I AM AMERICA SINGING: BOB DYLAN'S IDENTITY UNIFIED THROUGH LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

I Am America Singing: Bob Dylan's Identity Unified through Linguistic Performance

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Focus on his biography and his performance in the media has long been the basis of interpretation of Bob Dylan's identity. This has resulted in the accepted critical theory of Dylan's identity as mercurial and lacking a central ipseity. However, as Michael Strachan argues, rock biography is an unstable genre because it treats its subjects as mysteries that require solving, placing the biographer as the protagonist who can decode the riddle. This is compounded by rock and roll journalism's function in maintaining the standard in the canon of rock and roll. For this reason, these are inadequate media through which to analyze contemporary subjectivity or identity, especially one that has been historically treated as complex like Bob Dylan's has. In *I Am America Singing*, I argue that, because of his distrust of the media, Dylan's performance is a deliberate ruse of word games, shifts, and inconsistencies, and that the examination of the basic speech patterns the personae use provides a clearer understanding of his identity. It is through this focus that the shifts in voices and personae point to an identity unified through linguistic patterns common to American speech.

Dedication

For Edwin and David – “may your song always be sung.”

and

For Cary, who knows there’s no success like failure and failure’s no success at all.

CONTENTS

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Chapter 1

Pop Culture Mythopoeia: The Creation of "Bob Dylan"

On July 23, 2009, Bob Dylan was arrested in Long Branch, New Jersey when homeowners reported that a strange-looking man had wandered into their yard. Dylan, on a tour stop and trying to be anonymous while taking a walk through town, had left his identification at the venue at which he'd later perform with Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp. The homeowners called the police to report that "an eccentric-looking old man" was peering through a window of their home, which was for sale (Harris 2). He was detained by an officer in her twenties, Kristie Buble, who, along with the homeowners, did not recognize the elder musician, but were more familiar with his iconic representation from the early 1960s. Buble did not believe that the man was Bob Dylan, but rather thought, "[w]e see a lot of people on our beat, and I wasn't sure if he came from one of our hospitals or something" (Francescani). She brought Dylan back to the hotel and convention center where he was scheduled to perform to confirm his identity. When she asked for Dylan's identification, his manager produced Dylan's passport. In her defense, Buble said, "Now I've seen pictures of Bob Dylan from a long time ago and he didn't look like Bob Dylan to me at all. He was wearing sweatpants tucked into black rain boots, and two raincoats with the hood pulled down over his head" (Francescani). Buble was later met at the venue by her older Sergeant, who looked in the squad car and said, "That is not Bob Dylan" (Francescani). Older and in his street clothes, Dylan did not bear any resemblance to the way he looked in the 1960s. The dissonance between the homeowners', Buble's, and the Sergeant's responses to Dylan, the "eccentric old man"

they encountered, and the iconic figure of Dylan with which they were more familiar was based on their expectations of Dylan and Dylan's identity from the pop culture mythology that he has helped create and that has been created around him (Francescani).

This is one of the challenges in the interpretation and presentation of Bob Dylan's identity: it is the result of narrative construction in which language doesn't merely represent reality, but creates reality. The reality that has been created is the concept of Dylan's identity, and the current theory applied to it is that he is a "hollow man" without a stable core or that he lacks a central ipseity. This is because the language through which Dylan's identity has been created is the language of illusions and is, therefore, unstable.[1] Because of this, he is perceived and understood through stories that are true, half-true, important, unimportant, fabricated, or misinterpreted that have been told by both Dylan and his contemporaries. Subsequently, the way people respond to and interpret Dylan is the effect of his performance in the press, during which he played word and language games, primary source interviews conducted with Dylan's Hibbing, Minneapolis, and Greenwich Village friends, acquaintances, and fellow musicians based on their experiences and memories of him, and biographies and rock and roll journalism.

The narratives that have contributed to the construction of the mythology associated with Dylan's identity rely upon systems of communications dependent upon semiological language. This semiology establishes Dylan as the sign for which the language most commonly used to describe him, like "genius," "mercurial," or "voice of a generation," signifies a pop culture icon who has been witness to, shaped, and chronicled

[1] In *Narrative Chance*, Gerald Vizenor cites Vincent Leitch's argument from *Deconstructive Critisicm*, "[t]he world is a text, . . ., and nothing stands behind the world of tropes because a literal language does not exist, except in illusions" (5).

a great expanse of American history. He is, however, most closely associated with two key periods in his career: 1961-1966 and 1997-through his current production, the former being the seminal period in establishing the Dylan mythos. In the mid-twentieth century, the development of mass media aided in their dissemination. The mass media also creates myth about individuals in popular culture and influences the creation of mythologies about events and people that exist in the public sphere because myth is "a type of speech" and "everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse" (Barthes 109). Just as anything that exists is subject to language acts and narrative construction, everything in the public sphere is subject to mythopoeia. Further, myths that exist in the collective memory of any society are historically the product of oral tradition, but they also, "can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech"(Barthes 109). This is evident in the way in which celebrities were and have been treated since the development of technology that provided for the increased dissemination of information about them. More than just focusing on his or her works, media shifted the focus to the minutiae of the artist's life and to finding connections between the artist and his or her work. This gave media, including print and film, a larger role in the creation of Dylan's identity as it exists and persists in popular culture and as part of the collective unconscious.

Dylan's mythology begins when he arrived in New York City in the winter of 1961 and became part of the Greenwich Village folk community that was comprised of remnants of the Old Left and the Beats and the burgeoning New Left. The ideas of these successive movements were congruent in that they represented the interests of the fringe

or underrepresented factions of American culture, those existing outside of the hegemony that dictated the socio-culture norms that were ". . . embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth. . . ." (Connell 184). The folk community was grounded in the American folk tradition of country, bluegrass, and blues music, American culture, and the notion that the nation's founding documents were sacrosanct and protected the liberties and dignity of all Americans. The America that they gave voice to was not the post-war less commercialized and commodified America represented in advertising, in pop music, on television, or on the radio. That was "main stream" or hegemonic America. Dylan "thought of mainstream culture as lame as hell and a big trick" (*Chronicles* 35). Rather, the folk community felt a sense of responsibility toward a less-commodified or commercial reality. Folk singer John Cohen articulated that, "[w]e also seemed to represent some idea about, excuse the expression, integrity, or standing for something authentic or real in music" (Scorsese 1:01:09-1:01:17). He continued, "I think we were set up as a pillar of virtue" (Scorsese 1:01:31-1:01:37). Though others in Greenwich Village, like Dave van Ronk, were dedicated to this ideology, Dylan's quickly achieved success made him a relative representative of that authenticity or integrity.

Dylan attributes his feelings of alienation from the hegemonic culture in which he was raised and a search for an authentic Self to both the feeling that mainstream culture was a farce and that he was born "far away" from where and who he was meant to be. He was searching for a place that felt like home and an identity that felt more natural to him (Scorsese 0:53-1:01). Dylan's ennui was not unique. It was endemic to many Baby Boomers who felt their parents' capitalist and consumer-driven lives lacked meaning and

substance. For that reason, Dylan's initial appropriation of the Woody Guthrie-esque folk identity is one which he would argue was more authentic than the one into which he had been born. However, it is arguably an affect of the post-war era in which individuality and identity construction are molded by the society in which he lived, including media images, rather than springing from an internal source.[2] Summarily, Dylan's search for an authentic identity initially resulted in a construction and assumption of a preexisting folk trope, one that he borrowed from his radio, literary, and musical influences, primarily Woody Guthrie. His introjection of the folk counterculture persona blurred the distinction between the media representations of the folk musicians and ideology and his developing Self.[3] Commenting on this, SDS founding member Tom Hayden noted that the media saturation caused one to, ". . .become addicted to the media environment. . . Your identity gradually becomes so involved that you don't know who you are except in relation to technology, media and crowds" (Miller 308).

The initial confusion surrounding Dylan's identity began with his misleading history or origination stories, which have been documented in early interviews and retold by myriad biographers and journalists. To be sure, Dylan began stretching the truth when still in Minnesota, telling friends that he toured with Bobby Vee or that he was Bobby Vee, but it was difficult for him to completely recreate his identity as he did in New York. In *No Direction Home*, Izzy Young, former owner of the Folklore Center in

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[2] This theory of identity construction is historicized in Herbert Marcuse's 1964 work *One-Dimensional Man.* It is used here to illustrate how Dylan's early folk identity construction was the sum of external media influences rather than a natural internal development of Self. David Reisman also describes this phenomenon as "other directed" in his 1961 work *The Lonely Crowd.*

[3] The concept of "introjection suggests a variety of relatively spontaneous processes by which a Self (Ego) transposes the "outer" into the "inner." Thus introjection implies the existences of an inner dimension distinguished from and even antagonistic to the external exigencies–an individual consciousness and an individual unconsciousness *apart from* public opinion and behavior" (10).

Greenwich Village, reads Dylan's entry into a journal kept at the Folklore Center: "I was born in Duluth, Minnesota in 1941, moved to Gallop, New Mexico. Then until now, I lived in Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, North Dakota, for a little bit. Started playing in carnivals when I was 14 with guitar and piano" (Scorsese 57:21-57:36). Young continues to read from the journal, noting people Dylan said he knew or played with and admits he should have known Dylan was not telling the truth. The only truth in his biographical entry in Young's journal was that he was born in Duluth in 1941. The rest was a narrative constructed to create an adopted identity. Rather than honestly represent his rather normal, middle-class, Jewish, Midwestern upbringing, Dylan created an identity based on a Hobo ideal, emulating the character presented in Woody Guthrie's *Bound for Glory* that he believed represented folk authenticity. Robert Shelton acknowledges that for Dylan, "Woody symbolized the strongest fibers in American folk culture – empathy for the downtrodden, dislike for the sham, joy in music, the independence of a man who can't be bought, and a sense of justice that forced him to speak up or sing out when he saw people being pushed around" (78).

That is the identity Dylan channeled, emulated, and presented to the press. He used the media to mold his image early in his career, which established the language used to create his mythology. When Cynthia Gooding interviewed him on WBAI Radio New York in 1962, Dylan continued to mask his past by telling her, in response to her question about what he was doing in Minneapolis, where she had previously met him, "I'd just come in from South Dakota, that was about three years ago…yeah, I'd come in from Sioux Falls, that was the only place you didn't have to go too far to find the Mississippi River – it runs right through the town" (Gooding 1). Dylan's image and identity creation,

the orphaned Huck Finn-esque character steeped in Americana and American tradition, continued into May of 1963 during his radio interview with Studs Terkel. In the interview, he again confirms that he is from Minnesota, but embellishes a story about his uncle's having taken him to see Woody Guthrie in Burbank, California when he was ten (Terkel 6-7). Dylan did not deliberately hide his past, but began to perform a persona he'd experienced through media that felt more natural to him than the one into which he'd been born. Subsequently, Dylan performed a persona in public that was counter to the reality in which he had been reared. In doing so, he violated the perceived integrity or authenticity of the folk movement, but also established the origin of Dylan's mythology as the vagabond folk prodigy.

Dylan's appropriation of the folk and folk music identity was successful because it is deeply rooted in American tradition. However, the myths that exist in popular culture most closely associated to Dylan's identity performance, regardless of its iteration, focus on or layer what is signified by the antecedent traditions[4]. Speech about or representations of Dylan either isolate or marry many pre-existing mythological frameworks of American culture and history, including the myth of Robert Johnson at the crossroads, the heroic, yet transient, figure of the folk singer, the rogue, the American Wild West, and the reluctant superstar.

Dylan's folk music education is one example. When he was a student at the University of Minnesota playing in clubs in the adjacent neighborhood Dinkytown, he was considered an average singer and songwriter among his peers, imitating the folk and

[4] Once it has been established, myth is also effective in creating a reality in collective unconscious: "[m]ythical speech is made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance" (Barthes 110).

blues singers he admired, like Woody Guthrie or Mance Lipscomb. After having been in New York City for a few months, Dylan transformed into a formidable writer and performer. When he visited Minneapolis in May of 1961 the improvement in his performance was such a radical change that those who saw him perform during his visit have presented it as if Dylan must have made a Faustian deal to make it so. Tony Glover, Dylan's friend from Minneapolis, observed of Dylan's progress in his short absence, 'He was playing at a party and it was like a whole different guy. You hear those stories about the blues men who go out to the crossroads and sell their souls to the devil and come back all of a sudden able to do stuff – Robert Johnson, Tommy Johnson – that old mythology. It was one of those kind of deals almost" (Scorsese 53.34-53:50). This story, retold many times, that it has been appropriated as part of the Dylan mythology.

The pre-existing material or myth with which Dylan is associated is the story of the blues singer, Robert Johnson's rapid development of guitar skills. Johnson's legend or myth exists in many variations, reimagined by writers like Greil Marcus and Gayle Dean Wardlow. The most prominent is that Johnson went out to the crossroads and met the Devil who tuned and played his guitar giving him the skills of a master. Dylan's mastery of the finger-picking technique, cross-harp harmonica, and performance in the four or five months he had been in New York was so remarkable that it seemed like a modern version of the Johnson myth. The allusion ascribes a mythic aura to the twenty-one year old Dylan prior to Shelton's *New York Times* review of him four months later. Dylan recognized that the Johnson Crossroads myth had commonly been ascribed to him in 2005 when he said, "That's when I went to the crossroad and made a, a big deal…ya know? Like…yeah one night and ah, I went back to Minneapolis and ah, they were like,

'Where's this guy been?' Ya know? 'He's been at the Crossroads'" (Scorsese 54:15-54:32). The absorption of this myth into Dylan's narrative placed him in the pantheon of American musicians even before he had released his first album.

This image of Dylan, the Guthrie-eque prodigy who merged poetry, folk music, and popular culture, is the representation most closely associated with him. Because the focus of Dylan's mythology is placed on his early career, the myth-language associated with him originated in that early period. It follows that his identity is also associated with the folk revival and deviations from that perceived original identity are considered violations of his authenticity. While Dylan was recreating his personal narrative in the Greenwich Village folk community and in interviews, the media also helped shape his public persona and myth through their interpretation and presentation of him beginning with Robert Shelton's seminal September 29, 1961 *New York Times* review of Dylan's opening-act performance at Gerde's Folk City on September 26. The review focused more about Dylan's act than he did about the headlining Greenbriar Boys. Shelton heralded Dylan's arrival as a major figure in the folk music scene, writing, "[a]lthough only 20 years old, Bob Dylan is one of the most distinctive stylists to play in a Manhattan cabaret in months" (qtd. in Shelton 122). He continued, noting Dylan's Huck Finn hat and writing, "[h]is clothes may need a bit of tailoring, but when he works his guitar, harmonica or piano and composes new songs faster than he can remember them, there is no doubt that he is bursting at the seams with talent" (qtd. in Shelton 122). The allusion to Huck Finn, which would be revisited by journalists and biographers, specifically Greil Marcus in *Mystery Train*, helped further create Dylan's image as a free-wheeling, traveling orphan and also utilized pre-existing tropes, as the Robert Johnson myth had.

Shelton's review continued with recognition of Dylan's reticence about revealing his past, but also presented a prediction about his immediate future: "Dylan is vague about his antecedents and birthplace, but it matters less where he's been than where he is going, and that would seem to be straight up" (qtd. in Shelton 122). The piece ended with a review of the Greenbriar Boys' performance, but the article's layout and the amount of text Shelton dedicated to Dylan positioned him as focal point of the article. It was clear that Dylan was the musician worth seeing and the more important talent. The focus on Dylan, the young newcomer, engendered resentment among some of the other performers who felt the review gave undeserved and exaggerated praise. Shelton's article received mixed reviews in the Greenwich Village folk community, but his critique of Dylan as a fast-rising talent assisted Dylan's ascension and earn him a studio session with Carolyn Hester.

Two other aspects of Shelton's review help establish the Dylan myth. First, Shelton compares Dylan to or describes him with other elements of Americana like, "the rude beauty of a Southern field hand musing in melody on his back porch," "a vaudeville actor," and "beatnik," all of which are part of the collective unconscious or ideas and figures that have already been worked through in American culture and literature, and help create a mythical identity for Dylan. Secondly, Shelton ends his review, "But if not for every taste, his music-making has the mark of originality and inspiration, all the more noteworthy for his youth." (qtd. in Shelton 122). This underpins his initial assessment that Dylan's talent was unique, distinguishing him from his peers, and that his past was a mystery. Both of these became part of the lexicon and have been revisited, revised, and continued in subsequent publications.

Shelton's initial review of Dylan, coupled with what was printed about him in periodicals such as *Broadsides, Sing Out!, The Saturday Evening Post, Mademoiselle, Time, Rolling Stone,* and other publications in the short period of from 1961-1966 and the early Studs Terkel and Cynthia Gooding interviews created the language and shaped the narrative about Dylan's identity in his early career, which is the iconic figure of Dylan that exists in popular culture. In "An Open Letter to Bob Dylan," Irwin Silber of *Sing Out!* addresses what he feels are some of the issues Dylan was facing as a result of his fast-acquired fame. Silber writes to Dylan, "…I realize that, all of a sudden, you have become a pheenom, a VIP, a celebrity. A lot has happened to you in these past two years, Bob – a lot more than most of us thought possible" (67). The letter continues noting that Dylan, more than any other musician with the exception of Woody Guthrie, has been featured in *Sing Out!* because he had written "some of the best new songs to appear in America in more than a decade" (Silber 67). This reinforces the importance of Woody Guthrie's position in the Folk community and Dylan's connection to and descendants from him. Silber enumerates some of Dylan's recent compositions and claims that the songs he listed "have already had a significant impact on American consciousness and style" (67). Dylan distinguished himself as a songwriter by intellectualizing his lyrics and he was influential on other artists' work, but Silber's assessment of Dylan, which is also part of the Dylan lexicon, continues to add to the hyperbolic way in which journalists treated him.

Furthermore, the language was also used by Dylan's friends such as Dave Van Ronk and Joan Baez as they repeated false or veiled narratives about who Dylan was, where he came from, and how he was reared. He continued to be labeled with terms like,

"genius," "voice of a generation," and "prophet." These remained unchallenged until Andrea Svedberg's November 4, 1963, *Newsweek* article, "I Am My Words." The article both revealed Dylan's stable Midwestern Jewish upbringing, questioning his honesty and authenticity, and also accused him of plagiarism. Up to this point, Gooding and others in the folk community and media understood there were inconsistencies in Dylan's origination stories, but rarely questioned him or whether he was truthful about his biography because his musical talent and compositions eclipsed those of his contemporaries. Several had known of Dylan's name change, but hadn't cared. Many celebrities use pen or stage names, so Dylan's was unremarkable. Shelton's biography points out that John Hammond, Jr. claimed to have seen Dylan when he was in Minneapolis and that his last name had been Zimmerman (127). Similarly, Mary Rotolo, Dylan's girlfriend Suze's mother, found out that his birth name was Zimmerman (Shelton 146). Few, however, knew the extent of his identity narrative creation until the *Newsweek* article. In addition to calling him "practically a religion" due to his quickly-achieved success and the efficacy of the myth creation, Svedberg's article also "challenged his believability" and accused him of purchasing *Blowin' in the Wind* from Lorre Wyatt, a New Jersey teenager, a claim she knew to be false when she went to print (Shelton 213-4).

The article gained credibility because Svedberg had worked with local Minnesota reporter Walter Eldot to uncover information about Dylan's Hibbing upbringing (Shelton 53). Eldot had interviewed Dylan's father Abe Zimmerman for *The Duluth News-Tribune* in October of 1963. During the course of the interview, the elder Zimmerman said, "My son is a corporation and his public image is strictly an act" (Shelton 53). Abe Zimmerman

based his assessment of his son on his expectations of who he perceived his son to be. Because of the assumed authority the elder Zimmerman possessed as Dylan's father in determining Dylan's authentic identity from his inauthentic identity, this sentiment was reinforced in Svedberg's article. Svedberg took Eldot's notes and threatened to use the information that she had if Dylan did not grant her an interview. He ultimately did, but because the interview had not gone well, or as Scaduto writes, "Dylan became nasty and broke it off," she published that Dylan had been raised in relatively normal affluence, just as most his fans had been (159). Once the authenticity of his identity had been put into question, Svedberg doubled her indictment of Dylan as a fake by ending the article with the quote, "I am my words" (qtd. in Shelton 214). If his identity was mere performance and artifice as suggested by Abe Zimmerman and Svedberg's article, then his words also pointed to an artificial commodity. The article heightened the mystery that Dylan had already established and provided a way of interpreting him as an image created through words, language, and language performance that reflected little to no actual substance, an illusion.

The *Newsweek* article affected people's perception of Dylan and the Dylan myth creation in three ways that have complicated the presentation and interpretation of his identity. First, as noted by the major biographers, Shelton, Scaduto, Heylin, Spitz, and Sounes, the article created a chasm between Dylan and the press. The media had been instrumental in Dylan's identity and myth creation, but it had been positive and Dylan had been able to control the content. His inexperience with dealing with media that would treat him critically or unjustly prompted his reluctance to allow reporters access to him, though he did maintain relationships with a trusted few like Shelton, Jann Wenner,

and Nat Hentoff. Billy James, who had arranged for the interview with Svedberg, said, "See, there was a snide, vengeful aspect to the story. It may have forever colored his relationship with reporters and editors" (qtd. in Heylin 130). Heylin notes, "The new Dylan would turn on the press before they could turn on him" (130). Dylan felt a sense of betrayal and, from that point on, what was written about him in the media was based on interpretations of his put-ons, word games, and farces. Thus, the narrative and identity construction are based on language that is unstable.

The second way that Svedberg's article affected Dylan and the Dylan myth is that it posed the question of who controls the construction and presentation of one's identity, especially someone who had garnered as much fame and public attention as Dylan. Upon reading that article, Shelton, prominent in the creation of the semiology and a journalist Dylan trusted, wrote a letter of protest to *Newsweek's* editor Osborn Elliot saying that he could have offered Svedberg much more accurate information than she had published. Not only had Shelton reviewed Dylan early in his career, he had also interviewed him several times. He was rebuffed by Joan Wharton from *Newsweek:* "We regret that you disapprove of our story on Bob Dylan, but we thought our readers would be interested in a detailed account of the popular singer who so quickly became an established leader of the folk-music movement. Clearly, the final judgment of the value of any performer rests with the public" (215). The editors at *Newsweek* felt they had a responsibility to publish what they felt was a more accurate biography for Dylan. In doing so, they complicated his history and put his authenticity into question. As a result, it was clear to Dylan that his agency over his identity had been usurped by his quickly-achieved fame, the press, and the public.

The article evidenced that Dylan could no longer control how he was perceived or presented. He, thus, engaged in a language game with the press in interviews and press conferences, reminiscent of the game, Glissendorf, which he played with John Bucklen as a teen. The two of them would engage in an exchange of nonsense words with no connection. Clinton Heylin recounts, "…it was an impromptu word game with no purpose other than to confuse some innocent third party" (19). In *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan*, Howard Sounes explains the game. Dylan and Bucklen "had invented a mind game called Glissendorf whereby they would say crazy things to see how people reacted" (35). Shelton provides an example: "Bob played a word game he christened Glissendorf. They played it for Echo's cousin, a simple country girl, who nearly cried because she couldn't understand it" (46). Glissendorf is an antecedent to and the model for how Dylan would deal with the press from that point forward. His contentious relationship with and distrust of the media has continued throughout his career, helping further shape his identity and the Dylan myth, through his 2004 *60 Minutes* interview with Ed Bradley, during which Bradley asked him, "You wrote, "The press, I figured you lied to it. Why?" (*60 Minutes*). Dylan answered, "I realized that the press the media, they're not the judge. God's the judge. An' the only person you have to think twice about lying to is yourself or to God. The press isn't either of them. An' I just figured they're irrelevant"(*60 Minutes*). His mistrust of it turned him into a trickster figure in his interviews, biographies, and press conferences, assuming the posture of avoiding, shifting, or misrepresenting the truth. This, too, has shaped Dylan in popular culture. After Svedberg's article in *Newsweek*, Dylan could no longer deny his Minnesota roots, but he also did not allow the media to isolate him into a singular subjectivity.

Furthermore, Dylan also rejected the identities ascribed to him early in his career because he did not want to serve any one agenda. The first subjectivity into which he refused to be labeled was the folk identity he had crafted. His early topical songs, what Dylan called "finger-pointing songs," focused on social issues of the early 1960s. These songs positioned him as representative spokesperson of his generation who was given the Tom Paine Award by the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (ECLC) for 1962, awarded to "some public figure who epitomized the good fight for freedom and equality" (Shelton 222). By the time he accepted the award at an ECLC fund-raising dinner in December of 1963, he had realized that he didn't want to be the face or representative spokesman of any group including the New Left or an award recipient from the "Old Left burghers in new middle-class and mellowed radicalism" (Shelton 222). Dylan's acceptance speech articulated his feelings about being attached to a particular movement other than human expression. He said, "[t]here's no black and white, left and right to me anymore. There's only up and down and down is very close to the ground. And I'm trying to go up, without thinking about anything trivial such as politics" (Scorsese 2:02:37-2:02:48). Further, Allen Ginsberg said of Dylan's realization during his noxious acceptance speech that he "got up, stood on his hind legs and said he was not a political poet and nobody's left-wing servant, but an independent minstrel or something" (Scorsese 2:02:57-2:03:07). Suze Rotolo claimed that the public wanted to pigeonhole Dylan into the same performance or type of performance associated with the folk movement and topical or political song writing (Scorsese 2:03:14-2:03:22). In comparison, artists like Phil Ochs assumed the mantle of the New Left crusade, but when the movement was over or no longer relevant, they were also irrelevant. Heylin asserts,

"Ochs, the new kid on the block, was destined to be the first 'new' Dylan. When his mentor finally turned his back on the protest genre, Ochs obligingly took over as *Broadside* mascot" (114). Dylan's artistic vision exceeded the narratives and labels associated with him. He has said of those who tried to classify him, "You know, they were trying to build me up as a topical song writer. I, I was never a topical songwriter to begin with. Whatever reason they were doing it was reasons not really – that didn't really apply to me" (Scorsese 2:02:14-2:03:22). What Dylan didn't understand was that the identity that he initially created through narrative construction and the language associated with him fulfilled a need or needs that his audience had.

The public associated their responses to him with a particular moment or period in their own lives and used him to affirm their concepts of their "projected" selves.[5] The problem with this practice arises when the audience, including the media, attempts to understand him as anything other than an artist, a medium for the music. Dylan's connection with his primary folk fan base established an expectation of the identity he would continue to perform. However, Dylan knew that Folk music limited his personal and artistic development. As he developed as an artist, musician, and poet, he altered how he presented himself. The further Dylan developed or his "understanding" deepened, he was faced with a decision as to how to progress (Marcus 6). Rock journalist Greil Marcus argues that an artist "can move on, and perhaps cut himself off from his audience, if he does, his work will lose all the vitality and strength it had when he knew it mattered to

[5] In the introduction to his collection of Dylan's interviews, Jonathan Cott quotes psychologist Jeffrey Santinover's assessment of audiences responses to stars: "Once the star is established, his fans will tear him to pieces should he ever fail to carry for them the projected childhood Self. This is used to explain both the public's response to Dylan their feelings of betrayal each time Dylan seemed to shift identity performance" (xii).

other people. Or the artist can accept the audience's image of himself . . . Then he will only be able to confirm; he will never be able to create" (6). What happened to Dylan as he continued on his path to self-realization was that any artistic growth or expression that violated what fans, critics, the media, etc. expected of him betrayed what or whom they thought he should be and what they thought he should represent, just as Abe Zimmerman's indictment in Eldot's article had conveyed. These changes also betray what they thought they were in relation to the artist. The most notable example is when Dylan transitioned from acoustic folk music to electric rock and roll at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. Fans felt a sense of betrayal because they thought that Dylan had become too commercial by changing his style to appeal to popular music tastes. Though the reaction to Dylan "plugging in" would be the most remarkable negative response to a shift in his performance, Dylan would continue to experience repeated reactions to his performance shifts throughout his career.

The *Newsweek* article exposed that Dylan's identity was a narrative construct rather than an authentic alternative to the hegemony. Moreover, it had been created by a consortium of what Jean-Francios Lyotard calls "narrative wisps" in which the narratives are "stories that one tells, that one hears, that one acts out," and that identity "does not exist as a subject but as a mass of millions of insignificant and serious little stories that sometimes let themselves be collected together to constitute big stories and sometimes disperse intro digressive elements" (qtd. in Vizenor 3). Those narratives have been interpreted and, generally, misunderstood.[6] The "narrative wisps" that helped shape

[6] Page 3 of Vizenor's anthology on postmodern discourse about Native American literature, his introduction, includes a quote by Jean-Francios Lyotard that is used to describe how the identity of Native Americans has been shaped by a misunderstanding of texts or by an appropriation of the texts to colonial or

Dylan's identity are stories that Dylan has told, that people have heard about him and repeated either in the press, in biographies, or in scholarship, or that Dylan acted out. In this construct, Dylan loses or sacrifices his subjectivity and becomes the sum of the narratives, true, false or misguided, he's told, have been told about him, and perceived about his performance. These stories contain variations and inconsistencies, pointing to instability in Dylan's identity performance. Because none of the narratives stands as a definitive authority, scholars, the public, and the media posit that Dylan lacks stable ipseity or that he is untranslatable.

One of the insignificant stories that each of the biographies has highlighted with slight variations is that Dylan used his girlfriend Suze Rotolo's lipstick case as a fret during the recording session for his first album. "Dylan used the metal cap of Suze's lipstick as his bottleneck on the small finger of his left hand" (Shelton 133). Heylin also recounts this story: "Suze Rotolo, after sitting patiently through both sessions, occasionally loaning Dylan her lipstick holder as a substitute bottleneck" (83). Scaduto reports, "At one point when Bob couldn't find something with which to fret his guitar, for *In My Time of Dyin',* he borrowed a lipstick holder" from Suze (105). Howard Sounes records the event similarly in his biography: "His son, John, Jr. was there for moral support, along with Suze, who gave Bob her lipstick holder to fret his guitar when he played the spiritual 'In My Time of Dyin'" (111). The story serves to create the image of Dylan as an artist who will use any resource available to create what he wants in the way he envisions or hears it. Yet in her 2008 memoir, Suze Rotolo refutes this story as part of

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imperial ideals. It is used here as a theory to explain that Dylan's identity was a construct that he helped create, but was, as Joan Warton illustrated in her response to Robert Shelton, subject to interpretation, construction, and presentation by the media.

Dylan's mythology, indicating that she didn't wear lipstick when she dated Dylan and could not have offered a case to him (159). Stories like this that seem inconsequential further cement Dylan's vagabond genius identity, and illustrate how the minutiae from Dylan's history are recorded erroneously, repeated endlessly, and become Dylan lore.

A more significant misrepresentation in the Dylan mythos are the narratives about his 1966 motorcycle accident that resulted in his seven-year hiatus from touring and recording. All of the major biographies include a narrative about the crash, but each presents it differently. Scaduto's account notes that, "[o]n the afternoon of Saturday, July 30, pop radio stations across the country interrupted their broadcasts with a bulletin: Bob Dylan had a motorcycle accident in Woodstock the day before, had been hospitalized, and appeared to be seriously hurt" (245). Though there were conflicting reports, Dylan "had been riding his Triumph 500 bike near his home, heading for a repair shop….The back wheels of the bike suddenly locked, throwing it into a skid and dashing Bob to the pavement" (245). Shelton's account of the accident also recognizes inconsistencies in the story, but accepts Dylan's explanation: "It happened one morning after I'd been up for three days. I hit an oil slick" (426). Further complicating the narrative, Heylin quotes Shelton's account, but offers a further explanation with quotes from a 1987 *Esquire* interview with Tom Stoppard in which Dylan expands upon the story he told Shelton, telling him that he was blinded by the sun (267). Shelton's account is retold in *Time's Icons* published in 2011 but added that Dylan had told Shelton, "There *was* an accident. There definitely *was* an accident" ("Retreat, Return" 60). That accident has been mythologized as Dylan, James Dean style, racing down a highway and losing control of his motorcycle.

In 2007, Todd Haynes provided that image in the beginning moments of *I'm Not There.* The film opens in black and white with a motorcyclist tearing down the highway. The scene ends in an abrupt cut to black with the sound of screeching wheels. In 2001, Howard Sounes' account of the accident eliminated some of the sensationalism. Sounes recognizes that there was an accident around which there has remained many questions and that it may not have been as serious as perpetuated, but he also misrepresents the facts. He reports that Dylan was riding his motorcycle close to the Grossman's home and probably fell of the motorcycle, probably on "Streibel Road, [and] he simply lost his balance, and, rather feebly, fell off his bike" (220).

It is not until 2011 that Daniel Mark Esptein provides a new alternative, and less sensational, version of the accident. Epstein's does not hold any greater authority than earlier biographers, but his account helps complicate the narrative because it seems to dispel some of the mythology in the same way that Rotolo's story about not wearing lipstick had. "Few people now know what really happened the morning of July 29, and none of those has agreed to be quoted on the subject….Thank heaven there was no motorcycle accident that morning. There was a motorcycle, and there was a very weary, clumsy poet who wanted to ride on it" (Epstein 180). He continued that Dylan was walking the motorcycle down his manager, Albert Grossman's, driveway when he slipped on loose gravel and it fell on him (Epstein 180-1). Dylan was injured and needed to convalesce. He took the opportunity of the media's misrepresentation of the severity of the accident, some reporting his death or near death, to take time away from public life.

Dylan's name change is also a vital part of the Dylan mythology. Because they were published after *Newsweek* article revealed his early identity construction, the

biographies were consistent in their presentation of Dylan's childhood in Hibbing. It's unarguable that he was born Robert Allen Zimmerman to Abraham and Beatty Zimmerman and that he legally changed his name on August 9, 1962, but how he chose the name "Dylan" and when he started using it is both debatable and debated. Some scholars, journalists, and biographers maintain that Dylan began using the name before he left Hibbing to attend the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1959. Others chronicle that it was not until he came home for the Christmas break that he told friends that he was using the name Dylan. Some accounts point to him originally telling friends that he selected the name because it was his mother's maiden name or that he named himself after his uncle, a gambler from Las Vegas (Scaduto 24). There were also stories circulated that he named himself after the fictional cowboy and renegade Matt Dillon or the town in Oklahoma. Scaduto wrote that Dylan had told friends in Hibbing, "I can't use my real name…I need a stage name" (23).

Echo Helstrom, Dylan's high school girlfriend, remembers when Dylan told her he'd decided on his stage name in 1958. She "says that she didn't ask him whether it was inspired by Dylan Thomas because she just assumed that's where the name came from" (Scaduto 24). Heylin challenges Echo's memory, writing that it was probably the name Elston Gunn, one of Dylan's early stage names, and not Dylan that she recalled him telling her about in Hibbing (27). Heylin also quotes Dylan's childhood friend, John Bucklen, who remembers that Dylan told him of his name change before Christmas break in 1959: "He said, 'Down there when I play, my name is Dylan'…He said it was after Dylan Thomas, spelled D-y-l-a-n" (32). Despite Heylin's inclusion of the Bucklen quote, he disputes it by writing, "[t]hat Bucklen should recall Dylan telling him back in

December 1959 that he took the new surname from Dylan Thomas is significant" (33). He believes that it's improbable that Dylan got the name from a source other than the Welsh poet, but also attributes the name to an alternative origin. In Shelton's 1986 biography, Dylan asked Shelton clear up the story that he took the name from the Dylan Thomas (45). However, Sounes' biography retells the Echo's story, but adds a detail that when Echo asked Bob, "Do you mean D-i-l-l-o-n, like Matt Dillon?" (44). Dylan replied, "'No, no, no like this D-y-l-a-n.' Bob had a book under his arm and he showed it to Echo. It was a book of poems by Dylan Thomas" (44). Further, in 2005, Liam Clancy continued to perpetuate the story that, "out in Minnesota, there was a young man who was inspired to change his name because of the poet Dylan Thomas" (Scorsese 23:02-23:22). Dylan counters this by saying, "The name just popped into my head one day, but it didn't really happen any of the ways I read about it" (Scorsese 24:03-24:08).

Throughout his career, Dylan has stated that he did not choose the name because of Dylan Thomas, but selected it on the spur of the moment and decided to use it. Scaduto's and Heylin's biographies recount the same story Dylan told in *No Direction Home.* Heylin wrote, "Dylan himself said, in 1971, 'It just came to me as I was standing there outside the Scholar'" (32-3). Similarly, Scaduto wrote with slight variation, "Years later, reminiscing about that conversation, Dylan told me: "I needed a name in a hurry and I picked that one. It just came to me as I was standing there in The Scholar" (27). Despite Dylan's insistence that he did not select the name because of the poet, the Dylan Thomas story persists, however. This persistence adds to the literary allusion of Dylan's identity and persona.

Another theory about Dylan's name change focuses on his rejection of his Jewish heritage. This approach tends toward periodization of Dylan's history to enumerate the shifts in his identity performance. Some critics recognize it as a denial of his father or his religious identity, but most imagine him reaching toward a folk identity. Heylin's explanation focuses upon Dylan's rejection of his father's name. He denounces the Dylan Thomas stories, and the story that Dylan's name change is "a deliberate rejection of his religious identity" (Heylin 29). Though there is evidence to support a long history of anti-Semitism in Minneapolis and St. Paul and throughout Minnesota, Heylin believes that, "[f]ar more plausible is that he was making a grand gesture, denying that he was his father's son" (Heylin 29). However, the post-World War II anti-Semitism in America, specifically in Minnesota, engendered in Dylan an understanding of the Jew is "other" and informed the necessity of his change of name and adoption of a new identity. Scholars like Stephen Pickering and Seth Rogovoy have highlighted Dylan's Jewish heritage as central to the ethos of his lyrics and other written works, but not that the "otherness" that Dylan experienced as a result of his religious identity helped shape his empathy towards and understanding of other marginalized communities. Rogovoy notes that other artists like Lenny Bruce and Woody Allen Anglicized their names, but their Jewish identities were overt and central to their art and comedy (37).

None of the narratives stands as an authoritative account of Robert Zimmerman becoming Dylan. He has both embraced and rejected the stories that he adopted the name as an allusion to poet Dylan Thomas throughout his career. Dylan's request that Shelton suppress that story contradicts his Hibbing friends' memories of it. Similarly, the debate among scholars and critics about how Dylan's Jewish identity and the anti-Semitism in

the United States affected his identity construction provides for robust socio-cultural debate, but has not yielded a definitive answer. The sum of the stories has created parallel and conflicting narratives of Dylan's adopted cognomen, and these inconsistencies create parallel realities that exist in the Dylan mythos as true. Because they all exist in the realm of potential reality, he is considered mercurial and lacking a stable central identity. Additionally, the prolonged focus on what seems to be a fairly common practice among popular artists further emphasizes how scholars and critics over-complicate the minutiae of Dylan's biography and history.

Lastly, the *Newsweek* article indicated a disconnect between what Dylan was saying and what was interpreted and presented in print. When Svedberg quoted Dylan as saying, "I am my words," the idea that Dylan could be interpreted through language performance and acts cemented what Joan Wharton's letter had communicated: interpretation of Dylan by the press and public determined his value. It also illustrated the instability of language and its interpretation in what seemed to be a new era of the intersection of super-stardom, pop culture, and legitimate creative artists. For example, in her article, Svedberg quoted Dylan as saying, "I don't know my parents… They don't know me. I've lost contact with them for years" (qtd in Shelton 214). Taken literally and as it was presented, it can be interpreted as though Dylan had not seen his parents for years and that he didn't know them or who or where they were. Indeed, Svedberg interpreted it that way because she countered writing, "A few blocks away, in one of New York's motor inns, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Zimmerman . . . were looking forward to seeing their son sing at Carnegie Hall" (qtd. in Shelton 214). Interpreted literally, Dylan's biography is exposed as a lie. However, when read figuratively, Dylan's statement can

be interpreted that he felt he was a stranger to his parents and them to him, that he was born to the wrong parents, and that he felt he could not communicate with them. This misinterpretation and the adulation Dylan experienced can be explained more clearly through what Eldot's article about Dylan, published a month earlier than Svedberg's article, argued, "There's an unwritten code of show business that people like to be deceived. Performers must be legendized and molded into a public image that is often quite different from who they used to be" (qtd. in "Fifty Years of Song" 11). It's evident that Bob Dylan was a vast departure from Robert Zimmerman, however, Dylan's deception or ambiguous use of language were deliberate, not because he wanted to hide the identity to which he had been born, but because he relinquished his ego and subjectivity in favor of presentation of the song, lyric, or, more simply, his words.

To better understand Dylan' s identity, it's more instructive that when he said, "I am my words," he was referring more directly to his lyrics and other written works rather than strictly his biography. It is through those words that Dylan creates voices that express thoughts and emotions, and that he enters into the American literary tradition. Thus, he becomes a voice of the post-war era in the continuum of the American narrative. His identity, then, can be best understood not as trickster, mercurial and unstranslatable genius, or shape-shifter with a central vacuity, but a fragmentation of the American pluralistic identity in the liberal tradition with its myriad cultural, literary, and musical influences. This requires a focus on the voices Dylan has created in his lyrics and other written works and a focus on Dylan as text, rather than a strictly biographical approach, which leads to the same inconsistencies and contradictions that have adulterated interpretation of his identity. Throughout his career, Dylan has not only reflected the

subjective experiences of an individual but of the people, the sum of which are the aggregate voices of the national identity.

Chapter 2

"Gatekeepers" and Protectors of the Myth

Chapter one discussed briefly the prominent role that rock and roll journalism and biography performed in the creation of Dylan's identity and perpetuation of the Dylan mythology in popular culture, focusing specifically on his early career, before the hiatus caused by his motorcycle accident. The early journalistic texts created the language through which Dylan was initially understood. That language continued to be used, and it repeated and reinforced the image of Dylan the journalists presented. Rock and roll journalism maintains the cultural importance of the genre because it "acts as a gatekeeper of public taste through which meanings are created and disseminated" (Strachan 68). Robert Shelton's review of Dylan's September 26, 1961, opening act performance at Gerde's published in the September 29 edition of the *New York Times* was the seminal piece that set the tone for how the media would deal with Dylan. Though Shelton reviewed other performers that night, he dedicated the title of the review, a majority of the text, and the photo of the layout to Dylan. Shelton's assessment that distinguished Dylan from performers who had been in the folk community and playing on Greenwich Village stages longer than Dylan had.

Journalists and biographers agree that delineating break in Dylan's history, the motorcycle accident that occurred on the morning of July 29, 1966, provided the opportunity for him to remove himself from public life, the music industry, and the rigorous touring and recording schedule he had kept through that point. Regardless of what the truth of conditions or specifics of the motorcycle accident were, Dylan took the opportunity to settle down in Woodstock and spend time with his new wife and growing

family. In his 1969 interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine's Jann Wenner, Dylan responded to Wenner asking him why he hadn't worked in so long: ". . . I was on the road for almost five years. It wore me down a lot. I was on drugs, a lot of things. A lot of things to keep going, ya know? And I don't want to live like that anymore" (Wenner 23). His absence from the public heightened the mystery surrounding Dylan who, at the age of 25, had ascended to the stature of iconic legend in American music and popular culture and the tortured figure of a folk-rock poet. This period, during which he wrote songs for and recorded *The Basement Tapes* with friends at The Band's house, Big Pink, *John Wesley Harding,* and *Nashville Skyline,* demonstrates Dylan's continued creative output outside the demands of the incredible media scrutiny of his previous life. Further on in the interview, Wenner asked Dylan how the motorcycle accident changed him. Dylan responded, "What change? Well, it…it limited me" (Wenner 23). Certainly, Dylan's absence from public life in comparison to the period prior to the accident did not mean he was completely out of the media's gaze; journalists and photographers visited Woodstock, attempting to capture an impromptu interview or a candid photo, and ABC-TV in New York was supposed to show a second version of a film D.A. Pennebaker had edited from the footage he shot while on Dylan's tour of England in 1965.

In his post-motorcycle hiatus career, the press continued the narrative of Dylan's myth: that he is a shape-shifting prophet, voice of a generation, and genius. Michael Watts' article, "Chimes of Freedom," maintains Dylan's myth as he played a twenty-one city tour in 1974. Watts acknowledges that nearly eighty percent of the audience were younger and first time Dylan fans who had never seen him in concert during his early career, writing, "[e]ven those who weren't there first time around. They've been told

about it all enough times that they're curious, interested" (32). The stories younger fans had heard or read about Dylan engendered in them an interest in Dylan because they understood him to be the representative of the counter-culture of the previous decade. Further, Watts asserts that Dylan maintained his mystery and stature. Through his performance, Dylan becomes, "[m]yth into man and man into myth again, right before your eyes" (Watts 32). The language Watts uses in the article reinforces and contributes to Dylan's myth construction. Words and phrases like "genius," "brilliant," "voice of his generation," "God," and "prophet" are regularly repeated by journalists in ways different that they had been used in pre-accident media in a revision and continuation of the myth.

For example, Jack Kroll's January 30, 1978 *Newsweek* article, "Hero Sandwich" opens, "Dylan is a genius, the greatest troubadour of the counterculture" (51). The title of the piece sets Dylan as a heroic figure in American popular culture, and the first sentence places him as the most important singer-poet in the 1960s movement that rebelled against the status quo. Mark Cooper uses similar language in June 1978 review of Dylan "I've Seen the Lord: Shouts over the Top Critic for Bob Dylan," which observes that when Dylan sang "It's Allright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding" at a recent concert, the audience responded loudly, "thus giving the illusion that Dylan was still a topical writer, which he wasn't," and that the audience, "generally treated him like he was a God incarnate" (31). Cooper refers to Dylan's iconic early image, but also replaces it by imposing his ongoing importance in American culture and history. The article assesses Dylan's late 1970s performance, saying that his intention was, "to feel that moment more truly than any and then, incredibly, to tell you what he feels so you can feel it too," and that his words were so perfectly written that, "Dylan was history because each collection of songs gave a

name to the feelings in the air" (31). Cooper's review of Dylan's performance makes a distinct association between Dylan's words and music and American history and the American collective unconscious because his lyrics both recorded history and expressed how people responded to it.

Throughout most of 1978 the primary focus centered on Dylan's *Rolling Thunder Review* Tour, which started in October and allowed Dylan to revive some of the conviviality of his Greenwich Village days. It also provided Dylan the opportunity to make amends with those he might have mistreated. Though in the November 6, 1978 issue of *Time*, Jay Cocks' focuses on Neil Young receiving a more positive reaction from concert attendees than Dylan did, Cocks' argues, "Dylan's reputation, in historical perspective, is immense, possibly unrivaled" (64). That Cocks views the 37-year old Dylan in "historical perspective" and that he is being eclipsed by someone who is considered a "disciple" places Dylan's more important works in his early career. Additionally, that Cocks writes Dylan occupies such a significant place and without equal furthers the rhetoric of earlier rock journalism. It also carries forward the custom of journalists mythologizing Dylan, which continued into the eighties and nineties, and on into the 21st century.

Perpetuating the periodization of Dylan's career, Jann Wenner's September 20, 1979 article, "Bob Dylan and Our Times: The Slow Train is Coming," begins his article with a definition of faith and then uses the lexicon of rock journalism to equate Dylan with faith. Wenner writes: "[b]eacuse Dylan had the power of insight and poetry early in his career, he became an article of faith himself" (94). Though it was a role and label he rejected, Wenner alludes to Dylan being anointed the spokesman of his generation, using

language that communicated the thoughts and feelings of the collective, thus providing hope. Wenner continues the identity created around Dylan was not stable and that it would, eventually, "blow up," and disappoint the public that had so devoutly believed in him, included Wenner himself (94). As a member of the community who felt betrayed by Dylan, Wenner is sympathetic to those who share his feelings and positions himself as the writer who can rebuild the Dylan myth and as a guide for those in the next generation who will become Dylan fans. The article's introduction elevates Dylan as a heroic figure, providing hope where there was none. It then moves to the next paragraph that asserts that Dylan is a victim of fame, uncontrollable outside forces, and his retractors. Through the remainder of the two-page article, Dylan is ultimately restored to his heroic position. Wenner's review of Dylan's August 20, 1979 release, *Slow Train Coming.* Wenner writes, "It only takes one listening to realize that *Slow Train Coming* (Columbia Records) is the best album since *The Basement Tapes* (recorded with The Band in 1967 but not released until 1975)" (94). The rest of the article analyzes the album and its significance, separating this album from Dylan's early career. In this way, Wenner revisions Dylan's importance in American popular culture in the 1970s, using the lexicon Shelton established early in Dylan's career, thus creating continuity to the myth.

Of the myriad journalists writing about Dylan in the 1980s, *Time* columnist Jay Cocks stands out because he assumed an important role as a "gatekeeper" of rock and roll music, furthering the Dylan myth. Using the myth language to historicize Dylan, Cocks' many articles and reviews reinforce Dylan's place within the canon of American music, literature, and popular culture. When Dylan released *Biograph,* Cocks' article "Hellhound on the Loose," presents Dylan in interviews as poetic as he is in song or

verse. It also places Dylan, twenty-two years into his career, as a master who recreates himself by writing his own lyrics. Cocks asserts, "It seems as if the mother lode has barely been tapped." Later, Cocks begins his 1986 review of Shelton's biography, *No Direction Home*, with an anecdote about Dylan's "pilgrimage" to meet poet Carl Sandburg in 1964. Cocks creates a parallel between the canonic American poet and Dylan, "younger than Sandburg by nearly half a century." The completion of the sentence upholds Dylan's position as the next generation of canonical American poets by enumerating his accomplishments through his three-year career. It also reaffirms the career-delineating split before and after his motorcycle accident, and crediting him with "reinventing American music." Using words like "shaman" and "avatar," Cocks' articles maintain Dylan's identity as a shape-shifter and his importance in the public's consciousness.

Journalists continued to control the narrative of Dylan's identity creation in the public's consciousness into the 1990s, using the lexicon of the previous decades. Articles in the established "gatekeeper" publications like *Rolling Stone* and *Spin* and mainstream magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* reinforce Dylan's mythological identity and his importance in the American canon. For example, just as Cocks had in *Time* in the 1980s, Mikal Gilmore's *Rolling Stone* article, "Bob Dylan at 50," published in May of 1991, uses the Dylan lexicon to cover Dylan receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences. The Lifetime Achievement Award provides the framework through which Gilmore retrospectively interprets Dylan's career and re-envisions the myth, writing that Dylan "affected both folk and popular music more than any other figure in American culture" and that he had "single-handedly changed

rock & roll." Gilmore's assertion that after Dylan accepted his award with an awkward speech, "One more time, Dylan had met America, and no one really knew what to make of him," perpetuates in the myth of Dylan as untranslatable.

Throughout the 1990s, journalists published over three-hundred-fifty articles about Dylan, all of which reinforced the Dylan's importance in the public's consciousness and reaffirmed the Dylan mystique. Journalists hyperbolically credited him as being, "the person most responsible for ending the Viet Nam War" (Light). The interviews and articles reflect on Dylan's pre-motorcycle career as his most prolific, and focus on Dylan as a revered relic. Ann Powers *New York Times* review of Dylan's December 8, 1997 concert at Irving Plaza entitled, "Rock Review; Dylan, Poet of the Soul and National Treasure," labels Dylan as an "idol," elevating his relationship with the crowd and his performances to the sublime, writing that "they are gifts nonchalantly given, precious to recipients but easily replenished by the giver." Powers contributes to Dylan's myth and myth language using terms and phrases like "baronial," "legend," and "bard of plain experience." She also credits him with "recreat[ing] the rock star as an important poet and social force." Even though some journalists project that he "is clearly no longer the voice of a generation" as he had been for his younger fans' parents, many of the articles argue that his concerts are still the fastest to sell out in most cities (Light). The articles also focus on the changes in Dylan's career as the music industry changed. In 1994, *Billboard* columnist Eric Boehlert wrote about Dylan's decision to sell the rights to "The Times They Are A-Changin,'" "…perhaps the most important pop song of the protest era," to a financial firm for a commercial ("Dylan Proves"). Though the article is critical of Dylan's turn towards commercialism, it also uses the lexicon to add to the

myth by writing his decision "to sell one of his songs is historic" and that "much that surrounds the enigmatic figure, is a mystery" ("Dylan Proves"). Again, the focus on Dylan's decisions having an impact on the music industry maintains him as an important figure in popular culture. Additionally, Boehlert's projection of Dylan as "enigmatic" and a "mystery" reinforces him as a riddle that has yet to be solved. The frequency of articles published in the 1990s and the language used in them creates a continuum in the Dylan narrative because he is treated and written about with the same deference and mystery with which earlier journalists treated him.

Even when journalists attempted to address and decode the Dylan mythology or revive and renew plagiarism accusations, the media's continued focus on Dylan through 2014 reinforces their position as the guardians of rock and roll aesthetics and history and their role in the Dylan's identity creation in the public consciousness. More than six-hundred articles have been published from 2000-2014 in periodicals like *Rolling Stone, Atlantic Monthly, Esquire, Sing Out! Entertainment Weekly, Time, Newsweek,* and *U.S. News and World Report.* The articles cover diverse subjects, such as his website, his art, his tours, the release of his memoirs, his sixtieth and seventieth birthdays, and his studio releases, all of which use the lexicon that maintains Dylan's myth. In his 2000 article about musicians' foray into the digital age, Ron Sheffield enthused "Bob Dylan has the coolest official site ever," portraying Dylan as a successful pioneer in the new technology. Additionally, Dylan's friend, Kinky Friedman used relationship with Dylan to discuss him and bolster the concept of Dylan as mercurial in the December 2002 issue of *Texas Monthly*. Friedman writes that when he's asked "what Dylan is really like. The answer is just as complicated as he is" (244). In 2009, *Rolling Stone* featured Dylan as

one of the 100 greatest singers, writing that "he changed popular singing" (Bono et. al). The article recounts an anecdote in which Sam Cooke told Bobby Womack, "that from now on, it's not going to be about how pretty the voice is. It's going to be about believing that the voice is telling the truth" (Bono et. al). Using Sam Cooke as an authority compounds Dylan's impact on future rock and roll singers. Dylan's 70th birthday in 2011 provided the opportunity for many retrospectives of his career, all highlighting him as a "voice of his generation" that remains a mystery.

Journalists continue to create the narrative of Dylan's identity construction, while also constructing metanarratives about the most iconic moments in Dylan's biography. Mikal Gilmore's article "Dylan's Lost Years," published September 12, 2013, retells the story of Dylan's motorcycle accident reinforcing this element of Dylan's myth. Gilmore writes, "The motorcycle wreck has always been seen as a transformative event – the demarcation between the revolutionary rock & roll poet and the man who would soon seem content in blithe truths and at a remove from concern for events of the day" ("Lost Years"). Gilmore's metanarrative about the accident reinforces the periodization of Dylan's career to emphasize the impact of Dylan's *Self-Portrait* album as an equal demarcation in Dylan's career between *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline,* released before it, and *New Morning,* which earned the headline "WE'VE GOT DYLAN BACK!" from *Rolling Stone* ("Lost Years"). Gilmore's article argues that even Dylan's lackluster or unsuccessful release, when analyzed retrospectively, demonstrates that "…the fact that there was a remarkable album hidden within it at the time," ("Lost Years"). This reinforces the mythology: even the songs he writes to offend or make his fans forget about him, is regarded as "remarkable" ("Lost Years").

Analyzing every periodical article or review that has been published about Dylan throughout his career would lead to an encyclopedic volume. However, the representative sample presented illustrates the broader point that those who reviewed and wrote about him played a significant role in creating and perpetuating the language Dylan's myth and creating the narrative of his importance in American popular culture and metanarratives that reinforce the mythology. Even the few articles that have been critical of Dylan use language that is similar to the others, creating associations between the figure or image of Dylan, the words, commonly used in texts written and published about Dylan, and his identity. For example, when Kroll and others write that Dylan is a genius, they using the lexicon of Dylan journalism, signifying that the person "Bob Dylan" is signified by the concept of the sign "genius," someone who possesses a unique or distinctive intellect or quality. The word "genius," in addition to words like "prophet" and "poet" and words ad phrases like "voice of a generation," that have been commonly used in the articles, are signs that communicated a series of meanings for which Dylan became the signifier and, therefore, mythologized. The journalists, including Shelton, used Dylan as a symbol of authenticity and excellence in rock and roll. By maintaining his importance in popular culture and featuring him in their publications, they also protected their position as the "gatekeepers" or "guardians of the genre of rock and roll music, specifically in key publications like *Rolling Stone, Sing Out! Spin,* and *Time*.

When this idea is applied to rock and roll biography as a genre, the perspective through which the biographer presents information is not only part of the collective memory of the society in which the performer exists and creates, but also varied interpretations of the truth. Rock and roll biographers analyze biographical and historic

facts of a musician's life and his or her artistic creation, composing a narrative that creates and perpetuates the myth of the performer's identity.[7] Biographers do this by placing significance on the facts of Dylan's life and ascribing meaning to them, and ". . . are not content with meeting the facts; they define and explore them as tokens for something else" (Barthes 111). The writer's agency over the selection of the events, how they are shaped and connected, and how they are interpreted creates meaning from the facts in Dylan' s life, and a new type of language that creates relationships between Dylan and the facts of his life.

Biographies serve as historical narratives that chronicle the details of the lives of popular musicians and interpretations of the musicians artistic output, but they are also subject to the interpretations of those facts based on the subject position, agenda, and the pressures of publication contracts of the biographer.[8] Rock biography is a descendant of the music biography, which Robert Strachan argues plays a central role in the collective memory of composers and musicians (70). The biographer attempts to create an authoritative voice in the text by placing him or herself within the text as a protagonist. Strachan furthers his assertion, "…this is established in four main ways: the biographer is set up as spectator, an insider, an expert/chronicler or as analyst. In the process of establishing a strong narrative voice within the text the author 'makes' her/himself within the narrative, s/he becomes a character, an 'actor' in the events that they are describing as

[7] This theory is further applied to rock genre as a biography in the article, ""Where Do I Begin the Story?: Collective Memory, Biographical Authority and Rock Biography." The title is an allusion to the opening line of Robert Shelton's preface to his 1986 Dylan biography, *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* and alludes to the problems facing biographers of figures in popular culture. In the article, British rock and roll scholar, Michael Strachan, examines mythology of popular culture figures as they exist in the collective memory of a society.

[8] The importance of rock and roll journalism is compounded by Strachan's outline of the criteria for rock and roll biography creating the myth in the collective memory he discusses and the effect the biographies and biographers have on the narrative that is constructed around the figure or event.

this can be done in any of these four ways" (Strachan 70). This will allow the biographer retelling and perpetuating the myth of the subject through the biography to establish narrative authority or ethos through his or her methodology or relationship with the subject. He continues that rock biographers must further establish their ethos to ensure that their voice will be considered the primary authority on the subject. Finally, Strachan notes that, "[i]n the rock biography (and certainly in those of Dylan) the mythical element is often proposed as a crisis or a riddle which has to be solved" (70). Solving this riddle of Dylan's identity is essential to establishing the ethos of the biographer. Each of the five major Dylan biographies follows this pattern. Strachan's argument establishes that the language created through rock and roll journalism is furthered in biography. However, where the journalists serve as "gatekeepers," the biographers position themselves as the protagonist who can solve the mystery that Dylan has created.[9]

Published in 1971, the first biography to attempt to solve the Dylan myth or riddle was Anthony Scaduto's work *Bob Dylan: An Intimate Biography*. Scaduto's introduction, "Thank you, Mr. Tambourine Man," begins with a narrative about meeting Dylan in January of 1971. In it, he quotes the conversation he had with Dylan when they finally met. He writes that after reading Scaduto's book, Dylan said, "[s]ome of it is pretty straight, some of it is *very* straight, some of it is *exactly* the way it happened" (1). He continues that Dylan agreed to help Scaduto correct the errors that he found in the

[9] Strachan argues that rock biography holds an equal position in Dylan's identity construction because it engages in the same semiological language as rock journalism, but it goes a step further to present the biographer as the protagonist in the story. Quoting Pekacz's definition of music biography's role in the public's perception of "canonic composers," "Biography Is a form of cultural production and the production of meaning in biographical form has been a powerful force in shaping and reshaping culture memory, as well as a site of struggle over the control of this memory," Strachan places the rock biographer in the position of creating the collective memory of Dylan and solving the riddle of Dylan's identity (qtd. in Strachan 66).

biography, and continues quoting Dylan: “the book didn’t hurt” as some of the articles written about him had (1). It hadn’t hurt him because, “it’s not that magazine bullshit” (1). Scaduto establishes himself as superior to journalists because he reports that Dylan was pleased that the book did not include the same kind of speculation that he felt the magazines did. Including this information establishes Scaduto as both as spectator, prior to his meeting with Dylan, and an insider, once Dylan agrees to help Scaduto correct the errors in the book. He concludes the first part of his preface with a direct address to Dylan further reinforcing his position as a Dylan insider: “I thank you, Mr. Tambourine Man, for opening the doors and giving me a peek inside” (Scaduto 2). The introduction also includes the methodology Scaduto used to research and write the biography. In addition to the time Scaduto spent with Dylan, who he upholds as the key to his ethos, he further bolsters it. He asserts that he spent, “hundreds of hours of conversations with those who knew him, loved him, sometimes hated him, often feared him, and usually needed him” (Scaduto 2). Scaduto then enumerates those closest to Dylan such as Joan Baez, Suze Rotolo, and others from Dylan’s early years in Greenwich Village. He presents himself even more an insider through his association with those closest to Dylan, but also becomes an analyst who ascribes meaning to the events in his life and his works. Thus, he is writer who will solve the Dylan riddle and impose order on the Dylan mystery,

In the 1979 reissue of Scaduto’s biography, he included new postscript, “Afterward with Steven Gaines,” that continues the lexicon of the Dylan mythology. The afterward fits within the “second period” of Dylan’s career, following him after the first edition of Scaduto’s biography ends. Gaines reiterates the major events in Dylan’s life

that others had noted and moves forward to his 1974 concert tour that brought Dylan back into the public consciousness in a tangible, rather than mythical or abstract, way. He also argues that "Dylan had answered a similar challenge before; it was no accident that he was coming back just as his starlight was going out" (Gaines). Gaines recognizes that Dylan's absence after his accident, which he claims broke his neck and forced recuperation, affected how his public presence was perceived, and argues that the work Dylan was engaged in at the time Gaines wrote the postscript would return Dylan to his former position. Gaines' focus on Dylan's recording, film, and tour schedule in the early 1970s, reinforces Dylan's importance and helps revive his public presence. It also helps chronicle and analyze Dylan's artistic productivity in the early 1970s after Scaduto's biography ends. This update helps complete Scaduto's narrative about Dylan and places Gaines as co-protagonist with Scaduto.

Because he was the first reporter to review Dylan, Robert Shelton's 1986 biography, *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan*, is considered an authority because of the close relationship Shelton projects to have had with Dylan. Similar to the preface of Scaduto's biography, Shelton's begins with a chapter dedicated to both establishing his authoritative voice and his status as a Dylan insider, thus presenting his biography as more authentic than the two editions of Scaduto's that preceded it. Here, Shelton further establishes his authority by reminding his readers that he met Dylan in 1961 and continues that Dylan met him "at the Henry Hudson Hotel on Manhattan's West Side" (1-2). That Shelton phrases this sentence in the way he does, "He visited me," attributes a sense of importance Shelton feels he possesses in Dylan's life. Similarly, Strachan argues, "Shelton points out that is it Dylan who comes to visit

him and the interview in the hotel room is portrayed as being a re-uniting of old friends and sparring partners" (71-2). Rather than Dylan being the more important person whom people go to visit, Shelton is so important a figure that Dylan visits him. In doing this, he positions himself as more than the central narrative voice, a character or, as Strachan argues, the protagonist of the biography. By doing that, Shelton confesses, "I often felt like that reporter in *Citizen Kane* looking for "Rosebud" (2). He sets Dylan up as an elusive clue to be discovered and that, by virtue of his relationship with Dylan and those he knows, including journalists asking him to solve it, he is the person who can solve the riddle of Dylan's identity.

Further, Shelton continues to present himself as part of Dylan's inner circle, again reminding readers of his relationships with those in closest to Dylan, including his manager Albert Grossman, referring to them informally by their first names. He also includes phrases that connote agreement with Dylan such as, "We agreed that America was in trouble again," and understanding of Dylan's speech and meaning because when he said, "They're not going to get away with it," Shelton reflects, "I didn't need to ask who "they" were" (1-2). Shelton doesn't need to clarify Dylan's statement or meaning because he projects the image that he understands it without questioning him. Perhaps the most convincing way that Shelton asserts that he was part of Dylan's inner circle and the biographer who can solve the riddle of Dylan comes when he writes: "I assured Dylan I aimed at a portrait in which he could retain respect as an artist. He had known me long enough, I hoped, not to bracket me with reporters who think denuding celebrities is a way to earn a living" (5). Shelton distances himself from rock and roll journalists and Dylan's previous biographer, promoting himself as both the decoder of the Dylan myth and

protector of the Dylan legend. This is Shelton's most clear articulation of his position as protagonist. Finally, just as Scaduto had done, Shelton communicates his methodology, that he had spoken to Dylan for hours and that he had spoken to many people in the Greenwich Village folk community, the music industry, and others who knew Dylan. Again, Shelton uses these strategies to increase his ethos and set his biography apart from Scaduto's.

Shelton's depiction of his relationship is problematic because the friendship that he had with Dylan has been documented as one-sided.[10] This account of Shelton's direct involvement with Dylan's fast rise to success has been well-documented. Shelton even notes that Hammond was aware of Dylan before Shelton's review was published and had claimed that he saw Dylan in Minnesota performing under another name. Additionally, "[t]he fact that Shelton's contact with Dylan was limited to two interviews after 1966 (1971 in New York and 1978 in London) perhaps shows that the relationship diminished from the mid-1960s onwards" (Strachan 73). The 1978 interview "How Does it Feel to be on Your Own? Bob Dylan Talks to Robert Shelton," published in *Melody Maker* on July 29, continues to place Shelton as central to the text, but also continues to perpetuate Dylan as a mythical figure. Shelton writes statements like, "[w]e all feared he'd die young, too, but he cheated the undertaker and hitchhiked back from the cemetery" (Shelton 28). The use of the first person plural pronoun "we" inserts him as a character into a piece that was meant to be an interview with Dylan. It indicates that Shelton is part of Dylan's inner circle, but also a spectator who was worried about Dylan. Later in the

[10] Further in his analysis of rock and roll biography, Strachan challenges the closeness of Shelton's relationship with Dylan. He argues that Shelton's ethos is based on a relationship that was one-sided and inflated his importance in Dylan's being invited to record with Carolyn Hester and signed to a recording contract as a result of Shelton's *New York Times* review (Strachan 73).

article, Shelton continues, "[h]e used to wince at the name 'poet,' exploding at me once, "That's such a huge goddamn name for someone to call themselves'" (28). Just as he does in the biography he will publish eight years later, Shelton inflates his relationship with Dylan to increase his authoritative voice.

Bob Spitz added to the canon with his 1989 work *Bob Dylan: A Biography*. Sptiz opens his biography with a preface entitled "Author's Note and Acknowledgments," in which he further exemplifies Strachan's point about Dylan biographers establishing themselves as the hero who can solve the riddle of Dylan through the text and the analyst and researcher who has interviewed enough of Dylan's friends and has acquired enough information through his research to do so. Spitz achieves this through the distinction, as Barthes has previously argued, that biographers don't just reconstruct the facts of Dylan's life but also interpret them to dispel the myth around him (xi). The narrative of the introduction continues that when one writes about Dylan, that author does not write about Dylan as a unified identity, but the man with many identities, such as "the Bob Dylan who wrote brilliant songs and revolutionized our culture by making it conform to his abstract imagination" (xi). Just as Shelton did, Spitz's use of the first person plural pronoun "our" signifies that he is part of the community that Dylan represents. This statement uses the Dylan myth language and clearly presents Dylan as a figure who can engender significant cultural changes as a result of his creativity and the popularity of his music.

Spitz also communicates Dylan's importance in American history and popular culture through the same vocabulary other biographers and rock and roll journalists use, such as "genius" and "phenomenon." He inflates the importance of Dylan's biographers

in explaining the character, personae, and identity of Dylan, and distinguishes himself from the two earlier biographers through the clarification that the other writers had not successfully interpreted Dylan's identity as a fusion between fiction and fact. He concedes that it is not because of a complete misstep on the part of the other writers, but because of Dylan's mastery at shape-shifting, secrecy, and creation, and because earlier biographers were "[l]ike the ancient court historians" who "obediently wrote the story he put in front of them" and that "responsible journalists, dazzled by an audience with him, failed to question or examine the accuracy of his statements" (xii). Because so many half-truths, outright misrepresentations, and lies had been printed about Dylan for more than twenty years, Spitz supports the position that they became "historical fact, told and retold like lore" (xii). Spitz then attempts to discredit the texts that he argues have created the myth, thus justifying his role as the writer who will correct the inaccuracies of those earlier texts and present Dylan truthfully. He then further distances himself by claiming that he is a rebel with whom the journalists will not cooperate because they might be black listed, and that, unlike others, he did not intend to "become part of the legend" (xii). The problem with Spitz's declaration here is that using the lexicon and assuming of the role of the writer who can demystify or tell the truth about Dylan places him within the already existing trope of those who have written about Dylan.

Furthermore, Spitz continues to follow the exiting pattern by revealing his methodology. In the first biography, Scaduto describes his process of talking with those in Dylan's inner circle and enumerates the people with whom he spoke. Moreover, Spitz includes an extended inventory of the hundreds of people he interviewed that helped him create meaning out of the facts of Dylan's life and, subsequently, Dylan's identity. In

fact, Spitz spends nearly three pages listing those with whom he spoke or allowed him "inside access" to things like Dylan's school records or the friends, colleagues, or acquaintances who could help break through and help explain Dylan's time in Greenwich Village by offering a different perspective than what had previously been recorded or presented. This increases his authority because it demonstrates that Spitz's revision presents new information that will clarify Dylan's identity. In addition, Spitz asserts that his "intention had always been to depend on the sweeping circle of Bob's family, friends, lovers, musicians, and associates to provide [him] with an eyewitness account of [Dylan's] life" and that, in doing so, he had created a new Dylan archive (xii-xiii). This archive, Spitz claims, would prove to be the most accurate account of Dylan's identity because he spent four and a half years researching and writing it and because he was able to maintain his objectivity by having never met Dylan (xii-xv).

The next major biography that was published was Clinton Heylin's *Behind the Shades* in 1991 and was reissued as *Behind the Shades: Revisited* in 2001. Strachan argues that Heylin follows the model of the earlier biographers because, just at Shelton and Spitz had done in the opening chapters of their revisions of the myth, Heylin's introductory chapter attempts to set his biography apart from the three that preceded it. He writes, "[f]or instance, Clinton Heylin (1991) spends the first chapter of *Behind the Shades* finding faults with Shelton's work along with Anthony Scaduto's (1971) and Bob Spitz's (1988) books" (75). Strachan's assessment is correct; a good deal of Heylin's preface of the first edition, "A Preface in the Past Tense (1991)," is dedicated to criticizing his predecessors' efforts at writing a comprehensive biography on Dylan and solving the Dylan riddle. Yet, Heylin also explains his methodology to establish his

authority as do Scaduto, Shelton, and Spitz. There are two ways in which he does this. The first is that he differentiates himself from Scaduto and Shelton because both of his predecessors have Dylan's input in their books. Heylin argues, "[t]hough neither book could be described as authorized, Dylan exerted his influence on both. Inevitably this led to a slightly sanitized portrait of the man, particularly in Shelton's book" (x). In contrast, Heylin, who has never met Dylan, has maintained an objective critique and analysis, presenting a "skeptical but informed commentary" (x). While this is an important aspect of Heylin defining his authoritative voice, his objectivity is even more important.

In the introduction to the second edition of Heylin's biography, "A Preface in the Present Tense (1999)," the epigraph, an Oscar Wilde quote, sets the tone for the preface: "Every great man noawadays has his disciples, and it is usually Judas who writes the biography" (xii). Heylin then contemplates whether he is the Judas, the Peter, or the Paul figure in his biography. The metaphor in the Wilde quotation creates the equation between men who are great, considered to be great, or mythologized like Jesus, and those who were in those men's inner circles who wrote biographies about them. Wilde's quote points to Judas as the disciple who would write his biography. If Heylin is the Judas figure, he has betrayed Dylan by writing the biography. However, Heylin extends the metaphor, referring to two of the other disciples who were equally important figures in Jesus's close community and in building and disseminating the narrative about him. First, Peter is considered the founder of the Christian religion and was the first Pope of the Catholic Church. If Heylin is the Peter figure, then he is central to the creation of the Dylan narrative. Further, Paul is the disciple who proselytized Christ's teachings and spread them around the Mediterranean. Heylin writes that Paul is, "a man of strong

opinions and fixed views, whose 'version' of his philosopher-king colored posterity's view more than any interpreter of the tablets" (xii). Clearly, Heylin asserts himself as the Paul figure in the construction of Dylan's narrative. He is not Judas, the betrayer, because he has not been close enough to Dylan to betray him.

Heylin poses the question as to whether or not someone who has been intimately involved with the subject of a biographical study, such as a friend or wife, could objectively interpret that subject. In this, Heylin argues to justify his biography and his authority as the biographer. He writes, "Would Sara Dylan, even if she could assuredly put the intimate in biography, be capable of writing something that gave a sense of her former husband's importance" (xii). Heylin asserts that he is also not Peter because he has recognized that he is not the first to write about Dylan. Scaduto was, but, as previously mentioned, Heylin enumerates the inadequacies of the earlier biographies. Heylin presents himself as the Paul figure because he wants his biography to be the biography that shapes the narrative of Dylan more than the other biographies have. Heylin, who had acknowledged the myth-making of texts written about Dylan and myth-making through the narratives created by those who knew Dylan and would grant interviews, engages in the process of myth-making himself by equating Dylan with the messianic figure that Wilde speaks about and positioning himself as one of the disciples of that Christ.

In 2001, Howard Sounes' biography, *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan*, adds another narrative voice to the canon of Dylan biographies. The beginning section, "Author's Note and Acknowledgements" spends a great deal of time explaining Dylan's importance as a figure in American popular culture to justify the continued and

continuing focus on him, his work, and his life. Sounes argues that Dylan has never had a number one hit in the United States and there are many other artists who have outsold Dylan, like Madonna, Prince, Rod Stewart, and Foreigner (1). He continues that, regardless of Dylan's lack of chart-topping hits, the length of time he spent off of the charts, or his ranking in lifetime sales according to the Recording Industry Association of America, Dylan is comparable to icons from earlier periods, such as Frank Sinatra and Elvis, as other biographers like had previously argued. This continues the language of the Dylan myth and reinforces Dylan's place in American culture, but it also separates him because the aforementioned artists, " – aside from a limited number of co-writing credits given to Presley – they did not write their own material" (2). Sounes places Dylan within the pantheon of mythic American icons, but places him at the top of the hierarchy. Because Dylan has written his own works and has done so for the entirety of his career with the level of poetic skill that has been attributed to him, Sounes separates him from other mythic figures in contemporary American history.

After he makes clear why he feels that Dylan is worthy of the continued focus on him, Sounes begins qualifying his authoritative voice by justifying why there was a need for another biography about Bob Dylan even though there were four major biographies that were published before his. He declares himself the researcher and analyst who has solved some of the Dylan mystery, including information about his second marriage and the children from that second marriage. He asserts, "[w]hile good work has been done, the challenge of writing a major biography that conveys the full grandeur of Bob Dylan's artistic achievement, and also reveals the true life of this fascinating and elusive man, has remained" (5). Additionally, he makes a commitment to fulfill that need. Though

Sounes, unlike other biographers is never a Dylan insider and remains a spectator, he, articulates his methodology and enumerates the people close to Dylan and part of Dylan's music community and personal circle who contributed to his biography. In this way, Sounes establishes himself as the definitive authoritative voice, even more so than the self-described Dylan insiders who had previously written biographies. Sounes maintains that the research he conducted will, "…pin down precise details in areas where there has been widespread, and often erroneous, speculation" (5). Also, Sounes making this statement distinguishes *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan* from the previous scholarship, biographies, and journalism.

In addition to the biographies, the film *Don't Look Back* has shaped the narrative of Dylan's identity in collective memory as much as the rock and roll journalism of publications like *Broadsides, Rolling Stone,* or *Melody Maker*, and the biographies have.[11] The film covers a portion Dylan's 1965 concert tour in England, candidly showing him out of performance and behind the scenes. This medium differs from biography because the filmmaker, D. A. Pennebaker, is not a protagonist in the narrative in the same way Scaduto, Shelton, Spitz, Heylin, and Sounes are. However, the film is similar to the biographies because Pennebaker controls the narrative. As the editor, he has agency over which events he includes in the film and how they are portrayed. Heylin points out that, "[t]he film covers barely two weeks in the life, and during that time he played just eight concerts, hardly the most rigorous schedule ever devised" (193). The time span of the film may not have covered a strenuous tour and publicity schedule, but it

[11] When Barthes' definition of myth-speech as multiple modes of delivery, including film, is applied to Dylan's identity along with Strachan's argument about rock biography to works about Dylan, it is clear that D.A. Pennebaker's documentary *Don't Look Back* should be included in the discussion of Dylan's mythopoeia.

shows him at the culmination of a tedious, years-long touring schedule that had him exhausted and taking amphetamines to get through the remainder of it. This proved to be Dylan's breaking point for his hiatus would follow shortly after, but the sharp-tongued, fast-talking hipster that is portrayed provided a visible representation of Dylan's identity to those who saw the film, especially since it appeared to show him "behind the scenes" in candid moments, rather than showing him exclusively in performance. Pennebaker's "derobing" of Dylan allowed those who viewed the film to interpret him, in some moments, as the mythical figure they expected to see, and, in other moments, as someone with whom they associated. The film depicted Dylan in moments of anger at multiple points when he reacts to people in his entourage, fear, when he responds to a death threat prior to a performance, and vulnerability, when he begs to go home because he is exhausted. This created a continuity of Dylan's initial identity, as a genius and representative of the 1960s counterculture, but also a revision that added new material and complexity to the interpretation of Dylan's identity.

There is another facet of both rock journalism and rock biography that unifies the two genres. While they attempt to demystify Dylan, the language they use reinforces the mythology surrounding Dylan that he is untranslatable, mercurial, a shape-shifter. Journalists and biographers present Dylan as a person constantly shifting performances and identities, which signifies instability or an absence of a central core identity from which the others are drawn. Yet the language that each writer uses, regardless of the identity or identities or aspect of the Dylan lore on which they focus, communicates continuity and stability of the sign, signified, and signifier. Scaduto uses the language, calling Dylan both "man and legend" (2). The classification of the thirty-year old Dylan

as a legend is largely based on the early part of his career and speaks to the myth that had already been created around Dylan in the press to which Scaduto adds. Shelton's *Melody Maker* article and biography add to the revision and, therefore, the interpretation of Dylan's history, further complicating his identity. Shelton admires Dylan's longevity in the his profession and asserts that, "One reason Dylan is able to "stick it out" is all the more amazing is that he is several people all at once, a polymath as well as a Protean chameleon" (Shelton "How Does it Feel?" 28). He attributes Dylan's fortitude in the public sphere and in the music industry as a result of his encyclopedic knowledge and his ability to be more than one person at once and to shift between those identities. Again, the language points to Dylan's identity from the 1961-1966 period as the original or "authentic" Dylan and the deviations from it as confusing violations of that identity. Shelton extends the use of the lexicon in his introduction when he increases Dylan's myth and importance by attributing the shift of business in the music industry "from the business fat cats to the artists themselves" and to intellectualizing popular music to Dylan (3-6). This trend would continue through the succeeding biographies, shaping Dylan's identity though telling and retelling Dylan's stories to fill in meaning through further and extensive research and interviews in an attempt to demystify Dylan's identity.

The contradictions that arise due to multiple biographies adding "new" information at different periods further create the image of Dylan as being mercurial. These contradictions can be the result of different biographers interpreting something like the meaning behind his the facts of his biography with varying perspectives in an attempt to explain Dylan more clearly than he had previously been explained. Scaduto, for example, believed that Dylan's Jewish identity affected his early consciousness.

However, Heylin believes that Dylan rejected his father Abe rather than his religious identity when he changed his name, but Rogovy and other Jewish scholars view Dylan's Jewish identity as central to the creation of his works. Rogovy creates a parallel between Dylan and the 19th century Lithuanian Jewish folksinger Eliakum Zunser (1). Similarly, Stephen Pickering's analysis "presents an authentic perspective of Dylan – as a Jew" (11). The inconsistencies of Dylan's identity perception and presentation are further evident in Spitz's assertion that the biographies that preceded his as having a difficulty in understanding that an analysis of Dylan's biography requires the synthesis of the fictional and the factual and that others have created a myth, but that he refuses to be part of that tradition. Spitz emphasizes that the inconsistencies in the biographies, articles, reviews, and interviews with or about Dylan point to "sheer number of untruths and epic exaggerations that have found their way into print" (xii). Thus, the archival information about Dylan is based on specious documents at best. Sounes also reinforces this point with his aforementioned admission that the other biographies perpetuated speculations and inaccuracies. Part of the problem as Spitz, Heylin, and the other biographers argue in the prefaces to their biographies, is that these speculations and inaccuracies have been repeated, with or without revision, so often that they have become accepted facts of history in Dylan's biography. This is the point at which each successive biographer, with the exception of Scaduto who did not have a predecessor, attempted to weaken or undermine the authority of the biographies that were published before his and claim narrative authority in the role of protagonist as the analytic researcher who could and would present an accurate and truthful construction of Dylan's identity. In this practice, each biographer enters into a genre convention of biography that, when the canon is

considered as a unified collection that points to Dylan's identity, underscores his lack of a central ipseity. The intended corrections do not actually correct the anomalies in Dylan's biography. Rather, they add nuanced difference and doubt.

Subsequently, rock and roll journalisms instable construction of the narrative of Dylan's identity exists in collective memory. Subsequently, it created the perception of the instability of Dylan's central identity that has continued to control the public's perception of him. The texts which create the canon of Dylan narratives have been structured in a way that maintains the importance of Dylan in the public consciousness through the frequency of the focus upon him. It also maintains the magazine or newspaper publisher's control over who is deemed worthy of that attention or, as Strachan argues, the journalists serve as the gate keepers of what is or is not relevant to or will positively promote the image of rock and roll. Rock biography follows a similar set of institutional guidelines as rock and roll journalism does in the creation of pop culture figures' identities through the analysis of the facts and events of the figures lives. The mythology surrounding Dylan is the sum of the language biographers and journalists have used.[12] That has created how his identity has been interpreted throughout the majority of his career.

As Shelton argues, Dylan is many people at once. However, interpreting him through rock and roll journalism leads to an understanding of him in the context of the myth that reinforces rock journalism's importance and presents Dylan's identity in a constant state revision, reinvention, and reinerpretations. Revisions of Dylan throughout

[12] Strachan explains that, "Pekacz (2004), for instance, argues that biography has had a central and lasting role in the construction of contemporary perceptions of music history and the received knowledge of the lives of canonic composers" (66).

his career lend to the myth because they maintain Dylan's presence in and importance to genre and to rock and roll. In the same way, biographies written about him present a problem because they are subject to their own set of genre and industry "conventions" that affect the presentation of Dylan and his identity.[13] Each of the five major biographies and biographers attempt to create order out of Dylan's mercurial identity performance where journalism and previous biographies had been unsuccessful. However, they add to the mythology through their discourse and lexicon, further bolstering the post-modern "hollow man" theory of Dylan's identity. In this way, interpreting Dylan and his identity through rock and roll journalism and the biographies leads to the reinforcement of the myth they created through their collective narratives. Dylan's shape-shifting mercurial nature can be attributed to his identity being comprised of the fragmentation of the American pluralist society in its liberal tradition rather than him being a man with a hollow core who shifts from one identity to the next without any stability. The most effective way to reappropriate the interpretation of Dylan's mercurial nature is through an analysis of the personae and identity performance represented in his lyrics. This analysis will lend to an examination of Dylan's fractured identity as parts of a unified whole, representing the voices and experiences of the American populous.

[13] Strachan argues, "Rock biography has a clearly defined set of conventions, albeit slightly different from the conventions outlined by Pekacz" (66).

Chapter 3

How Dylan Becomes the Poet of the American Democracy

The previous chapters' examination of the genres of rock journalism and rock and roll biography illustrates that both contribute to the processes of myth creation, revision, and perpetuation. Because the identities these media create in the collective consciousness of a society points to a countervailing interpretation of Dylan's performances, understanding his identity has focused on the shifts from one performance to another, all of which point to an absence of something core or foundational from which those shifts diverge. Dylan's adopted folk identity and his perpetuation of it in his early career were functions of the business of music, of promoting a product based on what a consumer public would accept as authentic to a genre's, such as folk music, greater identity. Treating Dylan as a commodity and marketing him as a product is counter to the authenticity that was ascribed to him as representative of the folk revival. However, because popular musicians such as Dylan exist in a dual world of promoting their albums, a mass produced product to sell to the largest audience, and artistic creation, examinations of Dylan intersect these two and points to Dylan's identity as unstable as the media presents it. For this reason, shifting focus away from Dylan's personal history to his artistic creation points to Dylan as fragmentations of a unified whole. Therefore, when he said, "I am my words" in Svedberg's article, it was a clear statement of being and identity. Or, more clearly, that the words he used to create his lyrics and other written works were a more authentic expression of his identity than his performance in the media. The shift in personae and voice in his lyrical performance is representative of

Dylan entering into the American literary tradition, becoming the poet of democracy for the mid-to-late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

The American literary tradition into which Dylan enters begins in the mid-nineteenth century with Emerson and Thoreau whose works specifically enumerate and exemplify the importance of a writer upholding the moral and ethical integrity of a society or country. In his 1844 essay, "The Poet," Emerson wrote, "the poet is representative. He stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth, but of the common-wealth" (Emerson 208). The morality that the poet of the American democracy maintains speaks to the ideas and ideals on which America was founded: equality, freedom, individualism, and opportunity. He or she is the speaker of an objective truth relating to subjective expression. Emerson continues defining the poet or poets, "The men of more delicate ear write down these cadences more faithfully, and these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of the nations" (Emerson 210). Thus, the literature of a nation also chronicles its history in an organic and uncensored voice. The writers in this tradition articulate the American democracy and the plurality of American culture.

The voice within this tradition matures with writers like Whitman and Twain later in the nineteenth century. In *Democratic Vistas,* Whitman continues Emerson's argument, writing about the tenor of the literati America required. When Whitman wrote that text, America was in need of writers who would be able to chronicle the complexity of its heterogeneity, while also voicing "what is universal, native, common to all, inland and seaboard, northern and southern" (Whitman 9). Whitman's poetry expresses a

singular subjectivity, his own, speaking of the young democracy with hope, pride, and of observations from his travels and experiences.

As the United States evolved into maturity out of the 19th century and into the 20th century, the voice or poet of the democracy also had to evolve to reflect the country's social and cultural changes. Generally, multiple writers within a movement are credited with giving voice to the disparate communities within the American population. The Modernists, for example, were separated into regional writers, who expressed the histories, cultures, and people of a particular region of the United States, writers of social conscience like Steinbeck, expatriates, the Harlem Renaissance, and so forth. In the initial post-World War II period, The Beat writers were and represented a marginal society that pushed back against the supposed hegemony of the 1950s, represented in the post-war consumer culture, in television sit-coms, and American jingoism.[14] This is the America that John Kenneth Gallbraith had written about in *The Affluent Society.*

It is also the America in which Svedberg revealed Dylan to have grown up, and that he began to push back against early in his career. Dylan's voice "in the 1960s embodies the countervailing search for authenticity in American culture" (Edwards 8). This assessment of Dylan in the 1960s fits nicely with his pre-motorcycle accident identity. Dylan's early songs like "Blowin' in the Wind," "The Times They Are A-Changin'," and "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues," seemed to give voice to and connect with what was happening in American culture and society. In fact, Dylan's Greenwich Village contemporary, Dave Van Ronk, said of his friend, "If there is an

[14] One theory of this phenomenon can be located in Michael Harrington's analysis in his 1962 work, *The Other America*, in which he posits that "there is a familiar America. It is celebrated in speeches and advertised on television and in the magazines. It has the highest mass standard of living the world has ever known. In the 1950s this America worried about itself" (1).

American Collective Unconscious, if you could believe in something like that, that Bobby had somehow tapped into it and there were always these sometimes very faint resonances" (Scorsese 1:51:47-1:52:04). Dylan's voice stands as the singular voice of the American people.

As the first true poet in the American tradition in response to Emerson's call for a poet of America, Whitman stands as the Freudian "poetic father" that all succeeding American poets must address to surpass or replace.[15] Whitman said, "He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher" (qtd. in Klier 338). His work is so pervasive and has influenced poetry, popular culture and, most significantly, American culture. Poets such as Carl Sanburg, Wallace Stevens, and Dylan contemporary Allen Ginsberg, have followed the oedipal development of addressing and mimicking Whitman in style and form to supplant him in their respective eras as the poet of America. Critic Ron Klier quotes Cowley when he asserts that when Whitman wrote "[i]n the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. . . "the proof of the poet is that his country has absorbed him as affectionately as he has absorbed it" (qtd. in Klier 336). He continues that the canonical poets fail to achieve the mark of being "true poets" as Whitman defined them, and he names Woody Guthrie, Dylan, "and others like them" as poets in Whitman's tradition (336). That Dylan is a descendent of this line of American poets is unassailable; when he begins to find his poetic voice and declare himself as that poet is.

[15] Ron Klier addresses Whitman's influence in his article "Walt Whitman, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and The Anxiety of Influence" in which he quotes critic Hank Lazar, "because of the range, ambition, freedom, and magnitude of Walt Whitman's persistence as a poet, it is to be expected that nearly every other contemporary poet of some stature will, at one time or another, bow respectfully to Walt Whitman's direction" (334).

When Dylan entered the recoding studio in November of 1961, he was relatively new to the New York City folk scene and he was also new to recording. Still an "apprentice" poet, he was not ready to fully assume the position of the poet of the American democracy. This is the reason his self-titled first album presented only two original tracks, "Talkin' New York" and "Song to Woody," dedicated to Woody Guthrie. The majority of the songs on *Bob Dylan* demonstrate a young performer imitating the style of those he admired, while also reconciling issues with his oedipal poetic and musical fathers. As the second track on the album, "Talkin' New York," is illustrative of Woody Guthrie's stylistic influence on Dylan's early work in both composition and performance. Klier argues that this song is Dylan's acknowledgement of the debt to Woody Guthrie for the music and lessons "that decisively awoke that young Dylan to the verities of an America alienated, persecuted and disposed" (qtd. in Klier 335). The song is a traditional Guthrie style talking blues, written in stanzas varying in length from 4, 5, 6, to 7 lines in an irregular pattern. The lyrics tell the narrative of Dylan's arrival in New York City in the winter of 1961, his subway ride to Greenwich Village, to his first time on a Greenwich Village stage, to getting his union card. The narrative ends with Dylan leaving New York City and visiting East Orange, New Jersey, where Bob and Sid Gleason lived. The Gleasons, fans of Guthrie's who had visited him in the hospital in nearby Morristown, New Jersey, during which he told them that he felt imprisoned, hosted Guthrie on weekends so that he could visit with fans and old friends, like Pete Seeger, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, and, eventually Dylan (Scaduto 53).

"Talkin' New York" serves as a bridge to "Song to Woody," which is clearly written in Guthrie's style and continues to develop Dylan's voice. Written in five

quatrains, the song is a relatively simple honorarium to Guthrie's tradition as a folk singer and Whitmanesque poet. He sings about the world he observes as being Guthrie's world. Through the use of the second person pronoun "you," he addresses Guthrie directly. Dylan sings with reverence, acknowledging that everything he's singing Guthrie has already sung and sung better than Dylan can at this point in his career. He writes, "Hey, hey, Woody Guthrie, but I know that you know/All the things that I'm a-sayin' an' a-many times more," asserting himself as the apprentice to the master, Guthrie (Dylan "Song to Woody" ll. 9-10). The last two lines in the third stanza acknowledge Guthrie's position in Dylan's pantheon, "I'm a-singin' you the song, but I can't sing enough/'Cause there's not many men that done the things that you've done" (Dylan "Song to Woody" ll. 11-12). At this point, Dylan is still reconciling his own oedipal poetic development. He recognizes that he's "walkin' a road other men have gone down" in the first stanza and that he is becoming part of the American folk and literary tradition (l. 2).

The track's position as the last song on the album confirms Dylan's assertion about Guthrie being his last idol was an honest statement. Though he would bring with him the lessons he learned from Guthrie to his following albums, this would be the last time he would engage in overt hero-worship and emulation and he would continue to develop his lyric writing style. Shelton observed about the transition, "The first album was the last will and testament of one Dylan and the herald of a new Dylan" (130). The old Dylan was the student of folk music both in Dinkytown and in Greenwich Village; the Dylan that was emulating Guthrie. The new Dylan that was ushered in was the emerging poet of the American democracy. Consequently, the remaining eleven songs on the album are covers of traditional folk songs with Dylan's variations. In doing so, Dylan

was following a standard folk music form. By taking a traditional form and making it new, however, Dylan transformed it into something poetic, even if he borrowed from contemporaries, as he did from Dave van Ronk with "House of the Rising Son." Additionally, Scaduto asserts, "*Bob Dylan* didn't fully mirror what Dylan himself was up to because he was still moving so fast. The material on the album was already something out of his past even as he was laying it down" (110). The composition of the album illustrates a young artist still cultivating his poetic voice and musical style. He had, however, not fully started to articulate his own poetic voice through his lyrics.

Dylan's poetic voice differs from Whitman's expression of it because Dylan does not articulate a singular subjectivity. Rather, he shifts through multiple identities and persona.[16] Once he begins writing his own music, Dylan's work has a keen sense of the topical issues and a relationship with the past.[17] It is well-documented that Dylan used the chord changes and structure from the slave spiritual, "No More Auction Block," to write "Blowin' in the Wind," the lyrics of which resonate the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement. 1983's *Blind Willie McTell* uses the chord changes from the blues song *St. James Infirmary*, a variation of the English folk song *The Sailor's Wake*, to pay tribute to the revered blues man of the same name. In fact, Izzy Young says of Dylan's music and lyric construction, "It was written today but it sounded like it could have been written two-hundred years ago. It sounded current and old at the same time" (1:16:54-1:17:10).

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[16] Dylan's place in the continuum of the American literary tradition and narrative is further explained in the essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In it, T. S. Eliot provides the criteria for which artists create in the present, but also have a sense of the past which affects their creation but is also altered by it.

[17] In relation to the poet's timelessness, Emerson similarly wrote, "[a]nd this hidden truth, that the fountains whence all this river of Time, and its creatures, floweth, are intrinsically ideal and beautiful, draws us to the consideration of the nature and functions of the Poet, or the man of Beauty, to the means and material he uses, and to the general aspect of the art in the present time" (Emerson 208).

Established members of the folk community recognized Dylan's ability to compose songs modified and arranged folk music to address topical events and issues.

Dylan's work, from 1961-1966, to the 1970s when he released *Blood on the Tracks* and songs like "Up to Me," through his current production, has had a sense of being contemporary, but also traditional. The rhythms, chord patterns, and melodies of his songs are often borrowed from folk, country, and blues music, giving them a simultaneous modern and classic American sound; and the lyrics, because he ceased composing "topical songs" so early in his career, are not only relevant to the particular period in which they were written, but also to speak to a broader range of human experiences; the language, idiosyncratic structures, and phrasing is distinctly American. In addition, the way in which Dylan creates, what Eliot says is "a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable" demonstrates "[t]he progress of an artist [as] a self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (Eliot 56). Throughout his career, Dylan has not shifted into and out of many identity performances based on an untranslatable, mercurial, vacuous core. Rather, he has sacrificed his personal subjectivity to become the medium through which various American identities are given voice to create an American bricolage in the latter half of the twentieth century and early part of twenty first century. This represents all America is in practice and the discrepancies where it fails to fulfill the promises of its ideals.

On *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan,* Dylan continues to work through his oedipal issues with his poetic "fathers" and develop his poetic voice. The final song on *Bob Dylan* indicates reverence towards Woody Guthrie, his major influence, but also a separation from him. Dylan's producer, Tom Wilson, explained of Dylan's performances

that, “You go back to his three albums. Each time, there’s a big leap from one to the next – in material, in performance, in everything” (Hentoff 13). There was significant development in Dylan’s lyric writing as he matured into a serious poet, creating songs “in the tradition of all lasting folk songs” (17). As he continues to record, Dylan’s focus shifts away from specific topical events; rather, he wrote about experiences with which his listeners could identify. When Nat Hentoff visited Dylan in the recording studio, he observed that Dylan’s “songs…sound[ed] as if there were real people in them” (17). The distinction that Hentoff makes is that rather than there being simply personae through which Dylan assumed a voice and performed each song, each song presented its own subjectivity. The appearance of “real people” in the songs seemed logical. He told Hentoff, “If I haven’t been through what I write about, the songs aren’t worth anything” (15). The authenticity of experience through which Dylan writes, his poetic voices and personae, were drawn from the heterogeneity of his central identity, which is reflective of American cultural pluralism.

It is on this album, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, that Dylan includes only original compositions and, through them, declares himself a serious poet through his lyrics, developing the genre of folk music to write songs that articulated Dylan’s subject position and experiences through many voices and personae. On this album, he establishes the foundation for the voices that are traceable and would continue to be developed and expanded. When he assumes the position of the poet, he express the voice of moral authority expressed in the ideals on which America was founded and in Judeo-Christian values such as compassion, justice, and redepmtion. He also asssumes the figure of the cowboy, hobo, and outlaw that represents the American spirit of

individualism, expansion, and curiosity. Additionally, Dylan's articulation of the voice of the working class champions their dignity and essential role in the creation, development, and creation of culture.[18] The final voice expressed on the album is that of lover or the person expressing the mercurial nature of relationships. All of these voices will be further developed throughout Dylan's canon.

The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan opens with "Blowin' in the Wind," Dylan's statement on equality and the Civil Rights struggle of the late-1950s and early 1960s and establishes a voice of social conscience or moral authority of the poet. It's the voice that is initially congruent of the New Left movements of his generation and of Guthrie's influence on Dylan speaking for marginalized communities. The song is written in three octaves and follows the folk tradition of allusion in musical arrangements, but also has lyrics that address the contemporary issues upon which his peers within the folk revival of the early 1960s also focus. The basic chord structure of Dylan's song followed the slave and abolition spiritual "No More Auction Block." the lyrics of which call for an end to the sale of African slaves. The lyrics of "Blowin' in the Wind" create a parallel between the effort to abolish slavery and the movement to procure equal rights for

[18] Horace Kallen's work, *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea,* analyzes the nature of cultural duality and, ultimately, cultural pluralism. Kallen traces the genealogy of attitudes towards this duality in Western culture and argues that the duality exists between "culture," most commonly associated with leisure activities, and "vocation," which is associated with work. Kallen asserts that this opposition can be located in "the ethos of the Greek *polis"* and that a person in leisure or with more access to leisure time "looks upon people who work with their hands as incapable of the dignity and worth proper to a free man, by nature incapable to perceive the truth of things…" By this theory, there is little dignity or cultural worth in those who must work to support their basic needs in addition to their leisure activities. This binary between those who are cultured and those who are perceived as uncultured would change in the twentieth century. As Kallen argues, anthropologists were responsible for this shift during the early to mid-twentieth century in that, "[a]n upshot of their inquires was the notion that the vocations of a community were the nucleus of its culture; that their relations were reciprocal and compenetrative; that if consumption was end and production means, it was the means nevertheless which gave substance and form to the end."[18] As a result, the importance of labor and vocation and the leisure activities of the laboring classes were understood to comprise a vital and dignified part of the culture of any nation or group.

African Americans. This first person speaker in the song attempts to teach through dialectic, subverting his subjectivity to the answer to the series of questions, "The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind" (Dylan "Blowin' in the Wind" l.4). He poses a series of rhetorical questions in the first three lines of each stanza. He purports to know where the answers are and intends to encourage the reader or listener to consider them. The answer to these questions provided for the listener in the last line of each stanza is that they are "blowin' in the wind." It is a simple answer that is the central idea of America's governing documents and the American ideology; the answer of peace, freedom, and equality, is everywhere, but elusively blowing around everyone making the social changes necessary for the United States to live up to its guarantees of equality and freedom stalled or slow-moving.

It's on track six of the thirteen tracks on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," that Dylan declares himself the poet of the American democracy. The other tracks announce him as a nascent major poet, but this track is his statement about his position in the American canon and completes his oedipal development. In the song, Dylan creates an antiphony in which addresses Whitman and American poets in the Whitmanian tradition. Through this conversation between a persona representative of a poet from an older generation talking with one from a younger generation, Dylan assumes the voice of the "poet of America." In *Dylan's Visions of Sin*, Christopher Ricks acknowledges Dylan's debt to older poetic traditions, specifically the Scottish ballad *Lord Randal.* Ricks asserts, as do other Dylan scholars and biographers, the "initiating question" in the dialect is an allusion to the first two lines of each of the ballad's quatrains, "O where ha you been, Lord Randal, my son/And where ha you been my

handsome young man?" (330). Rightly, Ricks makes the association between the opening lines in Dylan's stanzas and those in the Scottish Ballad and notes that Dylan's referrence to the ballad in his book *Tarantula* compounds the allusion (330). However, *Lord Randall* communicates equality in the dialogue between mother and son because each stanza is evenly split, giving two lines to the questioning mother and two lines to the answering son (333). The series of questions and answers in the quatrains communicate the narrative of Lord Randall's demise.

In opposition, the conversation in Dylan's song is unbalanced and reads like a Platonic dialectic with the teacher posing the questions and leading the pupil to his own knowledge through his answers. Ricks acknowledges this in his assessment of the speaker's fortitude in the song, "But in Dylan's song the question is always outweighed by the scale of the answer, and furthermore the scale itself then varies" (333). Dylan's stanzas open with the initiating two-lined question, but the answers from the speaker shifts line lengths from five in the first stanzas, to seven in the second and third stanzas, to twelve in the final stanza. The increasing number of lines in response illustrates the speaker's confidence in his experiences and knowledge gained through them. The unbalanced number of lines indicates the speaker assuming the role of the "master" American poet from the questioner. Indeed, Allen Ginsberg recognized this. Sean Wilentz notes that when Ginsberg first heard Dylan sing "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," "he later said, [he] wept with illuminated joy at what he sensed was a passing of the bohemian tradition to a younger generation" (68-9).

It is also instructive to note that the allusion to *Lord Randall* that Dylan uses in this song makes the voice who poses the initiating questions a composite of many literary

influences or “fathers,” as scholar Ron Klier assesses in his article, “Walt Whitman, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and The Anxiety of Influence.” Though the poem is Scottish, not American in its origins, there are two aspects to take into consideration. The first is that many American folk songs originate in the Anglo tradition. Both the country song “The Streets of Laredo” and the blues song “St. James Infirmary” are musical descendants of the Old English folk song “The Sailor’s Wake.” As explained in the first chapter, Dylan used the basic chord structure from “St. James Infirmary” for the composition of his 1983 song “Blind Willie McTell.” Folk music that settlers brought from their mother countries became part of the American folk music traditions, with some variations.

The second is that the dialogue occurs between a parental figure and a child. Much like the mother’s questions in *Lord Randall,* the initiating question asked by the older poet is relatively the same throughout the song. Dylan replaced “Lord Randall, my son” with “blue-eyed son.” (*Lord Randall* l. 1; Dylan “A Hard Rain’s a-Gonna Fall” l. 1). This exchange symbolizes a sense of innocence the questioner believes the son, who is Dylan, with bright or light eyes to possess, but also points to the son as the favorite son because he is no longer merely “handsome” as he was in *Lord Randall,* but he is “darling” or someone held dear. Dylan positions himself as the favorite poet or student of poets through the language of the lyrics in the opening of each stanza. The symbolist imagery of his responses indicates that he is ready to assume his position as the poet of his time. Addressing an older generation of successful poets who captured the American character as did Whitman and Guthrie and placing himself in the dominant position, both

in line length and expression, Dylan is able to supplant the older poets. Thus, he makes room for himself in their place.

Because the phrasing of the questions changes only slightly, the majority of the content of the poem or song is located in Dylan's young poet's responses to the relatively stable questions. When the song was released, many misunderstood the "rain" to mean "atomic rain." Dylan had written the song in the fall of 1962 around the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, in his May 1963 interview with Studs Terkel, Dylan said, "No, no it wasn't atomic rain . . . It's not atomic rain, it's just hard rain. It's not the fallout rain, it isn't that at all. I just mean some sort of end that's just gotta happen which is very easy to see but everybody doesn't really think about is overlooking it" (Terkel 6). The images that Dylan includes illustrate the signals of the horrors of humanity and catastrophe that surround people on a daily basis, but they either do not recognize the signs or they need someone to shift the focus to them. This end as Dylan calls it, Heylin interprets as, "[t]his hard rain had more in common with the biblical apocalypse than bombs falling through the air" (102). Indeed, it stands that the rain that falls in Dylan's song is rain that will cleanse the earth of humanity's blights, but it does not point to an apocalypse. Ricks continues this understanding by asserting, "*A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* is a vision of judgment, a scouring vision of hell. Hell on earth" (342). However, in and to every generation the world is in a fragile state with an end of times and some catastrophe to bring it about looming, probably more so in Dylan's time during the age of atomic anxiety. How the world ends is less important than the poet's responsibility to tell the truth of his observations about it and everything else he sees, which is what Dylan commits to doing at the end of the song.

The first stanza of the song provides the initiating question to a younger poet who has been away or, at least, out of contact with the questioner. The young poet finds temporary shelter with the older poet during the conversation. He reveals the time and distance of his travels through the scope of and diction in the answer. The images that Dylan includes in his response indicate that there is something wrong in the world. The mountains are obfuscated by mist, highways are crooked, the forests are sad, the oceans are dead, and he is "the only human being – more, the only sentient being" (332). His mode of travel is also challenging and challenged. He uses words like "stumbled," "crawled," and "stepped" to communicate that. Similarly, he tells the listener the scope of his journey. He's been to twelve mountains, six highways, seven forests, twelve oceans, and ten-thousand miles into the graveyard. His assessment about their state and the state of the world is not a superficial one. He's been to many and enough of each to form an educated opinion or to learn what he feels is a representation of the truth as he presents it. Additionally, he has been out, across the country as Walt Whitman and Woody Guthrie had, and is reporting where he has traveled to assert his ethos and to demonstrate that his education is sufficient. Dylan's travels have been as extensive as Whitman's ruminations in *Leaves of Grass* and Guthrie's rail travels that inform his populist catalogue.

The initiating question in the next three stanzas of the song shift from where he's been to what the poet perceived through his senses and the people he has encountered during his travels. This is his education as a poet. He goes out and has a variety of experiences with many different people, and he then records his ruminations. Williams maintains that the song is simple and that the responses are written, "in a form similar to

a nursery rhyme or a recital in school…the song's singer: reports on where he's been, tells what he's seen, tells what he's heard, tells who he's met, and declares what he will do now" (59). This form allows for the older poet to lead Dylan's young poet through an affirmation of his own understanding of the truth of the world based on his subjective organic experiences. What he sees are hostile images. He doesn't just see a baby, but a newborn baby, with wild wolves surrounding it. The wolves are predatory and a symbol of threat to the child. That they are "wild" represents a greater danger to the child because the word connotes accentuated ferocity and viciousness when paired with the symbol of the wolf. From the moment a child is born, he or she is socialized by his or her environment. The environment Dylan presents is untamed, uncivilized, and threatening to the child's safety and development. This is compounded by the image of young children brandishing weapons: "I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children" (Dylan "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" l. 12). The children have been born into a violent world, one in which they must fight or defend themselves to survive. The rest of the images reinforce the waste land Dylan has been describing and an impending end of times that will come with the arrival of the expected rain.

When the older poet asks what the young poet has seen in the third stanza of the song, his immediate response is an allusion to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. This is instructive for two reasons. The first is that Dylan addresses another American poetic father through allusion. The other is that it evidences continued development of Dylan's poetic aptitude. In section V of *The Waste Land,* "What the Thunder Said," Eliot personifies the thunder and it says "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata." The footnote for this section reads that the words mean "give," "sympathize," and "control." It continues to

explain that the allusion is taken from the *Brihadaranyaka* in the *Upanishads* that contains a fable that explains the meaning of the Thunder (Elliot footnote. for l. 401). Further, the *Katha Upanishad* describes the Thunder as a symbol of God, "that he is likened to an upraised thunderbolt, because of the impartial and inevitable nature of His Law, which all powers great or small, must obey absolutely" (*Upanishads* 63). This is a prescription for behavior that culminates in the final lines of the section and the poem, "*Shantih Shantih Shantih"* (Eliot 433). Through charity, sympathy, and exercising self-control, humans gain understanding and peace (Eliot footnote for line 433). After four sections that describe the earth as a waste land, dried up, scarred, and non-regenerative, the thunder signals the rain's arrival, signifying reprieve, if not hope.

Though also personified, the thunder in Dylan's scarred earth, his waste land, is markedly different than the thunder in Eliot's waste land. Dylan hears it rumbling a warning and leads to a wave, the following image, which will cover the earth and drown everyone on it. The succeeding lines present a montage of ominous and fragmented images of the worst of humanity, unable to communicate, hands on fire, laughing at someone in need, crying, and in which he hears the song of another "poet that died in a gutter" (Dylan "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" l. 28). The sounds that Dylan's young poet hears signal a change in the poet's attitude toward the world he observes. While Eliot views the early twentieth century as a waste land, it has a hopeful ending when the rain comes and provides much-needed nourishment. Conversely, Dylan's mid-twentieth century poet sees a world, as he says on *Bob Dylan* in "Song to Woody," that "Seems sick an' it's hungry, it's tired an' it's torn,/It seems like it's a-dyin' an' it's hardly been

born." (Dylan ll. 7-8). Though the rain in Dylan's poem is not necessarily apocalyptic, he does not see the same hope that Eliot's speaker does.

The song then shifts from sensory perception to interaction. Dylan has satisfied the questioner that he has both seen and heard enough on his travels to be able to write about them. The older poet then asks who the younger poet met while he was out on his travels. In the beginning, when the young poet responds where he'd been, he does not refer to any other people. The land is devoid of any humanity except for the speaker traveling through the desolate waste land. In this stanza, he mentions the diversity of the people he met. Again, the listener of the song or reader of the lyrics is provided with a series of ominous images that demonstrate the depravity of human nature, but there are human beings there. The poet has an audience for which to sing, which presents a possibility of salvation. What the images point to specifically is both debated and debatable. The landscape is populated with those who are surrounded with death and violence, and people who have been damaged in both love and hatred. Dylan does not detail his experiences with these people; he simply enumerates the list and their maladies: The child near the dead pony, the woman whose body is on fire, the white man walking a black dog, and the men who are hurt by both love and hate.

The one positive image Dylan provides in this stanza is the girl who gives him a rainbow. This image also communicates what Dylan overtly states in the next stanza, that there has been a cessation of the rain, even if for a short period. After the great flood in the book of Genesis, God gives Noah a rainbow as a covenant promising that he will not send another flood to destroy the earth. However, here the rainbow is given by a child rather than God, signaling that the next generation might be better equipped so they

will not share the same fate that is promised by the hard rain for which Dylan's poet waits.

In the last stanza, the dialogue shifts from the older poet asking what the younger poet has observed to what the younger poet will do now that he has gained knowledge. This shifts the poet from education to action, from past to future. Written in twelve lines, this is the young poet's most formidable response and in which Dylan articulates his commitment to assuming his role as the poet of the American democracy. Here, he accepts the role of the hero with the responsibility to not only record and report what he has experienced through sensory perception, but to "tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it/and reflect it from the mountains so all souls can see it" (Dylan "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" ll. 52-3). He commits to living out and performing his role. Emerson asserts, "[t]he poet does not wait for the hero or the sage, but, as they act and think primarily, so he writes primarily what will and must be spoken" (Emerson 210). He can only know what must be spoken if he travels, observes, and is connected with the people and what's going on, the understanding of which he articulates through the course of the dialogue and the song. Where he has been during the course of the song has been a safe shelter, but he is going out before the rain begins to fall again. Williams notes that Dylan's speaker is going out into living world to "participate fully…while it still lasts" (61). Additionally, Williams' argues that, "[a]lthough written in the shadow of (possible) imminent death, this song is not an old man's last will and testament, places arrived at in a lifetime, but rather a young man's collection of first lines, places to begin from" (60). This is where Dylan's most obvious development occurs. Dylan has provided an

enumeration of his starting points and it is from there his poetry and poetic voice will continue and develop.

Track three on the album, “Masters of War,” illustrates slight shift in persona from the other compositions. The song is one of the first and most direct of Dylan’s “finger pointing songs” and presents another voice of moral judgment, but the representation of this voice is different than the one in “Blowin’ in the Wind.” Though it conveys a sense of moral or social conscience, it also communicates to the ideals of the American democracy. The speaker in “Masters of War” goes further to condemn in a way that the speaker in “Blowin’ in the Wind” did not. “Masters of War” focuses on the Military-Industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned about in the 1961 speech he delivered three days before John F. Kennedy’s inauguration. Eisenhower advised that the arms industry was new to the American society and economy and that its influence was pervasive. Because of this, the American people must remain alert to the industry’s influence and power. The sixty-four lines of the song are separated into eight octaves with lines six and eight in each octave possessing a regular end-rhyme scheme with either perfect or near rhyme. This rhyme scheme reinforces the tension that each octave develops by connecting the progress of Dylan’s point of the immorality of the profiteers’ business practices to his statement of judgment, punishment, or the consequences of the profiteers’ actions.

“Masters of War” begins with an invitation or a call to the profiteers with the line, “Come you masters of war” (Dylan “Masters of War” l. 1). This device was used in medieval poetry to assemble an audience that would listen to the poet’s stories. He catalogues specifically to whom he’s speaking by enumerating the machines and vehicles

they build so there is no confusion that the "masters of war" are those who propagate the war machine for their own profit. Though they are men who build products that provide employment and contribute to the GDP, Dylan reminds them they, "never done nothin'/But build to destroy" (Dylan "Masters of War" ll. 9-10). This is the source of their sin in the speaker's judgment. He can see the truth of their actions; their business and success are dependent upon the perpetuation of war from which they cowardly run and in which they have not fought, nor will they fight. The speaker then accuses those who profit from war as arming men his age, while the "masters of war" hide and "turn and run faster when the fast bullets fly" (Dylan "Masters of War" ll. 15).

The lyrics continue with an inversion when the speaker expresses that he speaks "out of turn." He presents himself as rude or uneducated, but his understanding of the "Golden Rule" of what is right and wrong is clearly stated. He may not be as educated or wise as those to whom he's speaking, but he knows that there is no forgiveness for what they've done, not even from Jesus. The emphasis on Jesus, a Western symbol of grace, love, and forgiveness, as unable to forgive accentuates the severity of the crimes that Dylan feels the profiteers commit. Williams argues the songs written during this period, especially "Masters of War," "also find Dylan thinking about Jesus (and Judas) – not the spiritual Jesus, who shows up in some of the songs on the first album, but Jesus as a mythical figure, the persecuted teacher or truth-teller" (70). Similarly, the speaker assumes a voice of truth-teller throughout the song as he exposes the military industrial complex and those responsible for its continuation. Williams quotes Bert Cartwright's "suggest[ion] that in the period of 1961-1966 'Dylan saw the Bible as part of the poor white and black cultures of American with which he sought to identify'" (70). The

association with and portrayal of underrepresented voices was part of the debt Dylan owed Woody Guthrie.

In “Masters of War” and other songs recorded during this period, like “With God on Our Side” and “Let Me Die in My Footsteps,” Dylan’s deliberate use of Biblical allusion speaks to and for specific communities within the American population. In the two concluding stanzas of “Masters of War,” the speaker questions the profiteers with pointed condemnation alluding to salvation and redemption. First, he asks the profiteers whether the money they earned was worth the number of young men who were killed or injured as a result of their industry. He concludes that they are condemned by their actions and “all the money [they] made/could never buy back [their] soul[s]” (ll. 55-56). The song closes with the speaker’s vow that he will “stand o’er [the profiteers’] grave/’Til [he’s] sure that [they’re dead]” (ll. 63-64). He assumes a vitriolic tone that goes beyond the judgment the rest of the song communicates.

The song “Oxford Town,” the ninth track on the album, uses a topical journalist style of the folk music revival in that it deals with a specific event: the racial integration of students at the University of Mississippi. Again, Dylan writes in quatrains with regular end-rhyme. The song’s simple melody, rhythm, and lyrics create cognitive dissonance between the musical composition and the weight of the message. Williams asserts “[t]he simplicity of Dylan’s “banjo tune played on guitar” fits his lyrics perfectly; the whole song is a testimony to the power of understatement” (63). In doing that, Dylan demonstrates his development as a poet. The song points to the inequalities of segregation in the public educational systems, including state universities, of a free nation

that promises equality. However, the simplicity with which the message is conveyed shows how basic the concept of educational equality should be in American society.

The voices of the cowboy, outlaw, and hobo expressed on tracks five and eight, "Bob Dylan's Blues" and "Bob Dylan's Dream" respectively, are voices that express the a carefree, independent, and cavalier identity that has been mythologized as quintessentially American. "Bob Dylan's Dream," another first person lyric that assumes a different persona, is written in seven quatrains with a regular rhyme scheme that connects the images of the first and last two lines of each stanza. The first stanza begins with the speaker taking a westbound train and dreaming of his past when he falls asleep. He has "half-damp eyes" because the scene he envisions, playing music and spending time with his friends, causes him to lament for a moment in their youth when their sense of fraternity was their strongest association and source of joy. The tone of the poem shifts to sadness in the fourth stanza: "With haunted hearts through heat and cold/We never thought we could ever get old/We thought we could sit forever in fun/But our chances really was a million to one" (Dylan "Bob Dylan's Dream" ll. 15-16). The song ends with the speaker's lament for simpler times that mirror Dylan's early days in New York City. The speaker wishes that he and his friends could be back on the rails together in the way that did when they were younger. The song parallel's Dylan's lament for how his life and circles had changed and how he longed for earlier carefree days. After Dylan was signed to his contract with Columbia Records, many of his friends in the Village envied his success and treated him differently.

Similarly, "Bob Dylan's Blues" assumes the voice of the rail-riding musician. He begins with a spoken introduction that intends to add authenticity to his folk song and

authority to his voice by separating himself from pseudo-folk musicians. This distinction is important because it also corresponds to Dylan's early stories about his childhood as an orphan on the railroad. He tells his listener that most of the folk songs being written are written in "Tin Pan Alley," but that his was written on the road somewhere in America. The first-person speaker is an outlaw bank robber who wields a six-shooter and espouses the trials and triumphs of his chosen life. The song opens with the mythological figures of The Lone Ranger and Tonto as rail-riding saviors, but they are not heroic to the speaker. He says that "They are ridin' down the line/Fixin' ev'rybody's troubles/Ev'rybody's 'cept mine" (ll. 2-4). He assumes that he's been abandoned by the heroic figures because someone told them that he was okay. Set in juxtaposition to the heroic Western figure of The Lone Ranger who has a companion in Tonto, the speaker is truly marginalized and does not have many possessions. Despite being an outlaw and vagabond, he demonstrates positive character traits in his loyalty to the woman he loves. He sends the "five and ten cent women," who are arguably prostitutes, away (l. 7). The final lines encourage the listener to embrace his ideology and live outside the social structure, represented by the "judge" or figure of the law. He ends with a positive "Yes," punctuated with an exclamation mark that emphasizes the affirmation.

The second track, "Girl from the North Country," alludes to an English ballad "Scarborough Fair," shifting poetic voices to the lover or the voice that communicates the mercurial nature of love. It recalls a personal association with a girl with whom Dylan had been involved in Minnesota, told through a first person perspective different than the persona found in "Blowin' in the Wind." Scholars and critics dispute whether the "girl" in the song is Echo Helstrom, Dylan's high school girlfriend from Hibbing, or Bonnie

Beecher, his friend from the University of Minnesota. It's possible that the girl in the song is a combination of women who were influential in Dylan's early life and that they are presented in a unified vision. Echo Helstom's hair was cut short and did not flow down her breast; however, she was his first love. Dylan scholar Paul Williams argues that "[t]he song was written in early January, while Dylan was in Italy searching unsuccessfully for Suze" and is, therefore, written about the girl he was dating at the time he wrote the song (75). Clearly, the cover photo of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* depicts Dylan on a snow-lined street with a long-haired Suze Rotolo in the coat she brought back from her travels and studies in Italy. In it, she closely resembles the long-haired girl in a coat that keeps her warm in the cold winters Dylan refers to in the song: "Please see if she's wearing a coat so warm/to keep her from the howling wind" (Dylan "Girl of the North Country" ll. 7-8). Rotolo recalls the photo being taken in her book *A Freewheelin' Good Time: A Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties.* She recounts, "[w]hen I was in Italy, I bought a loden green coat that I loved dearly, even though I knew it wasn't suitable for a New York winter. I put it on over the big bulky sweater and tightly tied the belt for warmth" (Rotolo 215). Regardless of which woman was the inspiration for "Girl from the North Country," the song presents a traditional folk melody with topical lyrics that present a clear subjective position in which the speaker tenderly remembers a past love.

Written in a similar voice or persona, "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" expresses the subject position of a person who was hurt by love. The song is written in four octaves, with the refrain repeated at the end of each one. The refrain serves to undercut the seriousness of what the lyrics communicate. The song is sung in first person

through which the heartbroken poet comments on the relationship and his bitter post-breakup assessment of that relationship. Subsequently, "Dylan is quoted by Nat Hentoff on the back of *Freewheelin'*: "It isn't a love song. It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better. It's as if you were talking to yourself" (qtd. in Williams 56). Dylan continues to use the folk axiom of by adapting the tune for "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" "from Paul Clayton's adaption of a folk tune, "Scarlet Ribbons for Her Hair," but the lyrics are topical and personal (Shelton 177). They convey Dylan's heartbreak over Suze's departure into a song that directs his anger toward her. His lament over the lost love reveals part of his growth as a poet. After he calls the woman he addresses a child in the third stanza, he sings, "I gave her my heart, but she wanted my soul." (Dylan "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" l. 23). Although he's bitter about the end of the relationship, it is clear that he would not relinquish the essential part of himself to the woman, the part from which he creates. Dylan has been quoted repeatedly that from an early age he felt that he had something special that he had to protect. The choice of the word "soul" is representative of this essential aspect of his identity or the stable core from which he composes his lyrics.

Ultimately, Dylan reveals himself and his identity through his words in his lyrics. The mercurial shape shifter of media performance and biography is replaced by a poet who stands as a singular and unified representation of the fragmented, diverse, and pluralistic voices of the American people and their experiences. Dave van Ronk said that the folk community was not bothered by Dylan's posturing, lies, and identity shifts because, "[w]hatever he said off stage, on stage he told the truth as best he knew it" (Scaduto 69). That truth that Dylan spoke early on the stages of the folk houses of

Greenwich Village is echoed in Emerson's statement, "[t]he sign and credentials of the poet are, that he announces that which no man has foretold…He is the beholder of ideas, and the utterer of the necessary and casual. For we do not speak now of men of poetical talents, or of industry or skill in metre, but of the true poet" (210).

Through the dialogue with the representative older poet or unified representation of American poetic fathers in "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," Dylan heralds his arrival as the poet for which Emerson called in 1844 and for which Whitman set the standard. He speaks directly to the older poetic "father" through the antiphony in the song and progresses through a catechism in which he addresses the older poets and demonstrates his developing poetic sensitivity and expression. Emerson further asserts that, "[t]he men of more delicate ear write down these cadences more faithfully, and these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of nations" (210). Dylan's ability to reach the mass of the American society when poetry reading as a leisure activity was on the decline is predicated by the technological age in which he began and continues to record. This, coupled with the business of the music industry, allowed for Dylan's affirmation as the poet of the American people to occur quickly and rather early on in his career, a practice he would continue and develop through strains of voices he uses to express American ideas and experiences throughout his career. The seeds for the voices that he will use and develop can be traced back to and from the personae he created on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.*

The American voice that Dylan expresses is not a singular voice, but the "varied carols" of the diverse cultural associations that Whitman wrote about in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass.* Each American possesses his or her own song, "each singing what

belongs to him or her and to none else" but it is Whitman, the poet, who catalogued, named, and gave voice to the carols in the nineteenth century, as Dylan does in the twentieth century (Whitman l. 12). Just as Whitman did, Dylan understands that "…the highest minds of the world have never ceased to explore the double meaning, or, shall I say, the quadruple, or the centuple, or much more manifold meaning of every sensuous fact" (Emerson 208). It is through his words that he has explored, articulated, and created an identity that analyzes the multitude of meanings and perspectives of America. He is able to shift in, out of, and through all of his voices, personae, etc. because he draws from the fragmented mosaic of the country's cultural heritage, rather than exist as a vacant core in constant performance lacking stability.

Chapter 4

An Argument against Periodization

Analyzing the trajectory of the voices Dylan uses to express this identity has caused many critics and scholars to periodize his work through socio-historic or socio-cultural analyses, creating connections between specific events and Dylan's treatment of them. Each of those periods is associated with a specific identity performance. His early career is generally separated into his protest period, the period in which he "went electric," and the symbolist poet era. The period after his motorcycle accident, which comprises the majority of Dylan's fifty-two year career, has been categorized by his successful tour of "outlaws," *The Rolling Thunder Review*, his conversion to and subsequent rejection of Evangelical Christianity, his never-ending tour, and the few albums, such as *Blood on the Tracks* and *Slow Train Coming* that have received critical acclaim. His career is then divided by another potentially life-threatening event. In May of 1997, Dylan was hospitalized with the heart condition histoplasmosis. Later that year, in September, he released *Time Out of Mind*, which began his current period, often commended by reviewers, scholars, and critics as among the strongest material of his career. However, periodizing Dylan's body of work is problematic because it sets the songs into discrete chronological periods, causing them to be interpreted as static and, in some cases, topical, rather than being part of a continuum of voices from the beginning of his career through his current production.

The periodization of Dylan's work informs how critics, scholars, and journalists interpret and have interpreted his identity throughout his career. Each period is related to

a transition in his performance. This is best evidenced in Todd Haynes' 2007 film *I'm Not There* in which each of Dylan's identities is associated with a representative character. The film's tagline, "He's everyone. He's no one" asserts the post-modern theoretical view of Dylan's identity, which argues that the identities Dylan assumes are fluid, but foundationless. His early career and beginning in folk and blues music are represented by "Woody," an African-American boy whose runaway narrative echoes the stories Dylan told until he Svedberg's article exposed him. Haynes also includes a "protest" character, an outlaw, a rock star, a poet, a pastor, and a romantic figure. Each of these characters is paired with a corresponding phase of Dylan's life and career and songs that represent them.

Critics, scholars, and journalists perpetuate distinctions through repetition, and they have become part of Dylan's mythology. For example, Jeff Miers' review of Dylan's performance in the August 9, 2002, edition of *The Buffalo News* supports the delineations of each period in Dylan's career that correspond with the relative identities. Though it is a self-effacing barb directed toward the media and scholars who periodize his work, the introduction that was recited or played before Dylan's stage shows from August of 2002 through April of 2012 was a modification of Mieirs' article.[19] This further reinforced that Dylan's career, work, and identity could be best understood through delineations of periods because they are the accepted paradigm on which

[19] Before Dylan's show begins, an offstage voice says: "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the poet laureate of rock 'n' roll. The voice of the promise of the sixties counterculture. The guy who forced folk into bed with rock, who donned makeup in the seventies and disappeared into a haze of substance abuse, who emerged to find *Jay-sus*, who was written off as a has-been in the late eighties – and who suddenly shifted gears, releasing some of the strongest music of his career in the late nineties. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Columbia Recording Artist, Bob Dylan" (qtd. in Marcus 24).

analyses are based. By using this introduction, Dylan is partially responsible for continuing the mythology created around him.

However, the voices in Dylan's works follow the threads of varying subjectivities that communicate objective truths to reveal Dylan's identity as a fragmented whole rather than a vacant core. With the two original compositions on *Bob Dylan* and the songs on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan,* Dylan began creating voices that he would continue to develop throughout the arc of his career. These identities create a bricolage through which Dylan shifts to represent singular voices that appropriate traditional American values of forming "a more perfect union," such as racial and economic equality and justice. They also pose questions of being, creation, love, and the nature of God. This type of question is certainly not unique to Americans. What is unique to the American voice and American experience is the language through which these questions are posed.

Dylan assumes the role of the poet when he performs through the same voice he employs in "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," the voice of the Emersonian poet of democracy. As the country grew and developed into a world super power in the mid-twentieth century, it was the poet's charge to illuminate the circumstances in which American government and society failed to comprehensively extend those civil liberties. For this reason, the voice of the poet most often speaks a subjective truth that represents the oppressed, marginalized, or underrepresented in American society. Folk music has historically achieved this end and, as previously addressed, Dylan's association with the folk community and folk music revival was a natural apprenticeship; however Dylan quickly outgrew the movement. When Dylan severs ties with the folk music movement, he does so because he does not want to be associated with any political or social

movement in lieu of representing core American progressive values through songs that express a humanist aesthetic. Because of this, the speakers in the majority of Dylan's songs express remarkably subjective first-person voices through which the social and political experiences of Americans are communicated. It is through these personae that abstract concepts and subjective experiences coalesce. This enables listeners to empathize with the song's speakers and connect to subject positions outside of and different than their own. They are also able to understand the discrepancies between the image of America as projected through hegemonic media representations on television, film, mainstream popular music, and print media and reality of America falling short of fulfilling its promi

Dylan's songs demonstrated and encouraged a sense of concern and community that extended beyond a singular cause to express compassion and humanistic concern for the value of all people. This concern is editorialized in Dylan's catalogue through his articulation of the American ideal. In "Only a Pawn in Their Game," Dylan doesn't indict Byron De La Beckwith as other songwriters of the period did, such as Phil Ochs in his song "Too Many Martyrs." Rather, Dylan presents the objective truth that De La Beckwith should be penalized for the murder, but that he is also symbolic of the violence against African Americans at the hands of segregationists. More than a decade later, the 1975 song "Hurricane" comments on discrimination within the American justice system. Dylan uses the case of Ruben Carter, the African American boxer, who was convicted of a crime he did not commit based on weak or circumstantial evidence. The song also highlights the disappointments of the Civil Rights Movement and the diminishing hope of the movement because the American society had failed, eleven years after the Civil

Rights Act was signed into law, to secure equality to its African American citizens. Dylan engages in a similar social critique in "Who Killed Davey Moore," commenting on the boxer's death after fighting Sugar Ramos in March of 1963. The speaker in the song questions who is responsible and the reason for the boxer's death. The song begins and ends with those two driving questions, which serve as a refrain between verses that seek to find a specific person at fault for the Moore's death. Just as he had in "Only a Pawn in Their Game," Dylan's speaker reserves his judgment to allow the listener to conclude that those listed in the verses, the referee, the crowd, the manager, the gambler, the journalist, and the other boxer, are all complicit in perpetuating the culture and sport of boxing that led to Moore's death. These and other Dylan compositions that point to specific historic events comment on and critique those events to draw out objective truths and realities beyond reporting what happened and recording the history. Songs about incarceration and conviction of Ruben Carter or the death of boxer Davey Moore are classified as topical or historical because they deal with specific events. However, Dylan uses them to communicate the subjective reality of the event and a broader truth.

The more objective third-person voice articulated in "Chimes of Freedom" signals the liberal ideals of democracy as a voice for equality. Specifically, the speaker in this song assumes an authoritative position that the "chimes of freedom" toll for all Americans. The catalog of people in the song spans the diversity of American society. Though most of those enumerated represent the most vulnerable members of society, such as those who are kind and gentle or unwed mothers, the handicapped, and refugees, who need protection, the penultimate line counts "every hung-up person in the whole wide universe" (l. 47). Dylan's speaker uses the 1960s slang for someone who subscribes

to or is "hung up" on mainstream, commercial, or hegemonic culture. It's often used as a derogatory term used to signify the socially and culturally unenlightened. With this song, Dylan's speaker begins to focus on an all-inclusive America or an idealized participatory democracy.

In each stanza, the speaker presents dark and violent images that threaten freedom and democracy and point to a specific event in history. He begins that darkness at a point between sundown and midnight. The storm that forces the speaker and his companion to find shelter in a doorway because of the "thunder crashing" points to the tumult of the 1960s social and cultural movements that created a binary between the government and its people, challenging the country's stability. This is reinforced by the images that signal the violence of the Civil Rights Movement, the United States dropping the atomic bomb, which promulgated atomic anxiety, in the fifth stanza, and assassination of John F. Kennedy in the last stanza. However, the images that pervade each stanza are underscored by the promise of the "chimes of freedom" ringing. The same storm that presents the ominous thunder also provides the "majestic bells of bolts stuck shadows in the sounds/Seeming to be the chimes of freedom flashing" (ll. 1-2). The speaker argues that the tragedies that challenge the American democracy create a catalyst for change that brings the country closer to the ideal of its founding documents. This voice is the unification of the disparate voices, articulating the discrepancy between America in theory and America in practice or performance.

Written and recorded a year earlier, "With God on Our Side" presents a similar theme that was expressed in "Chimes of Freedom," but critiques American Exceptionalism as an accepted social doctrine and Americans' socialization into it. He

begins the song with an elimination of his subject identity that parallels Dylan relinquishing his own subjectivity. The song opens "Oh my name it is nothing/My age it means less" (ll. 1-2). Dylan uses the transitive verb "is" to equate the words "name" and "nothing" to signify that the absence of a specific identity. Though the speaker uses the first person pronouns "My" and "I" throughout the song, his use of them signals that Americans raised and socialized into an American nationalist paradigm could assume the position of the speaker. Compounding the speaker's absence of subjectivity is his statement that he is not only ageless, but that the absence of a specific age places him in any generation. He represents all Americans or the collective American subjectivity. The only indicator of identity the speaker shares is that he was both raised and educated in the Midwest or "middle America." The Midwest depicts an image of the status quo or of hegemonic American culture and society. This is an important distinction because it signals a shared American experience of being socialized into the belief that American culture and society are sanctioned by God's will.

The nine octaves that comprise the song follow a regular rhyme scheme of the even-numbered lines end-rhyming. "With God on Our Side" recounts the United States' bellicose history from its origins to the conflicts with the Native Americans through the mid-twentieth century Cold War with the Soviet Union. Each of the first four octaves begins with nationalist rhetoric and war heroism that bolster American pride and exceptionalism, and commences with a variation of the refrain, "That the land that I live in/Has God on its side" (ll. 7-8). Dylan's speaker juxtaposes the conflicts the United States has been involved in since its inception with the ironic affirmation that God affirms or supports its actions. The ironic tone with which these lines are delivered

forces the listener to consider the implications that a just God would favor one nation over another, especially in a global conflict. As the song continues, the speaker's disillusion with America's policies continues until he concludes, "If God's on our side/He'll stop the next war" (ll. 63-64). As he was raised, the speaker was taught and believed that the United States was just in its use of force in conflicts throughout its history; however, as an adult, the speaker questions American Exceptionalism and rejects the notion that a just God would sanction war.

Dylan's speaker also expresses concern for Americans while utilizing the same voice of moral authority to further critique the economic inequality that exists in America. In "Ballad of Hollis Brown," the cyclical nature and isolation of poverty are presented to the listener. The title character, Hollis Brown, a farmer, symbolizes those who strive toward the Jeffersonian ideal of independent and self-reliant farmers.[20] However, drought and economic realities have left Hollis Brown in abject poverty with little hope of restitution. The transition from an agrarian economy to one based on manufacturing in the early-middle twentieth century created alternate pathways for working-class Americans to enter the middle class. This shift in workforce also changed the foundation of the American dream. Though farming was still an important component in the economy, there were more opportunities to earn a steady income and to advance within the labor industry. Through the narrative of the desperate Brown, Dylan's speaker comments on the demise of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer ideal. The last line of the

[20] In *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, Henry Nash Smith writes, "Jefferson was primarily interested in the political implications of the agrarian ideal. He saw the cultivator of the earth, the husbandman who tilled his own acres, as the rock upon which the American republic must stand. "The small land holders," he wrote, "are the most precious part of the state" (128).

song underscores the cyclical nature and isolation of poverty and that the opportunities to escape poverty in the transitional labor force were limited.

This type of song is not limited to Dylan's catalogue from the period preceding his motorcycle accident. The moral authority, the voice that speaks for progressive or liberal values, is present throughout Dylan's compositions. The seven sestets that comprise 1979's "Slow Train" present the poet's first-person observations of how the country has failed to fulfill its promise. Rather, it has compromised its "earthly principles" of kindness, love, and humanity (l. 5). Each stanza examines a different entity that influences American politics, economics, and culture. In the third stanza, he points to OPEC or the oil-controlling countries that have the power to influence industry and policy in America. He focuses on politicians and televangelists in the fifth stanza as "the enemy" who "wears a cloak of decency" (ll. 29-30). Dylan's speaker asserts that those in positions of institutional power cannot be trusted. Continuing with his enumeration, he points to those who have enough grain to end hunger, but let it sit in their silos. The speaker points to man's ego as being the most powerful influence in the abandonment of American ideals. Dylan ends each stanza with the refrain line, "There's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend" or a variation that includes the coordinating conjunction "and" (ll. 6, 12, 36, 42). The impending doom of the train that is going to come around the bend is delayed linguistically by the repetition of the word slow. In the refrain, Dylan's speaker forces listeners to wait for train to come. This signifies that the consequences of the decisions that are made in the present will be deferred. This is evident in the songs that follow, such as "Union Sundown" and "Clean Cut Kid."

Featured on 1985's *Empire Burlesque*, "Clean Cut Kid" addresses American Exceptionalism in the same voice that was expressed "With God on Our Side." The song's speaker is a third-person observer that conveys the narrative of a man's indoctrination into American nationalism and his transformation from a "clean cut kid" to a "killer" at the hands of the American society and government, and comments on the devolution of the American dream. When he was a child, the "kid" was socialized into middle-class bourgeoisie values, and was a model citizen; he played baseball, attended church regularly, and was a member of the Boy Scouts of America. All of these are symbols of the hegemony and the "kid's" full indoctrination into it by "put[ting] ideas in his head he thought were his" (l. 7). His decision to join the military continued his trajectory of indoctrination, of being a "clean cut kid," but it also resulted in his existential awakening and disillusionment with the American dream.

Closely tied to themes presented in "Clean Cut Kid" and "Ballad of Hollis Brown," the decline of the American economy in "Union Sundown" and "Workingman's Blues #2" depicts the American Dream as inaccessible to the speaker and to working class Americans. The songs were released twenty-two years apart, but focus on similar critiques of the decline in American manufacturing and its effect on employment rates and the strength of the middle class. "Union Sundown" is the sixth track on *Infidels*, released in October of 1983. Its speaker focuses on a critique of American capitalism. In its refrain, the first-person speaker uses the line "Well, it's sundown on the union" to address to the weakening influence of labor unions in the United States, but also to the weakening middle class resulting from American manufacturing jobs being sent overseas. The "sundown" on the unions in "Union Sundown" becomes evening in "Working Man's

Blues #2," indicating further denigration of the American economy. Dylan articulates the shift from sundown to evening as part of the natural progression of states and empires in *Chronicles: Volume One*. The three stages of progression are, "an early period where society grows and develops, then some classical period where the society reaches its maturation point and then a slacking off period where decadence makes things fall apart" (35). He continues that he is not certain which of those three stages America is in; however the degeneration of the morality of capitalism in these songs belies that the country has entered a phase of decadence and decline.

The speaker in "Union Sundown" examines the tenuous relationship between corporations and labor unions and the effect that relationship has had on American manufacturing. Labor unions' collective bargaining protects workers and allows them to negotiate for fair wages and benefits. This practice intended to ensure that workers are treated fairly by maintaining a reasonable balance between the corporations' profit margins and the workers' salaries and benefits. However, in the late twentieth century, corporations increased their profits by eliminating labor positions in the United States and outsourcing their manufacturing to countries in Asia and South America that have limited or no labor regulations. Dylan's speaker recognizes that "[t]he unions are big business" and have exploited the workers they represent (l. 39). The verses enumerate the products that are no longer manufactured in the United States that are being made in the foreign countries for "thirty cents a day" (ll. 8 and 19). American workers would live in poverty if the made salaries the workers in the developing nations earn, which the speaker recognizes is "a lot of money to" them (l. 20).

The song's moral commentary is communicated through the speaker's assertion that greed and unregulated capitalism are more powerful than the ideal of democracy. The refrain, "Well, it's sundown on the union/And what's made in the U.S.A./Sure was a good idea/'Til greed got in the way," signals that the focus on building in goods in America dissipated when corporations realized they could eliminate union involvement and increase revenue by opening factories in countries with developing economies. The speaker uses the past tense transitive verb "was" to highlight discrepancy between the height of manufacturing during the post-World War II era and its decline as the century concluded. He attributes that decline to selfishness and the corporations desire to have more money than they need to continue operating. This comes at the expense of the American working class. Ascribing this type of greed to capitalism, the speaker defines it as being in conflict with the values of a democratic society in which everyone has an equal opportunity in the absence of hereditary wealth or an established class system.

The greed that the speaker condemns for the diminishing industrial workforce in "Union Sundown" is further reinforced in "Working Man's Blues #2," alluding to Merle Haggard's 1969 song "Working Man's Blues." Haggard's song is told from the first-person perspective of a manual laborer who has difficulty supporting his family, regardless of how much or how hard he works. This belies the history of skilled labor positions providing Americans the opportunity to achieve financial stability. Dylan's song appears as the sixth track on his 2005 album *Modern Times* and signifies the continued loss of American manufacturing jobs and degradation of the middle class in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The speaker concludes the first stanza, "They say low wages are a reality/If we want to compete abroad" (ll. 7-8), resonating the

theme of outsourcing in “Union Sundown.” He introduces the consequent problems of financial insecurity for those unable to earn a living wage, and is a representative voice for blue collar workers or manual laborers in the 21st century. “Working Man’s Blues #2” is a lament for the mid-century America in which an average American could ascend to the middle class with a high school education and while working a “good job” in manufacturing or in a manual labor position.

The thematic association between these songs is the reduction in opportunities for Americans to enter the middle class and the limitation of the access to the American dream. This begins with “Ballad of Hollis Brown” in which the sustainability of an agrarian labor force is in decline. This isolates Brown and his family in poverty until desperation causes him to murder his family and commit suicide. The voice of the poet continues this theme in “Union Sundown” and through “Working Man’s Blues #2.” These three songs use parallel or repeated imagery to demonstrate the shift in the American labor force from agrarian to industrial to service has the same effects on the American worker. Images of poverty, hunger, and isolation dominate “Ballad of Hollis Brown” and “Working Man’s Blue’s #2,” while the tone of disillusion with American society and their role in it permeates all three songs.

The third person voice of the poet of moral authority is not isolated to commentary on the workforce and access to the American Dream. It is also present in questioning the interrelation between justice and morality in America. This is especially clear in the songs in which those who enjoy wealth and power abuse their position and privilege. Dylan’s early compositions “Seven Curses” and “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll” depict women characters exploited by men in positions of power. The

speaker of the songs creates an emotional connection between the songs' subjects, Reilly's daughter and Hattie Carroll respectively, and the listener. This association forces the listener to examine how human life is valued in the United States and the efficacy of and corruption within its judicial system. Hattie Carroll's value and the adjudication of her murder are influenced by racial and economic disparity in the United States. The speaker narrates the case of a white man's misconduct at a charity event in Baltimore and the subsequent death of the African-American hotel worker. Similar to Hattie Carroll, Reilly's daughter's inability to receive justice is determined by her socio-economic status and her gender.

The song "Seven Curses" is a fable that establishes justice as a function of morality as well as function of the state. Those charged with performing the duty of enforcing or interpreting the law should also be people of high moral character. The dialogue of Reilly, Reilly's daughter, and the Judge, punctuates "Seven Curses," giving the characters their own voices. When Reilly's daughter comes to pay her father's bail and the judge refuses the money, she faces the moral decision whether to sacrifice her virtue or her father's life. This event in the narrative establishes the judge as the villain and Reilly's daughter as the heroine. Her decision to sacrifice herself, despite her father's protests, emphasizes her morality and heroism. It also accentuates the judge's moral turpitude when he fails to overturn Reilly's death sentence in return for "the price [that] was paid" (l. 24). The speaker conveys this violation of justice and morality through the images of the howling dogs and the moaning earth. The judge's punishment is exacted through seven supernatural curses, a result of his violation and abuse of power.

A year after "Seven Curses" was released the poet of moral authority used the figure of Hattie Carroll symbolically to signify the disparity in value of African-American in relation to white lives. Just as he does in "Only a Pawn in their Game," he presents the story and reserves his judgment to allow the listener to form his or her response. To underscore this effect, his refrain "You who philosophize disgrace and criticize all fears/take the rag away from your face/now ain't the time for your tears," concludes each verse to heighten the anxiety of the scene. The speaker contrasts Carroll and Zantzinger in the second and third stanzas. The twenty-four year old Zantzinger's life is one of wealth and privilege; while Hattie Carroll's long life is one of servitude and passivity. The progression of the verses highlights the rising action of the narrative, but they end with the same refrain. This increases the tension of the event until the last verse reveals Zantzinger's six-month sentence for murdering Hattie Carroll unprovoked. The speaker alters the final refrain as a cue that the moral outrage and grief the listener had withheld throughout the song and Hattie Carroll's tragic story progressed, should expressed.

Dylan also used the third-person voice of the poet to focus on the abuse of justice in the case of Ruben "Hurricane" Carter in his 1975 song "Hurricane." The song begins with a murder, "pistol shots" piercing a New Jersey night (l. 1). Each of the eleven nine-lined stanzas presents a fragmented image of the story that establishes Carter as the victim and those in positions of power as corrupt. The speaker also equates the prosecutors who ignored the evidence as "criminals in their coats and ties," adding to those who abuse their positions of power. Though the song speaks to a specific event in American history, it also focuses on the larger issue of those in positions of power in the

American society violating their roles. The figure of authority, specifically governmental authority, abusing its power without consequence or with little consequence recurs as a trope and through the voice of the poet throughout Dylan's work in songs like "When the Ship Comes In," "Idiot Wind," "Political World," and "License to Kill," among others.

The poet uses a fragmented voice in "Pay in Blood," which appears on 2012's *Tempest.* The song is written in six octaves through which the speaker performs two contrapuntal dialogues. Each stanza is divided so that the first four lines are spoken through the voice of a slave or a soldier and the last four lines are spoken by the slave owner or a politician. The two dialogues split the song; the first three stanzas represent a slave owner talking to his slave, with the dialogue between a politician and a soldier in the final three. Their positions in the stanzas suggest an equation between the speakers. The slave and the soldier hold equal positions of the oppressed, and the slave owner and the politician are depicted as the careless oppressor. The slave owner's and the politician's reveal their carelessness in the final line in each stanza, "I pay in blood, but not my own" (ll. 8, 16, 24, 32, 40, 48). Dylan's poet uses the analogy to establish a parallel between the atrocity of slavery and politicians' treatment of the soldiers. Though the United States military is voluntary, most of the enlisted are members of the working class and find stable employment with opportunity for advancement following their high school graduation.

The poet also uses these parallel dialogues to echo "Masters of War." Just as the Southern agrarian economy was sustained by slave labor, the United States economy of the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is dependent upon the industry associated with the conflicts that put the soldiers "through hell" and happy that they

"made it back home" (ll.35, 33). The politician promises the soldier wealth for his service, yet exploits his position in the government by sending soldiers into senseless battles. This prompts the soldier to ask "You've been accused of murder, how do you plead" (l. 44). The politician's response underscores his immorality because, though he will "sleep alone," he will continue to pay for conflicts and build the economy with other people's blood.

Dylan originates the Emersonian voice with his earliest compositions, the topical songs. However, even the songs that speak to specific historic events represent more comprehensive ideas and broader truths. As Dylan's career progressed, the foundation of this voice, which represents and upholds America's idealized identity, was fragmented into subjective first-person personae and a more objective third-person poet's persona representative of American cultural plurality. Regardless of age, race, gender, or profession, thematic connections unify the voices by shared core values, grounded in the humanist belief that all people have basic rights to freedom, equality, and happiness.

In addition to the poetic voice of the Emersonian ideal, the voices of the cowboy, outlaw, hobo, the romantic, and the religious pilgrim further fragment Dylan's identity. Each of these voices is an expression of Dylan's poet, representing a facet of American society and originating early in Dylan's career. For example, though *John Wesley Harding* and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* are albums that most clearly assume these voices, they can be traced from the early recordings to the most recent releases. This persona is a component of Dylan's unified American identity in that the myth of the cowboy "represents America's westering experience to the popular mind" and that they "remain a cornerstone of American culture" (Savage 3). Dylan's cowboy, outlaw, and

hobo represent not only the pioneering and independent American spirit, but also another identity marginalized because of his economic status. Savage argues, "[t]he cowboy was a wage earner, not a capitalist, and only occasionally did he – or could he – rise above that economic level to acquire land or cattle of his own" (6). Similarly, the outlaw and hobo live outside of the hegemony; the outlaw is a criminal and lives beyond of the law and the hobo lives on the margins of society. In this way, these voices are similar to the voices represented by the Emersonian ideal.

After Dylan first assumes the cowboy persona on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* in the songs "Bob Dylan's Dream" and "Bob Dylan's Blues," he continues to perform it through a variety of voices throughout his career. The singular subjectivities of each voice express sundry manifestations of the cowboy identity within American culture. In "Paths of Victory," written in 1964, Dylan's first-person speaker is a trail-rider who sings about the difficulties of his task, but looks forward to "better roads" that "are waiting" (l. 7). Similarly, the figure of the cowboy in "John Wesley Harding" aligns with myth in American culture, the "Robin Hood" figure or a champion of the poor. Harding signifies the cowboy as a principled and vigilant man who protects his community and is above reproach. The cowboy figures presented in "Señor (Tales of Yankee Power)" and "Blackjack Davey" differ slightly from the cowboy in "John Wesley Harding." The vaquero speaker in "Señor (Tales of Yankee Power)" shares morals with John Wesley Harding. The song demonstrates the change in the power structures as the United States expanded west, rendering the speaker powerless. He is trying to save a woman he cares for, but he feels out of place in the country. The song's setting is presumed to be Lincoln County, New Mexico, and the subtitle suggests what the speaker voices in the

penultimate line of the song, “This place don’t make sense to me no more” (l. 27). Further, in “Blackjack Davey,” the cowboy figure is not presented as heroic, but as a charming suitor who convinces a woman to leave her life of comfort, her husband and her child. Blackjack Davey’s boss follows his wife and asks her to return home with him. She responds to his pleas:

> Well, I’ll forsake my house and home,
> And, I’ll forsake my baby.
> I’ll forsake my husband, too,
> For the love of Black Jack Davey. (ll. 56-59)

Her refusal to return home suggests that she prefers the love and simplicity of the cowboy over her family and her husband’s wealth. With these representations, Dylan’s cowboy personae uphold the myth of the American west and part of the American identity.

Additionally, the voice of the outlaw is performed as a subdivision of the cowboy persona. It represents a figure that is equally independent and rugged, but also one that is violent and lives outside of the law. The character’s lawlessness makes him dangerous, establishing him as the antithesis of the cowboy. Thus, he is a sympathetic rogue villain. Written in five sestets in 1965, “Outlaw Blues” is sung from the first-person perspective of a weakened figure, “stumbling” and falling “in a muddy lagoon,” wishing he “was on some Australian mountain range” (l. 4). The allusion to two notorious outlaws, Robert Ford and Jesse James, emphasizes the speaker’s weakness and desire to escape. Rather than being the assassin, the speaker is the assassinated and betrayed. The 1972 song “Billy,” which refers to American outlaw Billy the Kid, repeats this metaphor. The third-person speaker presents the title character as the most wanted man in the country. Alone, far from home, Billy is constantly in danger of being caught by lawmen, “bounty

hunters," "Some trigger-happy fool who's willing to take chances," or the "whores" with whom he sleeps who will corrupt his "spirit and soul" (ll. 26, 28). The most noteworthy person among those enumerated is Billy's friend Pat Garret who will betray and kill him, just as Robert Ford betrayed and killed Jesse James. First-person voices in songs like "Wanted Man" reinforce this depiction of the outlaw. Saying "There's somebody set to grab me anywhere that I might be," the speaker in "Wanted Man" describes himself as a man who moves frequently, and lists cities and states throughout America to emphasize the scope of his isolation during the manhunt (l. 19). This creates a link between this speaker, the speakers in the earlier songs, and speakers in the songs that follow like "Romance in Durango," "Lily, Rosemary, and the Jack of Hearts," and "Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle Dum" that assume the outlaw persona.

The figure of the hobo further fragments the cowboy persona. The character is isolated as the cowboy and outlaw are, but does not benefit from the same mythology in the American consciousness. Rather, the hobo exists on the fringes of society because of his transient nature and socio-economic status. He is generally presented as alone, unemployed, and shiftless. The speaker in 1963's, "Only a Hobo" is a first-person subjective observer of the hobo. His interpretation of the hobo's lonely death reinforces the hobo's position as a social outcast. In 1968, Dylan directly assumes the hobo persona in "I Am a Lonesome Hobo." Written in three octaves, the song allows the hobo to give voice to his narrative, depicting him as a more sympathetic character than did the observer in "Only a Hobo." The first-person subjective persona of the hobo explains that he "was once rather prosperous," but his choices and business practices resulted in him losing his family, friends, and wealth (l. 9). The final octave ends with a warning that

advises listeners to "Stay free from petty jealousies/Live by no man's code" and that they should reserve their judgment of others or they might suffer the same fate as him (ll. 21-22). The speaker's story encourages listeners to feel an association with him because his narrative is relatable. Dylan also presents this voice in songs like "Drifter's Escape" and "Tiny Montgomery." Through the voices in the songs that represent cowboys, outlaws, and hobos, Dylan's speakers are able to humanize those characters. While he uses the myth of the American west and the vagrant, he also breaks it down by presenting the subject experiences of a vital component of the American identity.

When Dylan's career and identity performance are periodized in the media, the years during which he converted to Evangelical Christianity in the late-1970s through the early 1980s are classified as his religious period. During this time, he released *Slow Train Coming, Saved,* and *Shot of Love.* While it's reasonable to interpret that these albums reflect Dylan's subjective experience with religion during this period, the voice of the religious identity is present in Dylan's early recordings. From their nascent stages of understanding God's relationship with their community in songs on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* like "Masters of War" and "With God on Our Side" to their mature expression of their personal relationship with a higher power in "Slow Train Coming" and "Every Grain of Sand," Dylan's speakers articulate the search for truth. Allusions to the Bible and religious practices pervade Dylan's lyrics affirming the presence of these cultural influences and the persistence of questions of creation and existence.

Prior to the release of *Slow Train Coming*, the speakers in Dylan's songs expressed this distinctly religious voice, not only through allusion as they do in "The Times They are A-Changin'," "When the Ship Comes In," and "Highway 61 Revisited."

On *Bringing It All Back Home*, the speaker in "Gates of Eden" creates a contrast between the depravity of world in which he lives and the paradise that Eden represents. Later, Dylan's first-person speaker evokes a vision of Catholic scholar St. Augustine in "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine." The saint appears to the speaker in a dream, telling him that there are no saviors in the modern world, but assuring him that he is "not alone." However, the speaker wakes "So alone and terrified" after dreaming he was among those responsible for St. Augustine's death (l. 22). This sets the speaker's reality in contrast to his dream consciousness, which emphasizes the isolation and absence of redemption in the modern world.

In the 1970s, the voice reflects a variety of perspectives on belief systems. The songs "Three Angels" and "Father of Night" on 1970's *New Morning* point to a shift in Dylan's speakers' interpretation of God. The speaker in "Three Angels" presents the image of three angels hovering above a city street playing their horns and looking down on the people who have little connection with each other. The song ends with the question, "But does anyone hear the music they play/Does anyone even try?" signifying that the material world distracts us from the spiritual (ll. 19-20). Similarly, the speaker in the song "Father of Night," recognizes spiritual presence in the physical world as he enumerates God's creations, including day and night, nature, and time. The speaker ends the song with the acknowledgement that "we most solemnly praise" god for his creations (l. 18). This illustrates a development in the way Dylan's speakers interpret God and serves as a bridge between the earlier songs and the songs on *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved*, and *Shot of Love.*

With the release of those albums, Dylan's speakers assume a voice that is aligned with Evangelical Christianity. "Slow Train Coming" continues the theme from "Three Angels." In it, the speaker creates a binary between the material and spiritual worlds, expressing his disappointment in those who do not recognize the spiritual. This theme is further articulated in "When You Gonna Wake Up?" Dylan's speaker questions his listeners to "wake up" to recognize god's grandeur. Songs like *Saved* and *Shot of Love* revisit and continue the themes of belief, grace, prayer, and redemption. Though Dylan's speaker assumes the voice after the *Shot of Love* album, his articulation of the religious voice reaches maturation in the 1981 composition, "Every Grain of Sand." The speaker begins in a state of confession and "in the hour of [his] deepest need" (l. 1). He communicates a series of images of depravity associated with despair, Cain's murder of Abel, and danger. Though he is depraved, he still seeks the guidance of a higher power as a path to redemption or salvation. After confessing a life of indulgence, the speaker concludes that he understands that his life is "hanging in the balance of the reality of man" (l. 23). This is his recognition that there is a god or a higher power that has a master plan and, in contrast to the speaker in "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine," this one is not alone. Rather, he is comforted.

Dylan continues this voice with a slight variation in the song "Beyond Here Lies Nothing" on the 2009 album *Together Through Life.* The subjective and despondent first-person speaker in narrates the demise of his relationship with a woman, but also asserts the absence of an afterlife or heaven in the refrain, "Beyond here lies nothing." He follows the refrain with recognition that outside of the realm of reality, there is nothing. Though the song is about the end of a relationship, Dylan's speaker expresses a maturity

in his challenge of the concept of Christian heaven or an afterlife by emphasizing the importance of love and the relationship with the woman in the physical world. The speaker follows the refrain with images of the physical world, like the stars and mountains, as things that are tangible like the relationship, and the recognition that nothing exists beyond the physical world with lines like, "nothing we can call our own" and "nothin' done and nothin' said" (ll. 6, 24).

In addition to the cowboy and the religious voices, a majority of the songs in Dylan's catalogue articulate the voice of the romantic or the man searching for love, finding love, unhappy in love, and losing love. The voices express diverse experiences with love begin on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* with the simple thematic binary created in "Girl of the North Country" and "Don't Think Twice." The voices develop through Dylan's career to communicate the complexities of romantic relationships and the search for companionship and love. Within this group of personae, critics, biographers, and scholars locate Dylan's subjective voice in songs that chronicle his relationships with the influential women in his life.

Songs written in the earliest years of Dylan's career are associated with Dylan's well-documented relationship with Suze Rotolo. Officially unreleased until 2008, the 1962 composition "Tomorrow is a Long Time," laments the speaker's loss of identity due to the absence of his beloved. Dylan wrote the song while depressed because Rotolo was studying in Italy (Shelton 130). Written in three unrhymed octaves, the lyrics' images present a world that is disjointed and a sleepless speaker in despair. To the speaker, the days are so unbearably endless that the day the beloved will return seems as if it will never arrive. The refrain, a quatrain at the end of each octave,

> Yes, and only if my one true love was waitin'
> Yes, and if I could hear her heart a-softly poundin'
> Only if she was lyin' by me
> Then I'd lie in my bed once again

reinforces that order will be restored once the beloved returns (ll. 21-24). Through the song, Dylan's lovelorn speaker conveys the transcendence and melancholy of young love.

Additionally, compositions from this period chronicle the difficulties in Dylan's relationship and, ultimately the end of it. In the 1964 song, "Ballad in Plain D," Dylan's speaker expresses regret for how his relationship devolved. The song is written in thirteen quatrains with a regular rhyme scheme. Observation of closed form limits Dylan's diction and syntax, but also emphasizes the constraints of the situation in which he finds himself. The narrative lyrics, which serve as a confession, record an argument that Dylan and Carla Rotolo engaged in,[21] the affect it had on Suze, the changes Dylan experienced due to his fame, the lies he told, and the end of his relationship with Suze. After the argument, the speaker says,

> All is gone, all is gone, admit it, take flight
> I gagged twice, doubled, tears blinding my site,
> My mind, it was mangled, I ran into the night,
> Leaving all of love's ashes behind me (ll. 41-44).

The speaker leaves the site of the argument and, in doing so, realizes that there is nothing left of the love he and Suze, or his beloved, once had. However, the penultimate quatrain expresses the speaker's remorse. He says,

> The words to say I'm sorry, I have found yet

[21] On page 248 of Shelton's *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan*, he writes, "In mid-March 1964, there was a harrowing row at Suze and Carla's apartment on Avenue B. As Suze got hysterical, Dylan and Carla scuffled on the floor. Two friends, Paul Clayton and Barry Kornfeld were dragged in. The crisis effectively ended Bob and Suze's romance."

> I think of her often and hope whoever she's met
> Will be fully aware of how precious she is,

signifying his regret for the he circumstances under which the relationship ended and his enduring affection for his former beloved, Suze (ll. 46-48). On *Blonde on Blonde,* in 1966, the song "Fourth Time Around" narrates an encounter Dylan and his former beloved have at her apartment, depicting the bitterness that follows the regret and heartache at the end of a relationship. The first lines, "When she said/don't waste your words, they're just lies," revive the trope of Dylan lying from "Ballad in Plain D" and reinforces the beloved's anger ("Fourth Time Around" ll. 1-2). The speaker's response, "I cried she was deaf," signifies the disconnect between the speaker and his former beloved (l. 3). After an argument that reduces the woman to crying on the floor, the speaker leaves her and begins a relationship with another woman, wiser than he was with the previous one. The lesson he learned from his former lover, "Everybody must give something back/For something they get," is amended and spoken to his new lover in the last lines of the song,

> And, I, I never asked for much
> I never asked for your crutch
> Now don't ask for mine (ll.8-9, 43-35).

The final lines depict an embittered speaker who will more carefully enter into serious relationships.

Dylan's subjective voice follows a similar pattern with songs about his wife, Sara Lowndes Dylan, chronicling the course of their relationship. In the 1966 song "Sad-eyed Lady of the Lowlands," the speaker enumerates his melancholy beloved's bewitching and

ethereal attributes followed by a question of how anyone, including powerful men and ancient kings, could resist or court her. A five-line refrain follows each octave asserting the prophesy that "no man comes" to the lowlands. The speaker, who also enamored of the sad-eyed lady, questions whether he should leave her his offering of affection or wait for her. The song ends with a question, signifying that speaker's courtship of the sad-eyed lady has not yet ended. Dylan's speaker demonstrates the development of courtship to commitment in "Wedding Song," featured on 1973's *Planet Waves.* Having found an equal companion with whom he feels safe and from whom he can learn, the speaker freely expresses a mature and profound love for her that transcends time and space, and makes him "complete." The love he feels for her exceeds material wealth and familial bonds. At the end of the song the speaker professes: "And I could never let you go, no matter what goes on/'Cause I love you more than ever, now that the past is gone" (ll. 31-32). The speaker's love for his wife has no antecedents and is eternal, regardless of circumstances.

The undying love expressed through Dylan's subject position in "Wedding Song" is challenged in the love songs on the 1975 album *Blood on the Tracks*. Songs like "Simple Twist of Fate," "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go," and "If You See Her, Say Hello," record the demise of Dylan's marriage to Sara. Just as he had in songs about the devolution of his relationship with Suze, the speaker in these songs laments the collapse of his marriage. All three songs recognize the connection the speaker feels with his wife. In "Simple Twist of Fate," Dylan's speaker opens the song in the evening with two people sitting on park benches: "She looked at him and he felt a spark tingle to his bones/'Twas then he felt alone and wished that he'd gone straight,"

pointing to the connection between the speaker and his beloved (ll. 3-4). By the end of the song, the relationship between the lovers has ended and, though they are not together, the speaker still feels a strong affection and connection. The speaker notes his loss: "I still believe she was my twin, but I lost the ring" (l. 28). "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go" and "If You See Her, Say Hello" follow the same pattern of the speaker saddened by his separation from his wife because he still loves for her.

Dylan's speaker further reinforces this theme in the song "Sara" in which he creates an opposition between the images of a dune when he and Sara were still together and how it looks now that they are separated. The first image depicts domestic bliss with the speaker on the dune and Sara and the children playing. The second image of the dune contrasts the first. Now alone on the beach, dead and decaying things, such as kelp and driftwood, surround the speaker. The kelp and driftwood have replaced Sara and the children, signifying the state of the speaker's relationship. In between the images of the dune, the speaker fondly remembers early moments in his courtship and relationship with Sara. These sentimental memories include, "Sleepin' in the woods by a fire in the night/Drinkin' White Rum in a Portugal Bar" and "Stayin' up for days in the Chelsea Hotel/Writin' "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" for you" (ll. 17-18, 27-28). The refrain emphasizes the speaker's love and admiration for Sara and emphasizes his regret over the dissolution of the marriage. The song ends with the speaker imploring Sara not to leave him or let him go. Even though the imagery on the dune suggests their relationship has ended, the speaker remains hopeful for reconciliation.

Though the emotions expressed in songs attributed to Suze Rotolo and Sara Lowndes Dylan are uniquely personal to Dylan's subject experiences just as his

experiences with Christianity had been, there is also something relatable about his experiences. That is what creates a connection between Dylan's subjective voice and the other voices that assume this persona. This is the most commonly used persona within Dylan's catalogue. It is fragmented into voices that express the complexities of love, romantic relationships, and marriage.

Songs in which Dylan's speakers search for love include "I Want You," "Temporarily Like Achilles," "I Wanna Be Your Lover," and "Need a Woman." The voices in these and the other songs in which the speakers seek companionship emphasize its importance. Dylan's speakers that find love highlight the importance of companionship in "If Not for You," "To Be Alone with You," Someone's Got a Hold of My Heart," and "Make You Feel My Love," among others, conveying the same profound affection that Dylan's subjective speakers do for Suze and Sara. Conversely, the speakers who find love, but find that it does not fulfill their expectations, express their frustrations in songs such as "Love is Just a Four-Letter Word," "Abandoned Love," "Love Sick," and "Till I Fell in Love with You." Just as there are with love found, there are myriad songs from different subject positions the express the end of a relationship. These diverse voices emphasize these emotions in many of Dylan's songs including, "Just Like a Woman," "I Threw It All Away," "Most of the Time," "Cry a While," Ain't Talkin'," and "Life is Hard." Throughout the span of his career, Dylan's speakers mirror his subjective experiences and express the joy, anger, depression, sadness, and regret associated with romantic relationships in a way that is both broadly relatable and personal.

Dylan's poet highlights the inequities in American society and applies the same moral judgment to different phases in American history. Though many of the voices in the songs recorded in the 1960s present the poet as moral authority, that voice continues its arc throughout Dylan's career. The other personae that inhabit Dylan's songs are fragmentations of the unified voice of the poet. Periodizing Dylan's canon of work as most critics do leads towards a focus on connecting the works with Dylan's biography in an attempt to uncover his identity. It is improbable that Dylan's subjective experiences did not influence his artistic output and making those connections will illuminate some of the works as has previously been done. However, the shift in focus to tracing the voices with thematic connections and locating them as fragments of a unified identity leads toward a reading of Dylan that redirects the interpretation of his identity. The identities Dylan assumes to give voice to his songs develop throughout his career and reflect the changes in American society. All of the voices emanate from a stable ipseity, unified by the American identity. The poet represents the integration of the identities through which Dylan speaks.

Chapter 5

E Pluribus Unum: From One Unified Language, Dylan Creates Many Voices

Because the study of Dylan's identity has historically focused on his biography and periodization of his career, those who study Dylan attempt to solve the mystery they perceive to exist between his public and private selves or the subjective artist and his creations. Their inability to completely fuse Dylan's subjective voice and the personae that he performs in public and through which he voices his songs is one reason he is perceived as a mercurial shape-shifter. The illusion created is that the disparate identities do not emanate from a unified core. Though the personae and his works are deeply rooted in American cultural history and tradition, critics and scholars maintain the hypothesis that his identity is foundationless and instable. Many of the songs in Dylan's catalogue, such as "Forever Young," "Positively Fourth Street," "Sad-eyed Lady from the Lowlands," and "Boots of Spanish Leather," are voiced through Dylan's subject perspective because there are clear correlations between the events in the songs and events in Dylan's life. However, the majority of personae Dylan assumes that give voice to his songs represent the shifts in identity and subjectivity that remain problematic. Taking into consideration that Dylan's or the artist's subject position is just one of the many subject positions through which he writes. Therefore, the hypothesis that Dylan surrendered his subjectivity into the horde of personae and speaks through many voices, all of which emanate from a stable core, is a valid interpretation of his identity. It follows that Dylan's declaration to Andrea Svedberg in 1963, "I am my words," clearly stated

that he created his identity through the language with which he articulated the diverse and, at times, conflicting subject positions of the personae in his lyrics.

To understand how Dylan created an identity that allows him to shift into and out of performances of a variety of personae, it is instructive to understand that they all proceed from a unified linguistic tradition. Linguistic patterns of spoken English are not subject to the same strict rules of grammar, mechanics, and syntax to which formal and written English must adhere. For example, in his analysis of the development of American English, *The American Language*, H. L. Mencken asserts, "[t]he vast uniformity which marks the people of the United States, in the political doctrine, in social habit, in general information, in reaction to ideas, in prejudices and enthusiasms, in the veriest details of domestic custom and dress, is nowhere more marked, in truth, than in their speech habits" (265). Mencken further argues that there is very little variation in the speech patterns and that which distinguishes regional expressions among Americans (260-1). In addition to regional linguistic normalization, the common or natural structure of American spoken English also creates equality among class stratification. Regardless of region or socio-economic class, the language spoken throughout American is relatively cohesive. The American population is, therefore, united through its common use of the English language.

However, the English language brought by the earliest settlers was aligned with the language spoken in England. As the new American country grew as a result of immigration, the language spoken in it developed in parallel to reflect the new population. Due to this American English deviated from British English and evolved into its own language with its own idiomatic structure and slang. Mencken cites Noah

Webster's assertion that American English would develop into a new language because "such as a new country, new associations of people, new combinations of ideas in arts and sciences, and some intercourse with tribes wholly unknown in Europe, [would] introduce new words into the American tongue" (qtd. in Mencken 1). Thus, from their diversity, immigrants created a language that was distinctly American. The people who inhabit and give voice to Dylan's songs are classified as characters that demonstrate this American linguistic tradition and cultural pluralism. They are unified under representative identities that have been central to interpretations of Dylan's work. These voices represent figures throughout American history and culture. The significance of these voices arises both in what they say, but, more importantly, the language with which they say it.

Basic informalities of speech patterns pervade Dylan's songs, creating a clear articulation of American English. Within these speech patterns there is an apparent deviation from formal structures in grammar, syntax, mechanics that are taught in school. Mencken argues, "Among all classes the everyday speech departs very far from orthodox English, and even very far from any organized English, but among the lower classes that make up the great body of the people it gets so far from orthodox English that it gives promise. . . of throwing off its old bonds altogether. . ." (255). The consistent error patterns of the speech of the lower classes or the working class in America are the manifestation of the "old bonds" of English grammar that have been "thrown off." However, these error patterns are not limited to their origination point of the working class. They became normalized in the language across socio-economic class and regions and became the regular idiomatic structure of spoken American English.

The most frequent of these errors occurs with verb use. This can be an error of shifts in verb tense or disagreement between nouns and verbs. Errors with pronouns also attribute a majority of the patterns in vernacular and vulgar speech. Speakers commonly confuse pronoun cases or replace a personal pronoun with a demonstrative (Mencken 295-6). Often, Dylan's speakers invert this error and use a demonstrative in place of a personal pronoun. Another error that frequently appears in the American vernacular and vulgar speech is the use of the double negative (309-311). Regardless of the voice or persona Dylan's poet assumes in the songs, the question of how these disparate voices converge or from where they emanate can best be answered through an examination of the speech patterns used in each of the songs. In fact, many of the songs contain multiple usage errors, which aids in establishing the voice of each persona. The thematic links among many of the songs and distinct personae, the language used in them indicates that they are speaking from a congruous linguistic identity. The primary levels of diction used to present this identity in the songs are the vernacular and vulgate of average, primarily working class, Americans. It is through the common use of vernacular and vulgate that Dylan creates stability among the songs' personae.

A key way that Dylan's speakers or personae develop their voice within the song is through weak enunciation of initial or final letters and syllables or of using a connecting syllable between words and phrases. Songs that use the connecting syllable usually contain "a" before or after a word create an informal or simple voice. Contractions such as "Man, it's a-killin' me" from "Mixed Up Confusion" or "It depends on how I'm a-feelin'" and "Well, if you, my love, must think that-a-way" from "Boots of Spanish Leather" illustrate the addition an extra syllable and development of a voice

indicative of average people or of the American "folk" ("Mixed Up Confusion" l. 2; "Boots of Spanish Leather" ll. 28-9). Dylan uses this convention of folk music extensively in his earlier compositions. In total, the construction appears in sixty-seven of the songs from 1962's "Hard Times in New York" through the 1997 song "Tryin' to Get to Heaven;" however, thirty-five of those songs were written, produced, or released prior to the motorcycle accident. Of the remaining thirty-two songs, the connecting or added syllable appears in iconic songs like, "Hurricane" or "Up to Me," and more obscure songs like "New Pony" or "Lenny Bruce." Regardless of the period of Dylan's career in which the song was written or the persona through which it is voiced, Dylan's speakers continue to develop and reinforce the voice of regular Americans through common speech patterns.

This is also evident throughout the catalogue in which Dylan's different speakers use twelve different aphetic variations of words in one hundred-five songs. The most common of the truncated initial syllables in the songs is caused by Dylan's speakers' variation of the word "until," shortening it to "'til." This occurs as early as 1962 in the song "Talking New York." Dylan's the folk singer or subjective persona says, "'Til I come to New York town" (l. 4). This simple aphesis appears in thirty-four of the songs from his earliest compositions like "Restless Farewell," "Walls of Red Wing," and "North Country Blues" through his most recent studio release. In the middle period of Dylan's career, the word "'til" is present in songs like "Up to Me," "Most of the Time," and "Solid Rock." The speakers carry this practice forward in the later period of his career, using it in "Love Sick," featured on *Time Out of Mind*, "Shake, Shake Mama" from the 2009 album *Together through Life*, and the title track from the 2012's *Tempest.*

Though this demonstrates a linguistic pattern used by the different speakers and spans Dylan's catalogue, "'til" is not the only aphesis they use. The second most frequent occurrence is the abbreviated form of because. It appears in twenty-three of the songs. Following that, twenty of the songs contain "'bout" rather than about and, in approximately ten songs each, speakers abbreviate around and across. Dylan's speakers also employ the aphesis for "except," "instead," "unless" "before, "above," "between," and "against" in fewer than five songs each, representing a total of eighteen songs that reinforce this linguistic structure.

Dylan's use of aphesis is arguably a conscious choice that he makes when writing his songs that results in the creation a common structure articulated by the various personae's voices. In other songs, such as "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," "Lay Down Your Weary Tune," "Slow Train," or "Honest with Me" the speakers apply the full version of the words "until," "beneath," and "around." This underscores that aphetic variations were deliberate and resulted in the speakers developing their voices with common or regular speech patterns. It is also consistent with the folk music standard. It is arguable that the aphesis occurs as a necessity to satisfy the rhythmic and metrical compositions of the one hundred-five songs in which they appear. Just as adding the syllable in the "a-goin'" construction may have regularized the rhythm of the lines, verse, or songs, so, too, does the elimination of a syllable. However, the effect is the same; their conventional use signals the relaxed enunciation of vernacular speech and establishes another linguistic connection among Dylan's speakers.

These personae also use contractions of words and syllables indicative of casual speech patterns regularly throughout the catalogue. Verb constructions such as "got to,"

"going to," or "want to" are fused by speakers blurring the syllables into "gotta," "gonna," and "wanna." In the rhythm of naturally spoken American English, Dylan's speakers contract other words, like "out of" into "outta" and "ought to" into "oughta," creating an informal tone. The simple contractions of "going to" and "want to" are singular errors; while the error in the contraction for "got to" is missing its auxiliary verb "have." The songs Dylan wrote early in his career that assume this format, such as "Whatcha Gonna Do," "I'd Hate to Be You on that Fateful Day," and "If You Gotta Go, Go Now (Or Else You Got to Stay All Night)," adhere to folk music constructions and establish these patterns as normal among his speakers. However, as Dylan's career progressed and he shifted away from writing and performing only folk songs, the construction continued.

In addition to aphesis and contractions, Dylan's speakers also use a colloquial form of gerunds and present participles, periodically dropping the "g" sound from the ending. Just as the aforementioned speech patterns are normalized and regularly used, this simple construction that signals common or languid pronunciation is used by all of Dylan's speakers throughout his catalogue. These constructions are the most common speech pattern among the many voices in Dylan's works, and it is present among the disparate voices. The speakers drop the final sound from the gerund or present participle in many words including "workin'," "gettin'," and "lovin'," resulting in a link that connects the personae. Further, the few songs like "I Shall Be Free No. 10," "Heart of Mine," or "Can't Wait" that use a more articulate pronunciation reinforce that the pervasive use of the informal pronunciation throughout his catalogue establishes the voice of common Americans.

Similarly, songs like “Born in Time” and “Highlands” that include both the informal and formal pronunciation underscore that the informal version is deliberate. The speaker in “Born in Time” uses both constructions in its first stanza. The second line, “In the blinking stardust of a pale blue light,” demonstrates the proper form. This is followed by the third line, “You’re comin’ thru to me in black and white” that uses the informal pronunciation. The interchange continues throughout the song. Similarly, in the sixth line of “Highlands,” the speaker says “shakin’” instead of “shaking,” but he uses the proper form of the gerund in all other instances in the song (l. 2). The varying application of the word endings indicates both the lax patterns of American speech and the conscious creation of an informal voice in the songs.

The continuation of the informal voice through vernacular language is further reinforced through the series of verb use errors. The primary solecism Dylan’s speakers commit is one that drops the auxiliary verb in present perfect tense. In most cases, the verb “have” has been eliminated from the verb conjugations “have gotten,” “have seen,” or “have been.” These constructions, which appear in one hundred-thirty of Dylan’s songs from 1963 through 2013, unify the personae that use it. Mencken’s study illuminates this error pattern, the vulgar use of the verb construction, through his assertion that “the perfect becomes a sort of simple tense with the elision of *have*” (285). This “simple tense” creates a simple or common voice through its use. The earliest occurrence appears in “Ain’t Gonna Grieve” in 1963. Aside from the use of “ain’t,” which is a separate error category in Dylan’s works, the third line of the fourth stanza places the word “got” immediate after the subject pronoun “we.” The line, “We got this far and ain’t a-goin’ back,” would be grammatically correct if the verb was conjugated

"have gotten" or if the subject and verb were contracted to "we've gotten." However, this is an example of how spoken language deviates from formally correct structures. Dylan's speakers use this construction to communicate the distance the speaker and his companion have traveled or what they have accomplished, but the regular speech pattern represents an error in grammatical structure common to spoken American English.

The pattern continues in Dylan's early period with iconic songs like "Positively Fourth Street," "Maggie's Farm," "Like a Rolling Stone," and "Highway 61 Revisited." In the post-motorcycle accident period, the frequency of this construction continues to shape and unify the voices in Dylan's songs. During this period, the omission of the auxiliary verb appears in the songs, "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go," "Hurricane," "Hazel," "Property of Jesus," and sixty-five others. The four aforementioned songs are spoken by personae that represent the voices of the romantic, the poet of protest, and the persona in search of or expressing his faith. Similarly, the thirty songs in which the error occurs in Dylan's later career represent the diversity of speakers that give voice to them. The song "Standing in the Doorway," which appears on *Time Out of Mind*, is spoken from the perspective of the heartbroken romantic addressing a woman who has left him. In three of the lines in the first ten-line verse, the speaker drops the word "have" and uses the construction "I got" in the lines "I got no place left to turn," "I got nothing left to burn," and "I got nothing to go back to now" (ll. 5, 6, 10).

Further, the speaker in "I Feel a Change Comin' On" acknowledges his position as the poet or voice of American democracy: "Some people they tell me/I got the blood of the land in my voice" (ll. 31-32). Lines 29 and 30 allude to Texas musician Billy Joe Shaver and Irish author James Joyce, both of whom have also written about their cultures

and countries. The lyrics establish a parallel between the speaker and artists who are revered as poets who give voice to their country's people. Other voices that use this construction represented in this period are the voice of the working class American in "Cold Irons Bound," the drifter in "Mississippi" and "Honest with Me," and the person searching for or expressing his faith in "Tryin' to Get to Heaven." Dylan's speakers' common use of the pattern signals a connection between the voices that use it.

Another common misuse of grammatical structures among Dylan's speakers is the error in subject and verb agreement. The errors occur both in agreement in number and in person. It is most frequently applied when the transitive verb "is" is used in the place of "are" when the subject follows the word "there" or the direct object following the subject "there" is plural. This construction appears in the 1962 composition "Mixed Up Confusion," which was not released until 1985 when it appeared on *Biograph,* and continues through 2012's release of *Tempest.* The third line of "Mixed Up Confusion," "Well, there's too many people," illustrates the error of agreement. The phrase "too many people" requires the plural verb "are," but use of the contraction both creates the error and mirrors vernacular American speech patterns. In "On the Road Again," Dylan's speaker uses this construction in the second line of the first stanza: "There's frogs inside my socks." The contracted singular "there's" disagrees with the plural "frogs." This pattern appears again in the 1975 songs "Mozambique" and "One More Cup of Coffee (Valley Below)." The speaker in "Mozambique," conjugates the verb in the fifth line, "There's lots of pretty girls in Mozambique," incorrectly. The correct subject-verb construction throughout the rest of the song highlights this error. The voice in "One More Cup of Coffee (Valley Below)" assumes the outlaw persona, speaking to

his beloved. The improper subject-verb construction appears in the fourth line of the fifth stanza: “There’s no books upon your shelf” (l. 26).

The thirteen other songs, including “Under Your Spell,” “Disease of Conceit,” and “My Wife’s Hometown” in which this error occurs follow the same construction. In “Scarlet Town,” the speaker uses the contraction “there’s” before “ivy leaf and silver thorn” in the second line of the first verse, “palm-leaf shadows and scattered flowers” in the second line of the third verse, and “walnut groves and Maplewood” in the seventh line of the fourth verse (ll. 2, 10, 31). “There is” would be the correct structure if the subjects were considered compound subjects or single entities. However, despite the use of the conjunction, the two plants listed in the subjects should be perceived as separate entities that require the third person plural verb construction. The use of this error furthers the pattern of common speech errors used by Dylan’s speakers regardless of the period in which they are used or the voice that uses them.

Moreover, agreement errors between transitive verbs and their subjects are not the only verb errors in Dylan’s lyrics. When Dylan’s speakers make the error in agreement between the subject and verb, it is usually an error in the conjugation or use of the third person singular verb. For example, the third person singular conjugation of the verb “think” is used in the third line of the last verse of “The Death of Emmett Till.” The line, “But if all us folks that thinks alike,” should use “think” to conjugate the verb as a regular first person plural to agree with the subject (l. 27). It also occurs in the eleventh stanza of the 1963 song “John Brown,” an anti-romantic depiction of war. In the last line of the third stanza, “You wasn’t there standing in my shoes,” John Brown is given a voice and speaker misuses the verb “wasn’t” with the second-person pronoun (l. 38). Brown’s

words reveal his disillusion with the romanticized vision of war that he believed when he was deployed.

In the period that critics and scholars classify as the middle of Dylan's career, this error manifests in songs like "Get Your Rocks Off," "Tangled Up in Blue," "Clothes Line Saga," and "Sign on the Cross." The third verse of "Get Your Rocks Off," which appears on *The Basement Tapes,* begins with the line, "Well, you know, we was layin' down around Mink Muscle Creek" (l. 13). Similarly, the first line of the fourth verse, "Well, you know, we was cruisin' down the highway in a Greyhound bus" (l. 19). "Tangled Up in Blue" also contains the same misuse of the third person singular verb used after a first or third person plural verb. The speaker uses "was" as the verb for the subject "our lives" in the first stanza. A simple correction of the error would replace "our" with a third-person singular pronoun or replace "was" with the verb "were." The error of using the third person singular conjugation continues through Dylan's most recent compositions in the songs "Thunder on the Mountain," "The Levee's Gonna Break," and "My Wife's Hometown."

However, the previously addressed solecism inverts the way in which the error generally manifests throughout Dylan's catalogue. It is more often that the speakers use the conjugation of the verb that disagrees with a third person subject. The first instance of this appears in "Dusty Old Fairgrounds" in the third line of the fourth verse, "Oh, our clothes they was torn but the colors they was bright" (l. 15). The reflexive use of the third person plural pronoun in both independent clauses emphasizes the informal voice and the agreement error. This also occurs in the 1983 composition "Foot of Pride." The second line of the refrain, "When your foot of pride come down," illustrates the

perpetuation of this pattern. The verb "come" disagrees with the third person singular subject "foot of pride" (ll. 10, 21, 32, 43, 54, 65). The layering of error patterns in the songs throughout Dylan's catalogue creates a unified idiomatic structure among the voices in the songs.

Another example of the error of third person subject and verb agreement that signifies unity in the speakers' use of language is the use of "don't" in the place of "doesn't." In forty-two of Dylan's songs, the speakers use phrases like "He don't," "She don't," or "It don't." This signifies the vulgar use of the verb construction where the verb "doesn't" should be used to agree with the third person singular subjects. Early songs such as "To Ramona" or "Mama, You Been on My Mind" that are voiced by the romantic seek to understand relationships. In the second line of the last verse of "To Ramona," the speaker tells the title character, "To see you tryin' to be part of/A world that just don't exist" (ll. 18-19). The word "world" is a third-person singular subject treated as a first- or second-person singular or plural subject or as a third-person plural subject. This construction is used again by a similar speaker in the third line of the third stanza in "Mama, You Been on My Mind," "It don't even matter t me where you're wakin' up tomorrow" (l. 11). The perpetuation of the agreement error in songs like "I Shall Be Free" and "I Don't Believe You (She Acts Like We Never Met)" illustrates the continuation of the common pattern of speech regardless of the persona in the song.

After Dylan transitioned to folk rock," this pattern continued. It first appears in the tenth line of the second verse of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" when the speaker says, "Don't matter what you did" (l. 28). He drops the third person singular subject "it," which should have the verb "doesn't" paired with it to have the subject and verb agree.

Instead, the speaker uses the verb "don't" that reinforces the solecism and the roughness of his speech. Similarly, the speakers in "She Belongs to Me," "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," and "From a Buick 6" continue to illustrate the uniformity of American speech patterns and habits. In "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," the folk persona begins his questions in the second verse with the word "don't" rather than "doesn't." In the seventh and eighth line of the first verse, the speaker conjugates the verb correctly, "And if I don't make it/You know my baby will" (ll. 7-8). However, he continues to conjugate "don't" with the third person singular subjects, "moon," "brakeman," and "gal." Later in the period, the romantic persona who voices "She Belongs to Me" uses the structure in the second and fourth lines of the first verse, "She's an artist, she don't look back" (ll. 2, 4). Here, the female singular third person pronoun "she" does not agree with the verb "don't." Similarly, the fourth line of the first verse of "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again," "But I know that he don't talk," furthers the use of the error during this period (l. 4). This error is not isolated to the speakers in the early years of Dylan's career.

The construction also appears in the post-motorcycle accident period, during the 1970s and 1980s. The working-class speaker in "Sign on the Window," which appears on *New Morning,* uses the construction in the third line of the third verse, "Hope that it don't sleet" (l. 13). Furthermore, the speakers in songs like "Goin' to Acapulco," "Open the Door, Homer," and "Neighborhood Bully" represent different personae that use the subject-verb agreement error. The hobo speaker in "Open the Door, Homer" begins the 18th line, "If he don't expect to be," repeating the error the poet speaker in "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry" made. It is employed again in the second line of the

sixth verse of 1983's "Neighborhood Bully," "What he gets he must pay for, he don't get it out of love" (l. 27). The poet of protest or social conscience that gives voice to this song perpetuates the connection between speakers. This continues in the sixth verse of the 1986 song "Brownsville Girl," and, in the most recent stage of Dylan's career, the error appears in "Standing in the Doorway," "Highlands," and "It's All Good."

Building on the foundation of verb errors that establish a linguistic tradition among Dylan's personae, the use of "ain't" throughout Dylan's catalogue signals both an error in verb use and the use of slang by the songs' speakers. Explaining its frequent use in American English, Mencken asserts that the "…extensive use of *ain't*, of course, is merely a single symptom of a general disregard for number, obvious through the verbs, and also among pronouns…" (289). Similar to the previously addressed verb errors, the use of "ain't" signals the replacement of proper phrases such as "aren't," "am not," "isn't," and "is not" (289). This is one of the most common error patterns Dylan's speakers use, appearing in one hundred-seven of the songs in his catalogue, including some of his earliest compositions like "Standing on the Highway," "Farewell" "Down the Highway," and "Percy's Song." The pervasive use of "ain't" progresses into the middle of Dylan's career in songs like "When He Returns" and "Saving Grace," both voiced by speakers expressing their faith, and "Jokerman," sung by the poet. Finally, in the later part of Dylan's career, the nineteen songs that use "ain't," such as "Summer Days," "Things Have Changed," and "Early Roman Kings," reinforce the connections between the disparate personae or speakers across the periods of his career.

Second to the verb errors Dylan's speakers commit, the use of the double negative is arguably the strongest link between the voices in and throughout Dylan's works.

Mencken argues, "[s]yntactically, perhaps, the chief characteristic of vulgar American is its sturdy fidelity to the double negative" (309). In this pattern, the speakers abandon the informal vernacular speech of the common American in favor of the less-formal vulgate. Again, this error is evident early in Dylan's career and persists through his latest studio album. It first appears in early compositions like, "Long Ago, Far Away," and "Baby, I'm in the Mood for You." In the second line of the fourth stanza and the third line of the fifth stanza of "Baby, I'm in the Mood for You," the speaker uses the word "ain't" with the word "nothing." In doing so, he constructs a double-negative, "I ain't gonna do nothing at all" (ll. 17, 23). He also creates a "folksy" or more common voice that he maintains throughout the catalogue. The speaker in "All Over You," another one of Dylan's early compositions that was unreleased until *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 9: The Witmark Demos: 1962-1964* in 2010, assumes the persona of a young romantic singing to his beloved. The speaker also constructs the double-negative in the first line of the third verse, "I don't need no money" followed by the clause, "I just need a day that's sunny" to communicate that he values the natural world over the material possessions ("All Over You" l. 25). In this, Dylan's speakers use this construction in twenty-one songs, including "Bob Dylan's New Orleans Rag," "Guess I'm Doing Fine," "Subterranean Homesick Blues," and "Desolation Row."

After the motorcycle accident, Dylan continues this pattern, maintaining this structure of vernacular American English among his speakers. The third person outlaw speaker in "All Along the Watchtower" employs the double negative in the second line of the first verse, "There's too much confusion, I can't get no relief" (l. 2). The speaker means to communicate that he is unable to find "any" relief, but the double-negative

conveys that he is unable to find "no relief." Regardless of the grammatically correct format of the negation, the speaker's meaning is clear to native American English speakers. The cowboy or outlaw persona also applies this construction in "The Man in the Long Black Coat" and "Time Passes Slowly." However, this is not the only persona that employs this construction. There are a variety of speakers that utilize the double negative as a means to both reinforce the link between the disparate personae in the songs and to create the voice of the average American. These speakers include the spiritual voice in songs like "Ain't No Man Righteous, No Not One," "Property of Jesus," and "When He Returns," the voice of social conscience in "Dead Landlord," and the voice of the romantic or lover in "Shot of Love," "Do Right to Me Baby," and "Tight Connection to My Heart (Has Anybody Seen My Love)."

In the later part of Dylan's career, the era following his heart condition and beginning with the release of *Time Out of Mind,* his speakers continue to use the double-negative. In "Make You Feel My Love," "'Til I Fell in Love with You," and "Sugar Baby," Dylan's speakers assume the voice of the romantic or lover. In "Make You Feel My Love," the speaker employs the double negative in the third line of the third verse, the fourth line of the fourth verse, and the second line of the fifth stanza to convey the depth of his love for his beloved. The speaker in ""Til I Fell in Love with You" expresses his heartbreak throughout the song because his beloved has left him. The fourth line of the fourth verse, "I'm thinking about that girl who won't be back no more," uses the double negative to express that angst (l. 22). Conversely, the speaker in "Sugar Baby" uses the double negative to express that he is jaded and frustrated with women. In the refrain, the speaker addresses the woman, "You ain't got no brains, no how" (ll. 6, 14,

22, 30, 38). This line layers error patterns of spoken American English with the use of "ain't" in the double-negative construction. Although the speakers in "Highlands," "My Wife's Hometown," "Duquesne Whistle," and "Not Dark Yet" assume different personae, they are connected through their use of the same speech pattern error. Ultimately, the double negative is used in ninety-one of Dylan's songs, from "Ballad of Hollis Brown" through the 2012 composition "Roll on John," adding to the link that exists between the speakers in Dylan's songs.

A speech pattern that Dylan's speakers use less frequently is that of using an objective pronoun in place of a demonstrative, a possessive pronoun, or a subject pronoun. The earliest occurrence of this error appears in the 1963 song "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues," the satirical song spoken in the voice of a member of the John Birch Society. In the second verse, the speaker says, "I got me a secret membership card," using the object pronoun incorrectly" (Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues" l. 9). Rather, the pronoun should be omitted all together or replaced by the reflexive use of the possessive pronoun. Later in the song, Dylan's misuses an objective pronoun in the line, "I know they did . . . them hard-core ones" ("John Birch Paranoid Blues l. 33). In the songs in which this error occurs most frequently, the word "them" is used to replace "these" or "those" as it does in the sixth verse of "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues." This is also used in other songs. For example, in "Dusty Old Fairgrounds" the objective pronoun appears in the refrain line "Following them dusty old fairgrounds a-calling" throughout the song. This error also occurs in the tenth and fourteenth verses of the 1964 song "It's Allright, Ma, (I'm only Bleeding)" when Dylan's speaker uses the construction "For them that must obey authority" and "Speak jealously of them that are free" in the

tenth verse ("It's Alright Ma" ll. 63 and 66). The syntax of the lines nearly suggests that the prepositions that precede the errors have created grammatically correct structures. However, the grammatical structure of both lines is incorrect because the third person plural actor is the subject of the sentence, rather than the object of the action. This pronoun is misused again in the fourteenth verse in the line, "While them that defend what they cannot see" ("It's Alright Ma" l. 90). Here, the demonstrative "those" should be used rather than the objective pronoun to make the phrase grammatically correct.

Dylan establishes this error pattern common to vernacular American English in his early compositions and continues using it with his speakers throughout his catalogue. The use of "them" in the same grammatical construction appears in the ninth line of the fifth verse of "Tangled Up in Blue," "And every one of them words rang true" (l. 61). It also occurs in the third verse of the 1985 song "Blind Willie McTell" and in the refrain of "Caribbean Wind" from the same year. The Delta Blues speaker in "Blind Willie McTell" replaces "those" with the word "them" in the first and fifth lines of the third verse. Both of these errors parallel normal speech patterns and create the voice of the common American speaker. Similarly, as its title suggests, "Ring Them Bells" also uses "them" in place of a demonstrative. So, too, does the 2001 song "Floater (Too Much to Ask)" from *Love and Theft*, in which the first verse ends with the error, "Another one of them endless days" (l. 4). Another song on *Love and Theft* that features the misuse of the objective pronoun, "Po Boy" uses the fourth line of the ninth and final verse, "Washin' them dishes, feedin' them swine'" (l. 36). Regardless of period, Dylan's speakers apply the objective pronoun erroneously.

In the middle of his career, Dylan's speakers also make errors in their use of objective pronouns when they use the objective pronoun in place of the subject pronoun. This occurs in songs like, "Sign on the Window," featured on 1970's *New Morning*, "Shelter from the Storm," appearing on the *Blood on the Tracks* in 1975, and "Romance in Durango" from *Desire* the following year. "Sign on the Window" uses the objective pronoun "her" in the subject position in the second verse. Dylan's speaker is an average American trying to achieve the American dream, who repeats the compound subject "Her and her boyfriend" in the first two lines of the second verse, rather than using the correct grammatical structure, "she and her boyfriend" (ll. 6-7). When the error occurs again, the speaker shifts to the romantic poet, but the misuse of the pronoun maintains the linguistic structure. The third line of the last verse of "Shelter from the Storm" contains the line, "If I could only turn back the clock to when God and her were born," which uses "her" in place of "she" (l. 39). Additionally, "Romance in Durango" changes the speaker who commits the error in pronoun usage, but maintains the structure of the speech pattern. The third line of the first verse, "Me and Magdalena on the run," uses the objective pronoun "me" rather than the subjective pronoun "I." Each of these songs is given voice by a different persona, but their use of the objective pronoun error is constant.

A less frequent, yet significant, error that Dylan speakers use throughout his catalogue is the use of the word "lay" rather than "lie". This is a common pattern in spoken language as the two verbs are often confused or used in place of each other. More often, the word "lay," which means to put or place, is spoken in normal conversation instead of "lie," meaning to repose or recline. Much like the other usage errors, this one crosses regions and status and is commonly used throughout America. "Man on the

Street" offers an early example of Dylan's misuse of lay. In the third line of the second verse, the folk singer speaker says, "There on the sidewalk did he lay" ("Man on the Street l. 7). The man in the song is reclined, reposed, or lying on the street. The speaker's use of "lay" originates the sequence of errors within the songs. Dylan's romantic persona misuses "lay" in the song "Lay Lady Lay." The titular imperative that drives the song intends to instruct the woman to lie down or recline on the bed with the speaker. However, the way the song is written, the verb signals the woman being addressed to place or put something on the bed, but there is no object listed for her to place.

The misuse of "lay" is furthered in the middle part of Dylan's career, first on the 1983 song "Tell Me" featured on *Infidels.* In the fifth line of the third verse, the speaker misuses the word "lay" in the same way that the speaker in "Lay Lady Lay" does. The speaker poses the question, "Do you lay in bed and stare at the stars" ("Tell Me l. 17). Again, the song uses the image of a woman reposed on a bed and creates a clear connection between the linguistic patterns of the speakers in the earlier and middle-era songs. The construction is next featured on 1986's *Knocked Out Loaded* on which the song "Brownsville Girl" uses the word incorrectly in the second line of the second verse. The line, "As the dying gunfighter lay in the sun and gasped his last breath," carries forward and mirrors the misuse of "lay" in the same way earlier songs had done ("Brownsville Girl" l. 6). Here, the figure of the cowboy from the song's allusion to the Gregory Peck film, *The Gunfighter*, is lying in the street as his dies rather than placing something in the street as the verb suggests. The use of "lay" repeats the error from earlier songs like "Man on the Street."

In Dylan's later career, this error pattern continues, reinforcing the linguistic connection among Dylan's speakers. "Huck's Tune," released on the 2008 album *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 8: Tell Tale Signs*, misuses "lay." The fifth line of the third verse, "I'm laying in the sand and getting a sunshine tan," mistakenly uses the word "lay" to signal the speaker's position reclining in the sand. The construction, however, appears most notably on several of the songs on 2012's *Tempest.* Three of the ten songs featured on the album, "Scarlet Town," "Tin Angel," and "Tempest," contain speakers that misuse the word "lay." In "Scarlet Town," the second line of the second verse, "Sweet William Holme on his deathbed lay," carries forward the word's misapplication ("Scarlet Town" l. 10). Similarly, the speaker in "Tin Angel" uses "lay" rather than "lie" in the first line of the third verse. The line, "The boss he lay back flat on his bed," again positions the subject lying on a bed and uses the wrong verb to communicate that position ("Tin Angel" l. 9). Finally, Dylan's speaker recreates the speech pattern error throughout the song "Tempest" in the refrain and its variations. The line, "The watchman he lay dreaming," includes an error in the third-person subject-verb agreement, but also repeats the misuse of "lay" that continues to link Dylan's speakers in their linguistic patterns, most specifically in their errors of use.

Many of the linguistic error patterns that have been normalized in American English are used repeatedly by Dylan's speakers throughout his catalogue challenge the assertion that Dylan's identity is unstable. Critics, scholars, and biographers define Dylan's career into three periods that they reinforce through their publications and studies on Dylan. Within those periods, these scholars, critics, and biographers have defined the personae Dylan performs and through which he gives voice to his songs. The patterns in

speech that Dylan's speakers establish in his early songs continue throughout his career, across the periods that critics and scholars have demarcated. However, these periods and personae are the accepted and remain the standard for analyses of Dylan's identity, all of which have resulted in the hypothesis that Dylan is able to shift into and out of the performances of personae that he does because he lacks a stable core from which they originate. However, the investigations of Dylan's identity have rested upon attempts to deconstruct his written works, primarily his lyrics, and assess meaning to them through biographical analysis. As a result, Dylan's critics and scholars attempt to impose his subjectivity onto his lyrics. This leads to the mystification and myth creation about and around Dylan because critics and scholars continue to focus on Dylan as a man or an artist rather than the words that he has used to shape and create his identity.

Therefore, Dylan's identity is unified, and its creation is the sum of the linguistic forms Dylan uses in his lyrics. As the creator, he is able to speak through the voices of the romantic, the person expressing or questioning faith, the poet of protest or social conscience, the outlaw, the cowboy, and the folkie. Even though each song can be classified according to the accepted definitions of period and persona, each song is voiced by a different individual speaker. It is clear that the speaker in "God Knows" and the speaker in "Forever Young" are different, but a unifying element is the linguistic tradition they use. Mencken asserts, "[t]here may be slight differences in pronunciation and intonation – a Southern softness, a Yankee drawl, a Western burr – but in the words they use and the way they use them all Americans, even the least tutored, follow the same line" (29). The idiomatic structures, error patterns, and relaxed enunciation that Dylan's speakers and personae use throughout the canon of his lyrics are structures that developed

as the American English language developed. These forms and solecisms that are common to the speech patterns of average Americans to establish a distinctly American voice in Dylan's songs.

Conclusion

"I Am My Words": Dylan's Identity Unified through Language

Bob Dylan rose to fame at the advent of the intersection of popular culture, high art, and the celebrity super-star. For this reason, interpreting his identity has continued to be problematic for journalists, biographers, and critics. Each had their own approach to constructing, interpreting, and deconstructing Dylan's identity. For example, the folk and rock and roll journalists who reviewed Dylan's performances, wrote about his album releases, and interpreted the voices in his lyrics as part of the American identity served as creators and protectors of Dylan's identity and myth. In addition, they reinforce the importance of American music and musicians in the public consciousness. When Anthony Scaduto published the first biography on Dylan, a second layer of myth construction was created. Since 1971, five major biographies and numerous books on Dylan's career and music have been published, all of which present the writer as the protagonist who can solve they mystery of Dylan's identity (Strachan 70). As part of this practice, the biographers, critics, and journalists who have written about Dylan's identity have attempted to impose Dylan's biography and subjective experiences onto his lyrics and performance in the media and public, and have created discrete periods through which they fragment his identity performance. As Dylan continued to develop as an artist and composer, the periodization of his career has been based upon arbitrary delineations that have perpetuated the misinterpretation of his identity. The events of his life, such as his relationships with Suze Rotolo and Sara Lowndes Dylan, his motorcycle accident, his subsequent retreat from public life, his conversion to and rejection of

Evangelical Christianity, and his second near-death experience in the 1990s, are the identities he performs and clues with which journalists and biographers might solve the puzzle of the myth of Dylan's identity.

During the early years of his career, Dylan was viewed as such an anomaly compared to major recording artists or the other folk musicians in Greenwich village that journalists' treatment of him created myth language that has shaped the way Dylan was and is still interpreted. This language includes assertions that Dylan represented the search for authenticity prevalent in the 1960s folk and counter-cultures and the subsequent student movements. The articles journalists wrote about him present him as a genius and as the "voice of his generation," and he is most frequently remembered for the music he created during his "protest period," the years before his motor-cycle accident in 1966. Similarly, he is associated with and recognized by his iconic image from the same period. The myth that resulted from the way that the press treated him presented Dylan as a representative figure of authenticity within the folk and counter culture movements of the 1960s. Any deviation from that initial interpretation and projection of Dylan's identity is perceived by his fans, rock and roll journalists, and biographers as a violation of his authenticity.

However, because Dylan did not want to be pigeon-holed into a singular creative performance or identity, he continued to develop his songwriting, shifting from writing and performing songs that he called "finger-pointing songs" from his early career to songs that communicated experience with which his fans could relate. Though the majority of his career has focused on compositions that speak to these experiences, journalists support the myth they constructed by the iconic imagery associated with his

early career. During this time, Dylan also perceived that trends in popular music were moving toward rock and roll, rather than folk music. When he "plugged in" at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, the folk community, his fans, and journalists perceived him as having "sold out" and betraying his folk authenticity. At the same time that journalists accused Dylan of abandoning his folk roots, they also credited him with creating a new genre of music: folk rock. This binary adds to Dylan's mythology and begins to create the image of Dylan as a mystery that must be solved.

It is clear that Dylan is not a victim, but an active participant, in the myth creation that surrounds him. When he arrived in Greenwich Village in 1961, he presented himself as an orphan who had lived on the rails, worked in carnivals, and played with iconic folk and blues musicians. It was an identity he had borrowed from Woody Guthrie's *Bound for Glory*. Subsequently, in the beginning of his career, he used the press to perpetuate the folk persona that supported an image of authenticity. In numerous interviews, some with media standards like Studs Terkel, Dylan repeated the narrative of his past that he had constructed, and used those narratives to create the reality of his identity. Some within the Greenwich Village folk community, like friend Dave van Ronk, suspected that Dylan was not honest about his past, but felt that whatever he said off stage did not matter as long as the lyrics he wrote and performed expressed the authenticity they expected from him.[22] This distinction between Dylan's identity construction and his lyrical creation is remarkable because it serves as a model for how Dylan's identity should be interpreted.

[22] In his biography, Anthony Scaduto quotes Dave van Ronk, "We accepted him not because of the things he said he had done but because we respected him as a performer. The attitude of the community was that it was all right, it was cool. He gets on stage and delivers, and that's fine. His pose didn't bother us. Nobody was turned off by it. Whatever he said off stage, on stage he told the truth as best he knew it" (69).

A less artificial demarcation of Dylan's identity creation occurred as a result of Andrea Svedberg's 1963 *Newsweek* article, after which Dylan's tentative trust with the press was broken because his stable, mid-western, middle class childhood was exposed. From that point on, he engaged in put-ons and word games, playing the role of the trickster in interviews and press conferences, making it clear that what Dylan said to the press could not be trusted and, therefore, his performances in the media were not an accurate foundation on which to interpret and analyze his identity. The theory that language creates reality does not apply to Dylan's performance in the press after Svedberg's article because he felt his trust was broken as a result of his past being revealed. Rather than focus on what Dylan said to reporters, scholars, or critics, the more important identity construction occurs in what he performs through his lyrics. Altering the focus from the layered and recreated narratives of Dylan's biographies or articles to the study of his lyrics presents a more accurate interpretation of Dylan's identity. It is through this interpretation that the shifts in Dylan's identity performance that led to his being interpreted as a mercurial shape-shifter begin to break down. Rather than being viewed as lacking a stable subjectivity, this interpretation of Dylan unifies the voices and personae he performs through their use of the American English speech patterns.

The personae presented in Dylan's lyrics do not only reflect traditional, cultural, or historical American voices. They also originate in his early compositions and can be traced through his latest productions. Dylan's first studio album, *Bob Dylan* is written and recorded in the folk tradition and includes only two original compositions, a narrative about his arrival in New York City and his tribute to Woody Guthrie. It is written and recorded within the folk tradition. On his second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan,*

Dylan includes only original compositions, announces himself as a poet of the American democracy, and begins to assume the voices of the American people. Dylan does not perform these voices in discrete periods as is the accepted assumption among those who write about him. These periods separate his career, arguing that he assumes the voice of the protest poet in the early 1960s, the cowboy in the late 1960s, the cowboy in the early 1970s, and the religious devotee in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rather, the personae that Dylan performs are present throughout Dylan's career, demonstrating the continuity of their construction and performance.

Furthermore, these voices that perform the songs are united through their use of language that is distinctly and uniquely American as it has developed throughout the country's history as a result of immigration and cultural diversity. This language includes errors in subject and verb agreement, pronoun misuse, double negatives, and the use of slang, such as the use of the word "ain't." It is through these error patterns that spoken language violates the grammatical, mechanical, and syntactical rules of formal written English, creating idiomatic structures that are used by all Americans regardless of race, gender, region, age, or socio-economic status. In this way, spoken American English acts as an equalizer among Americans. Creating equality and unity among the voices in Dylan's songs, each of the personae that give voice to the songs uses the idiomatic structures of spoken American English, and continues it throughout the catalogue. Thus, these speech patterns create a stable foundation or central core from which the identities emanate.

For this reason, when the study of Dylan's identity focuses upon the language the voices and personae use in his lyrics, the post-modern theory of his identity is challenged.

Reading and tracing the development of the personae Dylan voices in the lyrics leads to the affirmation that Dylan performs identities in the tradition of American culture, mythology, and history, and that those identities span the entirety of his career. Further, the common language, solecisms, and speech patterns used throughout Dylan's catalogue demonstrate that the voices can be perceived as unified in a way that investigations that focus on his biography have disregarded. When Dylan asserts to Andrea Svedberg, "I am My Words," he does so to articulate that the locus of his identity, as with any poet, is in his use of language.

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