

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

References

Baez 1964

Joan Baez. *Joan Baez Songbook*. Ed. by Solomon and Maynard. New York: Ryerson Music.

Bronson 1959-72

Bernard H. Bronson. *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads* (4 vols.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Burnett 1913 Richard Burnett. "Farewell Song." In *Songs Sung by R. D. Burnett, The Blind Man*. Monticello, KY. Self-published.
- Cohen and Seeger 1964 John Cohen and Mike Seeger. *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*. New York: Oak Publications.
- Dorson 1972 Richard M. Dorson. *Folklore and Folklife, An Introduction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dylan 1962 Bob Dylan. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Copyright registration manuscript EU 723453. June 11. Washington, DC: Library of Congress.
- Dylan 1998 _____. *Lyrics, 1962–1985*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Dylan 2004 _____. *Chronicles: Volume One*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Harvey 2001 Todd Harvey. *The Formative Dylan, Transmission and Stylistic Influences, 1961–1963*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Heylin 1996 Clinton Heylin. *Bob Dylan: A Life in Stolen Moments, Day by Day: 1941–1995*. New York: Schirmer.
- Krogsgaard 1995 Michael Krogsgaard. "Bob Dylan: The Recording Sessions, Part One." *The Telegraph*, 52 (Autumn): 68-131. <http://users.powernet.co.uk/barrett/TheTelegraph/extracts/Session1.html>.
- Moore 1939 Juanita Moore. "I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow." Copyright registration manuscript EU 202058. August 3. Washington, DC: Library of Congress.
- Phillips and Kirk 1956 Thomas Phillips and Eugene Brooks Kirk. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Copyright registration manuscript EU 429328. March 12. Washington, DC: Library of Congress.
- Saunders 2001 Walt Saunders. "Notes and Queries." *Bluegrass Unlimited*, 35, 11:26.
- Scaduto 1996 Anthony Scaduto. *Bob Dylan*. London: Helter Skelter Publishing. Orig. pub. 1971.

- Seeger 1962 Mike Seeger. Liner notes to *Old Time Country Music*. Folkways FA-2325.
- Sharp 1932 Cecil Sharp. *English Folk Songs in the Southern Appalachians* (2 vols). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shellans 1968 Herbert Shellans. *Folk Songs of the Blue Ridge Mountains*. New York: Oak Publications.
- Shelton 1962 Robert Shelton. Liner notes to *Bob Dylan*. Columbia CK 8579.
- Stanley 1953 Carter Stanley. "I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow." Copyright registration manuscript EU 310059. March 13. Washington, DC: Library of Congress.
- Wolfe 1973 Charles K. Wolfe. "Man of Constant Sorrow: Richard Burnett's Story, [part] 2." *Old Time Music*, 10:5-11.
- Wolfe 2002 _____. "The Original Man of Constant Sorrow: The Mystery of Emry Arthur." *Bluegrass Unlimited*, 36, 10:46-51.
- Yarrow and Stookey 1962 Peter Yarrow and Paul Stookey. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Copyright registration manuscript EU 712146. March 15. Washington, DC: Library of Congress.

Discography

- Arthur 1987 Emry Arthur 1987. Matrix C1540. Rec. Chicago, IL. Vocalion 5208. Reissued on *I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow. Vol. 1*. Old Homestead OHCS 190. Orig. rec. 1928.
- Arthur 1995 _____. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Matrix L957. Rec. Grafton, WI. Paramount 3289. Reissued on *Music of Kentucky, Vol. 2: Early American Rural Classics, 1927-1937*. Yazoo 2014. Orig. rec. 1931.
- Brown 1997 Richard "Rabbit" Brown. "James Alley Blues." Matrix 38000-1. Rec. New Orleans, LA, March 11, 1927. Victor 20578A. Reissued on *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090. Orig. rec. 1927.

- Carter Family 1935 "Can the Circle Be Unbroken." Matrix ARC 17472-2. Rec. May 10, 1935. New York City. Okeh 03027.
- Collins 1962 Judy Collins. "Maid of Constant Sorrow." *A Maid of Constant Sorrow*. Elektra EKS-7209.
- Dylan 1961 Bob Dylan. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Rec. Minneapolis, MN, c. May 1961. Unissued.
- Dylan 1961 _____. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Rec. Minneapolis, MN, December 22, 1961. Unissued.
- Dylan 1962 _____. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Matrix CO 68745-3C. Rec. New York City, November 22, 1961. *Bob Dylan*. Columbia CK-8579.
- Dylan 2005 _____. "Man of Constant Sorrow." Rec. March 1963 as part of *Folk Songs and More Songs* television program. Issued on *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan*. Dir. by Martin Scorsese. Paramount.
- Gunning 1937 Sarah Ogan Gunning. "I Am a Girl of Constant Sorrow." Recorded by Alan Lomax, NYC, 1937. Library of Congress, AFS 1945A. Unissued,
- Hester 1962 Carolyn Hester. *Carolyn Hester*. Columbia CL-1796.
- Lubin 1962 Roger Lubin. "Man of Constant Sorrow." *Folk Music of Washington Square*. Folkways FA-2353.
- Peter, Paul, and Mary
1962 "Sorrow." *Peter Paul and Mary*. Warner Brothers. W1449.
- Seeger 1962 Mike Seeger. *Old Time Country Music*. Folkways FA-2325.
- Stanley Brothers 1996 "I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow." Columbia 20816. Reissued on *The Complete Columbia Stanley Brothers*. Columbia CK 53798. Orig. rec. 1950.
- Stanley Brothers 1994a "Man of Constant Sorrow." *The Stanley Brothers: Clinch Mountain Bluegrass*. Rec. 1959, Newport, RI. Vanguard 77018-2.
- Stanley Brothers 1994b "Man of Constant Sorrow." *The Stanley Brothers: Clinch Mountain Bluegrass*. Rec. 1964, Newport, RI. Vanguard 77018-2.