray covers "Maggie's Farm," in which emphasis is always placed on the name: "*Maggie's Farm, Maggie's Brother, Maggie's Ma, Maggie's Pa,*" and so on. So if one wants to respect the musicality of the phrase, it seems only fair to do the same thing in French. However, syntax works against us here. The English possessive forces a reverse word order in French: "*la ferme de Maggie, le frère de Maggie, la mère de Maggie, le père de Maggie,*" which loses its effect as a repetitive pattern. Hugues Aufray opts to keep the effect by shelving the first possessive and dropping the word "farm" in the process: "*J'irai plus bosser chez Maggie, c'est fini.*" And then he twists the word order regarding the rest of the family: "*Maggie-frère, Maggie-père, Maggie-mère,*" which is musically satisfying but lyrically weak, as well as idiomatically questionable.

The desire to be faithful to the original's musicality often leads to such second-rate solutions. This is especially the case with alliterations that are often dropped due to the complication of fitting them in. That is what Hugues Aufray and Pierre Delanoë do with Dylan's "Way out in the wilderness, a **cold coyote calls**" (from "The Ballad of Hollis Brown"),

¹⁵ Music by Woolley, Horm, and Downes. Lyrics by Étienne Roda-Gil. Label: Carrère/Formule 1, 1979. Lyrics available at <http://www.bide-et-musique.com/song/662.html> (Ringo 1979).

¹⁶ Such is the original title on the double LP with extensive liner notes. The low-quality CD re-release has "*Knock, knock ouvre toi, porte du ciel.*" Hugues Aufray also keeps Bob Dylan's "badge" ("*Mama take this badge off of me/Maman, jette ce badge loin de ma vue*"), oblivious of the fact that the meaning is different in French. A more accurate translation would be *insigne*, or *écusson*.

where, for lack of an equivalent, the whole verse containing that beautiful line has been omitted in the French version. Yet, alliteration is a major component of a poetic system, and thus it is problematic to abandon it altogether. When adapting “Mr. Tambourine Man” in 1965, Pierre Delanoë and Hugues Aufray first translated the line “In the **jingle-jangle morning** I’ll come following you” as “*Dans le matin calme, tu vas me montrer l’horizon.*” However, when rewriting that cover in 1995, Hugues Aufray settled for the clumsy “*Dans cet jungle de jingle-monnaie, emmèn’ moi loin d’ici.*” This effort to carry over the sound of the English original into French is quite characteristic of his style, but still falls short of recreating a poetic line. The first version works much better because it actually deviates from the original. In the second one, we can see what he wants to get at, but we conclude that he is unsuccessful, leading to the listener’s artistic frustration.

Equivalence of Meaning

Bob Dylan is not only a master rhymester; he has also been highly recognized for his political messages. The political connotations of his lyrics have led some of his adapters to choose faithfulness not to the sound of the words, but to the original lyrics or context. As Graeme Allwright tells us, “I adapted ‘Davey Moore’ and ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ because something touched me in those songs, namely the social context.”¹⁷ Choosing to remain faithful to the song’s references limits the adapters’ choices in quite another way.

When introducing “Who Killed Davey Moore” during his infamous Halloween Concert in 1964, Bob Dylan ironically said, “It’s taken straight out of the newspapers. Nothin’s been changed, ‘xcept the words.” Graeme Allwright could stake the same claim regarding his (already mentioned) version of the same song. On the one hand, his adaptation is completely scrupulous; he uses the same structure, same message, same characters, and same American setting, with every line in the very same place and no added or subtracted images. It is hard to imagine a more faithful translation. His only change, though crucial, has to do with meter.

A striking feature of the original song is its use of clichés: all of its characters are human stereotypes. They are worlds away from those in “Visions of Johanna,” for instance, in that they evoke prefabricated human representations. The effect becomes even stronger in French as these

¹⁷ See Allwright 2004.

standard representations of the American way of life are transplanted directly into a cultural setting that accepts them with even less questions. To a French audience in the sixties, this described America. But in these two cases, those abstractions work perfectly well, because this song is a protest song about social roles and their deadly effects. What Graeme Allwright does, then, is to turn a negative factor—the presence of clichés—into a positive, meaningful one, thus heightening the effect of the original.

However, the wish to get the message across often entails adding some extra information to the verses. In “*Cauchemar psychomoteur*” [“Motorpsycho Nightmare”], for example, Hugues Aufray describes Rita (the farmer’s daughter) in the same way as Bob Dylan does: “*Elle me faisait de l’oeil comme Tony Perkins.*” An American audience in 1964 could easily make the connection with the lead actor in Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, but a French-speaking one (in 1965) could not, since the French public would recall Anthony Perkins, not Tony.¹⁸ As a result, French listeners are unable to understand why the narrator is more afraid of the daughter than of the gun-wielding father, making it impossible for one to grasp why that character would provoke the farmer with an expression of support for Fidel Castro (“I had to say something / To strike him very weird, / So I yelled out, / I like Fidel Castro and his beard”). The plot of the song simply does not work in French.

On the contrary, when covering “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll,” Hugues Aufray and Pierre Delanoë clearly wanted to make it understood that the victim was black (which was evident to American listeners in their own context). How is this information to be expressed, then? *Elle était noire, sa peau était noire, elle était d’origine afro-américaine*, or *elle était petite-fille d’esclave*? None of these options coincide with the poetic tone of the original. The adapters settled for “*Hattie Carroll était domestique de couleur*,” a well-intended, clumsy, bourgeois expression (the 1995 version will use the somewhat better “*Hattie Carroll était plutôt noire de couleur*”).

The difficulty is even greater with songs saturated with images, though some adapters have done quite a decent job, most notably Pierre Delanoë with “Farewell Angelina” for singer Nana Mouskouri.¹⁹ A search for equivalence of meaning will tend to make an adaptation seem more like a

¹⁸ Likewise, when a French audience hears the name Jack Kennedy, they think that JFK had yet another brother.

¹⁹ Delanoë’s lyrics for “Love Minus Zero-No Limit” (“*Amour moins zero. . .*”) or “A Hard Rain’s a-gonna Fall” (“*Le ciel est noir*”), however, are much less convincing.

simple translation, sacrificing part of the poetic effect. As Graeme Allwright says, in order to make up for that sacrifice in the performance, “you have to cheat.”²⁰

In sum, whatever one’s choice may be, the perils of faithfulness are enormous. For this reason, singer-songwriter Jean-Michel Caradec, who had tried and failed to adapt “Masters of War” for Serge Kerval, finally decided to write his own Dylan-like songs instead (Guillot 1981). This example is not unique. Actually, Dylan’s influence on French singers in their own original creations, both in songwriting and in performance, has perhaps provided the most elaborate transmission of his poetic innovations. Indeed, a vast array of singers acknowledge Dylan’s impact on their work, whether mentioning him by name,²¹ alluding to his songs,²² imitating him,²³ mocking him,²⁴ or even his French impersonations,²⁵ and so forth.

²⁰ See Allwright 2004.

²¹ See Michel Sardou (1985), Michel Delpech (1969), Alain Bashung (1979), and Alain Souchon (1999).

²² Jean-Michel Caradec also wrote a song using only titles of Dylan songs (http://perso.wanadoo.fr/www.jeanmichelcaradec.com/jmc_raconte_dylan.htm). In that regard, we may also mention Alain Bashung’s “*C’est la faute à Dylan*” (1979).

²³ Everything is there: non-sequiturs, oblique titles, folk-rock musical background, veiled references, and most of all, wit. Some lines are borrowed quite directly from “I Shall be free” (which, in turn, is a reference to Leadbelly’s “We Shall be free”). Then came Jacques Dutronc, whose first recorded song, “*Et moi, et moi, et moi*” (1966a), was written as a parody of Antoine’s attitude (by this, I refer to the supposedly cool and selfish attitude Antoine put forth in his songs). Ironically, the French public apparently mistook it for the new single by Antoine, so we have a quadruple mirror-effect here: from Leadbelly to Dylan to Antoine to Dutronc.

²⁴ See Jacques Dutronc, “*l’Opération*” (Dutronc 1966).

²⁵ Particularly savvy are the Belgian Stella (1966a), who actually mocks Sheila in “*Un air du folklore auvergnat*” and Hugues Aufray in “*Cauchemar autoprotecteur*” and Les Cinq Gentlemen, with their hilarious “*Dis-nous Dylan*” (1966b), which was a minor hit in France (1966).

Looking for justifications

The attempts at faithfulness thus far considered have yielded few masterpieces; they are honest efforts, some better than others, but few of them prove to be real works of art. This is largely because the songs in question are attempts at duplication, which inevitably run the risk of losing the spontaneity of the original, as well as the key feature of Dylan's art— orality. What was once a unique form has now been repeated. It is on its way to becoming a cliché, and clearly, a faithful copy can never be as good as the original. This is the eternal problem of purists, against whom Dylan (2004) himself has had a lot to say. Invariably, one feels the need to use liner notes as a defensive device to justify the intrinsic shortcomings of faithful adaptation. Of course, if the covers stood on their own as independent works of art, explanations would not be necessary.²⁶ Consider, for example, Pierre Delanoë's (1965) comments in the liner notes of *Aufray chante Dylan*: "Some listeners may be slightly surprised when hearing these songs for the first time, but the sincerity of the creator [Dylan] and of the interpreter [Aufray] will touch them to the heart"²⁷ [translation mine].

The singers who have attempted to carry over Dylan's art into French have all been faced with the dilemma of distance. That is especially true for those who released full-length CDs of Dylan songs. The very titles of those records—*Aufray chante Dylan*, *Serge Kerval chante Bob Dylan*, *Aufray Trans Dylan*—both acknowledge the gap between languages, and signal the intention to bridge it. Such an intention, however, puts the artists in an ambiguous and contradictory position. On the one hand, it amounts to telling us that we need a go-between to truly experience Bob Dylan's artistry (Monteaux 1971):

²⁶ Of course we know that Dylan himself made extensive use of liner notes, but those, except for the occasional sentence, had no advocacy role. The only flagrant exceptions are those to *The Freewheeling Bob Dylan* (in 1963) and to *World Gone Wrong* (in 1993), where we can discover the riches of what *he* hears in the songs. Those of the original *Planet Waves* release also had a kind of defensive character, but, characteristically, they were not reprinted in the later editions, though one can easily find them on various websites, as well as on the well-known re-release of *Highway 61 Interactive*.

²⁷ The same Hugues Aufray was quite disappointed upon learning that his 1995 record (*Aufray Trans Dylan*) had been re-released without the liner notes (and with, in fact, a very hasty packaging, with typos and the unlikely addition of the words "Best of" (Aufray 2005).

Serge Kerval sings twelve Bob Dylan songs adapted in French [. . .] with a precise sense of equivalence pertaining both to form and intention, and suddenly Dylan speaks to us in French: [. . .] his songs, which used to arouse our interests, now reach out to us. [translation mine]

On the other hand, this go-between inevitably blocks our view of the original artist. Paradoxically, trying to bridge the gap only adds to the distance, and thus to the misunderstanding.

The contradictions of such a position have led to some interesting dialectical exercises. For instance, Serge Kerval is rumored to have perceived his record as a small victory of the French-speaking world over the tightening grip of American culture! More than three decades after Serge Kerval, a singer like Jean-Louis Murat—who always has nice things to say of his fellow-songwriters—reversed that contention, claiming that direct knowledge of Dylan’s songs in English was in fact more helpful for producing a genuine French record than listening to adulterated adaptations (Tandy 1999):

I think my record, though made in the United States, is much more French than those of [Francis] Cabrel or [Jean-Jacques] Goldman, who nonetheless pass for the heirs of [Georges] Brassens and others. Actually, the only thing Goldman does is grossly recycle trite American music, and Cabrel’s melodies are so American that they partake of the installation of McDonald’s in France [. . .] Myself, on the contrary, I got interested in music while listening to Bob Dylan during my homework, not to Hugues Aufray. [translation mine]

Regardless of one’s viewpoint and despite one’s determination to be faithful to the original, the distance will always remain, and the result will always be inferior to the original. Such an endeavor will always fall short. Such are the merits and perils of attempting fidelity when translating songs. Respect for the original, by its very nature, limits choice and thus tends to kill the poetic effect afforded by the density of meaning and by the presence of the unexpected in the initial song.

Yet is it important that these adaptations be considered works of art in their own right? The goal may be one involving the importance of *transmission* instead. Here, creativity appears second to passing something on, something which is greater than yourself and may involve something you may not even understand: “At times, a miracle happens [. . .] and you

become the *dybbuk*²⁸ of the author,” says Boris Bergmann.²⁹ When talking about his numerous adaptations of Leonard Cohen, Graeme Allwright (2005) says:

At the end, I was under the impression that I had written the original lines myself. There’s a mysterious side to it: even I am not sure about the meaning of those words I used. If you do translate every image, you may not understand the whole thing, but the mystery will be there. And that’s the point: the song has to retain its mystery.

That is why Hugues Aufray chose to put his 1995 effort under the sign of transmission, ransacking his dictionary for the occasion:

Liner notes to <i>Aufray Trans Dylan</i>	My attempt at translation
<i>d’abord il faut transbahuter... transborder... transcoder... puis transcrire...</i>	first, you have to transship... to transcode... then to transcribe...
<i>ensuite on doit tout transférer... transfigurer... transformer...</i>	then you must transfer everything transfigure... transform...
<i>transfuser... transhumer... et meme transgresser... souvent transiger...</i>	transfuse... transplant... and even transgress... often compromise...
<i>on transige quant il faut!... alors seulement... le mot transite... il transmigre...</i>	you compromise when you need it!...then, only then... the word transits... it transmigrates...
<i>l’idée commence à transperser... à transmuter...</i>	the idea is slowly transfixed... gets transmuted...
<i>tandis que l’on continue... on transpire... mais on transparaît soudain...</i>	while going on... your perspiration transpires... but you suddenly filter through
<i>il faut encore et encore transplanter... transporter... transposer sans cesse...</i>	again and again, you have to transplant... transport, transpose without end...
<i>pour qu’enfin on se “transatlantique”...</i>	so that at last, you get “transatlanticated”
<i>C’est le désir de transmettre... pour partager.</i>	It is the desire to transmit... to share.

²⁸ In Jewish folklore, the dybbuk is a demon that enters and controls the body of a living person. Actually, it seems more likely that the adaptor is possessed by the spirit of the original author.

²⁹ See Bergmann 2005.

Aufray's insights reflect those of Brian Swann (1992:xvii) with regard to translating Native American literatures: "The desire is not for appropriation but some sort of participation: a touch of an elusive essence. The fact that we no longer believe we can possess is what affords value. So even at its most 'definitive,' any translation [. . .] will always partake of the unknowable."

Is anything more elusive in pop culture than a Bob Dylan song? This particular quality explains both the will to pass those songs on to non-English speaking audiences and the failures most of those cover versions represent as works of art. As Joachim du Bellay famously wrote five centuries ago, a translator is not a creator, so using the criteria of translation, and especially faithfulness, leads to second-best solutions. This was well understood by some adapters, who insisted on claiming fidelity (see the above quote from Serge Kerval's liner notes), while doing exactly the reverse. Boris Bergmann (2005) thus jokes in an interview, "I practiced adultery on a grand scale." In this way, the original is no longer seen as an absolute reference, but instead as a blueprint, a starting point. It is bent into something different and often more convincing than any attempt at faithfulness. The arch-example for this second kind of adaptation is Francis Cabrel's 2004 cover of "Shelter from the Storm" ("*S'abriter de l'orage*"), which features different chords, different melody, different story, different rhythm, four verses instead of fourteen, and arrangements strongly reminiscent of another Dylan song ("Most of the Time"). Nonetheless, it is, in the end, a powerful and genuinely Dylanesque song. It is arguably the best Dylan cover in French, not because of its "accuracy" of replication, but because of the faithfulness of its transmission of greater meaning.³⁰

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³⁰ I would like to acknowledge the work of Isabelle Pontécaille, Graeme Allwright, Pierre Gerphagnon, Éric Pesty, Hugues Aufray, Boris Bergmann, and Catharine Mason for their assistance in completing this article.

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³¹ The names in brackets refer to the author and/or composer; the titles in square brackets refer to the original Bob Dylan song covered.

³² Pierre Delanoë is often rumored to have written those French lyrics alone, but Hugues Aufroy strongly denies this and adds that he was able to prove his authorship with SACEM, the French equivalent of ASCAP or BMI (Aufroy 2005). Besides, he is credited as co-adaptor on the cover of *Aufroy Chante Dylan*.

³³ Released in 1965, this LP is the most popular body of French covers of Dylan songs in French, with a beautiful front cover in which you can study the details of Aufroy’s right ear, and a somewhat more surprising back cover that illustrates in two black and white pictures an exchange of patent leather boots between Aufroy and Dylan. Though highly criticized, it sold quite well and has had a lasting musical influence.

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According to Mr. Aufroy, this was the first time somebody used picking-style guitar or a fuzz-guitar in France.

³⁴ This includes everything except “*Ce que je veux surtout*” (Hugues Aufroy). In 1995, Hugues Aufroy rewrote and re-recorded most of his 1965 and 1966 songs, rewriting *L’homme orchestre*, and added thirteen more recent songs to the lot. The motivations were twofold. First, there was a royalty problem: after 30 years, most of the rights from his 1965 record were supposed to revert back to the record company (Barclay), leaving only a small share (4 per cent) to the artist, so it seemed only fair to re-record the whole batch. Second, Hugues Aufroy himself was unhappy with the adaptations he had co-written with Pierre Delanoë, which led him to make quite a few corrections to those and to adapt the newer songs all by himself.

³⁵ There is no known adaptor to that song since, as the legend has it, the French lyrics were written by three volunteers from the audience. Thanks to Chris Rollason for that information.

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Songs³⁷

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³⁶ This record was re-released as a CD in 1996 by Scalen Disques (Toulouse). Serge Kerval had been trained as an opera singer before changing directions to become the French equivalent of a folksinger. He had a deep, strong voice, and recorded a large number of songs out of the French folk tradition. The record is very pleasant musically and the arrangements are excellent. Another interesting feature is the choice of songs: seven out of twelve stem from *Blonde on Blonde* (the whole carnival-like third side of the original LP, plus *Just Like a Woman* and *I Want You*), three from *New Morning* and the remaining two from *Self Portrait*. This, in addition to its title, makes it a logical follow-up to Hugues Aufray’s record. The adaptors are Pierre Delanoë, Boris Bergmann, and Luc Aulivier. According to one source (*Troubadours de France*, n.d), it was endorsed by Bob Dylan himself. It was a commercial failure, however. According to another source (Ducray et al. 1975), covered in English by the Sandals in 1966, it then prompted a long standing ban on all Dylan covers in French. It would be 22 years before Graeme Allwright’s recording of *L’homme donna un nom à chaque animal*.

³⁷ The information included in this section of the references is an attempt to provide an as complete as possible account of songs mentioning Bob Dylan, related to him or otherwise noted in this contribution. Unfortunately, not all details regarding the record labels, years, or places of release are available. We apologize for this to our readers.

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³⁸ Covered in English by The Sandals in 1966.

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NICOLAS FROELIGER

Stella 1966a

Stella. "Cauchemar autoprotecteur" (Zelcer, Chorenslup).
Paris: RCA Victor 86.171M.

Stella 1966b

Stella. "Un air du folklore auvergnat" (Zelcer, Chorenslup).
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“The Low Hum in Syllables and Meters”: Blues Poetics in Bob Dylan’s Verbal Art

Catharine Mason

It may seem to be stating the obvious when pointing to the fact that Bob Dylan’s songs carry the voices of master blues singers. Vocal texture and color, singing behind the beat, and the use of twelve-bar rhythms might very well prove sufficient indicators for qualifying Dylan as a blues musician. Unfortunately, however, the elaborate and fascinating details of blues verbal artistry continue to remain a mystery to many scholars, as well as many musicians themselves. In this paper, we will take a closer look at the poetics of traditional blues lyrics within the particular context of their strong influence on Dylan’s songwriting. In doing so, we will focus on language use. Our goal is a deeper understanding of tradition, transmission, and personal creativity.

By poetics, I mean that function of language that serves to enhance, embellish, and in any way focus the attention of listeners (or readers) on what could be called the “message for the sake of the message.” This definition is a direct borrowing from Roman Jakobson’s description (1987:62-94) of the interworkings of poetics in all speech genres, from everyday forms to the most complex and calculated of written poetries. Ethnopoetics,¹ which has been used most widely to treat Native American oral traditions, have contributed to the knowledge that poetic structures, motifs, and devices are culture-specific. Versification, narrative technique, sound patterns, metaphors, symbolic matrices, imagery, characterization, grammar use and all other such techniques derive from cultural uses of the

¹ The leading figures of ethnopoetic approaches to verse structures and stylistic form are Dell Hymes (1981, 2003) and Dennis Tedlock (1983). Hymes’s work applies philological methods in his studies of rhetorical and poetic structures, while Tedlock takes his lead from sound matrices (rhythm, pauses, intonation, volume) and discursive strategies in identifying poetic ways of creating meaning.

specific language that serves as medium for the art form. This principle of interpretation was first espoused by Edward Sapir (1921:225), who demonstrated that “every language is itself a collective art of expression.”

Dell Hymes² furthered the work of Jakobson and Sapir in his pioneering description of speech styles as having both collective and individual import. By focusing on style as a descriptive basis for language (as opposed to grammar in the long-standing tradition of linguistics), Hymes leads us to more applicable insights into the interdependence of content and form (and their corresponding referential and poetic functions) in verbal expression. He provides concepts and methods for identifying stylistic features as primary integers in the social construction of meaning. Hymes’s work allows for a wide-reaching application of Jakobson’s insights into poetics. In the following example, Jakobson (1987:70) leads us to consider how poetics operates in everyday life:

A girl used to talk about “the horrible Harry.” “Why horrible?” “Because I hate him.” “But why not *dreadful, terrible, frightful, disgusting?*” “I don’t know why, but *horrible* fits him better.” Without realizing it, she clung to the poetic device of paronomasia.

Hymes’s³ intricate demonstrations of stylistic operations (including verse structure) in a number of spoken languages⁴ also provide a basis for dealing with personal choices in individual speech.

Style is not only a matter of features other than referential, or of the selective use of features of both kinds; it also has to do with the selective creation of new materials and letting go of the old. As languages change, they do not change wholly randomly, or lose structure in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics. They remain one relatively consistent set of realizations of the possibilities of language, rather than another. And they have the character they do in this regard partly because of choices by users. It is possible to consider some kinds of change, including sound change, coming about in part because of social meaning associated with features, more prestigious variants replacing less prestigious ones. It is possible to consider some changes as coming about in response to internal

² Taken from Hymes 1981. See also Hymes 2003.

³ Hymes’s assertions, within the context of their use in this essay, appear in Bauman and Sherzer 1974:449.

⁴ English, Greek, Portuguese, Hopi, several varieties of Chinook, and several varieties of Salish are just a few of the languages in which Hymes has identified verse form in oral narratives. For a complete list, see Appendix 3 in Hymes 2003.

imbalances and pressures, and to cumulative drifts which make some avenues of change far more tractable than others. But some changes cannot be understood except as changes over time in what users of the language find it most desirable or essential to say.

Music lyrics provide a privileged use of verbal style as their primary purpose is to fit the music. We find an abundant number of lyrical styles in the English language alone. Blues music represents a highly selective use of verbal expression, as noted in the above quote, forming a “relatively consistent set of realizations of the possibilities of [the English] language.” In the following discussion, we will study some of the stylistic features of blues lyrics as they have been adopted by Dylan in some of his most traditional work (focusing specifically on his compositions in the AAB song form), and as they have helped to shape some of his most original work. I will argue that, for Dylan and many users of American English, blues artistry has been not only a choice of a more “prestigious variant,” but an art form allowing for a real sense of what is “most desirable and essential to say.”

Dylan, Blues Arranger and Innovator

In the early 1990s, thirty years into a successful songwriting and performance career, Dylan released two CDs of his own arrangements and recordings of traditional music. These recordings are, to my mind, another version of Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965), rendering valuable sources of inspiration in musical technique, poetic frameworks and human life narratives. In the liner notes to the album *World Gone Wrong*, the collection of particular interest to us here, Dylan shares with us the ways in which the lives and themes of his musical masters have touched him. In performing the songs composed and/or handed down by the musicians he honors, the artist passes down stories of human struggle and deep emotion as narrated by the song lyric.⁵ It is clear to ethnopoeticians and other folklorists that oral transmission of traditional narratives is far from being a detached, impersonal investment. Performance of traditional lyrics indeed requires a

⁵ I have been using the term “lyric” to mean the words to a song in unfixed form. For the purposes of this paper, this definition will contrast with “text,” which will refer to the transcribable performed version of a lyric. Inasmuch as variations exist from performance to performance, once transcribed, they can be studied as personal interpretations of the lyric.

personal interpretation of the subject matter disclosed. Dylan (1990: liner notes) informs his listeners:

“Broke Down Engine” is a Blind Willie McTell masterpiece. It’s about trains, mystery on the rails—the train of love, the train that carried my girl from town—the Southern Pacific, Baltimore & Ohio, whatever—it’s about variations of human longing—the low hum in meters and syllables. It’s about dupes of commerce & politics colliding on tracks, not being pushed around by ordinary standards. It’s about revivals, getting a new lease on life, not just posing there—paint chipped and flaked, mattress bare, single bulb swinging above the bed. It’s about Ambiguity, the fortunes of the privileged elite, flood control—watching the red dawn not bothering to dress.

Conscious of the cultural, social, political, and symbolic references anchoring this song in social life—references that cut across temporal barriers by pulling from deep-set human motives—Dylan reshapes the contours and inner impulses of the piece, though very subtly, to allow for the emergence of his personal voice. It is indeed his loyalty to the original “score” and “text,” as recorded by Willie McTell in the ‘30s, that makes this work an interesting springboard for a study of Dylan’s mastery of—and innovations in—blues poetics.

Songfulness

On the surface, one may describe McTell’s lyrics⁶ as a collection of loosely connected sentiments, events, and discourses. However, a number of elements serve to establish balance and coherence throughout. We note first the use of repetition that creates a sound effect of symmetry and completion. A liberal use of anaphora along with the regular syllabification of musically measured rhythms provides a familiarity of sound that satisfies the ear as well as satisfying that part of the human mind that would ordinarily look to language for meaning. The listener will not necessarily contemplate the words and lines for metaphoric secrets and referential content, as Dylan has provided in his liner notes. However, she will take pleasure in what musicologist Lawrence Kramer (1999:303-319) has called the “songfulness” of the lyric, the satisfaction of hearing language sung without seeking to decode the message. The significant role that songfulness plays in the social

⁶ This study is based on McTell’s 1933 recording of “Broke Down Engine.” See references.

construction of meaning can be better understood when one considers the fact that the ear will quickly pick up on a lyric that is not well-constructed and instinctively revolt against unbalanced, a-rhythmic, and otherwise unpoetic texts. In other words, language—in itself, without reference—is meaningful to the listener.

The specificity of blues songfulness can be easily grasped by observing audience response in the performance arena. In many instances, nothing more than a few syncopated drum beats or bass guitar notes will interpellate⁷ listeners into the realm of blues experience in which the mind and body yield entirely to the effect of the music. A number of songwriters have reflected upon both the existential and universal impact of “bluesfulness” in metatextual commentary reflecting on the song form itself. Such metalepsis is, of course, an evolution of the common use of the term “blues” in traditional songs. Adding to a vast corpus of skillful arrangements of blues masterpieces, Dylan provides provocative insights into contemporary applications of traditional blues messages. In “Sitting on a Barbed Wire Fence” (1991), he contemplates condescending views of blues music put forth by commentators unfamiliar with a blues experience:

Of course, you're gonna think this song is a riff /
I know you're gonna think this song is just a riff /
Unless you've been inside a tunnel /
And fell down 69-70 feet over a barbed-wire fence . . .

I would be remiss not to mention here Dylan's reference to blues tradition and authenticity in his beautiful tribute to his master (1991): “No one sings

⁷ By “interpellation,” I refer specifically to Jean-Jacques Lecercle's development (1999) of the Althusserian term that describes the process of hailing individuals into subjects. This social process is “an extraordinary example,” Lecercle tells us, “of the performative power of language.” Reflecting upon Althusser's classic example of a police officer hailing someone in the street with his whistle, Lecercle (1999:156) describes the (social) effect: “the sense of guilt which is the psychological correlate of subjectification is so diffuse that *everyone* turns round (which suggests that there is overkill in interpellation: the paradox is that interpellation is both individual—it concerns *this* subject—and collective; the utterance potentially addresses everyone, but that is precisely what language allows the speaker, through metalepsis, to do.” Like the police whistle, songs enact public interpellation, calling individuals—both fictional, often archetypal characters and through them, listeners—into subjects. This process as Althusser described it derives from ideological forces and power struggles. Dylan seems conscious of this process as we will see in the explication of “10,000 Men” below. The term is useful to us in a more general way in that it allows us to better focus on the social dynamics of song performance.

the blues like Blind Willie McTell.” In the final part of this paper, we will see how Dylan manipulates poetic form in and of itself to induce (blues) meaning.

Grammar Deviations

A number of deviations from Standard English grammar have become accepted and recognized by speakers as stylistic forms of speech due to their degree of expressivity. Indeed, what is often perceived of as “bad” or ungrammatical English can be formulaic and poetic. No one could deny, for example, the emphatic expression vehicled by double negation (present in other English varieties as well). The triple negation found in American Southern dialects allows, not so uncommonly, for even greater exclamatory effect: Ain’t nobody here got no idea what I’m talking about?!

The “ain’t . . . no” formula is of particular interest in the overall structure of Dylan’s arrangement of “Broke Down Engine.” In effect, of the three uses, the first and third frame the text, occurring in the first and last verses. The singer-songwriter plays metatextual tribute to the blues master by repeating the title of his song in the line “Feel like a broke down engine” followed by the “ain’t . . . no” formula in these two verses. The final verse replaces the initial “ain’t got no drivin’ wheel” with “ain’t got no whistle or bell.” This framing device creates structural balance and strengthens the effect of the double negation as it expresses the ultimate state of absolute loss of one’s self. Such ultimateness is further reinforced by use of the formula in the penultimate verse, creating a culminating effect of a symbolist nature rather than a narrative one. Repetition adds to this effect: in both verses the complete phrase is “ain’t got no” and both interpellate the female lover.

The dropping of auxiliaries in the use of the perfective aspect (for example, “You seen my cat?” as opposed to “Have you seen my cat?”) provides another stylistic grammar deviation common in Southern dialects. In Standard English, the perfective form, as it relates the accomplishment of an act, employs the auxiliary “have” as if to indicate that one presently *has* (holds/carries/owns) a particular experience. The dropping of the auxiliary may have derived from phonological (rhythmic) structuration of verbal speech or from mere syntactic simplification. The result, at any rate, seems to be one of a heightened effect of the achieved action without locating it in time and space. McTell’s song line, “You been down and lonesome,” which reduces the standard form “have been” to its past participle “been,” places the action—or in this case, the state of “being”—in the forefront. The

dropping of the auxiliary places the experience in a more direct relation to the acting subject. It is clearly not the same as if one were to say “you are down and lonesome,” which provides a general description of the subject’s condition. “You been,” I would argue, combines or even merges the doer, the doing, and the having done into a definitive operation by which the action or the experience illustrates its doer.

If we compare the retention of the auxiliary “have” in the blues song “You’ve Been in Love Too Long,” recorded by Bonnie Raitt (1979), we can see/hear the difference of effects. The Paul/Stevenson/Hunter-authored lyrics, as performed by Raitt, focuses our attention on the time-measured experience of the acting subject, clearly highlighting the result of that experience: “You’re a fool for your baby.” It is as if the singer were saying “look at yourself, it’s time to move on.” In fact, “You been in love too long,” to my Southern ear, sounds stylistically awkward and I would suggest that this is due to the lack of a temporal marker needed to complete the sense of “too long.” “You been” seems, in this way, to express fatality, outside of time—let’s say a blues destiny—while “you have been,” which marks grammatical tense in the auxiliary, expresses a present state of being, linking it to the past and opening it up to the future.⁸

Informal Register

Incomplete sentences, the dropping of the first person pronoun, an abundant use of the second person “you,” and an abundant use of the “-ing” verbal form in blues lyrics are markers of a heightened interpersonal exchange and serve to create an atmosphere of intimacy both in the narrative and in the performance arena. These grammatical devices derive from spoken English and clearly denote an informal register in which barriers between speaker and listener(s) dissolve. In formal speech as well as in writing, syntactic structures adhering to the rigorous rules of subject/predicate conjugation allow for clarity of subject matters that are transmitted across mediatized bridges. Rigorous syntax is indeed necessary for clear

⁸ This Ø (a common indicator in linguistics signifying the absence of a first person pronoun) perfective form, common to Southern American English, whether of spontaneous origin or an adoption from white colonialists, has not attracted the attention it deserves from linguists (probably due to grammatical purism). Further investigation should also include a description of the use of double participles in which “do” seems to function as an auxiliary. In the McTell text at hand, we find “I done got broke” and “I done pawned my pistol.” The particled “do” clearly highlights the *doing* as a completed act. The expression “it’s a done deal” is surely a derivative of this grammatical evolution.

communication in situations in which the speaker's references are not so readily available to the listener(s). Diction, definition, and illustration are rhetorical devices practiced by orators and diplomats in an effort to communicate across barriers, whether they be political, cultural, or epistemological.

By contrast, incomplete sentence structures are used by interlocutors of certain languages who share similar references, ways of thinking, and codes of communication. It is common, for example, in both American and French conversation for a listener to complete the sentence of an initial speaker thereby confirming reception and understanding of (and in many cases agreement with) the idea transmitted. We find in such cases a type of syntactic and cognitive interplay that is obviously not practiced in formal settings. These observations allow us to perceive the "broken" sentence structure of blues and other American folk music genres as a stylistic design of the informal registers of spoken language. It should also be pointed out that the informal register of blues poetics is in keeping with the rules of prosody that have likewise emerged through speaking.

The absence of the first person pronoun "I" in American southern English is, to my knowledge, a largely stylistic effect often found only in song. I have known no instance in spoken English of a speaker deleting this pronoun other than in a veritable "breakthrough into performance."⁹ It is nonetheless common in American genres of folk music, especially the blues, and allows for a sense of closeness to the speaker that coincides well with the immediacy of the singing voice. Interestingly, Dylan's version of "Broke Down Engine" has 17 instances of Ø I (absence of) while McTell's version has only six. Elaborate rhetorical use of this device for the contemporary artist can be studied in "Meet Me in the Morning," "Gonna Change My Way of Thinkin'" and "Dirt Road Blues," all composed in AAB form.

As for the abundant use of second person "you," Dylan's text is more in keeping with that of McTell's. In both cases, the singer interpellates three players in the following order: listeners – beloved – Lord – beloved. Dylan's lyric deviates from that of his blues master only in the addition of a third interpellation of the beloved. Attentive listeners to Dylan's work are familiar with the many innovations the artist has made in his use of player

⁹ The notion "breakthrough into performance" reflects a discourse phenomenon identified by Dell Hymes (1981) in which speakers step unexpectedly out of a usual, everyday use of language into skilled verbal expression for the sake of its effect. Hymes (1981:81) writes: "The concern is with performance, not as something mechanical or inferior, as in some linguistic discussion, but with performance as creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of the ordinary course of events."

interpellation. In short, these two pronominal devices—deletion of the first person pronoun and interpellation—clearly establish a subjective mode of expression and enhance the emphatic function of language by colorful player interaction. Such subjectivity and intersubjectivity become an integral part of the informal register of the song discourse.

The close-up point of view that is expressed in the verbal ending “–ing” also adds to the rich design of intimate association between singer and listener in “Broke Down Engine.” Grammarians have always pointed to the continuous aspect of the “–ing” form. The description of an event as it is carried out derives from a subjective view of the event and gives interlocutors a feeling of lived experience. It is common for English speakers to expose actions that have an effect on their sentimental landscape by using be + –ing. “His failure to respond to my love is torturing me” discloses an ongoing pain in a way that invites the listener to observe closely. “His failure to respond to my love tortures me” states a fact and provides a global view of the tortures of unrequited love in a way that allows for more objective distance. “Ah, you’ll get over it,” one may spontaneously reply to the second example, using the simple present, whereas the example employing the continuous present incites a more sympathetic, far less detached view of the event.¹⁰

McTell exploits this grammatical device three times in “Broke Down Engine.” The first two involve the description of first person actions creating an intimate feel for the singer’s desperate situation: “Been shooting craps and gamblin’” (verse 3) and “I ain’t crying for no religion” (verse 4). The song climaxes with an elaborate use of the “–ing” form in the final verse (6). In effect, the continuous aspect is used elaborately in the unfolding of an entire love narrative “right before our eyes”:

Don’t you hear me, baby, knockin’ on your door?
 Don’t you hear your daddy, mama, knockin’ on your door?
 Can’t I get out singing, living, tapping ‘n flatting, slip right across your floor

Dylan adopts and modifies the pattern of the three instances of the “–ing” form found in McTell’s 1933 text. His arrangement maintains the sequence of the two lines employing the verb form followed by a love narrative. His narrative contains, however, several modifications:

¹⁰ This subjective effect of the verbal form be + –ing is well illustrated by the film *The Truman Show* in which Truman’s life may be viewed in all its intimacy at any given moment: *Truman is sleeping. Truman is starting to wake up. Truman is opening his eyes.*

Can't you hear me, baby, rappin' at your door?
 Can't you hear me, baby, rappin' at your door?
 Now you hear me tappin', tappin' across your floor

Dylan's text further changes the culminating effect of the narrative verse by following it up with a repetition of the first two verses in the framing device discussed above. This structure focuses attention back on the individual landscape of the lone lover, shifting us away from the interplay of the lovers. I would suggest that such a maneuver is influenced by the romantic poetry of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine, who many scholars have argued to have been influential in Dylan's songwriting.

Blues Metaphor

A third feature of which is characteristic of blues songs is found in the use of ingredients from everyday materiality as metaphors of human life and well-being, sexuality, struggles, and passion. Trains and rain are common metaphors in blues songs as well as in blues-inspired country and folk musics. Windows, floors, and doors are also commonly used in the traditional blues. In Yank Rachell and Sleepy John Estes' "Ragged and Dirty" (also recorded by Dylan 1993), for example, we hear: "Went to my window baby, I couldn't see through my blind" in which the window represents the singer's eyes and the blind represents his inability to see the reality of his lover's infidelity. These metaphors are made clear in the line that follows: "Heard my best friend coming round, I thought I heard my baby cry." Cris Smither's "I Feel the Same" (recorded by Bonnie Raitt 1973) gives us "It seems so empty now, close the door," in which the door represents the passageway allowing for a relationship to develop . . . or not.

"Broke Down Engine," a severe and life-interrupting event, evokes an individual's lost spirit and momentum. It also clearly suggests an interruption of sexual happiness. "Booze" becomes the fuel that could serve to lubricate or corrode the "driving wheels," which are, in turn, the particular motives and activities that keep the mind and heart inspired and a relationship "running." The house thus becomes the frontier of an individual's psychic and physical space. Other house references in the McTell lyric are:

Can't you hear me baby, knockin' on your **door**?
 Can I get out singing, living, tapping 'n flatting, slip right across your **floor**?
 You ain't got to put her in my house, Lordy, you only lead her to my **door**.

In keeping with this tradition, Dylan songs are filled with elements of everyday material life as relating deeper insights into existential experience.¹¹ We find doors in more than 80 of his songs, commonly denoting the threshold of interpersonal relations. Windows are also abundant. Well over 20 references to floors evoke communal life, domestic drudgery, the lowest stages of a person's life or a form of subterranean disclosure/truthfulness.¹² These commonplace items, as well as trains, rain, barbed wire, shoes, and other articles of clothing are a clear carry-over from blues traditions. To these, Dylan adds alleys, clocks, pies, ashtrays, money, phones, televisions, and brand names as well as his own version of traditional references.

Dylan's creative use of blues metaphors is widely encompassing and expanding in both detail and general reference. His references to the larger categories of materiality commonly referred to in the blues—houses, clothing, body parts, and climate—make up a considerable part of his corpus. His innovations involve processes of 1) transformation and/or projection of traditional metaphor through metonymy, synecdoche, or extension; 2) parallels; 3) modernization of objects and their function; and 4) elaboration through detail. Examples of these processes include 1) the replacement of the traditional "door" with the synecdochal "keyhole" in "She Belongs to Me"; 2) the paralleled "railroad gate" for "door" in "Absolutely Sweet Marie"; 3) "stainless steel" in "Sweetheart Like You" as a modern allusion to domestic doldrums. The modernizing of traditional references is also found in the juxtaposition of rural lexical items in "Sitting on a Barbed Wire Fence"—barbed wire, hound dogs, and bodily tortures of love ("killing me alive")—to contemporary elements of American life—random sums of money, foreign (unintelligible) doctors, and the musical riffs that one may hear in passing.

Elaboration through detail is probably the most common method of innovating blues metaphors used by Dylan. Entire songs have been devoted to random details symbolic of general references such as the many

¹¹ Dylan's metaphoric mastery has made way for fascinating, in-depth explications by a great number of competent scholars and other attentive listeners. Whether they be exotic, classic, or contemporary—borrowed, derived or invented—Dylan metaphors are never without substantial and coherent anchorage in the overall text meaning. Origins and influences are not always clear and direct and there is surely much to be done in this area of song studies. The objective here, however, must be confined to those metaphors that fit a stipulated definition of a blues metaphor.

¹² As when *Rambling, Gambling Willie's* cards fall to the floor (Dylan 1991) and the singer's words fall to the floor in "With God on Our Side" (Dylan 1964).

commonplace objects found in a house in “Everything is Broken.” “Shelter from the Storm” and “A Hard Rain’s A’ Gonna Fall” are but a couple of examples of songs built on climate references. “Clothes Line Saga” provides a narrative of the routines of doing the household laundry as it portrays the complexities of cohabitation. “4th Time Around” alludes to personal identity and the difficulties of interpersonal relationships through everyday activity involving language, clothing, and body parts. Elaboration of general categories may also be sporadic yet often provides powerful images such as a leopard-skin pill-box hat, red, white, and blue shoestrings, buttons on a coat, and high-heeled sneakers (clothing as identity, lifestyle, affiliation and discrimination); and drainpipes, buckets of rain, a mattress balancing on a bottle of wine, and a fireproof floor as representative of domestic life.

Binary Blues Clauses

The formal structure of the AAB blues verse is composed of two word groups that I have termed “binary blues clauses.” These word groups are juxtaposed and repeated in a second line; they are then followed by a third line that, just as between the binary clauses, induces a particular relation to the A lines. The verse itself is thus a triplet while inside the verse we find three binary structures: the repetition of line 1 in line 2; the response effect of line 3 to the two repeated lines; and the combination of two clauses found in all three lines. The overlapping of binary and tertiary structures is certainly an integral part of the rhythmic richness of this song form. We will focus here on the linguistic features of these structures as they lend themselves to stylistic form.

Probably the most important feature of binary blues clauses arises from syntactic fragmentation so common in American speech. The clauses remain independent of one another, basic English syntax is often defied and the meaning of the line is found in the equation of two lines, as opposed to the full thought that defines a sentence. Indeed, the core of the construction of the verse is based on relations other than grammar and syntax, constituting parallels that are clearly poetic in nature. In sum, the full poetic effect of this formula is found in the implied relationship between the two clauses and that between the A and B lines.

In my inventory of the McTell and Dylan corpuses I have identified the following relationships: cause and effect; elaboration of a condition, state, or situation that often constitutes the stylistic device of amplification; confirmation of a figurative meaning; combinations of events, circumstances, habits, or characteristics that derive from a given scenario,

often unsuspected in the opening clause of the line; condition into an effect; and, of course, oppositions. These relationships are rarely straightforward but instead implied as part of the elliptical nature of much poetry and song. For example, from "Broke Down Engine," we find "I ain't crying for no religion, Lordy, give me back my good gal please." The binary operation is oppositional: the implied relation between the two clauses is completed in the singer's need for supernatural power—not as a religious pursuit but as a romantic one. A distinction between religious and romantic motives contrives to express the desperate nature of the latter.

Although the binary clauses may form a complete sentence as in "Don't you hear me, baby, knocking at your door," this is most often not the case. Even in the example here, deeper meaning is discovered by fragmenting the clauses and seeking an implied relation. Such is found in the equation of the two sides of communication. In effect, the two clauses evoke the two processes necessary for communication to take place, starting with the second, namely the receiving of a message, and ending with the initial act of sending a message. By inverting the two processes, the singer places emphasis on the receiving end of things, interpellating the beloved who may or may not be deaf to his cries. In the same way that this inversion of the communication act provides a good example of how binary blues clauses defy temporal order, one may also question the necessity of the syntactic completion of the two clauses to the line's meaning. It would be easy for a blues singer to completely separate them, replacing them with "Don't you hear me, baby? I'm knocking at your door." Other options are "I knocking at your door" and "I be knocking at your door," and it is quite plausible to interpret the deletion of the first person pronoun as a stylistic effect. It is clear that, whatever the possibilities, the complete sentence structure adds nothing to the essential meaning of the line.

In "I done pawned my 32-special, good gal, and my clothes been sold," the second clause elaborates a progressive stage in an achieved state of helplessness evoked in the first clause. The singer is weaponless and then without clothing, both as a result of gambling. The first loss leaves him without defense (or a means for aggression) and the second leaves him without public decency. A process of degradation is implied, not only in the comparison between the lesser need for a pistol than that for clothes, but also in the change from the active voice ("I done pawned") and the passive voice ("my clothes been sold"). In the first act, the singer acts and in the second, he endures the act. The message thus unfolds: gambling is dangerous and it only gets worse.

Dylan's own compositions include 17 songs with full AAB structure and seven others using an altered use of binary blues clauses. His innovations of this form are as remarkable as in his use of blues metaphors. A surprising example of innovation of binary blues clauses will be studied in what follows.

Obscurity of Form into Meaning

I wonder if even the most attentive listeners of Dylan's recordings would be able to readily identify the one song on *Under the Red Sky* (1990) which is composed in AAB verse form. The lyric structure of "10,000 Men" is indeed disguised by several dominant features that in fact bear a contrast to the traditional blues form. The contrasting formal designs that make up "10,000 Men" clearly mark both cultural hybridization and originality in Dylan's songwriting.¹³ The use of varying discourse genres provides the most striking and encompassing example of stylistic contrasts. The description of collective identities and activities of "10,000 men" (and alternately of women) clearly enters into a socio-historical view of the world: front-line soldiers, elite members of society, explorers, wealth seekers, brides, destitute criminals, housekeepers and servants may be viewed as archetypes as in many of Dylan's texts.

However, in the third line of every verse (the B lines), each group is linked to the worldly activities that they perform, bringing them down to earth, so to speak, and giving them a clearly human role. The symbolic images of the men on the hill, of those dressed in oxford blue, of the women dressed in white, and so on, evoke their social status and place them in a synchronic view of history. This momentary, still-life view of human purpose is overturned in each of the B lines by transforming them into real life events carried out by individuals ("some of 'm gonna get killed," "coming in from the cold," "each one of 'em just out of jail," "sweeping it up with a broom," and so forth). I would like to insist on the fact that this synchronic/diachronic contrast is built into the formal structure of the lyric in which the A lines paint a history-book picture and the B lines zoom in for

¹³ Such a formal contrast seems to mark a poetic instance of structural transformation as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss in Amerindian myths. Interplay of stylistic form in one and the same text may very well reveal something about the microscopic process of cultural transformations identified in more macroscopic social phenomena by structural anthropologists.

a closer observation of active human life. The binary oppositions of the collective/particular and the synchronic/diachronic are expressed with contrasting rhetorical structures identifiable as socio-historical discourse and blues discourse.

Another genre, however, is superimposed throughout the text and, it should be noted, throughout the album. In effect, the underlying theme of "10,000 Men" finds parallels in the following nursery rhyme:

What are little girls made of, made of?
 What are little girls made of?
 Sugar and spice and everything nice
 That's what little girls are made of.

What are little boys made of, made of?
 What are little boys made of?
 Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails,
 That's what little boys are made of.¹⁴

In terms of content alone, Dylan's text, like the nursery rhyme, is built on a distinction between the activities and qualifiers of men and those of women. The structure is also built on a constant shift in our perception of each. On the surface, male roles painted in the A lines interpellate soldiers, well-dressed men, explorers, fortune seekers, poor men, and guardians of woman's morals. Female images call forth brides, housekeepers, and servants. This list clearly provides a "neutral" view of social categories as in history and storybook characters.

To link the Dylan text with the nursery rhyme printed above, we note that the male roles involve danger, power, possession, success, and failure while the female roles involve subordination and efforts at pleasing others. There is a sort of innocence in the simplicity with which these roles are presented. This simplicity is especially captured in the airy rhythms echoing children's rhymes as well as in the fixed nature of the images that one simply wouldn't think to question ("That's what little boys are made of"). The number 10,000, an ungraspable sum for young children, and yet containing the pedagogical 10 (the number of fingers with which children learn to count) signals, however, the deceptive characteristic of nursery rhymes, as well as of authoritative discourse more generally.

The B lines of the lyric, which are to be interpreted as a response to the oversimplified categories of both historical discourse and nursery rhyme,

¹⁴ Transcribed from childhood memory.

bring to our attention that looks can, indeed, be deceiving. Such deceptions are drawn out in the following table:

Gender role	Stereotype	Reality
Soldiers	Powerful and brave ¹⁵	Self-destructive
Well-dressed men	Respectful ¹⁶	Self-satisfying
Explorers	Adventurous	Mischievous
Fortune seekers	Hard working	Pampered
Guardian	Protective	Jealous
Brides	Pure	Seducers
Poor men	Needy	Polygamous users
Housekeepers	Dutiful	Clumsy and futile
Servants	Sugar and spice	Nice ¹⁷

In addition to the contrasting view of the collective players in the text, the male/female distinction finds a parallel in the speaking voice of the poet (male) who interpellates a female second person “you” four times in the song (verses two, three, five, and nine).

The lyric is constructed, then, of three narrating voices: the detached historical view of, let’s say, “the history lecturer”; the voice echoing from a child’s world of fairy tale; and the singing persona who plays out a personal drama of the male role sketched out in both the rhyme and history. The voice of the singing persona is, of course, the narrative voice holding the text together. We may thus identify the history lecture and the nursery rhyme as metanarratives,¹⁸ held in suspension as part of the singer’s life references

¹⁵ This image and its story call to mind Dylan’s “John Brown,” in which the soldier’s mother boasts with personal satisfaction of her son’s bravery. In the end, John Brown has been injured and mutilated from battle. He shows that he does not feel self-satisfaction by placing his medals in his mother’s hand—a symbolic gesture.

¹⁶ This category of supposedly respectful men taking advantage of naïve women finds a parallel in Dylan’s “Blind Willie McTell” (1991): “There’s a woman by the river / With some fine young handsome man / He’s dressed up like a squire / Bootlegged whiskey in his hand.”

¹⁷ The final line of “10,000 Men”—“It’s really so sweet of you to be so nice to me”—yields the only purely linguistic evidence of a possible influence of the “What are little boys made of” nursery rhyme. All other echoes are either thematic or narratological.

¹⁸ A metanarrative is the formal telling of a story within a story. The relationship between the metanarrative and the narrative varies but will have an inherent bearing on the ultimate meaning of the overall narrative.

and clearly having a bearing on his interaction with the female players in the lyric.¹⁹ What is most interesting for us here is that the personal voice of the narrator is formally aligned with the blues discourse in both elemental and structural ways.

First, as we have seen, the blues discourse—as a more intimate and diachronic view of human life—is found in the B lines of the verses. The A lines, in all except verses five and nine, depict the collective group in a noun phrase. Verse one of the song sets the pace with the powerful and anticipatory, yet static, image of “10,000 men on a hill.” As opposed to the traditional blues form, these lines are not constructed of two clauses;²⁰ nor do we find any of the stylistic features identified above (grammatical deviations, informal register, commonplace metaphors). The B lines, on the other hand, are nearly all composed of two separate clauses and are rich in blues stylistics. Moreover, speech directed to a second person player (always female) is used in the B lines of verses two and three, and throughout verses five and nine. From the very first verse we see a considerable difference of grammatical “tone” between the A and B lines:

10,000 men on a hill
 10,000 men on a hill
 Some of ‘em going down, some of ‘em gonna get killed

In the B line of this verse, we find both phonetic deviations that imply casual discourse (we note that all of the A lines in the song employ standard diction) and grammatical deviation in the deletion of the auxiliary “are” in the second clause. We also note the uninhibited use of the “-ing” form.

One of the most interesting uses of grammatical deviations in the Dylan corpus is found in the B line of verse three of “10,000 Men”: “None of them doing nothing that your mama wouldn’t disapprove.” This line contains four markers of negation: none, no-, -n’t and dis-. The abundance of negations creates obscurity in the meaning of the line to the extent that one is practically obligated to do a mathematical calculation to figure out if the “10,000 men on the move” are “good guys” or “bad guys.” Taking into consideration the grammatical deviation of “None of them doing nothing,” the logical inference here is that mothers would not approve of anything these men do. No ambiguity whatsoever.

¹⁹ In all but one instance of a female presence in the text, the narrator is also present.

²⁰ Despite the use of single clauses, the A lines are sung as one full line with a long pause between, for example, “10,000 men” and “on a hill” in AAB blues fashion.

I will argue, however, that even for listeners born and bred in the rural South, this line causes confusion. I contend that this confusion is deliberate and results from the contrast between the double negation of the first clause as deviation and the double negation of the second clause as grammatically logical. The juxtaposition of these double negations seems to somehow negate the negation of the approval thereby creating a sense of ambiguity that does not grammatically exist. Could it be that a mother's approval stands as an ultimate play of power against the authorities of history? That the "snakes and snails" and "sugar and spice" is telling of some truth about the sexes, but not the whole story? Or might it be that the grammatical deviation itself is what our mama disapproves?

To conclude, blues renditions of the universal tale of unrequited love have often served as metaphoric representations of power struggles between slave and master and the later development of worker and boss. In some instances, descriptions of suffering in romantic love were composed to disguise descriptions of the hardships of economic and social injustices experienced by African-Americans in the rural South. The interplay of distinctly different voices and points of view in "10,000 Men" demonstrated above is clearly not a mystical configuration but a reflection of plurivocal realities of American cultural heritages and ideologies. The formal blues structure is maintained by the artist's enactment of a frustrated love affair. This is found most explicitly in the expression of jealousy in verse five. In verse nine, attempts to extract sweetness from a mere gesture of (tea) service reveal a lover's desperation. While such meaning conveyed in traditional blues lyrics is based to a large extent on content—characters, events, and sentiments—although not entirely (metonymy and other stylistic devices are clearly at play in "Broke Down Engine"), Dylan's textual meaning is disclosed most significantly through a reading of the dialogical structures which make up his poetic design. Indeed, formal discourse patterns and their historical references reveal a wide range of power relations (teacher/student, bearers of tradition/youth, commander-in-chief/soldiers) in parallel with explicit descriptions of male and female roles. "10,000 Men" is thus in keeping with the blues tradition as it depicts hardships that are both personal and political. The poetic innovation as described here stems from Dylan's meta-linguistic penetration of codes of authoritative discourses that guide social behavior and interpersonal relations by interpellating individuals into subjective identities.

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