
from *Inside A Prune*

Welcome to issue 11, all being well you will receive this on schedule (October, 2004). It is, however, slightly in doubt for the first time. This is due to my being away for much of the summer and Keith moving house during the same period. This, admittedly clever, move on his part did not fully succeed as I have tracked him down and given him an all but impossible deadline to meet. As he's always met these before, I am confident he will again.

Speaking of schedules, as I write this introduction, the publication date of Bob Dylan's memoirs - an event akin to the Loch Ness Monster appearing on a T.V. chat show at one point - is almost upon us. The advance excerpts released have had me enthralled, amused and no little surprised. It is all so generous, revealing and lucid. I am gratified, too, as a couple of quotes from these passage already exemplify what I was talking about in a speech I gave at Strathclyde University in September.

I mention this as it is another of my talks (to add to the one in here) that will be written up one day so beware its appearance in issue 12! If so it will be accompanied by another gripping chapter from John Hinchey's follow up to his excellent book, *A Complete Unknown*. The aforementioned *Chronicles* - plus associated releases and interviews - will obviously feature heavily in that issue so please send in your thoughts. I envisage a 'forum' similar to the one Mick Gold conducted on the Never Ending Tour in issue 4.

Another thing that may be in issue 12 - again feel free to volunteer - is an in-depth review of Paul Williams's *Mind Out Of Time*. Clearly a new volume in Paul's 'Performing Artist' series deserves no less but I fear we may have missed the boat slightly on this one. As a sponsor I was hoping to get a pre-release copy to review for you but - presumably due to it being published in Europe - this didn't arrive until yesterday. (Many thanks for the inscription when it did eventually arrive, Paul, most thoughtfully put.) Regular *Judas!* readers have, of course, already encountered the Oh Mercy chapter, which we ran in a previous issue and which surely ranks right up there with the finest of Paul's writings (In addition, you can read earlier interviews with Paul on *Judas!*'s website in the Homer, the slut archive section of the subscribers' area.)

Anyway, issue 12 is for the future, for now we hope you enjoy issue 11 which, in addition to my own article, sees Björn Waller, Pádraig Hanratty and Jim Brady return to these pages, the *Judas!* debuts of Scott Marshall and Leonard Cohen expert Jim Devlin adding to Martin Van Hees's regular column and the culmination of Andrew Davies's epic saga.

Till next time,
Kind regards and happy reading

Andrew Muir

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All Duncan Hume

Let Thy Wilbury Done

Looking back at the Traveling Wilburys

by Björn Waller

I was 15 years old in 1988. And you know, it would be so easy to claim that I was down with the cool stuff, that I bought *Daydream Nation*, *Franks Wild Years* and *Tender Prey* the day they were released, not to mention the pilgrimage I made across the pond to see Dylan in Concord...

...except it would be a lie. In the mid-to-late 80s I was listening to a lot of pretty sissy music. Don't we all at that age? When I look through the albums I bought back then they're called *Diesel And Dust*, *The Joshua Tree*, *Solitude Standing*... not necessarily bad albums, but nothing everyone else wasn't listening to. (At least no one can prove I ever owned a Samantha Fox record. Thank God for used record stores.) I did listen to some of my parents' records - Beatles, Stones and other stuff like that - though mostly in secret; it was a bit embarrassing for a 15-year-old to admit that that music made more sense to me than anything I was hearing on the top 10 chart. Bob Dylan? A fleeting acquaintance from my mother's very scratchy *Greatest Hits*. I suppose I must have thought he sounded a bit like Mark Knopfler.

So sometime in late '87 or early '88, my father came home with a new record - a remarkable event, as he's never been one to buy more than half a dozen records per year. It was George Harrison's comeback album *Cloud 9*, and as the closet Beatles fan that I was, I listened to that album a lot. So when I heard a new single on the radio that summer with Harrison singing I knew it wasn't on the album... and who were those other guys singing with him? Of course, it turned out to be 'Handle With Care' by the Traveling Wilburys. And I loved that song right from the get-go. Not just because it solved my problem of what to get Dad for his birthday. I mean, Harrison, Dylan, Orbison and the ELO guy on the same record? Oh, and some youngster named Tom Petty. The old man would love it, and I could listen to it when he wasn't home.

So I ended up buying the single for Dad, and eventually the LP for myself. And for a while, I played the hell out of it, much like I did with the follow-up two years later. And even if my tastes have drifted in different directions since then, the Wilburys records are still very much a precious part of my record collection (by some cruel twist of fate, they sit right in between Transvision Vamp's *Pop Art* and U2's *The Unforgettable Fire*).

Now that we hear rumours that the Wilburys albums will finally be re-released, I think it is interesting to examine the songs Dylan wrote for the Wilburys; traditionally, a lot of people seem to think that the 'revival' of *Oh Mercy* came out of nowhere. Between the delayed release of the terrible *Down In The Groove* (making it appear more than a year after it was recorded), the universal (and in my opinion undeserved) bashing of *under the red sky* and the lack of any proper post-Dylan *And The Dead* live albums, *Oh*



Mercy seems to stand out like the 2001 monolith - insular genius surrounded by vast deserts of barbarity. (His other collaborations during that time just add to that; 'Steel Bars', anyone?) How did Dylan go from 'Had a Dream About You, Baby' to 'Most of the Time'? Well, here's about an album's worth of brand new Dylan originals, spread out over two years and two records, which are often ignored when Dylan's career is summarised. That the Traveling Wilburys were a joke is fairly obvious. The aliases they used, the absurd

song lyrics, the fact that the liner notes to their albums were written by Monty Python members... but were they JUST a joke? And exactly what part did they play in Dylan's rebirth as a performer in the late 80s/early 90s?

Within days of *Down In The Groove* being unleashed on an undeserving audience, Dylan was in the studio with the Wilburys. The sessions were over quickly, Dylan went on tour, and Vol 1 was released the day the 1988 tour ended. When you look at it that way, it seems like something tossed off in a weekend, something no one really believed in. Yet it sold like hotcakes, spearheading or at least joining the rise of a beast long thought extinct: the supergroup. The last time we saw it was in the late 60s and early 70s, with bands like Derek & The Dominoes, Blind Faith, CSN&Y etc. But all of a sudden in the late 80s, there were scores of records by allstar acts; CSN&Y reunited for a second studio album (the dismal *American Dream*), as did the Highwaymen. Whether folk-rock (Little Village, The - ahem - Notting Hillbillies), indie rock (Electronic, Dim Stars) or heavy metal, no genre seemed immune to the sudden urge for lucrative side projects. Of course, having a bunch of well-known names in the same group is usually a good commercial decision, but not always an artistic success (for an excellent example, just compare *Little Village* to John Hiatt's *Bring The Family* - same musicians, same mood, yet the 'group' effort is ridiculously inferior). But where many of these supergroups seemed to have been more fun to play in (and get paid for) than to listen to,

the Wilburys started by coincidence and at least initially managed to turn that into some really nice music with a spontaneous, fun feel.

That five artists of this calibre would hook up and form a band was unexpected, but in a way it made perfect sense. They had been working together in different constellations for years, and it came at the right time for all involved, too. Dylan was just entering a period of creativity which over the following 3 years would see him play 265 shows and write *Oh Mercy* and *under the red sky*. Tom Petty's career was peaking and would shortly result in the excellent *Full Moon Fever*. Harrison and Orbison were making high-profile comebacks after several years out of the limelight, and Lynne, who had tried to disband ELO a few years earlier, had become a much sought-after producer. It all came together by accident, but an accident that could probably only have happened at this point in time. Most people probably know the story: Harrison needed a B-side for his next single...

'And so I just thought I'll just go into the studio tomorrow and do one, and it happened that Jeff was working with Roy and Roy wanted to come. My guitar was at Tom's house for some reason and I had to go round and get it. And the only studio that we could find available was Bob's.' (Harrison)¹

'Handle With Care', the result of that first day, was written by Harrison with some input ('*Give us some lyrics, you famous lyricist!*') from Dylan. It is prob-

ably the quintessential Wilburys song, capturing everything that was ever good about the band in just over 3 minutes - not only is it one of the catchiest songs of Harrison's solo career, but listen to that arrangement! Harrison takes the lead vocal, sounding happier than ever, Orbison gets to sing a 'lonely bit' that makes perfect use of his high tenor (the voice that convinced a young Neil Young that he could sing), and the froggier vocalists of the group get to crowd around the mic on the chorus. Dylan even adds a typical harmonica solo over the fade. Aliases or not, there was no mistaking who these guys were - and yet it all works when you put it together.

So it made sense for them form an actual group and put an album together. The phrase 'wilburies' had come up during the *Cloud 9* sessions, to describe various technical snafus and supposed gremlins in the studio. As the bunch of gremlins hanging around Dylan's studio they were, the band briefly considered calling themselves the Trembling Wilburys before settling on Traveling. And as a final touch to seal the bond, they even went as far as assuming Ramones-style aliases: Nelson (Harrison), Lucky (Dylan), Lefty (Orbison), Otis (Lynne) and Charlie T. Wilbury Jr. (Petty). Yet for all the joking around (underlined by Michael Palin's pythonesque essay on the origins of the Wilburys) they were obviously serious about the music, and, not completely unlike the *Basement Tapes*, the good times had by all never gets to override the fact that these are real songs, funny but never just for laughs. There's

almost a boyish giddiness to the album - they really seem excited to be in a *band*. Harrison, Orbison and Dylan had been solo artists for a loooong time, and one can't help but wonder if the informality of the proceedings brought back fond memories of the Quarrymen and the Golden Chords.

'We watched Roy give an incredible concert and kept nudging each other and saying, 'Isn't he great? He's in our band.' We were real happy that night.'
(Petty)²

Lynne always takes a lot of flak for his production of the album - he overdubs synthesizers, horns, extra guitars and vocals on pretty much everything. And it's true that 15 years on it sounds dated. Still, I think he deserves some credit for giving it a consistent sound; no matter how good the mood was and how sympathetic the various Wilburys were to each other, having five very different artists in one band could have made for a very schizoid album, but they really do sound like a *band* - not five solo artists, not Jeff Lynne and guest vocalists. There's a balance between the band members' personalities and the uniformity of the sound. (Also, few of Dylan's producers during the 80s captured his voice as well as Lynne does on the two Wilburys albums.)

One advantage of the 'secret' identities was of course that it gave them the freedom to do whatever they wanted without having to have it compared to their impressive collective back catalogue - and perhaps even blur the lines of who did

what. Take 'Rattled', for instance. Now here's a great little rockabilly tune by the Sun Records alumnus who recorded 'Ooby Dooby', right? Except it's actually Jeff Lynne. The Wilburys were not only friends but fans of each other as well, so you're never quite sure who is doing what and why; if a lyric sounds Dylan-like, it may be because one of the others is influenced by Dylan, but also because he's consciously trying to write like Dylan - and of course, it might even be Bob himself who wrote it! Still, there are (probably) three (mostly) Dylan originals on *Vol. 1*. The first, 'Dirty World' is possibly one of the earliest Wilbury tracks, as Harrison namechecks the 'trembling wilburies'. The raciness (by Dylan standards) of it and the use of the phrase 'dirty mind' in the first line has made some people wonder if he wrote it as a Prince parody. If he did, he failed miserably, as the lyrics of this decidedly unfunky little strummer are incredibly chaste compared to, say, 'Darling Nikki' (even if the chorus hints at an F word - '*Dirty world, dirty world, it's a -ing dirty world...*') and of course Dylan's hoarse vocals sound nothing like His Purpleness. Personally, I think it sounds more like an updated 50s rocker à la Warren Smith - it's certainly no dirtier than some of the tracks cut back then. But no matter what it's supposed to sound like, as a Wilburys song it works a treat. Listen to Dylan drawl his way through this and try not grin:

*You don't need no wax job, you're
smooth enough for me!
If you need your oil changed I'll do it for
you free!*

*Oh baby, the pleasure'd be all mine
If you'd let me drive your pickup truck
and park it where the sun don't shine...*

As a song, it almost sounds unfinished; a couple of verses are followed by a long free association round with all the Wilburys chanting nonsense lyrics, and then a brief chorus as the song fades (and indeed, the circulating demo fades out after the last 'proper' verse). I'd hazard a guess that it is exactly what it sounds like; a half-improvised happy romp through three chords by a bunch of friends enjoying each others' company and a few beers (albeit later 'perfected' by Lynne in the studio). For sheer hilarity, it's no 'See You Later Allen Ginsberg'; but it does have charm.

'Congratulations', the only Wilburys tune Dylan has performed live (I'd add 'to date', but let's get real) opens side 2. Yes, I know it was released on CD as well, but to me the Wilburys albums will always be vinyl LPs. As a song it's passable, though nothing special - both lyrics and music are clichés that have been used better by lesser songwriters. What makes the song work is the vocal. Even Lynne's production and all the Wilburys singing what can charitably be called 'harmony' can't hold Dylan back here, as he gives those old vocal cords a really good working over, constantly teetering on the edge of pitch, spitting the words out with a sarcasm that is pure joy to listen to. The last verse - 'Congratulations for making me wait, congratulations, now it's too LATE!' - is easily one of his best studio vocals of the late 80s.

'Tweeter And The Monkey Man' on the other hand, is a damn fine song; an excel-

lent mid-tempo rocker with a simple but effective riff and lyrics about a New Jersey drugbust gone bad. To some extent, it's obviously a Springsteen parody/pastiche (*Rolling Stone* called it 'Dylan's wonderfully bitchy way of asserting who's really the Boss', which pretty much nails it). Yet it's also a typical Dylan story song, with a plot that sounds clear the first time you hear it but upon closer inspection reveals enough loose threads, foggy identities and lingering question marks to match 'The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest', plus a smattering of generic americana. The only thing that doesn't quite work is the chorus, which sounds tacked-on and really suffers from Lynne's overproduction. And again, the vocals are an absolute hoot. He hits all the Dylan clichés; drawn-out vowels ('Now the town of Jersey Citeeeee is quiiiiieting down agaaaaain...'), nasal and whiny with just enough phlegm in his throat, packing far too many words into one line somehow... But unlike so many of his vocal performances in the preceding years, where he often seemed to try to sing like Bob Dylan ('We Are The World... 'nuff said) it sounds completely natural here. Dylan's vocals on *Vol 1* are not overly pretty - much closer to the raspy voice of *Oh Mercy* than anything he had recorded before. If anything, the coarseness of Dylan's vocals stands out even more here when put up against Lynne's glitzy production and the smooth vocals of the other Wilburys (well, OK, not counting Petty) than in Lanois' more sympathetic soundscape. Yet where Harrison seems to feel pretty cozy among Lynne's synthesizers and saxophones,

Dylan - even though his voice sounds older than ever - sounds rejuvenated, like he's going head to head with the production in a chicken race to see who gets to burst out of the speakers first, not in an aggressive way but simply because he's having a blast and is more relaxed than he's been in a studio for years. As if singing as Lucky Wilbury meant he didn't have to try to remember how Bob Dylan is supposed to sing.

So we have three brand new Dylan songs here*. And it seems to me that as different as they are from each other, they still have something in common. The shuffle of 'Dirty World', the doo-wop stylings on 'Congratulations', the Springsteen references on 'Tweeter'; Dylan is playing with genre clichés, and unlike what he had been doing a few years earlier, they're clichés he's familiar with. There's certainly no attempt to sound like 1988 here. Throughout his career, Dylan has often learnt and re-learnt how to write by rewriting other songs or playing with clichés; from '1913 Massacre' and 'Scarborough Fair' to 'The Future' and 'Uncle John's Bongos'.

'It's only natural to pattern yourself after someone (...) If I wanted to be a painter, I might think about trying to be like Van Gogh, or if I was an actor, act like Laurence Olivier. If I was an architect, there's Frank Gehry. But you can't just copy somebody. If you like someone's work, the important thing is

* Eh? There are three on DITG, all dreadful but still Dylan songs, and five on KOL, all but one dreadful but still Dylan songs, collaboration on both albums notwithstanding.

to be exposed to everything that person has been exposed to. Anyone who wants to be a songwriter should listen to as much folk music as they can, study the form and structure of stuff that has been around for 100 years.' (Dylan)³

The 'forms and structures' Dylan uses on these songs might not be 100 years old, but they are no less obvious than those of, say, 'Girl of the North Country'. Whether this is a deliberate attempt to jump-start his muse or just a way for him to contribute something to the Wilburys record, Bob alone knows. But the sequence of them does seem to hint at a quick development over the few days he had to write and record them; as if all Dylan really needed to write songs again was a slightly different perspective.

Apart from his own compositions, Dylan also gets to do lead vocals on the weird 'Margarita', a showcase for what Lynne can do behind a producer's desk and not much more, Dylan's vocals sound bored and the best line of the song goes 'Went to the Big Apple/Took a bite'. Ouch. Curiously enough, he's the only Wilbury who doesn't do lead vocals on 'End Of The Line', a good-timey Harrisong serving to end the album on the same note as 'Handle With Care' started it.

The Wilburys never played live as a group. With Harrison notoriously stage-shy and Dylan, Petty and Orbison busy with their solo careers, it's understandable that they chose not to spend too much time on what was never intended to be more than a side project. And yet... the long break in Dylan's touring schedule

between the release of *Vol 1* (released the day before the last 1988 NET show) and the restart of the 1989 tour may not have had anything to do with it, but tour plans were apparently serious enough for Tom Petty to ask his production and lighting designer, Jim Lanahan, to come up with an idea for a stage design.

*'I envisioned some kind of Terry Gilliam-esque vehicle as the set. The sails were going to be projection surfaces, and the wing was a thrust that we could go out on. The wheel house was the monitor mix position, and there would be smoke coming out of the smokestack and the wheels on the train would turn.'*⁴

Exactly *how* a Traveling Wilburys show would turn out - and if it would be any good - is anyone's guess. Good backing musicians would of course be essential, especially since they'd probably have to resort to their individual back catalogues to fill out a full concert; 2-3 songs each? 'Highway 61 Revisited' and 'Love You To' sitting next to 'Calling America' and 'You Got It'? Dylan and Orbison duetting on a medley of 'Crying' and 'Baby Stop Crying'? Oh, the humanity... Above all, with a 'Terry Gilliam-esque' stage setup, it would tend to play up the comedy aspect of the Wilburys - something that worked well over a couple of days worth of recording sessions, but can you imagine Dylan and Harrison joking it up on stage every night over a nationwide tour? There's a catch 22 here: the Wilburys were supposed to be fun, and in order for a live show to work, they'd have to maintain the off-the-cuff

feel of the LP - yet they would have to be serious about it; with five lead singers and a high-profile tour they couldn't just walk up on stage and wing it. Perhaps it's for the best that it never happened - though it's an interesting what-if.

But of course, Orbison's death on December 6th, 1988 put a definite stop to any plans there might have been. Rumours had Del Shannon taking Orbison's place in the group, which seems like an intriguing idea; he had worked with Petty before, and like Orbison he was one of the 'original' rock stars in dire need of a career boost. Sadly, this too fell through as Del Shannon committed suicide in February 1990, shortly after recording *Rock On* together with Jeff Lynne and Tom Petty. (The Wilburys eventually released a cover of his classic 1961 hit 'Runaway' as a B side for the 'She's My Baby' CD single. It's not a bad version, though it sticks a bit too close to the original - apart from Dylan's brief harmonica solo, which is delightfully out of place.) So while the Wilburys continued to work together in various constellations throughout '88 and '89, the 'band' itself remained quiet. Until April of 1990, when Dylan apparently gave Harrison a ring:

Bob: *When are we doing another Wilburys record?*

George: *Why? Do you want to?*

Bob: *Yeah, don't you?*

George: *Yeah, I do.*⁵

The result was quickly recorded and released some months later as *Vol 3*. Yet another little joke. This time the liner notes were written by Eric Idle, and they

called upon a slightly different gang of Wilburys: Boo (Dylan), Muddy (Petty), Clayton (Lynne) and Spike (Harrison). Is there any significance in the name changes? Perhaps. The album does have a different feel; more serious and socially conscious, yet at the same time much sillier than *Vol 1* ever got. Take Petty for instance; his contributions as Charlie T. Wilbury Jr. were 'Last Night' and the mock-futuristic 'Margarita' - the two least successful songs on *Vol 1*. As Muddy, he only contributes one track - a blues (!) about owning too many musical instruments, which turns out to be one of the best songs on the album. Lucky Wilbury was a pretty easy-going fellow; Boo Wilbury, much like his distant cousin Bob Dylan on *his* 1990 album, was a far grumpier guy with a dark sense of humour.

While *Vol 3* is not a bad album, really, it does pale next to its predecessor. It's not just the absence of Orbison that's being felt - he was sort of the odd man out on *Vol 1* anyway - but more a case of the Wilburys failing to work as a unit. Where the first album had been a happy, natural thing, *Vol 3* often seems contrived. Though Lynne's production works hard to cover this up, most of the songs here are obviously written and mostly performed by one Wilbury with the others serving as backing musicians. But that means that there's a lot more 'pure' Dylan on this album than there was on *Vol 1*. Out of 11 songs, there are (again, probably) at least four Dylan originals here, as opposed to two and a half on the first one. Also, he gets to sing a lot more lead.

'She's My Baby', which starts the album off, does so as raucously as any Dylan album opener since... well, OK, 'Political World', I suppose. It's got the same 'kicking in the door' feel, opening the album on volley. And while it's not his most challenging lyric ever, it is a riot to hear Dylan spit '*She likes to stick her tongue right down my throat!*'. But unfortunately, we also immediately see the problem of the album here. Lynne's production with heavy drums and a ridiculous guitar solo by Gary Moore goes completely against the mellow mood of *Vol 1* - and though it sounds like a typical democratic Wilburys tune with everyone singing a verse each, this was originally a Dylan solo number. By the time Lynne is finished producing it, he's taken the first verse for himself and all the others get to sing before Dylan has a chance to get to the mike. It works, but *how much better it could have been.

'Inside Out' is probably a Harrisong featuring Bob on lead vocals. At least that's Olof Björner's guess, and I like to think Dylan isn't responsible for this. It appears to be some sort of ecological lament about everything, you know, turning... yellow. Problem is, serious subjects and silly lyrics rarely mix very well; there are some nice vocals, but the weak lyrics and dreadful chorus ('Don't it make you want to twist and shout?' - more like shake, rattle and roll over, frankly) drag the song down.

Dylan has written a long line of 'love' songs chastising the woman for failing to do her part in a relationship, from 'Boots of Spanish Leather' to 'Sugar Baby', and his

* Why wonder? The version with Bob singing throughout has been out for pretty much as long as the album itself.

two most interesting songs on *Vol 3* fall into that category – and do so with a bang. ‘If You Belonged To Me’, a dark little song not completely dissimilar in melody to ‘Dirty World’, is quite interesting. For starters, it’s barely a Wilburys song at all – Dylan sings all the lead vocals, plays harp all over the place, the others barely even get to sing backup here. He wrote quite a few of these love-gone-bad songs during the 80s; but ‘If You...’ works a heck of a lot better than, say, ‘Under Your Spell’ or ‘Something’s Burning, Baby’. Dylan almost goes completely over the top here, especially with that wonderful line *‘The guy you’re with is a ruthless pimp, everybody knows/Every cent he takes from you goes straight up his nose’*, yet he never really turns it on so much that the song risks becoming a joke. Also, note that Boo Wilbury (again) seems a bit less of a misanthrope than grumpy ol’ Bob Dylan; the message of the song, after all, is that life isn’t half as bad as the woman he’s singing to thinks it is. Of course, her problem is easily solved: *‘You’d be happy as you could be if you belonged to me.’* Boo is about as much into women’s lib as Bob, apparently.

If ‘If You Belonged To Me’ straddled the fence between serious and self-parody, Dylan happily jumped off that fence a few minutes later; kicking off side 2 of the album is ‘Where Were You Last Night?’, a completely lightweight, silly and really adorable little song. This may not be Dylan poking fun at every bitter love song he’d ever written, but it sure sounds like it. Starting off fairly normally with the title line, it seems to be a fairly normal song about jealousy (‘What did you do? Who

did you see?’) which may or may not have borrowed a line or two from ‘In The Pines’. But as we soon see, it’s not a matter of just one night, and by the time we get to the last verse it’s ‘Where were you last year? You sure as hell weren’t here!’ In a way, it’s the complete antipode of ‘Most of the Time’, the narrator still furiously obsessed with a relationship that’s been over for ages - and of course, that setup just begs for parody. ‘You won’t get rid of me as long as you’re alive’, indeed. By the time Dylan ends it by wheezing ‘it’s getting to me, making me gloomy’ you can picture him covered in cobwebs, still waiting for a date who never showed up and never will.

‘Seven Deadly Sins’, the album’s remaining Dylan original, is yet another genre exercise - again, a doo-wop ballad. It is not at all bad, but hardly anything to write home about; while it’s no worse, it’s also no better than the equally clichéd ‘Congratulations’, and this time Dylan’s vocals don’t work for it - he has rarely sounded as croaky as he does here. He adds some nice vocals on Harrison’s ‘The Devil’s Been Busy’, another song trying in vain to combine a serious message with a sense of humour; Lynne is really trying his best here, adding layers of guitars and sitars, yet the main (or only) point of interest remains Dylan’s and Harrison’s ‘duet’, which actually works well if you disregard the trite lyrics. Dylan also sings the bridge on Lynne’s ‘New Blue Moon’ (and manages to sound exactly 100% unconvincing as he laconically draws ‘ya-hoo.’)

The final track probably contains more than a few Dylan lines. ‘Wilbury Twist’, a dance craze best reserved for those who

can afford the doctors' bills, actually manages to sound like the kind of light-weight fun that much of the album tries too hard to be, as all four Wilburys trade verses and instruct listeners to '*Lift your other foot up/Fall on your ass/Get back up/Put your teeth in a glass*'. Of course, Lynne buries it in saxes and choruses, but still it's a good enough closer.

Four non-album songs also came out of the sessions for *Vol 3*. 'Runaway' was mentioned above. The single 'Nobody's Child', a cover of a song by Cy Coben and Mel Foree, was released to benefit the Romanian Angel Appeal, spearheaded by Olivia Harrison to help bring some relief to Romanian orphans. The song itself is pleasant enough; Dylan carries the song with some nice vocals and harp, and the lyrics are eerily spot-on for the occasion. But after Lynne has added layers of guitars and backing vocals, you can't help but feel that it sounds a bit too... well, jolly. You end up very grateful that Dylan didn't have Lynne produce *Good As I Been To You*, though. Then there are two outtakes: 'Like A Ship' is a dreary little Dylan number somewhat rescued by a lovely bridge. It sounds like something that still needs work - or at least a more committed lead vocal. Harrison's 'Maxine', in contrast, is a pretty good effort, and it's hard to see why it was left off the album.

Dylan's voice on *Vol 3* is rougher than it had ever been in the studio before; he had been touring a lot since the last album and had just finished sessions for another. His songwriting, on the other hand, is definitely sharper, the songs more realised in some sense - more songs in themselves

than writing exercises. And if nothing here matches the best songs on *Oh Mercy* and under the red sky, at least a couple of the songs here stand well on their own and are an interesting indication that even if Dylan's pen was drying up after the writing burst of 1989, it was not yet completely empty.

But that was it, basically. After the release of the 'Wilbury Twist' single in March 1991, the Wilburys have never reconvened again. Aside from George Harrison's 1992 live album crediting production to Spike and Nelson Wilbury (who, of course, are both Harrison), there have never been any other releases, and the two LPs soon went out of print. Not that no one ever thought about it. Over the years there were several reunion rumours; in connection with the release of the Beatles Anthology, Lynne mentioned wanting to make a third album 'if we can get in touch with Bob'. Petty and Harrison both dropped hints a while later:

'I saw George four or five days ago. We had breakfast and talked. I think we'll probably do another Wilbury album next year. That's a great little side thing that I have. I can go into another world for awhile.' (Petty)⁶

Exactly what came of this - if indeed it was ever more than just something mentioned in passing - is uncertain, though I suppose that in 1997 Dylan had other things on his mind (*Time Out Of Mind*, almost dying etc). Another rumour in 1999 would have had the Wilburys backing up Carl Perkins on a new record - despite the



fact that Perkins had died the year before. The idea was to use some vocal tracks Perkins had recorded before his death and have the Wilburys record backing tracks (and, one assumes, vocals). And as late as 2000 - as Harrison appeared to be beating his cancer - Petty mentioned that it would be fun to do another album. But with Dylan uninterested and Harrison's health declining, the opportunity either never came about or they simply decided it wasn't worth the effort. After all, they'd struck it lucky once and just gotten by the second time - a third attempt might have been pushing their luck.

Which returns us to the question, as this is a Dylan magazine after all: what importance did the Wilburys have in Dylan's career? Perhaps none; perhaps they were just a pleasant diversion for him during a time when he was to some extent reinventing himself. But perhaps the recording of *Vol 1* did plant a seed in Dylan's head. He had been unhappy with the way albums were recorded in the 80s, now all of a sudden he had the chance to

record an album in a relaxed setting, perform without the pressure of having to live up to his own myth, play around with song structures and lyrics... *Vol 1* does not, all by itself, explain the change Dylan went through as a recording artist between 1987 and 1989, but it does offer some hints. *Vol 3* is not the great lost Dylan album, but it does seem to indicate that Dylan had every intention of continuing writing and recording. Whether his complete silence between 1991 and 1997 was caused by the poor critical reception of *Vol 3* and under the red sky or if he simply couldn't write anymore is still an unanswered question, but if he could come up with 5 or 6 songs shortly after writing under the red sky, surely he couldn't have been completely empty?

But above all, the Wilburys records remain an interesting side project, offering something we don't see often; Dylan collaborating with other artists, not to lend his name to them or theirs to his, but simply for the hell of it. They were never meant to be more than that; but overall, they were certainly no less either.

Appendix

Hard Traveling: *The Wilburys, 1987-1992*

1987

Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, *Let Me Up! I've Had Enough!*

- 'Jammin' Me' (Dylan/Petty)

Bob Dylan with Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers: Temples In Flames tour
George Harrison, *Cloud 9*, produced by Lynne

- 'When We Was Fab' (Harrison/Lynne)

1988

Traveling Wilburys, 'Handle With Care' single

Traveling Wilburys, *Vol 1*

Randy Newman, *Land Of Dreams*, produced by Lynne and featuring Lynne and Petty

1989

Traveling Wilburys, 'End Of The Line' single

Tom Petty, *Full Moon Fever*, produced by Petty & Lynne and featuring Harrison, Lynne, Orbison and Shannon

- 'Free Fallin', 'I Won't Back Down', 'A Face In The Crowd', 'Yer So Bad', 'A Mind With A Heart Of Its Own', 'Zombie Zoo' (Lynne/Petty)

- 'Runnin' Down A Dream' (Lynne/Campbell/Petty)

Roy Orbison, *Mystery Girl*, produced by Lynne & Orbison and featuring Lynne & Petty

- 'You Got It', 'California Blue' (Lynne/Orbison/Petty)

- 'A Love So Beautiful' (Lynne/Orbison)

Various artists, *Lethal Weapon 2 OST*

- 'Cheer down', George Harrison (Harrison/Petty), produced by Harrison & Lynne

1990

Traveling Wilburys, 'Nobody's Child' single

Traveling Wilburys, *Vol 3*

Traveling Wilburys, 'She's My Baby' single
Bob Dylan, *under the red sky*, featuring Harrison

Jeff Lynne, *Armchair Theatre*, featuring Harrison and Shannon

- 'Blown Away' (Lynne/Petty)

The Jeff Healey Band, *Hell To Pay*, produced by Lynne and featuring Harrison

- 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' (Harrison)

1991

Traveling Wilburys, 'Wilbury Twist' single

Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, *Into The Great Wide Open*, produced by and featuring Lynne

- 'Learning To Fly', 'Into The Great Wide Open', 'The Dark Of The Sun', 'All The Wrong Reasons', 'Out In The Cold', 'Built To Last' (Petty/Lynne)

- 'All Or Nothin', 'Makin' Some Noise' (Petty/Campbell/Lynne)

Del Shannon, *Rock On!*, produced by Lynne, featuring Petty and Lynne

- 'Walk Away' (Lynne/Petty/Shannon)

1992

George Harrison, *Live In Japan*, produced by 'Spike & Nelson Wilbury'

Ringo Starr, *Time Takes Time*, produced by Lynne and featuring Lynne & Petty

1 www.wilburys.info

2 www.wilburys.info

3 'Rock's enigmatic poet opens a long-private door', Los Angeles Times, 4 April 2004

4 'Unseen Design', Entertainment Design, 1 February 2000

5 <http://www.bjorner.com>

6 BAM, 7 February 1997

Shatter Like The Glass

by Jim Brady

Back in issue three of Judas! we brought you some of the opening pages of Jim Brady's 1979 dissertation for Strathclyde University. We are pleased to now bring you the conclusion to his detailed study.

... 'Ballad of a Thin Man' expands this attack on the dogmatically empirical mind. 'Mr Jones', like the man in 'Crawl Out Your Window' with his 'businesslike anger', has standardised his emotions, elevating facts over any other kind of experience and thereby insulating his 'self' from any emotions which might upset its integrity: his 'pencil', through which he carefully filters his experiences, is a symbol of this detachment. In view of this, the juxtaposition of his 'imagination' with his factualism is heavily ironic,

*You have many contacts
Among the lumberjacks
To get you facts
When someone attacks your imagination
But nobody has any respect
Anyway they already expect you
To just give a check
To tax-deductible charity organisations.*

Indeed Mr Jones's pencil is another connection between the two men (the other has his 'chalk'); both define themselves by their reliance on these instruments which in their hands lead to blind and uncomprehending rationality:

*You walk into the room
With your pencil in your hand
You see somebody nakes
And you say, 'Who is that man?'
You try so hard
But you just don't understand
Just what you'll say
When you get home.*

These vicarious experiences - both his contact with the working-class 'lumber-jacks' and with those nightmarish freaks - are symptomatic of this man's search for easy answers to difficult questions. 'You try so hard' is ironic since he is not in fact trying to relate these new experiences to his own narrow awareness but worrying about how to explain it all to his (probably equally blinkered) wife; that verse's concluding couplet has the same bathetic reduction that was applied in 'Crawl Out Your Window'; and it has the same function, that is to underline the evasiveness of this empirical attitude - which pretends to be intensively dedicated to truth but fears it - and to ridicule and refute the conception of mankind which it produces.

Mr Jones's painful bewilderment in the face of these new experiences continues, although he holds on to his certainties, asserts his standards of 'normality' and ends the song unchanged; still attempting uselessly pedestrian and pedantic analysis. Jon Landau writes of this song;

'he (Dylan) wants to blame Mr Jones for things that aren't his fault and the result is, to me an embarrassingly hateful putdown...'

Michael Gray takes the opposite attitude;

'Ballad of a Thin Man's importance is that it deals with a universal experience - the feeling of a loss of identity and the mind's attempt to overcome the consequent sense of debility. There is no condemnation of the many, or the old, nor any corresponding implication of praise for the trendier, younger few. The song implicates its narrator quite consciously and so makes clear that we are each of us the Mr Jones whose confusion we witness.

Gray is, I think, correct. Whether or not the narrator is implied the sense of confusion is so powerfully evoked and the dilemma so universal that the song is clearly far more than 'an embarrassingly hateful putdown'. The option between the imagination (and its depth) and the superficiality and worthlessness of factualism is everyone's, and Dylan's regret - there is no blaming since essentially you 'harm' or limit only yourself - is that imagination is so frequently rejected.

The third verse is a particularly frightening, Kafkaesque inversion of Mr Jones's reality; going to a freak show, he is himself arraigned as a misfit,

*You hand in your ticket
And you go watch the geek
Who immediately walks up to you
When he hears you speak
And says, 'how does it feel
To be such a freak?'*

*And you say 'Impossible'
As he hands you a bone*

*Because something is happening here
But you don't know what it is
Do you, Mister Jones?*

The 'something' which the chorus refers to is the honest recognition and appraisal of one's own experiences and the vicariously educated Mr Jones has been incapable and unwilling to open his mind even to anyone else's;

*You've been through all of
F. Scott Fitzgerald's books
You're very well read
It's well known*

The verb there is derogatory - 'been through' as opposed to 'understood' or even 'read'.

Finally then, these freaks are (like 'the mystery tramp') in part a self-projection which Mr Jones refuses to accept and the song's bewilderment refers to the discrepancy between that false exclusiveness and the unsettling feelings which it attempts to ignore.

This rejection of factualism is found even in Dylan's earliest work; the bitterly understated conclusion to 'Ballad of Hollis Brown' equates factuality with indifference;

*There's seven people dead,
On a South Dakota farm
There's seven people dead
On a South Dakota farm
Somewhere in the distance
There's seven new people born.*

Dylan perceives that this empirical attitude is basic to his society's way of thought and he recognises its reductive-ness. Going back to that 'peel the moon' image; he recognises that such thoroughness actually misses the point altogether; the moon having all kinds of significance beyond the merely physical, will not yield itself. This attitude is well represented in a writer like Hemingway, in whose famous rendering of the bare truth there is, on Dylan's attitude, an evasion and fear of troublesome emotions; in the above quotation for instance, Dylan's irony reveals that the 'Hemingway-like' reporting (like Mr Jones with his pencil) of 'facts' masks a refusal to think or feel at any level beyond that of the objective 'fact'.

'Tombstone Blues' is surely an attack on Hemingway, ridiculing his hunting, his athleticism and his tough stoical pose;

*Well, John the Baptist after torturing a
thief
Looks up at his hero the Commander-
in-Chief
Saying, 'Tell me great hero, but please
make it brief
Is there a hole for me to get sick in?'*

*The Commander-in-Chief answers him
while chasing a fly
Saying, 'Death to all those who would
whimper and cry'
And dropping a bar bell he points to the
sky
Saying, 'The sun's not yellow, its
chicken'*

The most important aspect of that is the implication of how the 'Commander's' Hemingwayesque sublimation of emotion is the dominant ethic, and the line,

*'Death to all those who would whimper
and cry'*

recognises - albeit comically - that deep tragic emotions amount to nothing more than a nuisance for many people. Hemingway's values (and those of his followers) are antithetical to Dylan; whereas the latter hopes that the individual may discover himself through emotional openness, someone like Hemingway, who discounts the transcendental in man, can only view new and startling emotional experiences as a threat to that 'self' which he has constructed out of social ritual and convention; this failure to come to terms with experience is well illustrated in *Farewell to Arms* which asserts the primacy of the physical aspects of life.

*The head was mine, and the inside of
the belly. It was very hungry in there. I
could feel it turn over on itself. The head
was mine, but not to use, not to think
with; only to remember and not too
much remember.*

Another consequence of placing one's existential faith in the physical empirical world is that religious or mystical feelings are also incomprehensible and frightening;

*'You understand but you do not love
God'
'No'*

*'You do not love him at all?' he asked
'I am afraid of him in the night some-
times'*

*'You should love him'
'I don't love him much.'*

The kind of surface factualism which those extracts commend is seen by Dylan as detrimental to American Culture; he sees that culture as preferring learning to wisdom, reason to the imagination, philistinism to Art, and emotional fear and sloth to spiritual courage and energy; thus the 'true' self is banished further and the 'wastepaper-basket self' accepted with little dissent because it is either an easier concept to live by, or (for the empiricist) the only one possible. Thus, in 'Please Crawl Out Your Window' the man's 'business-like anger' is a necessary defence; a defusing of any emotion which threatens his existential stability; and similar motifs of emotional repression occur in the songs discussed below.

In 'Gates of Eden' Dylan states these ideas quite explicitly, contrasting the tragic waste of the imaginative faculty with America's prevailing materialism; the image is a particularly democratic one, suggesting the universality of this potential and positively refuting any elitist implications of 'Ballad of A Thin Man', which might have been read as making them/us distinctions (as it was by Jon Landau) and reserving true awareness for a chosen few,

*The kingdoms of Experience
In the precious wind they rot
While paupers change possessions
Each one wishing for what the other has
got.*

The last verse also bears comparison with 'Ballad of a Thin Man'; its pattern is analogous.

*At dawn my lover comes to me
And tells me of her dreams
With no attempt to shovel the glimpse
Into the ditch of what each one means.*

Mr Jones's experiences were also dream-like, they were 'glimpses' of what might have been - for his empirical mind - a higher form of truth: as with this lover though, he made no attempt to come to terms with the 'glimpses' and make of them a complete vision. (The metaphor of 'shovelling' is of course another of those images which assert the labour and concentration needed to discover the truth.)

The overall pattern of this song is analogous to 'Lay Down Your Weary Tune', contrasting in the same way the defective but rehabilitative human state with an ideal but essentially inhuman perfection. As in the latter song this ideal is not something we can attain - 'the gates of eden', as the image suggests, are closed - but something which, in its purity and simplicity, is an exemplar of our flaws (and Dylan's concern here is largely with the societal flaws which aggravate the individual's weakness). The ideal world, as with Nature in 'Lay Down Your Weary Tune' is beyond our kind of consciousness - it just exists;

'No sound ever come from the Gates of Eden'

'And there are no sins inside the Gates of Eden'.

The crucial distinction for man is that he is without this limited unconscious perfection and can improve himself.

The second verse presents a picture of urban life - admittedly an awkward and contrivedly 'poetic' one - whilst the biblical sounding second part expresses the incoherence and superficiality of this apparently solid concrete and metal reality.

*The lamppost stands with folded arms
Its iron claws attached
To curbs 'neath holes where babies wail
Though it shadows metal badge
All and all can only fail
With a crashing but meaningless blow.*

The third verse attacks this Hemingway attitude of stoical thoughtlessness through a military metaphor - the obediently mindless 'savage soldier' with his 'head in sand'. The fourth refers to the modern church and the false religiosity of its followers. Their responses to life's depth and variation is muddled and insincere; they half-accept, half-reject materialism and sensuality.

*With a time-rusted compass blade
Aladdin and his lamp
Sits with Utopian hermit monks
Side saddle on the Golden Calf
And on their promises of paradise
You will not hear a laugh
All except inside the Gates of Eden*

Common to these people and to the typical American - rather unkindly dismissed as 'the grey flannel dwarf' - is

the denial and neglect of the 'kingdoms of experience' in favour of the 'golden calf' of materialism.

Now, a natural corollary of these fears is hostility to the Artistic mind; the Artist is likely to confront Americans with the true depths of their own being and as a result he is dismissed as fanciful or reduced to the position of one of Mr Jones's freaks. As Saul Bellow said,

The writer has sunk, then, from the curer of souls - which was his proper business in the nineteenth century to the level of the etiquette page in the paper, or advice to the lovelorn, something of that nature.

A great many writers have been quite willing to charge themselves with this function, being public figures, role-taking, turning themselves into exhibitionists.

Dylan, of course, in his 1960's position as Media demagogue was made exceptionally aware of the public's desire for sensation rather than contemplation, and behind his refusal to accept their roles lie a number of his familiar themes. Responses like these to the Art-debating clamour of the audience Bellow mentions typify Dylan's rejection of stereotyping, of easy answers, superficiality and role-taking;

Q. *Many people writers, college students, college writers - all felt tremendously affected by your music and what you're saying in the lyrics*

A. Did they?

Q. *Sure. They felt it had a particular*

relevance to their lives... I mean you must be aware of the way that people come on to you.

A. Not entirely. Why don't you explain to me.

Q. *I guess if you reduce it to its simplest terms the expectation of your audience feels that you have the answer.*

A. What answer?

In his art this kind of integrity is transmitted into works like 'The Three Kings' which satirises this demand for the Artist to exhibit himself as a kind of tame psychological weirdo, an entertaining diverting oddity for a thoughtless, pretentious audience:

'Frank... Mr Dylan has come out with a new record...and we understand you're the key'

'That's right'... 'Well then could you please open it up for us?'

'And just how far would you like to go in?'

'Not too far but just far enough so's we can say we've been there'...

'All right' ... he sprung up, ripped off his shirt and began waving it in the air.

A light-bulb fell from one of his pockets and he stamped it out with his foot.

Then he took a deep breath, moaned And punched his fist through the plate glass window.

'Far enough.'

'Yeah, sure Frank.'

'It's Alright Ma' refers to this crisis of imagination and its subsequent neurosis from the viewpoint of the Artist who will not submit.

*And if my thought-dreams could be seen
They'd probably put my head in a guil-
lotine
But its alright, ma, its life, and life only.*

If that seems a little paranoid
'Maggie's Farm' offers the same thought
more humorously,

*Well, I wake in the morning
Fold my hands and pray for rain.
I got a head full of ideas
That are drivin' me insane.
Its a shame the way she makes me scrub
the floor.
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no
more.*

'Outlaw Blues' uses similar wit, comi-
cally expounding the image of the Artist as
an exhibitionist who, if not carefully
watched, might open up his coat and
reveal something shocking.

*Don't ask me nothin' about nothin'
I just might tell you the truth.*

'Tombstone Blues' combines a serious
claim for the power of the Artistic
Imagination (in this case music, with the
aptly ridiculour 'tuba' forming the earth-
bound contrast) with a jibe at those who
seek easy answers. 'Flagpole', here suggests
that the 'dear lady' being addressed is
America.

*Where Ma Raney and Beethoven once
unwrapped their bed roll
Tuba players now rehearse around the
flagpole*

*And the National Bank at a profit sells
road maps for the soul
To the old folks home and the college*

*Now I wish I could write you a melody
so plain
That could hold you dear lady from
going insane
Of your useless and pointless knowledge.*

Contemporary Society, Dylan
suggests, has replaced the Artist with
something much less adequate, indeed
something ridiculous and spirituality
becomes synonymous with money.

Before concluding with 'Desolation
Row' - perhaps the most potent of Dylan's
visions of America's imaginative failures -
there remains his discussion of a related
theme; that of the delusion of innocence
and purity which pervades the American
Mind. Dylan's early 'protest' song 'With
God on Our Side' dealt with this extreme
righteousness - from a political viewpoint
- as a kind of double think,

*Oh my name it is nothin'
My age it means less
The country I come from
Is called the Midwest
I's taught and brought up there
The laws to abide
And that land that I live in
Has God on its side...*

*... And you never ask questions
When God's on your side.*

'I Dreamed I Saw St Augustine' is a more
mature treatment of the American delusion

that they are a people untainted by the evil which initially drove them to their ideal new world. This song is written in the tradition of writers like Hawthorne and Melville (in fact Dylan dedicates it to Melville in concert performances) who constantly questioned American Innocence. The following is almost certainly the kind of experience of that falsity which prompted the song and which underlies 'It's Alright Ma's fear of the American 'Guillotine'.

Dylan was speaking at a dinner held by a leftist group, not long after the murder of John F. Kennedy:

*I'll stand up and be uncompromisable
about it, which I have to be to be honest.
I just got to be, as I got to admit that the
man who show President Kennedy - Lee
Oswald - I don't know exactly what he
thought he was doing, but I got to admit
honestly that I too - I saw some of myself
in him. I don't think it could have gone
that far... I saw things that he felt in me -
not to go that far and shoot...
Some members of the audience began to
boo and hiss, and Dylan went forward:
'You can boo... it's Bill of rights, it's free
speech and... someone broke in and
said his time was up and Dylan later
claimed the chairman began kicking
him under the table.*

This is a perfect illustration of self-delusion and Dylan's comments draw both themes - the delusion of factuality and the pseudo-innocence - together,

*They didn't understand me because
they got mind-blinders on. They*

*couldn't understand that Oswald was
like me, and like you. He was uptight
About the times we're livin' in, about all
the lies they feed ya, about the history
books that tell ya facts not worth a
damn, but never once tell you how
somebody feels. That's what Oswald
was about, that's what I'm about.*

Brave, rather than foolish, Dylan's expression of kinship with Oswald, and as we will see, with the Goths who pillaged Hippolyta and killed Augustine, is an eloquent, if saddening, testament to man's capacity to shatter the finest dreams.

The narrator's horror in this song arises from the realisation of his own blackness, his own potential evil

*I dreamed I saw St Augustine;
Alive with fiery breath
And I dreamed I was amongst the ones
That put him out to death
Oh, I awoke in anger
So alone and terrified
I put my fingers against the glass
And bowed my head and cried.*

Dylan here superimposes on his familiar theme of self-evasion a Hawthornian vision of man's culpability for the world's evil and suggests that attempts at whitewashing and soul only make the sense of evil all the more terrifying when it inevitably, as in the murder of Kennedy or Augustine, breaks through to the conscience.

There are two contemporaneous songs which comment further on America and balance that sense of evil. 'I Pity The Poor

Immigrant', as the title suggests, is addressed to the 'immigrant' American race and it stresses that the evil of the above song is an aberration and that their deluded materialism is neither a normal nor permanent state;

*I pity the poor immigrant
Who tramples through the mud,
Who fills his mouth with laughing
And who builds his town with blood,
Whose visions in the final end
Must shatter like the glass.
I pity the poor immigrant
When his gladness comes to pass*

'Terms of Rage' is a less optimistic companion to this; again the 'I' who is talking seems to represent the original spirit of America (now overthrown). There is a strong sense of 'family' betrayal - the worst kind of infidelity.

*We carried you in our arms
On Independence Day
And now you'd throw us all aside
And put us on our way*

Transcendental values have been lost and a spiritual void now exists,

*Now, I want you to know that while
we watched,
You discover there was no one true.
Most ev'rybody really thought
It was a childish thing to do.*

(Again Dylan uses that infant image.)

In place of religious impulses, we have materialism;

*And now the heart is filled with gold
As if it was a purse*

This parallels the poor immigrant's condition,

*'... who falls in love with wealth itself
And turns his back on me.'*

Dylan is at best ambivalent towards the future of his society and the song with which I will conclude, carefully balances that pessimism with faith in the salvation of the individual.

The unevenness of 'Desolation Row' has already been noted; much of its imagery is gratuitous and some of it exhibits a juvenile sense of paranoia, 'the cyanide hole' and the 'heart-attack machine' constitute such overstatement that their intended sinisterity becomes laughable.

Elsewhere though the images do succeed; the out of place Romeo, the absolutely appropriate Cain and Abel, 'the blind commissioner' and finally Ophelia, secretly flirting with sanity,

*And though her eyes are fixed upon
Noah's great rainbow
She spent her time peeking
Into Desolation Row.*

Perspective, as that suggests, is all important and the recognition of reality is a rare thing here; those who do 'think about' 'Desolation Row' are punished and delusion rules;

*Now at midnight all the agents
And the superhuman crew*

*Come out and round up everyone
That knows more than they do.
'The titanic sails at dawn'*

is of course another reference to the delusions of America's Mr Jones's and in the same verse (which unaccountably put Ezra Pound and Eliot on the doomed ship).

Dylan borrows the false whimsy of Eliot's 'Prufrock' to reinforce this stress on the sane, realistic perspective,

*...Calypso singers laugh at them
And fishermen hold flowers
Between the windows of the sea
Where lovely mermaids flow
And nobody has to think too much
About Desolation Row.*

This penultimate verse is a useful concluding point since its ideal of unself-conscious perfection recalls the song which began this discussion. At this point, however, Dylan's dissatisfaction with that state seems more marked; the instinctiveness of these people is something which does not belong to the world of

'Desolation Row' and their ideal rings just as false as Prufrock's daydream. Man's position then, is that he must comprehend reality as fully as possible; without however, falling into the 'Titanic' - like delusions of empiricism.

Part of this is the acknowledgement of our own disastrous creations, and the final verse defiantly faces American Life; the Artist accepts that he is in part responsible but asserts at the same time that such acceptance may lead the individual to remake and transcend that reality:

*Yes, I received your letter yesterday
(About the time the doorknob broke)
When you asked me how I was doing
Was that some kind of joke?
All these people that you mention
Yes I know them, they're quite lame
I had to re-arrange their faces
And give them all another name
Right now I can't read too good
Don't send me no more letters no
Not unless you mail them
From Desolation Row.*

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They're Planting Stories in the Press: Ripples & Reverberations from a 1991 Bob Dylan 'Interview'

by Scott M. Marshall

In the summertime of 1991, after a mini tour of North America, Bob Dylan took a breather before heading down to South America for more concerts: three in Argentina, one in Uruguay, and five in Brazil.

On August 8, opening night in Buenos Aires, Dylan treated his audience to Curtis Mayfield's gospel song, 'People Get Ready.' If the lyrics of Mayfield's composition represented the cliched 'gospel truth,' then what happened off the stage, days later, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, represented its polar opposite.

'What is truth?' asked Governor Pontius Pilate, many moons ago, before giving the green light to execute a certain thirty-three-year-old Jew who had caused no small stir in the religious community.

Nearly two thousand years later, another Jew - who has made his mark on the world of music - was about to play for an enthusiastic audience. The stakes were not, arguably, as high as they were back in ancient Palestine, but truth, in a way, was on the line. Why? Because certainly some of Bob Dylan's fans, who descended upon the venue at Gigantinho in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in August 1991, had recently read the interview in their local newspaper

...the interview in *Zero Hora* which featured the same man whose music they would soon be enjoying (an interview reportedly conducted some two months earlier, in Budapest, Hungary).

One of those fans happened to be Eduardo Bueno, who soon realized, much to his dismay, that the interview was attributed to him! He had never interviewed Bob Dylan. Bueno duly paid a visit to Jose Jardim (the newspaper's chief editor) and revealed that the interview was, in fact, a fraud. 'I subsequently wrote for *Zero Hora* a review of the wonderful concert Dylan gave in Porto Alegre,' Bueno remarked, 'in which I had the opportunity to tell the readers that the 'Budapest interview' had never taken place.'

But who would concoct such a fraud, and for what reason? And why was Eduardo Bueno put in the mix? The convoluted tale began nineteen months earlier, in 1990, when Dylan was in Brazil for two concerts (São Paulo on January 18, and Rio de Janeiro on January 25). Through the grapevine it was discovered that Bueno was not only a devoted fan of Dylan's music, but was also mingling with the Dylan entourage in Brazil. For these reasons, he was asked to write a first-

person account of the tour. The request was made by Luis Fonseca, a newspaper reporter for *O Estado de São Paulo*. Bueno agreed. Although he shared his stories with Fonseca, Bueno made it clear that he never actually spoke to Dylan, and that 'care should be taken with everything we printed because too much bullshit has already been published about Bob.'

So, after hanging out with some of Dylan's entourage, attending the two gigs, and writing his four-page piece in January 1990, Bueno left Rio de Janeiro and returned to his home in rural, southern Brazil. A few weeks later, when Bueno finally read the published piece (he had to leave before it appeared in print), he was utterly shocked. 'The reporter had rewritten everything, invented several of the stories, printed fake names that I had never heard of, and worst of all,' remembers Bueno, 'had put a lot of words into Dylan's own mouth - and he published it under my name.'

Just as we learned he had to do the following year, in 1991, Bueno made his appointment with an official at a newspaper. 'On February 17 [1990], I flew to São Paulo, made an appointment with *O Estado's* director, Augusto Nunes, told him what happened and said that I'd be forced to sue them if they didn't do something about it,' Bueno explained. 'Consequently, the reporter was fired and the paper printed a half-page apology the following day.'

Bueno thought the nightmare was behind him. It wasn't.

In August 1991, it was déjà vu time -i.e., the Budapest 'interview' that cropped up in *Zero Hora*, the newspaper in Porto Alegre. 'I have my suspects, but I've been unable to

prove anything against anyone,' Bueno said, 'but you know in Brazil, as anywhere else, nobody likes to lose their job.'

Bueno's comments certainly imply that the culprit here was Luis Fonseca, the reporter who he confided in (and was betrayed by) some nineteen months earlier. If so, what a culprit Fonseca has proven to be. He essentially put into motion, via two Brazilian newspapers in two consecutive years, some falsehoods that have yet to dissipate from the dense world of Dylan information.

When a Dylan fanzine based in England (now defunct) reprinted both pieces, including the Budapest 'interview' nearly a year after it was originally published in Porto Alegre, the Pandora's box was officially wide open (which no man has been able to shut). But *The Telegraph* was not some unreliable rag. As most readers of *Judas!* will know, it enjoyed a solid reputation and had been in existence for basically a decade. Its editor, the late John Bauldie, had even recently penned the liner notes to an official Dylan release, *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3* (1991) under the sanction of Jeff Rosen, Dylan's longtime associate.

Although the title of the reprinted interview in *The Telegraph* should have, arguably, raised some eyebrows ('Angels, Vampires, The Bible, Mick Jagger, The New Hat, and the Ill-Fated Gig in Transylvania'), some of its details - first showcased in Brazil - were ably fashioned to feign authenticity. However, the introductory paragraph that preceded the interview did contain some red warning flags:

'Budapest: Wednesday, June 12, 1991. On the terrace of his suite at the Buda Penta

Hotel, overlooking the lovely district of Castelo, the oldest part of the city of Buda, and the River Danube, Bob Dylan spoke to Eduardo Bueno about...well, all sorts of things, really. The interview was printed in the Brazilian magazine, *Caderno 2*, on June 20, 1991, under the title "Bob Dylan Breaks His Five-Year Silence".

Although Bueno has noted how the name of the hotel Dylan stayed in and the name of the stadium he was playing in made it appear 'professionally done,' there are other things in the paragraph that should have alerted a careful reader. The time between the supposed interview and the date of the magazine was only eight days (12 June to 20 June). This seems suspicious since magazines take a while to get to press, not to mention the fact that many magazines have dates on their covers that are dated well beyond the actual publication/release date. Whatever the case, the red warning flag of red warning flags was found in the article's title: 'Bob Dylan Breaks His Five-Year Silence.'

Huh?

Let's see, some quick math brings us to this apparent conclusion: from the summer of 1986 until the summer of 1991, Dylan didn't grant any interviews. Tell that to Sam Shepard who interviewed Dylan for the July 1987 issue of *Esquire*. Tell that to Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times* who interviewed Dylan in Tel Aviv in September 1987; or Kurt Loder of *Rolling Stone* who interviewed the singer the next day, after the Jerusalem gig. Or Edna Gundersen of *USA Today*, who, in July of 1988, interviewed Dylan. Or check with Kathryn Baker, who interviewed Dylan a month later for an article that was syndicated via the Associated Press.

And that's just the beginning of this purported period of media silence: *USA Today* (Edna Gundersen, September 1989), WNEW-FM radio, New York (Dan Meer, September 1989); *Q* magazine (Adrian Deevoy, October 1989); *USA Today* (Edna Gundersen, August and November, 1990); *Guadalajara Colony Reporter* (February 1991); promo interview for *The Bootleg Series* (Elliot Mintz, March 1991); *Spy* (Joe Queenan, March 1991); and *SongTalk* (Paul Zollo, April 1991). That's thirteen interviews...and who knows, there were probably more.

So much for the 'Five-Year-Silence.'

After *The Telegraph* reprinted the 'interview,'¹ the whole wide world of Dylan publishing, it seemed, had inadvertently embraced Budapest as if it were so. Here are just a few examples, and God knows (to quote a song) how many other examples exist from the fruit that burst forth from Budapest.

Christian Williams' 1993 book, with the ironic title, *Bob Dylan In His Own Words*, contained quotes from the Budapest 'interview' on several pages. Williams' publisher, Omnibus Press, was based in London, New York, Paris, and Sydney. The interview that never was...was making the rounds.

As subscribers to *On the Tracks* (the latest U.S. fanzine) received their fourth issue in 1994, one article² included a nice-sized quote in a box on a page, a definite eye-catcher, with quotes from, yes, you guessed it - the Budapest 'interview.'

One would think the indefatigable Clinton Heylin - Dylan chronicler and biographer that he is - would've recognized the bogus interview somewhere along his

journey of research. After all, Heylin was one of the co-founders of *The Telegraph*, the very fanzine that published Eduardo Bueno's retraction not long after the interview appeared (a two-page retraction no less, and over 800 words).³ However, Heylin and Bauldie cut ties around this time period so perhaps Heylin never saw the retraction. Whatever the case, when Heylin updated one of his books in 1996, *Bob Dylan: A Life in Stolen Moments Day by Day: 1941-1995*, there were entries that likely sent Eduardo Bueno fuming through the landscape of Brazil:

January 19, 1990: 'In the evening, after relocating from Sao Paolo to the Rio Palace Hotel in Copacabana, Dylan is interviewed on a somewhat informal basis by Brazilian journalist Eduardo Bueno. Bueno drops a lot of the right names -Matisse, Cezanne, Michelangelo - and one wrong one, [Elvis] Presley, but Dylan has little to say.'

June 12, 1991: 'In the afternoon, Dylan is interviewed on the terrace of his suite at the Buda Penta Hotel by Brazilian journalist Eduardo Bueno. It is a very odd interview, Dylan seemingly tolerating some impertinent lines of questioning about angels, vampires, and Brazil itself.'

Thus, the Budapest 'interview' continued to pick up steam; despite Heylin's warning that 'it is a very odd interview'.

With wide-scale use of the Internet by the mid-1990s, folks were enabled to post (and find) all manner of Dylan minutiae from the world of fanzines, magazines, newspapers, and books. Surely those persnickety quotes from Budapest have lurked in the shadows of cyberspace for some time now.

Heylin further perpetuated the non-interview - inadvertently - in his updated

biography, *Bob Dylan Behind the Shades: Take Two* (Viking, 2000). Published by William Morrow in the U.S. as *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades Revisited* (2001), the biography included a more advanced case of Budapest confusion. Heylin attributed some of the non-existent quotes to Joe Queenan's actual interview with Dylan in 1991 (*Spy* magazine).

Dylan's had a 'God-given destiny,' something he told a journalist in 2001. He hates to keep 'beating people over the head with the Bible' as he said in 1986 to another journalist, but it's the only instrument he knows that 'stays true.'

Truth seems to intrude into every corner of the planet, sometimes welcome, sometimes not, and its counterfeit (for example, the Budapest mess) is also competing for an audience.

Since this article was so heavy on 'truth' and 'facts,' it would be ironic (perhaps fitting) if multiple errors were committed. Feel free to send in those corrections or clarifications to the folks at *Judas!* Here's hoping I didn't commit a whopper of the Budapest variety. In Budapest, Dylan said [well, actually never said] he read the King James version of the Bible.

Incidentally, I think we're getting way too many versions of the Bible thrown at us these days. I said that.

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1. Eduardo Bueno, 'Angels, Vampires, The Bible, Mick Jagger, The New Hat, and the Ill-Fated Gig in Transylvania,' *The Telegraph* #42 (Summer 1992), pp. 40-48.

2. Laurence A. Schlesinger, 'Trouble in Mind: A Rabbinic Perspective on Bob Dylan's "Religious Period",' *On the Tracks* #4 (Fall 1994), p. 44.

3. Eduardo Bueno, 'The Letterbox,' *The Telegraph* #44 (Winter 1992), pp. 44-45.

Postscript: What will follow shortly here is a transcript of the bogus Budapest interview - 'Angels, Vampires, The Bible, Mick Jagger, The New Hat, and the Ill-Fated Gig in Transylvania' by Eduardo Bueno - as reprinted in *The Telegraph* #42 (Summer 1992), pp. 40-48.

What purpose, you may ask, does this serve? Well, maybe Dylan aficionados will be able to better recognize quotes from this bogus interview when they run across them. A game can even be played with it. Whoever perpetrated the fraud (on Eduardo Bueno and numerous Dylan fans for years to come) made it seem genuine in a number of ways, including accurate historical references and the inclusion of some quotes (or paraphrases) taken from authentic Dylan interviews; the technique of the perpetrator parallels the story that says that the devil will insert a bit of truth into each lie to make it more palatable...

Budapest: Wednesday, June 12, 1991. On the terrace of his suite at the Buda Penta Hotel, overlooking the lovely district of Castelo, the oldest part of the city of Buda, and the River Danube, Bob Dylan spoke to Eduardo Bueno about...well, all sorts of things, really. The interview was printed in the Brazilian magazine, *Caderno 2*, on June 20, 1991, under the title 'Bob Dylan Breaks His Five-Year Silence.'

Bueno: When this tour began, back in Italy, everything seemed a bit tense. Yugoslavia, the first Eastern European country you've played in your 30-year career, is also going through pretty tense

times right now. What do you think of what's been happening in Eastern Europe in the last couple of years?

Dylan: You're saying that you thought the tour began in a tense sort of a way?

Bueno: Well, a little bit. Don't you think so?

Dylan: Uhhmm...

Bueno: Well, anyway, what do you think about what's happening in Eastern Europe now that you're here for the first time?

Dylan: I've been here before, in 1978 or '79, on holiday...Do you know anything about the history of Central or Eastern Europe?

Bueno: A little.

Dylan: Well, then you must know that these countries don't have a really solid national unity. More important than that, they don't have an *ethnic* unity. These countries are countries that were created, invented. They're not organic. They were sort of toys on the big nations' tables. So what's happening now is simply a return to the natural order of things.

Bueno: Are you in favor of separatist movements?

Dylan: I'm not really interested in governments or countries. I think that the individual, the man alone, just him, the single being, is what really matters. I'm in favour of the absolute freedom of the individual. I think that politics is the devil's instrument. Politics kills. Politics is dirty. Politics is corrupt. I mean, everybody knows that.

Bueno: The best government is the one which doesn't govern...

Dylan: Yes. Thoreau was always right about that...Is this what you wanted to talk to me about?

Bueno: No, I wanted to talk about angels.

Dylan: Angels?

Bueno: Yes. In an interview you did with Sam Shepard in *Esquire* magazine, he asked you what were your thoughts about angels and you didn't finish giving him an answer because the telephone rang and you went to answer it and when you came back, the subject was changed.

Dylan: Well, the Bible says that angels exist.

Bueno: That's exactly what you said before. But do you believe in angels?

Dylan: Of course. I believe in everything that the Bible says...and according to the Bible, there are five angels for each human being.

Bueno: Do you read the Bible a lot?

Dylan: Yes.

Bueno: All the time?

Dylan: Always.

Bueno: Which are your favourite books in the Bible?

Dylan: Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Bueno: What do you think about the Apocalypse?

Dylan: It will not be by water, but by fire next time. It's what is written.

Bueno: Which edition of the Bible do you read?

Dylan: King James's version.

Bueno: That's not really a Fundamentalist version of the Bible, is it?

Dylan: I've never been Fundamentalist. I've never been Born Again. Those are just labels that people hang on you. They mean just about as much as Folk Singer, Protest Singer, Rock Star. That's to say that they don't mean anything at all.

Bueno: I heard you wanted to go to

Transylvania in Romania, to the area where Bram Stoker was inspired to write *Dracula*.

Dylan: Yes, but the trip was cancelled, or maybe just postponed.

Bueno: It was here in Budapest that Bela Lugosi was born—the greatest movie *Dracula*. Did you know that he died shouting, "I'm immortal! I'm King of the Vampires!"?

Dylan: I think he was *Dracula* incarnate.

Bueno: Do you believe in vampires?

Dylan: Sure. The world is run by vampires. Wherever you go, there are vampires. The music business is controlled basically by vampires.

Bueno: How is your relationship with the music business, with your record company and so on?

Dylan: Well, my business is to write songs, to make records, and to play shows here and there. Basically, that's it. I'm not very interested in what the men who run the record companies, or the producers, or the music publishers, have to say to me. None of them has ever told me anything interesting in the last 25 years. Last year, the vice-president of my record label told me that *Oh Mercy* didn't sell many copies because the record's title didn't mean anything. Well, it meant something to me! After that, somehow I felt all the more determined to make my records the way that I like to make them. But none of my records sell very many copies, do they?

Bueno: What records are you listening to nowadays?

Dylan: Hey, you know, I can't understand why there are so many new records. There are thousands of new records every week, and most of them mean absolutely

nothing. I don't want to sound too conservative, you know what I mean, but there are already enough good old records. Nobody needs new records that don't do anything new.

Bueno: In Brazil, your tour manager told me that you only listened to old things—Bill Monroe, things like that.

Dylan: That's true. That's what I listen to the most: Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, Big Mama Thornton, Jean Ritchie, Blind Willie McTell, rural blues, country blues. But I like rap too. I listen to rap a lot. I hear a bit of dance music sometimes. My sons and daughters like it. One of them's a big Guns N' Roses fan.

Bueno: You know, when you sang 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door' in Ljubljana and Belgrade, I had the feeling that the audiences in the East were much more connected with the spirit of the song than Western audiences, who probably now associate that song with Guns N' Roses.

Dylan: Guns N' Roses are OK. Slash is OK. But there's something about their version of that song that reminds me of the movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. I always wonder who's been transformed into some sort of a clone, and who's stayed true to himself. And I never seem to have an answer.

Bueno: In Portuguese, the title of that movie is *Soul's Vampires*.

Dylan: Great title.

Bueno: On your 50th birthday, an English newspaper, *The Independent*, asked a lot of people what they'd give you as a birthday present. Mick Jagger said, 'After what I saw on the Grammys, a new hat and some good songs'.

Dylan: Well, a new hat I've already got. It's here. It's called a Borsalino. I bought it in Milan, five days ago, for \$75. New songs? Well, I don't think he's ever written a song like 'Masters of War.' But to do my show, I don't need to be moving from here and there. But I love Mick, I always did.

Bueno: Your tour to Brazil was postponed from June to August. Some of the newspapers said you were frightened of the cholera epidemic.

Dylan: Did they say that? Well, I think you know better than me what newspapers are like.

Bueno: What did you think of Brazil?

Dylan: Well, I'd been there before. I don't really want to say too much about it, but...a few sewers wouldn't do the country any harm. That'd help with the cholera too...I think we've already talked more than enough, don't you think so?

Bueno: One last question, then. What are your plans for the future?

Dylan: Oh...I generally don't even know what I'm doing next week. Well, I know now, today. I guess my plans are to go on writing, recording, and performing live. My life's been pretty much like this for as long as I can remember. To tell you the truth, I think that my life is getting better all the time. I think that the older you are, the better you get. So I'm gonna keep on for a long time. If you come see me when I'm 90 years old, you'll find me on a stage some place.

(Original translation by Ricardo Ferrara)

End of the bogus Budapest 'interview' (all approximately 1300 words of it)

Taormina, Italy 28th July 2001
by Duncan Hume



Lies That Truth Is Black And White

by Andrew Muir

Note: this article is based on the transcript of a talk and therefore is both more personal and informal in tone than is usual when dealing with such subjects.

The idea for this article did not start with Dylan alone, instead it was films that raised questions in my mind, and those questions were to do with historical accuracy (or inaccuracies) and whether or not these are important in entertainment or art. The real reason for writing the article is that although the questions kept presenting themselves, I was not sure of the answers. By writing this article, I am trying to find out. I first covered this area at the fourth annual John Green Memorial day when I read out my notes for this article. I would like to thank those present for their feedback on the day and since and hope that they feel - as I do - that they have sharpened it.

My starting point is the film *Braveheart* which - despite having much to recommend it - was spoiled for me by disquieting changes to history. I am referring to such things as the introduction of the 'pregnancy' and other fabrications just for the sake of Hollywood and its low expectations of its audiences!. It is not as if the story were not stirring enough, nor that the film had failed to captivate while sticking close enough to historical fact (there is still a great deal of leeway for 'invention' that cannot be disproved after all). There was no need for the deliberate fabrication in what was supposedly a historical epic.

Mel Gibson directed and starred in *Braveheart* and then went on to make a film called *The Patriot*. I have never watched this late film as, having already been disturbed by how history was falsified in *Braveheart*, I heard that in *The Patriot*, it was distorted again. This 'gut reaction' on my part alerted me to the fact that historical inaccuracies in entertainment *do* bother me at some level. How deeply though, I needed to find out.

Mel Gibson said about the misrepresentation of history in the film, in his charming manner: 'I don't know what the Brits are worried about, it's only a film'. That is the statement that started me thinking and worrying. 'It's only a film', but if it is a film that is staging a historical event or a series of historical events - is it important if you twist history or not?

Naturally, I immediately started thinking about Dylan; but, just before we go on to how the above questions affect his songs, a few more words on films. There are too many examples of my theme even to merely list without ending up with a book length publication. Nonetheless I would like to note, in passing, that this kind of thing goes from wild invention and deliberate distortion to relatively minor lies. The reasons for this range from political propaganda to lazy incompetence and include dubious theories on 'giving the audience what it wants'.

For example, I have not seen the film *Titanic* - it seems I am all but alone in that - and I have not seen it, partly at least, because of something that irritated me about historical inaccuracy. Like most Scots I am very proud of being Scottish, and what annoyed me was that they changed a Scottish hero into a coward. In the film there is a role of a Scottish coward; in real life this person died saving a number of people. In the film, they changed him from a hero to a coward for 'plot reasons', something they would not have done for, let's say, an Irish or Jewish or Black man but because it was a Scotsman they thought they could get away with it. As indeed they could and did. Some of the people behind this gross lie did 'make amends' by travelling to a celebration of the character's real life heroism but how many people who watched the film know that? Very few I would say - perhaps as few as noticed the last line after the 'credits' in the film *Hurricane*.

'Hurricane', the song, will feature later in the main, Dylan-based part of this article but I would like to keep with films,

for the moment. This film, supposedly a dramatisation of the Hurricane Carter story, is one in which historical accuracy undoubtedly does matter because this is a deliberate staging of something that happened to make a specific point.

Or, rather a staging of what the film-makers want you to believe happened; the film is a disturbing mixture of fiction and fact; with far more of the former than you would imagine. Much of it is a tissue of invention and wild supposition; you might well wonder how they can get off with such a thing. Yet one remembers Mel Gibson again and the slippery evasion of: 'it's only a film'. Legal escape is supplied by, in very small writing, an admission at the very end of the film which states:

While this picture is based upon a true story some characters have been composited or invented and a number of scenes invented.

How many people will notice that, I wonder? Certainly none of the reviewers did. The vast majority of viewers accept the story as 'historical re-creation', as the 'truth' - as they are clearly meant to. Yet much of it is not true, and we are not talking minor details here; some of the things that are made up in it are the racist cop who goes through his life chasing Hurricane Carter; the scene where Hurricane Carter first gets into trouble with the authorities shows the young Carter saving a boy from a paedophile attack. Where that comes from I know not, the first record of Carter's trouble with the police is of him mugging a man for \$55 and a wristwatch. There is a connection

between this and the film inasmuch as both involve Carter hitting the man with a bottle. However one is a cowardly attack and the other a heroic defence of another boy. Then there are the episodes that entangle fact with fiction and supposition: the murder event itself and what the eyewitnesses said being a major example; the film portrays of Carter as the happy and successful soldier (despite his record of court martial leading to a discharge as 'unfit for duty'), all of this brings to mind, as much of the film does, the phrase from elsewhere on the same Dylan, album *Desire* 'but the truth was far from that'.

The film appears as though it is presenting a 'true story' of 'what really happened' yet it is not doing that. It is a deliberate re-writing of history for the purposes of 'entertainment'. Now, 'Hurricane' the song by Dylan about Hurricane Carter, is shall we say *inventive* and stretches the truth too much (in ways that the film lamentably built on) and has some (hopefully unintentional) inaccuracies. However, it is nowhere near as guilty of fabrication as the film, and, there may even be - to presage a controversial point dealt with later - an *excuse* for the inaccuracies inasmuch as *if* Hurricane Carter was innocent, the song's attempt to free him is to be lauded; there is no such excuse for the film. Still, we will come back to 'Hurricane', the song, later; it is a most complicated and contentious case and there are other songs to examine before then.

Firstly though, a slight digression to make an important point: When you question the facts behind the songs and films that I do in this article, you find people thinking of yourself as belonging to pro-

racist or pro death penalty camps. I must stress as much as one possibly can on paper that I am not, nor ever will be, in either of those despicable groups. I do, however, worry whether historical accuracies are important or not - no matter who or what the 'truth' is being re-invented for.

Let us to go back to the beginning, Dylan-wise, and trace the story of these kinds of songs from the early days up until 1975's epic 'protest song'. The story, if you will, 'from Emmett Till to Hurricane Carter'.

The reason that I go back to 'The Death of Emmett Till' is that Dylan made a very interesting comment about this song back in 1964. He said then that:

"I used to write songs, like I'd say, "Yeah, what's bad, pick out something bad, like segregation, OK, here we go," and I'd pick one of the thousand million little points I can pick and explode it, some of them which I didn't know about. I wrote a song about Emmett Till, which in all honesty was a bullshit song...I realize now that my reasons and motives behind it were phony. I didn't have to write it."

These statements: 'bullshit song' and 'reasons and motives behind it were phoney' are interesting in the light of what Dylan went on to write later in his life. Given the overall horror of the Emmett Till story and the almost complete accuracy of Dylan's song, it is one of the least 'bullshit' songs he's ever written, speaking strictly in terms of historical accuracy. It is, though, something other than factual accuracy that his 'bullshit' and 'phony'

remarks refer to, it is his motivation in writing it.

As a song, it is just a piece of juvenilia with the occasional flash of something more deft; but 'The Death of Emmett Till' has only got one verse with any historical errors in it at all. And, given the sheer racist brutality of what happened, you can forgive Dylan the inaccuracies. Just for the record, however, they occur in one verse only, in the lines:

*...to stop the United States of yelling for a trial,
Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till
But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful crime.*

The brothers didn't confess and - at the time at least - it was not known that there was anybody on the jury who had helped them². However, given the rest of the gruesome story, it was not really such a terrible liberty to take.

Dylan was later to gently mock himself ('The moral of this story, the moral of this song...') for bluntly pointing out moral messages to his listeners with lines like:

This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man

Yet, even in the preachery 'The Death of Emmett Till', Dylan plays the US card quite cleverly (as he does in the similarly righteous, 'You Bin Hidin' Too Long'). The nation enters the song as an 'easily fooled but definitely on the side of the goodies' character:

And then to stop the United States of yelling for a trial,

The moral itself is that this incident must not be allowed to sink into history because the problem is still prevalent. Eventually, after all the moral high-handedness and pleas for justice and ethical awareness, the young Dylan is not averse to appealing to patriotic feelings. It is an effective ending, pointing out how easy it could be to stop these atrocities while reminding everyone how far America was from being a land of the free or brave:

*This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan.
But if all us folks that thinks alike, if we give all we could give,
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.*

After having dismissed this as a 'bullshit song', Dylan has, unsurprisingly, not played 'The Death of Emmett Till' since around the time he wrote it. He does, however, regularly play 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll', which I think we would all agree is one of Dylan's greatest masterpieces. The development of writing from 'Emmett Till' to, less than two years later, writing 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll', makes Robert Johnson meeting the devil and selling his soul in return for his guitar skills seem a more than plausible story because, whatever happened to Dylan then at whichever crossroads, he went from writing propaganda pieces to masterpieces.

Another excellent thing about 'Hattie Carroll' is that it has brought the best out of Dylan's critics. Christopher Ricks has never been better than when he's writing or talking about 'Hattie Carroll'; and critic after critic have risen to meet the challenge of elucidating the brilliance of the lyrics. It is a quite wonderful song, and I could go on at length the poetry and the genius of it; but that is not what the article is about - it is historical truth I am discussing.

I listened to 'Hattie Carroll' for many years and believed the whole story as sung to be true. Then I saw the newspaper article that Dylan had based the song on and Dylan had clearly believed those 'facts' (there are no quotation marks strong enough to convey the irony of 'facts' as used in Newspaperspeak, Orwellian double speak to the *nth* degree). I think we all know how 'truthful' tabloid papers are, and it crossed my mind that all might not be exactly as I had always thought. However, it never really occurred to me that the Hattie Carroll story was anything intrinsically other than what Dylan sang. Then, Clinton Heylin's *Behind The Shades* drew my attention to the fact that perhaps the story was not all that it had seemed. There is something splendidly Heylinesque, is there not, in the way that Heylin sees Zantzinger [Dylan drops the 't' from the name in the song] as the victim of the story³? This is what Clinton wrote about it:

Dylan's portrait of William Zantzinger in 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll' verges on the libellous, depicting him as a privileged son who killed a black maid by striking her with his cane at a Baltimore 'society gath-

ering,' escaping with a nominal sentence because of his political connections. The reality of the case is that the 24-year-old Zantzinger got drunk at a party and began tapping people with a wooden carnival toy cane. One of the people he tapped was a 51-year-old barmaid with an enlarged heart and severe hypertension. When she questioned his need for another drink, he became verbally abusive. Carroll became very upset and, on returning to the kitchen, complained about Zantzinger to a co-worker. She then collapsed and was taken to hospital where she died the following morning. The extent of Zantzinger's political connections was a grandfather who had served on the State planning commission in the 30s.

Although you need not necessarily end up in total agreement with Heylin's interpretation. You begin to discover a very different event from the one immortalised in the song when you start reading into the official records. Zantzinger is unquestionably an odious person who has committed crimes, racially based at that, since 1964. However, in the case of the tragic death of Hattie Carroll what was debated in the courtroom was not at all what the sensationalist reporting - which Dylan based his song on - depicted as having happened. That reporting gave a wildly inaccurate view of the prosecution case whereas in the above extract, Clinton is, more or less, quoting Zantzinger's defence. Unpalatable though it may be to lovers of the song (it certainly is to this one), the defence case was the one that was mostly proved in court.

As one of the three sitting Judges, D. Kenneth McLaughlin, remarked soon afterwards: 'The press portrayed it as a man beating a woman to death when it was actually a woman suffering a stroke.'

There was even doubt right up until the end of the case over whether or not Zantzinger had struck Hattie with a cane at all. More than one of the *prosecution* witnesses said it had been broken earlier in the evening. The judges finally decided he had 'hit' her with his carnival cane. I put 'hit' in speech marks because this is where things begin to appear wildly different from the newspaper account(s) the song is based on and the story has become to be thought of. The first accounts included the eye-witness testimony from other barmaids who re-affirmed in court that Zantzinger had launched a vicious blow on the right shoulder 'hard enough to stun' Hattie.

However the state doctor (prosecuting) stated on the first day of the trial that there was not a mark left by the 'blow'. The autopsy revealed she had died of a 'huge (brain) haemorrhage'. The doctor went on to say, however, that in his opinion there was a 'definite relationship between the *assault* and the onset of the symptoms'.

By 'assault' Dr. Petty was referring to the whole incident, that is; the insults as well as the 'attack' with the cane. These he said had caused an 'emotional reaction' that 'aggravated the blood pressure' which in turn 'triggered the stroke'.

So the case progressed, with first and second degree murder falling by the wayside and manslaughter being debated.

The 'blow' that 'slew' Hattie Carroll in the song was not what was being debated in court; but whether or not the incident had precipitated the stroke or whether the hypertension and enlarged heart the unfortunate Hattie suffered from would have claimed her life in any event. Doctors -from the defence side- stated that Hattie Carroll could have died at any time and that it could not be claimed that there was a physical connection between any alleged blow and her death; whereas the medical experts on the prosecuting side stated there was a definite, or at least probable, connection no matter whether she could have died at any moment or not.

As Deputy State Attorney Charles E. Moylan very movingly stated: 'If a person commits a wrongful act, he is responsible for all the consequences...even if he shortens her life by as little as 20 minutes (he is responsible for her death).'

So, Zantzinger was found guilty of manslaughter. Judge McLaughlin's summing up detailed the crime with these words:

"...when a person by violent action sets in motion a chain of circumstances against her to die sooner than she otherwise would have died, it would be unreasonable and possibly subversive of justice that criminal responsibility should not attach". The judges concluded that although "emotion itself cannot cause death" it can precipitate it: "the blow struck by the cane was not of such a nature as to cause physical damage to the deceased, but contributed to the death by creating in her a fear and excitement".'

All of this is still far from the tabloid report entitled 'Rich Brute Slays Negro Mother of 10'; detailing the 'brutal beating by a wealthy socialite' who 'rained blows on the back and head of Mrs Carroll'. Yet it is the sensationalist printing of a murderous slaying that has passed into 'history', Dylan read the newspapers and believed them⁵ and he turned their stories into a masterly song that has in turn been re-told in magazine, books and radio shows as though it were the gospel truth. More of all this some other time, however as I am curtailing this investigation here because I have been informed a much more detailed study of the story is already underway and I am sending my research documents towards that; the twists and turns in the real court case of Hattie Carroll are well worthy of an in-depth study.

Once the field has been cleared again I will return to the tale but I would like to leave you with one other, rather strange, observation. This is that Zantzinger does not come across as particularly racist when you have studied the accounts of the night. (Of course he was and is a racist but we mainly know that from things unconnected with the death of Hattie Carroll.)

He did call Hattie Carroll 'a black bitch' so my comment seems initially 'strange'. On the other hand if you were to arrest people for saying such things, many of the football fans in the UK would be in jail to say nothing of some of the players they support⁶ or, indeed, a depressingly large number of people in general.

Not that I am condoning Zantzinger calling her a 'black bitch', of course, but what should be remembered in the sense

of this article, is that the people Zantzinger was most violent to that night were white, not black.

Those we know of include his wife with whom he fought on the dance-floor. Literally so, at that, they struggled on the ground as he beat her head with a shoe. This disturbed neighbouring couples and an altercation ensued between Zantzinger and a Mr. Biggs (it was he who claimed he broke Zantzinger's cane after they fought, a point corroborated by another witness though this was before Zantzinger had encountered Hattie). Zantzinger also attacked the arresting policeman (his wife was by now fighting on his side and bit the cop's leg). In other words, the violent abuse that was going on was multi-racial - not that it excuses anything that Zantzinger did - but it adds another different complexion to the story behind the song. Finally there is the mystery of why William Zantzinger (who seems to have spent much of his life thieving money from people) has often talked about libelling Dylan, but never has.

The major point for this article is this: if something as clear-cut as 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll' starts to have grey areas, you begin to question everything. You start to think that Zantzinger - who in a drunken night upset a maid of fragile health who later died - is not as guilty as the multiple killing ('manslaughter in the highest degree') driver in 'Percy's Song'. In the one case Dylan rages against inefficient sentencing, in the other he pleads heart-breakingly for leniency. In both cases he is so convincing in his deliveries that it took years before I ever thought of the comparison and contrast.⁷

Another one of Dylan's greatest early protest songs (and one that again has been very well written about) is 'Only a Pawn in Their Game'. This song tell the story of how poor white trash are manipulated into working for corrupt politicians by being 'fooled into thinking' that they are better than the blacks and, therefore, should have no complaints over their own miserable lives. It is one of Dylan's most compelling songs from this time because it does not preach as such; instead it opens up for you a whole way in which the world works and evil flourishes. The idea itself is not new, of course, and had been written about extensively in America before Dylan but it had not been put this way in song before.

There are many quotes that show how accurate Dylan's analysis was. Some of these are available from a marvellous website⁸ that picks such instructive examples that I am going to utilize some of their quotations here. These come from Lillian Smith's book, *Killers of Dreams*. She writes from the point of view of the poor white trash that Dylan is singing about in the song:

...but we clung to our belief. Our white skin made us better than all the other people and this belief comforted us for we felt worthless and weak when confronted with authorities who had cheapened nearly everything we held dear except our skin colour. In our land we could still be king.

This is the terrain of Dylan's song. Then, talking about politicians, Ms Smith goes on to write:

... they needed poor whites to be their yes men, moral henchmen quieting the leaders' uneasy conscience. Like David playing on his harp to Saul, the rural whites sang the lies the dominant group wanted to hear.

These are telling insights from somebody who lived it and Dylan's song brilliantly portrays the same thing. His line describing the South politician preaching to the poor white man: 'you've got more than the blacks, don't complain' brings both writer and lyricist come to the same conclusion:

It was only the poor whites who led them to love these lies which they needed sorely to believe were true. To be superior, to be the best people on earth with the best system of making a living because your sallow skin was white made you forget that you were eaten up with malaria and hookworm, made you forget that you lived in a shanty and you ate pot liquor and cornbread.

The song quite brilliantly depicts the same insights as Ms. Smith and I am not here to criticise the song at all as a song or its insights. I am here, though, to point out historical inaccuracies and, would you believe it, this one is also, historically speaking, 'wrong'.

The point of the song is that a mind-manipulated member of poor white trash background shot Medgar Evers in the back, not knowing in any real sense what he was doing or why. (The automotive description in the opening verse is extraordinarily skilful in conveying this.)

This may have seemed the most likely explanation of the killer's motivation for the cowardly murder, but it is not what happened.

What Dylan describes is terrible (and true, no doubt, in a general sense but I am here concerned with the narrower strictures of historical accuracy) but the truth of the killer and his background is even more horrific; less insidious, perhaps, but even more invidious.

The person that shot Medgar Evers was called Byron de la Beckwith, not exactly a poor white trash name, you will have noted. He was once a fertiliser salesman by trade, which is perfectly apt for a man who spent his life spouting bullshit. The point though is that he was not poor; he paid his \$10,000 bail in cash.

He was not stupid either, at least not in the commonly accepted meaning of the word. He ran for Lieutenant Governorship of Mississippi four years after shooting Medgar Evers in the back and got over 34,000 votes. All of which is not to deny his beliefs were idiotic in the extreme as well as being evil to the core.

An out and out racist of the worst possible kind, he was a member of the Ku Klux Klan and the White Knights and what was known as the White Collar Klan (operating under the banner of the innocuously named 'Citizen's Council'), who used business means to oppress the blacks. (He also hated Jews and indeed everyone other than those whom he saw as God's Chosen people - white, right-wing Christians only; and some of them he wasn't too sure about.)

Byron de la Beckwith knew exactly what he was doing. He worked to a polit-

ical agenda. He liaised with other political groups. When he eventually was caught and jailed years later, for another crime, he had a car boot full of dynamite. You get the picture; this was a racist and bigot, a coward, a murderer and a terrorist.

He died 'unrepentant' as his demented followers still like to announce. His prison cell was decorated with Confederate and Lithuanian flags; he campaigned for a white only USA until his untimely (as in far too late) death. A thoroughly evil person was de la Beckwith; but not poor white trash and not, unfortunately, someone unaware of what he was doing and why.

In other words he was not 'only a pawn in their game'. Dylan did actually sing about the exact kind of thing that Byron de la Beckwith was in an unfinished two verse song called 'Talking Devil' in 1963:

*well sometimes you can't see him so
good
when he hides his head 'neath a snow-
white hood
and he rides to kill with his face well hid
and then goes home to his wife and kids,
I wonder if his kids know who he is.*

*Well he wants you to hate and he wants
you to fear,
wants you to fear something that's not
even here.*

*He'll give you his hate, he'll give you his
lies,
he'll give you the weapons to run out
and die
and you give him your soul.*

That was the real person that killed poor Medgar Evers. Unfortunately, though, the likes of Byron de la Beckwith's wife and kids knew precisely what their husbands and fathers were doing; they were brought up to share the same beliefs. His kind still flourish, too. There are, disturbingly, a number of websites and associations in America today who still hail him as a hero and martyr.

The recurring question that has hounded me is: if you write about something that happened historically and you are factually inaccurate, does it weaken the songs or not? Nothing will weaken 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll's' brilliant exploration of injustice and its poetic analysis of the polarising forces in society for me. Still, I wish it was true all the way through. Nothing will change the truth of how poor white trash are manipulated in 'Only a Pawn in Their Game'. It just so happens the one example he has picked is inaccurate. Does it matter? Dylan himself worried about these things.

On his fourth album he repudiated his 'protest phase' in ringing and poetic terms. I was astonished when I first heard 'My Back Pages' as I had just grown to love all these wonderful protest songs and here suddenly was the man who had written and performed them saying that he had been wrong, that this was not what he should be writing and he was not going to sing about these kinds of things anymore.

I thought it was incredibly brave for an artist to have written all these magnificent songs and then to write this beautiful one repudiating them. So, this article would never have been written if Dylan

had left it there; but he did not. Years later a double-sided single with two versions of the one protest song, 'George Jackson' split Dylan fans and critics into two camps. *Rolling Stone* commented at the time that:

'The song immediately divided Dylan speculators into two camps: those who see it as the poet's return to social relevance and those who feel that it's a cheap way for Dylan to get a lot of people off his back.'

Undoubtedly the 'George Jackson' release was a very interesting episode in Dylan's career. Why did he put it out?

Peter Doggett, writing in *Judas!* issue nine, commented:

To my knowledge, Dylan has never commented on George Jackson, or his song, in any interview. Yet there are clues within his lyrics as to the depth of his emotional and political involvement. For example, the opening lines ('*I woke up this mornin'/There were tears in my bed/They killed a man I really loved*') suggest an immediacy of response unlikely in a man who had only discovered how passionately he felt after reading a book. Factually and philosophically, in fact, there was nothing in 'George Jackson' that betrayed any deeper knowledge of his subject's life and beliefs than Dylan could have learned from the six o'clock news. '*They were frightened of his power;*' he said of the prison guards, '*they were scared of his love*'; but love, especially for his captors, was an emotion markedly absent from most pages of *Soledad Brother*.

Michael Gray astutely described the song's most revealing verse:

'Jackson says in one of his letters that, from now on, he's just going to divide people into the innocent and the guilty. As Dylan re-states this, it is Us and Us, not Us and Them:

*Sometimes I think this whole world
Is one big prison yard
Some of us are prisoners
The rest of us are guards.*

This, one might feel, is Dylan's only authentic contribution to the song; also the sentiment most at odds with Jackson's political philosophy.'

George Jackson comes across in the song as one of the most saintly people that Dylan's ever sung about. As is, to digress slightly from my main theme, Joey Gallo as portrayed by Dylan in 'Joey'. That song is a total rewriting of history. I do not actually mind 'Joey', despite the fact that he was a terrible person, far removed from the figure in the song. But then I do not think the song Joey actually pretends to be anything other than a myth and we all know what a myth is, don't we, after watching *Renaldo and Clara*?

'Joey' is a myth making song. It is like singing about Billy the Kid, another psychopathic killer for all we know, or Jesse James and Robin Hood and all such other 'heroes'. Dylan is showing us how we build up these myths round these outlaws. He also uses the song to open the second side of the album, making it connect in the listener's mind (in those far off vinyl days) to the opening song of the first side. Which brings us back to 'Hurricane'

Now, Dylan's 'Hurricane' is nowhere near as bad at distorting the truth as the film but it does have a number of inaccuracies and stretching of the truth. But Dylan, as we know, can be affected by something he reads or somebody he meets. One of the reasons that George Jackson does appear as such a saintly figure, is that Dylan had read *Soledad Brother* and, as anyone who has read the book will tell you, it is remarkably powerful. Obviously, it is from George Jackson's point of view and you've got to take it that this is his story powerful though it is. The same can be said for Hurricane Carter's *The Sixteenth Round* and, to a large degree, that book and his meeting with Hurricane Carter is what Dylan bases his song. Clearly, therefore, you are getting the song from Hurricane Carter's point of view. If Hurricane Carter really was innocent I do not mind if Dylan *did* twist the truth. To get an innocent man out of jail, I think, you could go to almost any length. Though whether Hurricane Carter is innocent or not is something we will probably never know.

He eventually got released on grounds of procedural irregularities (again, nothing like it is in the film and nothing like it comes across in the song); it was eventually accepted that racism was involved in his conviction and therefore he was, quite properly, released.

Indeed, one feels almost guilty of questioning his innocence. As Stephen Scobie remarked in my interview with him for *Judas!* issue nine:

What I do want to say is: whether or not he was guilty, you have to look at the

kind of work that he has done in Canada since his release from prison, the kind of work that he has done on behalf of people wrongly accused of murders in cases that are much, much more clear-cut than his, cases where DNA evidence and things like that have absolutely conclusively proven the innocence of people who have been found guilty of murders. The kind of work that he has done since he got out of prison seems to me entirely admirable, and I find it really suspicious that there's still a strong faction that wants to discredit Carter and discredit the kind of work that he's done, by arguing that he is in fact guilty. I think it tends to come from people who are in favour of the death penalty - and Carter, whatever his guilt or innocence, has emerged in the last ten or fifteen years as one of the most charismatic and articulate proponents of the argument against the death penalty. So I find it very suspicious that there is still such a strong effort to discredit him.

Although in the same interview, he acknowledged that:

I think it's entirely possible that he was guilty; I think it's entirely possible that he was innocent. I tend towards the belief that he was innocent, but certain groups certainly have doubts...

I am not here to argue that one way or the other. I have been reading about it for years and I am no nearer knowing what to believe. Carter has done some wonderful things in recent years and he did some terrible things when he was younger. If you

want to read up on Hurricane Carter, there are many, many websites about the case. Be very careful though, some of these websites say; 'we're not racist' which is a very easy thing to say whether you are or are not. Similarly, others claim that they are not pro-death penalty yet they read very much as though they are.

As for the song itself, I do not want to pull it apart because, as I say, Dylan was convinced that Carter was innocent. As with 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll', his motives in writing the song could not be purer. Dylan was warned off the Hurricane Carter story by people like Kinky Friedman and Joni Mitchell but he was convinced by Carter's version of the events and went ahead with his song. Many people who warned Dylan off getting involved thought they were proven correct when, in 1976, Carter was re-convicted in his second trial, Dylan did not say much at the time, he only had one comment on it that I know of. It is a very interesting comment. He said about the second trial that they 'still knew what buttons to press'.

So, clearly, Dylan was still convinced then that Hurricane Carter was innocent and indeed he made his story a central part of *Renaldo and Clara*. Dylan was clearly convinced and if you are convinced an innocent man's in jail, you would feel justified in 'stretching the truth'.

For the record, though, some of the things that are incorrect in the song that affect historical accuracy quite importantly include: Dylan claims that Carter was 'far away in another part of town' - he was not. He was stopped near the scene of the murder. The song repeatedly states 'one time he could have been the champion of

the world'. Perhaps that once was true but by the time of the murders he was not a contender; which is what is implied. Another liberty taken is the line about the wounded man who:

*...looks up tthrough his one dyin' eye
Says, "Wha'd you bring him in here for?
He ain't the guy!"*

He did not; what he said was: 'I don't know' - but that does not rhyme as well does it? This is not just a flippant point. The noted scholar and Dylan fan, Christopher Ricks once spoke about Tennyson's famous line: 'into the valley of death rode the 600'. Julian Barnes recalls this in *Flaubert's Parrot*.

...concerned 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. 'Into the valley of Death/Rode the six hundred.' Tennyson wrote the poem very quickly, after reading a report in The Times which included the phrase 'someone had blundered'. He also relied on an earlier account which had mentioned '607 sabres'. Subsequently, however, the number of those who took part in what Camille Rousset called ce terrible et sanglant steeplechase was officially corrected to 673. 'Into the valley of Death/Rode the six hundred and seventy-three'? Not quite enough swing to it, somehow. Perhaps it could have been rounded up to seven hundred - still not quite accurate, but at least more accurate? Tennyson considered the matter and decided to leave the poem as he had written it: 'Six is much better than seven hundred (as I think) metri- cally so keep it.'

*Not putting '673' or '700' or 'c.700'
instead of '600' hardly seems to qualify
as a Mistake to me...*

Perhaps not, but it seems hardly fair on the 73 who are not immortalised, whose deaths are ignored.

Dylan also wildly romanticises the character of Carter in 'Hurricane' in the verse about the horses. Hurricane Carter's real connection with horses was punching them unconscious as a way of showing off. Not quite the same connection as in Dylan's song.

It is intriguing that Dylan, who had described 'Emmett Till', as 'bullshit' and 'phoney' should go on to write songs like 'George Jackson' and 'Hurricane Carter'

When Dylan does decide that things are after all 'black and white', he returns to the powerful weapons of earlier writings. 'Hurricane' is a vastly greater lyrical accomplishment than 'The Death of Emmett Till' but a lot of similarities exist. The use of contrast for example, plus outright finger-pointing:

*The trial was a pig-circus, he never had
a chance*

is a line that would be equally at home in either song. As would:

*If you're black you might as well not
show up on the street
'Less you wanna draw the heat.*

You'll be doin' society a favour

And the all-white jury agreed

Although, the 'Hurricane' story is from a different perspective than that of 'The Death of Emmett Till' (black - falsely-guilty as opposed to white-falsely-innocent) the lines:

*Couldn't help but make me feel
ashamed to live in a land
Where justice is a game,*

would suit 'The Death of Emmett Till' whose own:

*And so this trial was a mockery,
but nobody seemed to mind.*

would fit the later song.

To return to my question: does it matter that a film or a book or a song based on a historical incident or series of incidents reflects them accurately or is the 'wider' artistic truth more important or simply the entertainment value? It obviously matters to me or I would not be writing this article, and also to those people who have told me that reflecting on my talk at Northampton has made them uneasy about these songs.

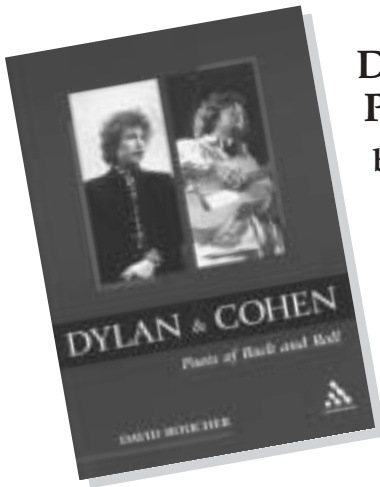
Songs about Robin Hood and Billy the Kid and Jesse James are one thing, long ago as they are; Joey and Byron De La Beckwith though are recent and Zantzing and Carter are still with us. Do the facts matter or are the songs independent of history? Does the distance of time between when we hear the songs and when the incidents took place change your answer? If so how many years does it need to be? Is the time of Robin Hood so long ago that truth is irrelevant to the myth? Probably most people think it is - but what

about Billy The Kid or Billy Zantinger? Is there a difference between forty years ago and one hundred and forty years?

All these questions from me; a strange way to end an article except it is not really finished, I have answered that it does matter to me but it is, I hope, an ongoing debate. One that I want you to continue. Please send your answers to the above questions to the usual address or visit our website at www.judasmagazine.com where you will find this article and a voting poll.

With thanks to Ron Turnbull, Clinton Heylin and Gerry Barrett and the John Green Convention

1. Audiences moulded in their tastes by Hollywood and the media industry themselves
2. Or at least as was provable at the time, not for the first time Dylan's words rang even truer in hindsight than first they were heard
3. Though I take his reference to the odious creature as poor William Zantzing to be a joke on his readership's sensibilities utilising one of the song's main strands of oppositional imagery.
4. Rich beyond Hattie's wildest imaginings though Zanzinger certainly was, "wealthy socialite" is going a bit far. Tobacco farmer he was, not rich enough to get through the winter without a bank loan for ## though
5. It he does to this day, recently having mentioned how anyone would be outraged by a "young man beating up an old woman"
6. Lee Bowyer spat worse verbal abuse to an Asian lady in a MacDonalds not that long ago; though longer ago than when he was involved in the case of the beating up of an Asian man.
7. This point was earlier made by Robert Forryan
8. <http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/onlypawn.html>



DYLAN & COHEN Poets of Rock and Roll

by David Boucher

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A review by Jim Devlin

This is such an easy book to recommend. Did I just say easy? It's not an easy read by any means: the text is dense and the author's authoritative views and opinions, in addition to the mass of historical and contextual details, and the copious footnotes all make for a slow and considered read. But you will be rewarded. Bear in mind though what Stephen Scobie, well-respected author of books on both Cohen and Dylan, said in reply to a question about the distinction between poet and songwriter: *'A poem can survive on its own on the printed page without any accompaniment of music or the author's voice. A song on the other hand is always a little inadequate on the printed page. It needs to have the music and very often it needs to have the author's voice.'* Cohen himself has never claimed the wish to be accepted as a poet [*'it's a crown I've never worn'* he said in 1985], and if Dylan ever has, that means I need to re-read Michael Gray's *Song and Dance Man III*, again, or Christopher Ricks's *Visions of Sin*, to check

just what he might have said. Boucher's basic premise in this book is that both are poets, of rock and roll of course, and sets out to prove his case. He makes a very strong and persuasive case indeed. That they are also songwriters is almost taken for granted without that seeming to be faint praise, with a decent smattering of lyrics [poetry?] from almost a dozen Cohen songs and over 20 Dylan songs throughout the book.

I really enjoyed the introduction: 23 pages, and as good a telescopic intro to either artist's work as you'll find anywhere else. David Boucher namechecks, among others, and there are many others, Homer, Shakespeare, William Blake, the San Francisco Beat poets, Allen Ginsberg of course, the Liverpool poets McGough and Henry, Rimbaud, Pound, Lorca, Jack Kerouac, Dave Van Ronk, Woody Guthrie, Alexander Trocchi, Albert Camus and the Bible without ever causing this reader to be overwhelmed by such a roll-call of writers and authors and artists and singers

and the like who have had some 'influence' on Cohen and Dylan. It made me reflect that I wish I'd read this book before ploughing through *Song and Dance Man III* and *Visions of Sin and Prophet of the Heart* and *Various Positions*. That's not a criticism of these big books, just my way of rationalising my approach to dealing with the sheer volume of material on offer when writing about 'these two iconic writers and performers'.

Not only is this the first book to explore both Cohen and Dylan separately and together, seriously, assiduously, with their respective artistic developments under close examination - a fine reason in itself to go out and buy a copy, it also contains a wealth of material, Dylan-wise, for example, about the John Birch Society, hootenannies, Greenwich Village and Gerdes Folk City whose succinctness serves to frame and contextualise Dylan's work without causing any distraction away from it. And all this within the first couple of chapters. Cohen's life and work are outlined in greater detail in that splendid introduction and there's heaps more in chapter 4, where the author traces a chronology in Montreal and Hydra and New York which is both well-paced and focused on Cohen's literary and musical work since the 50s, thereby providing a cogent and important overview that provides a platform for the deeper analysis packing the middle pages. Check out 'The Politics of Identity and Authenticity' in chapter 5 and learn about the SNCC, CORE, NAACP, SCLC, COFO and IWW; take the phone off the hook and then listen to all the Dylan songs on p. 126; walk

through the front door of the Chelsea Hotel and into the corridors where Brendan Behan, Mark Twain, Dylan Thomas, Virgil Thompson et al. had lived and worked, then realise you've got to read again Boucher's dead-on, almost nonchalant, explanation of the French chanson and chansonnier tradition [p. 137]; by which time I was more than ready for the author's noble attempt, finally, finally, to 'compare the work of Dylan and Cohen as poet-songwriters', which makes up chapter 6. It's all Dylan in chapter 7, by the end of which you'll have Donald White, Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Davey Moore and Hattie Carroll rattling around in your head so that when you hear the songs [especially the 1964 plaintive and gently rolling acoustic version of 'Hattie Carroll' in contrast with the later RTR electric performance mentioned on p.175], the words will sting like fiery darts; all Cohen in chapter 8, and with the phone still off the hook, the time to enjoy 'The Night Comes On' and 'Everybody Knows' and 'Suzanne' of course, and 'Dance Me to the End of Love' will be well spent; you'll also probably read a few more of Cohen's poems than you'd expect. The final chapter, 'The Religious Experience', examines how '*religion has played an important role throughout Dylan's career*' [p.212 ff], and the '*constant pull toward Judaism after passionate flirtations with Christianity that characterises much of Cohen's spiritual quest*' [p.219 ff]

Throughout the book, I had to work hard to link the lyrics and poetry with the music of the songs though, because Boucher pays scant attention to the latter:

the tunes and melodies and intros and accompaniments, Dylan's syncopated vocals and harmonica riffs, the 4-beat rhythms and guitar solos and drum fills etc. are not a feature of this book, which, as a listener to the songs of Cohen and Dylan, you might reasonably expect to find in it. The nearest we get to it is his statement [p.3]: *'lyrics are distinctive in their way, often gaining their particular force in the performance, the combination of intonation and notation, betraying a dependency on the music that is integral to their appeal.'* But because Boucher's angle is so much more on the historical, as evidenced by the first part of his statement of intent on p. 34: *'In this book the dominant political and social culture of the 1960s is predominantly the context against which the songs of Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan are explored'*, there is little room left to discuss 'the songs' as musical structures, and I missed that. I would have welcomed some of Boucher's insights into the passion and pain of these songwriters and their song-writing; I wanted to be reminded of Cohen's slow and meticulous working methods, and needed more about Dylan's musical wizardry in his reworkings of songs in live



performances. I spotted a few errors: Irvine Welsh, surely [p.18, p.262], and Leonard's collaboration with Phil Spector was on *Death of a Ladies' Man*, the album [p.20], not to be, but often is, confused with his book *Death of a Lady's Man*. In 1975, didn't the RTR mostly play shows up and down the eastern coast of the US with a handful of concerts in Quebec, Toronto and Montreal, and not *'across the United States'*? [p.94]. I can't agree with Boucher's sweeping claim that *'Cohen ... was almost comatose in many of his live appearances'* [p.79] Many?! How many?! Which ones? And any notion that 'Chelsea Hotel #2' is about anyone else other than Janis Joplin is erroneous [p.192] This is a well-researched book. I counted up 413 footnotes: that's an average of 46 per chapter. The illustrations are well-chosen and include some real gems like the 'Warning' sticker about Dylan's *Saved* album, and the lovely Marianne filmstrip. A proper bibliography and, dare I say it, a discography, would have been welcome. Incidentally, Stephen Scobie concluded his answer to that poet-or-songwriter question with the words: *'Dylan is a songwriter. Cohen is both.'*

Time Is An Enemy

by Pádraig Hanratty

After the slim pickings of the early 1970s, *Blood On The Tracks* was seen as a dramatic return to form by Dylan, a gripping fusion of autobiographical hurt and creative evasion. Heylin calls the album ‘perhaps the finest collection of love songs of the twentieth century.’¹ For Shelton, it is ‘the spiritual autobiography of a wounded sensibility.’² Williams highlights another of the album’s key themes:

*[The] very essence of timelessness, evocation of the past as a universal, omnipresent now.*³

Many of Dylan’s most famous songs are concerned with time. ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ repeatedly asks: ‘How many times?’ In this song, time seems static, perpetuating all the wrongs of the world. In ‘The Times They Are A-Changin’, time finally starts to budge and people must be willing to move with it:

*You’d better start swimmin’
Or you’ll sink like a stone.*

To be alive is to be able to evolve with time, to be ‘busy being born’. People who isolate themselves from time are ‘busy dying’. The liner notes to *Highway 61 Revisited* contain the following observation:

On the slow train time does not interfere.

For Dylan, there were two types of people:

*It happened maybe that those words [‘The Times They Are A-Changin’] were the only words I could find to separate aliveness from deadness.*⁴

In ‘Like a Rolling Stone’, Miss Lonely is on the slow train. She lives in an isolated world with her chrome horses and diplomats. She doesn’t realise that time is moving on, that everything is not exactly the way that it seems:

You never turned around to see the frowns on the jugglers and the clowns.

Throughout this period, Dylan mocks those who can't tap into the changing times, who, like Mr. Jones, don't know what's happening, where it's at. In 1978, Dylan would be still mocking those people:

*People were still dealing with illusion
and delusion at that time. The times
really change but they don't change.⁵*

In the 1960s, Dylan's youthful impatience seeks constant change, new trips on magic swirling ships. Mindless repetition - 'How many times?' - must be avoided: 'And you're sick of all this repetition.' The greatest horror is to be stuck inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues again. And again.

The motorcycle crash led to a spiritual re-evaluation. Having been dramatically reminded of his mortality, Dylan began to use his songs to explore how precious time is: 'Lost time is not found again.' The songs recorded in the Big Pink basement don't look forward to coming changes; they celebrate a mythical past:

*'Take care of all of your memories,' said
Mick,
'For you cannot relive them.'*

The present becomes a time of relaxed reminiscence, not impatient anticipation. The songs celebrate that which does not change. *The Basement Tapes* and *John Wesley Harding* are full of simple timeless truths. *Nashville Skyline* presents a man who is happy with the way things are: 'Cause tonight I'll be staying here with you.' In *New Morning*, Dylan seems to be

trying to cut himself away from time and all the changes it brings:

*Time passes slowly up here in the
mountains.*

He now is content to merely 'watch the river flow'. Permanence, not change, is what is craved:

May you stay forever young.

Blood On The Tracks shows time wreaking havoc. The times are changing again, but the changes are no longer wanted. In the face of this uncertainty, some songs try to cling to the simple truths:

*Been shooting in the dark too long,
When somethin's not right, it's wrong.*

However, other songs show how time can shatter the most apparently timeless truths:

*What's good is bad, what's bad is good,
You'll find out when you reach the top
You're on the bottom.*

Everything becomes 'a little upside down'. The slow train has moved on and left blood on the tracks. Indeed, even time itself is torn apart on this album. Events are not presented in chronological order. Each song tells its story through a series of random memories and musings. Scenes from the past mingle with the present and future as memory and anticipation coexist almost simultaneously, like they did when Dylan found himself stuck inside of Mobile:

*Now people just get uglier
And I have no sense of time.*

The songs explore some timeless zone as the narrators live an almost static existence, constantly replaying the past. Each narrator broods on his own situation, turning it into a fable in an attempt to extract some universal lesson from the wreckage. In 2001, Dylan said:

I mean, you're talking to a person that feels like he's walking around in the ruins of Pompeii all the time. It's always been that way, for one reason or another.⁶

Time is further deconstructed through the use of fictional masks. Dylan uses the songs to explore real emotions related to recent episodes in his life. However, each song is a fiction, with Dylan's past and the narrators' fictional past melting into each other. Characters merge and split into different personas, with 'I' becoming 'he', and 'you' becoming 'she'. Masks collapse as the frowns of the jugglers and clowns are once again revealed: 'I couldn't believe after all these years you didn't know me any better than that.'

What had seemed like domestic bliss at the time is now portrayed as an illusion, a pantomime. This was something he even hinted at in his earlier songs:

*I'm crestfallen.
The world of illusion is at my door.*

In 1980, Dylan said of his songs:

If I was searching, it was just to... get down to the root reality of the way things really are, to pull the mask off.⁷

In the songs, Dylan hides behind many fictional masks. This is something he has often done:

*The man in me might hide sometimes
To keep from being seen.
But that's just because he doesn't
Want to turn into some machine.*

The breakdown of identity in this album would be further explored in *Renaldo And Clara*. When promoting that movie, Dylan offered the following opaque observation on the notion of self:

It's about the naked alienation of the inner self against the outer self-alienation taken to the extreme.⁸

Before writing these songs, Dylan had taken painting lessons with Norman Raeben. This led Dylan to explore a new style of songwriting:

He put my mind and my hand and my eye together in a way that allowed me to do consciously what I unconsciously felt. And I didn't know how to pull it off. I wasn't sure it could be done in songs because I'd never written a song like that. But when I started doing it, the first album I made was Blood On The Tracks. Everyone agrees that that was pretty different, and what was different about it is that there's a code in the lyrics and there's no sense of time.

There's no respect for it: you've got yesterday, today and tomorrow all in the same room, and there's very little that you can't imagine not happening.⁹

For Dylan, this is the primary function of songs:

Well, songs are just thoughts. For the moment they stop time. Songs are supposed to be heroic enough to give the illusion of stopping time. With just that thought.¹⁰

Once time has been captured in a song, past experiences never die:

A songwriter tries to grasp a certain moment, write it down, sing it for that moment, and then keep that experience within himself, so he can be able to sing the song years later.¹¹

The first timeless fable we're presented with is "Tangled Up in Blue". Like all songs on the album, it explores the dynamics of a love relationship. However, it is not some chronological soap opera; instead, we get a series of random memories and musings: lovers eloping; lovers breaking up; working in the Great North Woods; chance meetings in a topless place; memories of Montague Street; keeping on keeping on after the bottom fell out. Because the linear sequence has been tangled up, it's difficult to grasp the full picture:

I was trying to be somebody in the present time while conjuring up a lot of past images. I was trying to do it in a

conscious way. I used to be able to do it in an unconscious way, but I wasn't into it that way anymore. I wanted to defy time, so that the story took place in the present and past at the same time. When you look at a painting, you can see any part of it or see all of it together.¹²

The song opens with the narrator lying in bed, but immediately becomes reminiscence. The woman he once knew may now be a different person:

*Wond'rin' if she'd changed at all,
If her hair was still red.*

The sudden passing of time is alluded to, with the lovers 'splitting up on a dark sad night'. When times change, people react differently: the woman freezes up; something inside the man dies; the narrator becomes withdrawn. When the bottom falls out, identities begin to blur: 'Don't I know your name?' People's masks disintegrate:

*All the people we used to know,
They're an illusion to me now.*

The narrator is now haunted by the past. Indeed, in the past, he was also haunted by an earlier past:

*But all the while I was alone,
The past was close behind.*

The past is a vault of painful experiences and mentally reliving them also causes pain. However, the narrator still wants to return to that past:

*So now I'm goin' back again,
I got to get to her somehow.*

The past the narrator wants to return to is some ideal past. The real past has been tangled up in guilt, doubt, and regret. Hindsight shows that all secure feelings of permanence and certainty were nothing more than illusions.

In 'Simple Twist of Fate', the song's very title is a testament of time's unpredictability. On one level, the song, originally called 'Fourth Street Affair',¹³ finds Dylan musing about Suze Rotollo, his girlfriend in the early 1960s. However, it soon develops into a more creative exploration. The first three verses of the song recall a chance encounter in a park, where the narrator is fooled into thinking that this is the start of a profound relationship. In verse four, the carpet is suddenly moving under him:

*He woke up, the room was bare,
He didn't see her anywhere.*

The ticking of the clocks reminds him that time has moved on without him: 'I was born too late.' He must now play by time's rules:

*Hunts her down by the waterfront
docks where the sailors all come in.
Maybe she'll pick him out again, how
long must he wait?
Once more for a simple twist of fate.*

The song shows how transient all relationships ultimately are. Time tears apart those whom it throws together. The man and woman are merely pawns at the

mercy of greater forces: 'Blame it on a simple twist of fate.'

'If You See Her, Say Hello' could be seen as a sort of sequel to 'Simple Twist of Fate'. In this song, the narrator is still hunting for his woman: 'She might be in Tangier.' However, the relationship lost in this song is more profound than the one in 'Simple Twist of Fate'. They were lovers in this song and had a violent 'falling out'.

The song obviously echoes 'Girl from the North County'. In that song, it was the man who had moved on and wanted to be remembered to one who 'once was a true love of mine'. This time, it's the woman who moves on. She looked forward to a promising future, while the narrator desperately tried to cling to the past:

*Though the bitter taste still lingers on
From the night I tried to make her stay.*

The narrator is left alone, wallowing in memories of those who have moved on. These memories are fleeting, but vivid, reminding the narrator how transient the good times can be:

*Sundown, yellow moon,
I replay the past.
I know every scene by heart,
They all went by so fast.*

Indeed, the memories are so vivid that they can seem real, as the past seems to become part of the present:

*She still lives inside of me,
We've never been apart.*

In his youthful days, the narrator would have welcomed change. However, change is now painful: '*It pierced me to the heart*'. To heal his wounds, he tries to keep moving, knowing that he'll never escape the past:

*And I hear her name here and there
As I go from town to town.*

He recognises that his failure to accept that times have changed is a weakness:

*And I've never gotten used to it,
I've just learned to turn it off.
Either I'm too sensitive
Or else I'm gettin' soft.*

For the woman, it is time to change, to embrace the possibilities of the future; she will be moving forward, not 'passing back this way'. Things are now moving more quickly for her, something the narrator recognises:

*Tell her she can look me up
If she's got the time.*

The narrator tries to step outside the changes and just watch the river flow. However, this stasis is no longer relaxing because it means he just wallows in painful memories. He no longer celebrates the fact that time passes slowly:

*Say for me that I'm all right
Though things get kind of slow.*

After the swift changes, there is too much time to study the wreckage. A

similar idea would crop up years later in 'Standing In The Doorway':

*Yesterday, everything was going too fast.
Today, it's moving too slow.*

In some songs, the narrator lives in different time frames simultaneously. 'You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go' is sung in the present, but it looks back to past pleasure and anticipates future pain. The song is a stream of consciousness: the narrator sees 'flowers on the hillside bloomin' crazy' while remembering when life had 'never been so easy or so slow' and anticipates when 'you're gonna make me lonesome when you go'.

This song is about Ellen Bernstein,¹⁴ Dylan's then girlfriend. She has noted how the chaos in Dylan's life at that time spurred him to such creative heights:

*I think that he's always in some
measure of pain, being that creative.
That kind of artistic genius goes hand-
in-hand with demons.¹⁵*

In the past, time was a 'blue river running slow and lazy', time passing slowly up there in the mountains. The narrator believed that time could not interfere with his happiness:

*I could stay with you forever
And never realise the time.*

Although the narrator can see the pain that's coming, he can't prevent it. He sees his future suffering as part of a historical

cycle, the inevitable destruction wrought by time:

*Situations have ended sad,
Relationships have all been bad,
Mine've been like Verlaine's and
Rimbaud.*

As the future becomes more certain, the past begins to lose some of its gloss and become riddled with doubt: 'Can't remember what I was thinking of.' Past contentment is now seen as illusory. Of course, the past will become part of the future for the narrator: 'I'll see you in the clouds above.' She'll continue to live inside of him.

The changes will be violent, hitting the narrator 'from below'. However, they'll be followed by a chance for the narrator to re-examine the past, to deconstruct all the illusions:

*You're gonna make me wonder what
I'm doin',
Stayin' far behind without you.
Yer gonna make me wonder what I'm
sayin'.
Yer gonna make me give myself a good
talkin' to.*

The reason why changes seem so sudden in these songs is because the narrator is often blind to the subtle changes a lover goes through over time. When the revelation finally comes, as in 'You're a Big Girl Now', it's a painful shock:

*Our conversation was short and sweet,
It nearly swept me off-a my feet.*

When faced with how much things have really changed, the narrator initially refuses to face facts:

*A change in the weather is known to be
extreme,
But what's the sense of changing horses
in midstream?*

This offers a sharp contrast to the narrator in 'Just Like a Woman':

*I just can't fit.
Yes, I believe it's time for us to quit.
When we meet again,
Introduced as friends,
Please don't let on that you knew me
when
I was hungry and it was your world.*

Now, the narrator is not so eager to cast aside the past:

*Time is a jet plane, it moves too fast.
Oh, but what a shame, if all we've
shared can't last.*

In these songs, the characters are often reluctant to admit they've reached the end of the journey:

*She turned around to look at me
As I was walkin' away.
I heard her say over my shoulder
'We'll meet again some day
On the avenue.'*

A few years later, Dylan is more realistic about the chances of these happy reunions:

*It'd be great to cross paths
In a day and a half.
Look at each other and laugh.
But I don't think it's liable to happen.*

There are other echoes to 'Just Like a Woman' in 'You're a Big Girl Now'. In the *Blonde On Blonde* song, the narrator has to 'stand inside the rain'. In the *Blood On The Tracks* song, the narrator is 'back in the rain', no longer sheltered from the storm.

He finally swears that he can change, but it's too late. The present is only understood when the past is examined in retrospect. The changes are only seen as inevitable in hindsight. In the past, he blinded himself to the changes that were happening around him. In his desperation to perpetuate his happy state, he'd forgotten the old advice to Ramona:

*Everything passes, everything changes,
Just do what you think you should do.*

He now has learnt the lesson and must pay the price. He must relive the pain again and again, like a corkscrew to the heart.

However, sudden changes don't always lead to acceptance of guilt. They can also inspire venomous anger. In 'Ballad in Plain D', Dylan's anger at love's changes led to a painfully autobiographical song. This time, in 'Idiot Wind', he hides behind the persona of a man who may have shot Gray and took his wife to Italy:

*I thought I might have gone a little bit
too far with 'Idiot Wind'. I might have
changed some of it. I didn't really think
I was giving away too much; I thought*

*that it seemed so personal that people
would think it was about so-and-so
who was close to me... But I'm not
going to make an album and lean on a
marriage relationship. There's no way I
would do that, anymore than I would
write an album about some lawyer's
battles that I had.¹⁶*

However, as the furious catharsis unfolds, the mask breaks down and the song becomes more direct:

*Even you, yesterday,
You had to ask me where it was at.*

The problem is that it was the narrator who did not know where it was at. He needed a fortune teller to tell him what he should have known: 'Beware of lightning that might strike.'

In many Dylan songs, wind is a symbol of change, a purging agent that sweeps away the pretence of the past. All answers to the problems of the present are blowing in the winds of change. In 'All Along the Watchtower', some people are ready for the apocalyptic wind, as the princes keep the view. The thief knows that the wind is going to blow away falsehood and deceit, all the jokes that people play, and reveal the truth:

*But you and I, we've been through that,
And this is not our fate.
So let us not talk falsely now,
The hour is getting late.*

The idiot wind is also a symbol of change. However, this is no benign purification, but

reckless destruction. Unlike the other songs, this song takes place within the storm, rather than in the calm, empty aftermath. We get current confusion, rather than future understanding:

Well, it's bloodletting, it's what heals all disease. Neither aggression nor anger interests me. Violence only does on an interpretative level, only when it's a product of reason. People are attracted to blood. I'm personally not consumed by the desire to drink the blood. But bloodletting is meaningful in that it can cure disease.¹⁷

The contentment of previous times is torn asunder and becomes a rapidly fading memory:

I haven't known peace and quiet for so long I can't remember what it's like.

In time, he'll be able to engage in wistful reminiscences. For now, he can only look back in anger and look vengefully into the future:

*One day, you'll be in the ditch,
Flies buzzin' around your eyes,
Blood on your saddle.*

As illusions crumble, anger leads to self-loathing: 'We are idiots, babe.' The pantomime is over and people no longer know how to act. True faces are revealed as masks are cast aside. Once upon a time, Dylan gleefully tore away the masks that people hid behind:

*You've got a lot of nerve
To say you are my friend.
When I was down
You just stood there grinning.*

The tearing off of masks now leads to angry bewilderment:

*I can't remember your face anymore
Your mouth has changed, your eyes
don't look into mine.*

Actually, the narrators sometimes see themselves as being somehow different from the other characters because, unlike the other characters, they don't change. They retain their identity. This is hinted at in 'Idiot Wind' and also in 'Buckets of Rain':

*I seen pretty people disappear like
smoke.
Friends will arrive, friends will disappear.
If you want me, honey baby,
I'll be here.*

Soon after the album was released, Dylan would see that such changes are a natural and essential part of life:

*A person's body chemistry changes
every seven years. No one on Earth is
the same now as he was seven years ago,
or will be seven years from today. It
doesn't take a whole lot of brains to
know that if you don't grow, you die.
You have to burst out; you have to find
the sunlight.¹⁸*

In a later song, Dylan would see the advantage of these changes:

*You don't have to be afraid of looking
into my face.*

*We've done nothing to each other time
will not erase.*

Back in the idiot wind, the narrator realises that the previous calm was the lull before the storms of change, what Dylan once called the 'stillness in the wind/ Before the hurricane begins'. Time will ultimately destroy everything that it has built:

*It was gravity which pulled us down,
And destiny which broke us apart.*

It is not enough to simply blame destiny for all the problems, but, for the narrator, that will do for now. The song is a catharsis, a primal howl releasing all the pent-up fury. Life is seen as being idiotic - 'everything's a little upside down' - and these events are merely symptoms of that idiocy. Spurious blame gives a momentary sense of resolution:

Now I'm finally free.

However, the narrator knows that any sense of freedom will be fleeting:

*I followed you beneath the stars
hounded by your memory
And all your ragin' glory.*

'Shelter from the Storm' provides an antidote to the poison of 'Idiot Wind', just as on earlier albums 'Girl from the North Country' provided an antidote to 'Don't Think Twice, It's All Right', and 'I Don't Believe You' reversed the sentiments of 'It Ain't Me, Babe'.

At a concert in Paris in July, 1978, Dylan introduced this song as '*l'histoire de ma vie*', the story of his life. The story is told, as usual, through a series of vivid memories, as brief images from the past mingle with scenes and thoughts from the present. The narrator is aware of the random, unpredictable nature of time, so he presents his story in a random, unpredictable form; the verses could be sung in practically any order.

The song looks back to a time before the idiot wind, when the relationship was in its infancy. How distant that 'long-forgotten morn' seems now. Their meeting has taken on an almost mythic status. Similar to 'Like a Rolling Stone', the song opens like a fairy tale:

'Twas in another lifetime.

This time, the narrator is able to acknowledge that his lover saved him from the chaos, the 'storm', of his earlier days:

*I came in from the wilderness,
a creature void of form.
'Come in,' she said, 'I'll give you
shelter from the storm.'*

Years later, Dylan would still be acutely aware of how dangerous his lifestyle was in the 1960s:

I couldn't go on doing what I had been. I was pretty wound up before that accident happened. It set me down so I could see things in better perspective. I wasn't seeing anything in any kind of perspective. I probably would have died if I had kept on going the way I had been.¹⁹

The woman's love was a haven of tranquility in a world populated by 'steel-eyed death' and 'the one-eyed undertaker' (both stern images of time's destruction); it was a 'place where it's always safe and warm'.

The song echoes some of Dylan's 'domestic songs':

*If not for you
My sky would fall,
Rain would gather too.
Without your love I'd be nowhere at all,
I'd be lost if not for you.*

His lover protected him from the storm outside, sheltered him from the chaos of his earlier life. Indeed, her arrival marked a breaking away from the earlier life:

*Everything up to that point had been
left unresolved.*

This is not a memory to be dismissed in the fury of the moment, an experience denounced as worthless. The narrator can see what has been lost. The sky has fallen and rain has gathered, leaving the narrator desperately trying to reclaim the past:

*If I could only turn back the clock to
when God and her were born.*

He knows his mistakes and would try to rectify them, if only he could relive the past:

*And if I pass this way again, you can
rest assured
I'll always do my best for her, on that I
give my word.*

However, he cannot relive the past and must now accept his own failure to keep track of the changing times:

*Now there's a wall between us, some-
thin' there's been lost
I took too much for granted, got my
signals crossed.*

Dylan would later realise that reliving the past requires more powers than he's capable of mustering:

*I wish I was a magician.
I would wave a wand
And tie back the bond
That we've both gone beyond.*

Like Miss Lonely, he never turned around to see the frowns. The one-eyed undertaker blows his horn, warning how futile it is to hope for permanence in a world of transience. Everything passes away and only time lasts forever:

*But nothing really matters much, it's
doom alone that counts.*

In *Blood On The Tracks*, figures of time and death often merge. The presence of death, the one-eyed undertaker, reminds us of our mortality, of how fleeting our time really is. A fundamental change in life is often seen as the death of an era ('and something inside of him died'). One of the discarded songs on the album was called 'Belltower Blues',²⁰ presumably an early version of 'Call Letter Blues'. Dylan would return to the image of the bells of mortality over the years, most recently in 'Moonlight':

*For whom does the bell toll for, love?
It tolls for you and me.*

The omnipresence of death has been a recurring theme with Dylan from his earliest days:

*Don'cha know, everybody dies. It doesn't matter how important you think you are. Look at Shakespeare, Napoleon, Edgar Allan Poe, for that matter. They are all dead, right?*²¹

In *Dont Look Back*, Dylan was quite eloquent on the subject:

*I'm saying that you're going to die, and you're gonna go off the earth, you're gonna be dead. Man, it could be, you know, twenty years, it could be tomorrow; any time. So am I ... All right: now you do your job in the face of that and how seriously you take yourself, you decide for yourself.*²²

'Buckets of Rain' includes a whimsical way to deal with this:

*Life is sad,
Life is a bust.
All ya can do is do what you must.*

Sometimes, Dylan's thoughts on the subject were a bit weirder:

*Did you ever clip your toenails, cut your hair? Then you experience death.*²³

In 2001, his world view was as light-hearted as ever:

*Obviously everything must finish. That which ties everything together and which makes everyone equal is our mortality. Everything must come to an end.*²⁴

In *Masked And Anonymous*, Jack Fate offers a concise analysis of the relationship between time and death:

*All of us in some way are trying to kill time. When it's all said and done, time ends up killing us.*²⁵

In a world where time kills everything, memories become more precious, as the narrator of 'Up to Me' realises:

*Death kept followin', trackin' us down,
at least I heard your bluebird sing.*

You have to cling on to any precious memories, because 'time is an enemy'. The relentless march of time is alluded to again and again in the album through images of wind, rain, and hail. Shelton notes how Dylan 'uses natural elements to describe his tempest-tossed mood'.²⁶

In 'Up to Me', the narrator believes that the only response is to try to keep up with the march:

*One of us has got to hit the road,
I guess it must be up to me.*

He can try to follow his lover's trail, but the Union Central has already started pulling out. He now sees that things have changed, something he wasn't always prepared to do:

*I'd just about convinced myself that
nothin' had changed that much.*

Life changes suddenly and unpredictably. All you can do is play your cards, never knowing what your next hand will be. Many people bluff: they hide their insecurities behind icy masks of confidence. But the bluff can't be played forever:

*So go on, boys, play your hands,
life is a pantomime.*

Eventually, the clowns start frowning and the joker cries out: "There must be some way out of here!" The great emperor today becomes 'Napoleon in rags' tomorrow.

Blood On The Tracks contains its own pantomime about the nature of time, 'Lily, Rosemary, and the Jack of Hearts'. Whereas the other songs are like paintings, this song is like a movie, an art form Dylan is very familiar with:

*A movie is something that gives the
illusion of stopping time. You go some-
place and you sit there for a while.
You're looking at something. You're
trapped. It's all happening in your
brain and it seems like nothing else is
going on in the world. Time has
stopped. The world could be coming to
an end outside, but for you time has
stopped.²⁷*

The song is another meditation on the nature of time and love. Any love that ever existed between Jim and Rosemary has been replaced by pretence, a public pantomime with 'every hair in place'.

However, trouble lurks in the shadows:

*But just beyond the door, he felt jeal-
ousy and fear.*

In the course of the song, the masks and dresses will be torn off; the festival is over and people will reveal their true character. There is no need to hide any more because the curfew has been lifted. Something in the air awakens everyone's repressed fears:

*Anyone with any sense had already left
town.*

The Jack of Hearts is the catalyst, the one who reminds people of all those feelings they had hidden beneath the grease-paint: 'I know I've seen that face before.'

Gambling motifs abound: the gambling wheel has been shut down, but the women play five-card stud by the stair. People continue to bluff, trying to ignore their nagging insecurities:

*'"There's something funny going on,"
he said, "I can just feel it in the air."'*

Backstage in everyone's minds, once-forgotten memories are stirring: Lily remembers her 'strange affairs with men in every walk of life'; Big Jim is thinking about his time down in Mexico; Rosemary is looking back on all the 'bad things' that she has done. Time blurs as memories mingle with anticipation:

*She was gazin' to the future, riding on
the Jack of Hearts.*

The pretence continues: false eyelashes flutter; a brand new coat of paint is applied; a leading actor hurries by. However, as the night proceeds, the masks begin to disintegrate. Lily throws off her dress and takes the dye out of her hair. Rosemary sees her true self reflected in the knife. When the lights dim, all the false scenery vanishes and Jim must face his enemy, time:

*But then the crowd began to stamp
their feet and the house lights did dim,
And in the darkness of the room there
was only Jim and him.*

The scenery blurs into confusion. Rosemary and the hanging judge get drunk. No one seems to know what time the show will begin. When it finally starts, everyone is caught off guard:

*No one knew the circumstance but they
say that it happened pretty quick.*

The narrative, like time, marches relentlessly on: someone tries to shoot the Jack of Hearts (literally trying to kill time), but the revolver clicks; someone stabs Big Jim; Rosemary is on the gallows. The confusion of the night before cuts to the harsh clarity of the morning after: the hanging judge is now sober.

The cabaret is over; the bank safe has been cleaned out. Those who remain survey the wreckage, putting up 'Closed for repair' signs. Like the narrators in the other songs, Lily is left behind, alone, haunted by random memories:

*She was thinkin' 'bout her father, who
she very rarely saw,
Thinkin' 'bout Rosemary and thinkin'
about the law.
But most of all she was thinkin' 'bout
the Jack of Hearts.*

There is a profoundly different sense of time on this album than on previous ones. Since *John Wesley Harding*, Dylan's albums had had, by and large, a relaxed feel to them, a sense that time was standing still, or at most flowing 'slow and lazy'. *Blood On The Tracks* tries to face head-on the fact that time 'moves too fast', that everything is transient and unpredictable. In the 1980s, Dylan would continue to feel left behind by time:

*The thing I really notice now is time.
Things used to go a lot slower. These
days now go by so very fast.²⁸*

Narrator after narrator is left reeling as the slow train of time suddenly becomes a jet plane. Time leaves them all behind:

*I would have followed you in the door
but I didn't have a ticket stub.*

On *Blonde On Blonde*, Dylan sang:

*Then time will tell just who has fell
And who's been left behind.*

Being left behind, each narrator looks back on the past with hindsight eyes. They realised that they had allowed themselves to be lulled into a false sense of security, that what seemed permanent was just a

mask, an illusion. Everyone was just hiding their fear of life's fundamental transience. In 'Abandoned Love', Dylan would sing:

*Everybody's wearing a disguise
To hide what they've got left behind
their eyes.*

In 'Up to Me', a song that was significantly left off the album, Dylan throws off the disguise:

*And if we never meet again, baby,
remember me,
How my lone guitar played sweet for
you that old-time melody.
And the harmonica around my neck, I
blew it for you, free,
No one else could play that tune,
You knew it was up to me.*

Dylan too must have looked back on those long-gone days when a thin, ghost-like figure stumbled alone on to the stage with his guitar and harmonica, confidently announcing that the answer was just blowin' in the wind, that the ship was coming in, that the times were a-changin'. He could tap into the rapid beat of time, predict its changes. To some, he almost seemed like a prophet, gifted to ring in the changes that only he was aware of: 'No one else could play that tune.' And, of course, that persona was just another disguise:

*I didn't create Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan
has always been here ... always was.
When I was a child there was Bob
Dylan. And before I was born, there was
Bob Dylan.²⁹*

On the 1960s' albums, Dylan often looked forward to the future. On this album, he looks to the past, the lost time that can't be found again. By 1976, Dylan would already be changing his message:

*The past doesn't exist. For me, there's
the next song, the next poem, the next
performance.³⁰*

In 2003, Dylan argued that his songs try to tap into the present, not the past:

*I'm always trying to stay right square in
the moment, I don't want to get
nostalgic or narcissistic as a writer or a
person. I think successful people don't
dwell on the past. I think only losers do.³¹*

The album is a lament to times past, a meditation on the woman who went away from his window and lived at her own chosen speed. He finds himself bewildered as masks fall away all around him. This same stupefied confusion and despair permeated the otherwise playful 'I Don't Believe You':

*I can't understand,
She let go of my hand
An' left me here facing the wall.
I'd sure like t' know
Why she did go,
But I can't get close t' her at all.*

On *Blood On The Tracks*, Dylan is once again aware of the rapid currents of time. 'Call Letter Blues', another outtake song, contains the following lines:

*Well, I walked all night long
Listenin' to them church bells tone.*

However, the more he listens to time, the harder it becomes to understand. In 'Meet Me in the Morning', he finds himself lost in a timeless zone:

*They say the darkest hour is right before
the dawn.
But you wouldn't know it by me
Every day's been darkness since you
been gone.*

In this darkness, time disintegrates. Events are not presented in chronological order; they become a random series of memories and musings. Past, present, and future intermingle as time becomes tangled up. A fictional past is peppered with the real emotions hidden beneath the mask.

Certain themes recur in Dylan's songs over the years: love; identity; freedom; justice; God; authority; apocalypse; and blondes. The theme of time was there on his very first album and has been a continuous thread ever since. Soon after *Blood On The Tracks*, Dylan offered a surreal rewriting of his most famous anthem about time:

*Eden is burning, either brace yourself
for elimination
Or else your hearts must have the
courage for the changing of the guards.*

By the end of the 1970s, Dylan was dealing with the fundamental transience of existence by embracing fundamentalist Christianity, by seeing all the chaos as part of God's 'perfect finished plan', a relentless

march to apocalyptic judgement. In the 1980s and 1990s, his writing portrayed a constant struggle to come to terms with a world gone wrong, as time continued to wreak havoc. By 2000, he would adapt a much more stoic reaction to time's unpredictability:

*People are crazy and times are strange.
I'm locked in tight, I'm out of range.
I used to care, but things have changed.*

Dylan is as contradictory and unpredictable as the world he writes about. *Time Out Of Mind* offered a predominantly (though not entirely) bleak insight into the mind of someone who appeared to be irreversibly out of touch with his surroundings: 'I've got new eyes, everything looks far away.' Then the irresistible vaudevillian verve of "*Love And Theft*" was unleashed in 2001. Despite all the high water and lonesome days, that album presented a man relishing the challenges life was flinging at him as his time grew shorter: 'Feel like a fighting rooster, feel better than I ever felt.'

In his next album, we might find an entirely new analysis of these themes.

Only time will tell.

Notes

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3. Paul Williams, *Performing Artist 1974-1986*, Omnibus Press (1994), p. 23
4. *Chicago Daily News*, 27 November, 1965
5. *Playboy*, March, 1978
6. *Rolling Stone*, 22 November, 2001

Judas!

7. *Los Angeles Times*, 23 November, 1980
8. *Rolling Stone*, 16 November, 1978
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10. Bill Flanagan, *Written On My Soul*,
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11. *People Magazine*, 10 November, 1975
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13. Heylin, p. 373
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and Ashes and Sand, Inc. (1967)
23. *Playboy*, March, 1978
24. Rome press conference, 23 July, 2001
25. *Masked And Anonymous*, BBC Films and
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26. Shelton, p. 443
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29. *Rolling Stone*, 16 November, 1978
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31. *Los Angeles Times*, 4 April, 2004

Charleston, South Carolina 17th Aug 2004



Philosophical Reflections

by Martin van Hees

Do Right To Me Baby (Do Unto Others) - Rules and Regulations

The 'Golden Rule' – treat others as you would like to be treated by them – is a fundamental tenet of many religions and ideologies. Early formulations can be found in Confucius as well as in Buddhist and Hindu writings. For many of us, however, the most well-known renditions are to be found in the Bible, notably Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. Given the prominent place that the rule has occupied in the history of our thinking, it is not surprising that it forms an important part of our 'conventional moral wisdom'. The rule represents a spirit of impartiality and fairness – acting morally means that one does not give more importance to one's own desires and wishes than to those of others.

Nevertheless, the rule is not undisputed among philosophers. It has been questioned whether it can indeed serve as a moral criterion. If we see the rule as some form of consistency test, then it is not clear that it can serve as a test for the morality of our acts. After all, a wicked man can also be consistent in the described way. Take, for instance, a football hooligan who is always willing to take

up a fight with the supporters of other football teams. He may well wish – and many hooligans will probably indeed wish – that the supporters of the other teams will also be willing to fight with them at any given moment. Thus, he acts in a way towards others as he would also like to be treated by them. Yet we would be reluctant to say that the action is permissible because it accords with the Golden Rule.

Passing the test is therefore not sufficient for an act to be moral, and the Golden Rule thus cannot be the ultimate foundation of all of our moral principles: we need extra criteria for the assessment of an action's moral quality. In fact, passing the Golden Rule need not even be necessary for an act to be moral. Drawing on an argument that the nineteenth century philosopher Kant formulated against the rule, suppose a criminal is being convicted by a judge to several years of imprisonment. Couldn't he object to the imprisonment by asking whether the judge himself would like to be imprisoned? If the judge answers negatively, his verdict would break the Golden Rule.

At a first hearing, 'Do Right To Me Baby (Do Unto Others)' seems to form a straightforward embracing of the Golden

Rule. By describing in each of the verses specific ways – some of them rather funny – in which the singer does not want to be treated by others, it gives substance and thus a concrete meaning to an abstract principle. The lyrics do not defend the rule, although the invocation of the Golden Rule in the chorus, and the title of the song itself, shows that it is embraced by the singer. The song thus fits naturally on an album of gospel songs. On the one hand, it gives substance and meaning to a core principle of Christian thinking. On the other hand, just like gospel songs in general jubilate rather than defend a particular religious point of view, the song does not so much argue for the principle as give witness of the singer's acceptance of it.

As is often the case with Dylan, however, things are not as straightforward as they seem. Take the song's chorus:

*But if you do right to me, baby,
I'll do right to you, too.
Ya got to do unto others
Like you'd have them, like you'd have
them, do unto you*

Whereas the last two lines simply seem to embrace the Golden Rule, the first two lines of the chorus give a twist to it. Those initial lines make clear that the Golden Rule as embraced here doesn't apply to any sort of act – contrary to the standard version – but only to those that are right, that is, acts that we are morally permitted to perform. But that means that in applying the Golden Rule the singer already knows what the morally right thing to do is. Hence 'Dylan's version' of

the Golden Rule is not supposed to form the basis of our morality, and the above-described philosophical problems therefore do not apply.

That a moral view is already presupposed is also illustrated by the fact the emphasis in the verses is not so much on what the singer expects from others, but on what he considers to be right himself. Each verse contains four lines, three of which describe a particular way in which the singer does not want to treat others. Although the second part of each of those lines make clear that the singer does not want to be treated by others in that way either, those remarks are added (and sung) as almost an afterthought. What the singer wants others to do to him seems to be a consequence of what he believes is right, and the order is thus the opposite of what one would expect from an application of the Golden Rule. Moreover, the existence of an independent moral stance of the singer is emphasised by the fact that each verse contains exactly one line that is at odds with the pattern of the other three lines. They make an unconditional statement about what the singer wants – a statement that does not refer at all to the actions of others.

If we thus shift our attention away from the last two lines of the chorus, the song turns out not to be so much about embracing the Golden Rule, but instead forms a description and celebration of the singer's moral stance. That moral stance precedes and affects the Golden Rule, and thus enables the application of that rule without falling into the philosophical pitfalls described.

Red, White and Blue Shoe Strings – IV

by Andrew Davies

Brussels 28/4/2002

The following night saw me at another Irish pub, this time however, I chose O' Reilly's on the Place de la Bourse. The main reason for the new bar was that I wanted to avoid Derek just in case he had realised the full extent of his poor decision and was looking for me in Celtica to get his tickets back. At least he can tell his grandchildren that he gave up the chance of seeing one of the most famous figures in the history of music to watch some donkey pretending to be Phil Lynott. I already had my own ticket for the show but it is possible that the Canadian would be *sans billet* when he arrived; even if he wasn't, there were always people wanting tickets. Unless, of course, the gig happened to be in Innsbruck.

It had felt like a lifetime since I had last seen Dylan even though I had only actually missed the one show, at the Oberhausen Arena in Germany. Of course, although I was sipping a pint in the Belgian pub, my mind was in Germany and the gig that I was missing. I was rather pleased in a selfish sort of way that there was nothing too outrageous or interesting

in the set-list, when I checked it afterwards on the website. The Canadian would probably report back with tales of 'Hurricane', 'Restless Farewell' and 'Moonshiner' but in reality, 'Every Grain of Sand' and 'You're A Big Girl, Now' were as interesting as it got, on paper at least.

The Forest National is one of those venues that, once you have been there a couple of times, you can guess what sort of evening you are in for by the seating arrangement in the auditorium. It has those rows of removable seating and I was more than happy to notice that tonight, most of them had been taken away. In such venues, this tends to indicate that the tickets have sold well as the removal of the seats means that there is more standing room and consequently, an increased capacity. My previous visits to the Forest National, in 1998 and 2000 were mixed affairs. The 1998 show was one of my first concerts outside of the UK and I put the muted atmosphere down to the possibility that the continent audiences were perhaps less fanatical than the British ones. Subsequent shows have proved this not to be the case but the only thing I can remember from that first Brussels show (aside from an excellent 'Ballad of Hollis Brown') was that nobody in the audience

seemed to moved an inch all night, making me feel uncomfortable when I was trying to get excited about the occasion. The October 2nd, 2000 show was sandwiched in between two trips to the UK and was a rousing evening, like much of that particular leg of the Never Ending Tour. It could have been my new care free, I'm-going-to-enjoy-myself-whether-you-like-it-or-not attitude combined with a noticeable resurgence in Dylan performance quality that made it a special night but the audience was enthusiastic and far more inspired than two years earlier. Besides, we also got 'Tell Me That It Isn't True' and 'Seeing The Real You At Last'.

On this, my third trip, the band opened with a bouncy version of the youthful sounding 'Hallelujah, I'm Ready To Go'. It was fantastic but it was the second song that put us all in Bob's pocket, a place where we remained for the rest of the evening. Two years ago, Bob missed the opportunity to play 'Highlands' in Aberdeen and as if alerted to the lost chance, attempted to make amends by running through it the following night in Glasgow. No such mistake was made tonight, thankfully, and Bob followed the stimulating opener with a song that was written to be played in Brussels, 'When I Paint My Masterpiece'. Those who are cynical enough to be of the opinion that mentioning the word Brussels in a song is not reason enough to make it being played in the city a special moment were clearly not in the hall. The extended version saw the verse in question being played twice, on both occasions huge cheers met the news that Bob left Rome and flew into

Brussels. Dylan, obviously enjoying the reaction, kept up the showmanship and threw in another random Brussels that had the audience in fits. This simple piece of cabaret was the moment of the whole tour for me and even future listening of CD bootlegs of the show would continue to warm the heart. This spectacle was followed with 'If You See Her, Say Hello', 'Moonlight', 'I Believe In You' and 'Love Sick'. Also worth a mention is 'Knockin' On Heaven's Door', the opening chords had me groaning in negative anticipation but, following a make-over that involves some serious Charlie and Larry vocal assistance, never have I heard such an inspired version.

The Canadian had arrived earlier in the day with his friend Mel, another from his homeland, who now lived in Zurich. It hadn't occurred to me that Mel might not actually be a man and although nobody could ever accuse her of being lady, she was definitely a female, of sorts. I racked my brains to find the most appropriate word to describe her without being overly offensive or unkind; the best I could come up with was butch. Her arms were bigger than both my legs and she had a permanent scowl on her face that reminded me of the short, fat, green guard that met Luke Skywalker at the gates of Jabba's place in *The Return Of The Jedi*. The upsetting image of her in bed with the skinny Canadian flashed through my mind and forced me to try and erase it with tequila. However, in fairness, she had been pleasant enough to me earlier and was grateful that I had managed to get her a ticket for what was (along with my missed

German show) to be one of her two stops on the tour. Clearly, she had to get back to terrorising the people of Zurich. After the show, I took the odd couple to Celtica, where I was half hoping to meet journalist Derek. I had no idea of predicting what was actually going to happen.

Once again, the bar was busy and the upstairs dance floor was packed with drunken but jubilant Dylan fans. The massive bouncers on the door let us in free of charge; possibly either because they recognised me from the other night or they were terrified of asking Mel for money. Not that she would have had much, the amount I charged her for the ticket. We had been there for an hour or so and had been joined by a couple from London, Michael and Pamela Hurst, who were Dylan fans living in Brussels. The Canadian took the opportunity to inflict his various opinions on the new company, leaving me to talk with the woman. She was sinking her pints like a trooper and I was drunk enough to have a few sly swipes at her but, probably in my favour, she wasn't really listening to me. Her gaze was aiming straight over me and was fixed on somebody near the bar. I thought at first that there was somebody in sight that Mel fancied but the stare was more like the kind that comes on bouncers when their weighing up whether or not to wade into a brawl. Besides, I didn't have Mel down as the sort to stare longingly; if there was someone she wanted, she would probably just go and mercilessly take, the poor bloke would be powerless. The whole idea made me rue my earlier shower.

Pissed off with being ignored, I turned

around to see what exactly was keeping her attention. My stomach turned over when I saw who it was: the member of the German fan club who was carrying Norm in Frankfurt before the police frightened him away. The reason for my malaise was not so much that the guy was here, although I could have done without it, but more because I could guess why Mel was behaving in this way. My theory was this: The bloody Canadian had fed his chunky friend an inflated version of the Frankfurt incident and his part in it, no doubt playing up his Ruben Carter role. The German was probably at the previous show and got pointed out to Mel by the Canadian, from a safe distance, of course. Now, in the bar, fuelled by the Canadian's hyperbole, bucket loads of Guinness and more testosterone than all the bulls in Belgium could muster between them, she marched over to the member of the German fan club, squared right up to him and before he knew what was happening, head butted the boy smack in the face. He went down right away in a mess of blood and I was half expecting an all-encompassing fight to spark off but amazingly, it didn't ignite. Most people didn't know whether to run away screaming or laugh but she put up some insane and entertaining resistance to the bouncers who reluctantly stepped in to remove her from the club. The Canadian hastily followed her out into the Brussels night with words that he would see me for tomorrow's journey to Paris after he saw her safely on the plane to Switzerland. I never saw her again and not a single tear was shed on the subject either.

Paris 30/4/2002

There were crazy things going on right across Europe. Every day, the news seemed to be showing yet more headlines about Israel's bloody conflict with Palestine in the east and there was the worrying business of a growing support for the right in the west, a phenomenon that manifested itself with the unforeseen democratic success in the first round of the French presidential election of the underestimated Jean-Marie Le Pen. Paris was to be the Never Ending Tour's next stop.

When I met the Canadian at the train station to catch the express into France, his general appearance was edging on the poor side. In fact, he looked like he'd been attacked by a dog. The bags under his eyes were painful-looking dark affairs and his brittle, exhausted body was having an awful time keeping the rucksack up off the floor. He told me that he had no sleep and had just been to the airport to see the lovely Mel onto the plane before rushing back into town to catch the train. I pointed out to him that he could have flown into Paris seeing as he was at the airport anyway but my suggestion was met with an unnecessary bit of scorn. He may have been tired but I told him that if his sharpness towards me was to continue then as soon as we got to Paris, I would secure him to his rucksack and dump him at the bottom of the Seine. As for me, I was in good shape. Give or take a violent Canadian female, Brussels had been a huge success for me both musically and financially and

I was very sorry when the time came to leave.

I was, by this point, really getting into the swing of the tour. I was still enjoying the shows and having an excellent time getting involved in the culture that surrounded them. Loathed, as I was to leave Belgium, I was very much looking forward to getting to Paris and was eager to arrive. The Canadian and self found some seats in the centre carriage and parked ourselves down. The boy was still in a whining mood but, to his credit, produced a bottle half full of bourbon and a couple of plastic cups as soon as we started moving. As happy as I was with this, I was even happier when he fell asleep leaving me to the whiskey and the journey in peace.

With the journey enhanced by the Wembley Arena show from October 6th, 2000, on my mini disc player, we rolled into the Gare du Nord in what seemed like no time at all. That night at Wembley (the second of two) was another one that continues to stick in my mind for all sorts of reasons. It was a Friday night (the night prior to the last football match at the neighbouring stadium before they pulled it down) and I remember it mainly because I was standing right next to Ronnie Wood, who spent the evening blatantly ignoring the venue's No-Smoking policy. Bob was on sparkling form that night, even in the famously bad venue, and throughout 'Like a Rolling Stone', all I wanted to do was turn to Wood, point at the stage and say:

'That's how it's done, Junior!'

Obviously, not wanting to make an enemy of Ron, I resisted the urge but at least Wood seemed to be enjoying himself, something that cannot be said of a lot of the audience. I was surprised and disappointed to see that so many of the miserable-faced lumps of meat that had stood for two and a half hours the previous night with their arms folded were there again. I had stood in line with some South African students who were in England during a gap year in their studies. There was immense energy coming from them and their excitement elevated mine all out of proportion. They told me that they were living and working at some tourist resort in the New Forest and had spent nearly all of the little money they had earned getting to Wembley to see Bob. I didn't have the heart to tell them that they could have gone to Portsmouth. After the concert, some bright spark thought it would be a good idea to close down Wembley Park tube station, resulting in six thousand people and me making for Wembley Central, which, on a freezing October night that threatened rain, seemed like it was a continent away.

I spent my first Parisian afternoon doing the whole tourist thing as I had never been to the French capital before now. The traffic in the centre of town was incredible and the noise from the cars was drowned out, only by the shouting of those driving them. I made a mental note to never bring a car into Paris. The dubious guidebook that I had borrowed from the sleeping Canadian was little help so I soon abandoned it in favour of my own instincts.

The girl at the information place told me that Paris was the place where lovers of food, wine, art and music flock to taste the exquisite flavours of the city that justifiably holds the title of the capital of style. She rattled the sentence off in style and it made me think that her previous job had to have been at Strasbourg Station.

'Are you here on holiday?' she asked.

'In a way', I replied, 'I'm here to see Bob Dylan.'

'Is that a friend of yours?'

The two sets played by Dylan in Paris were, as far as I was concerned, symbolic of the two rounds of voting in the French election: i.e. the first was worrying and the second, reassuring. The first night at le Zenith, a pleasant venue that was seemingly packed full of Britons, lacked whatever factor it is that more than occasionally makes Dylan's concert performances truly astonishing. The opening minute of 'She Belongs To Me' at song number two was enough to raise my hopes to an almighty level but it fizzled out lamentably and unspectacularly. One of my favourite tunes, the prospect of hearing it done live was considerably more exciting than actually hearing it being performed, especially in this lacklustre manner. It was a pattern that was to continue through the evening, with the exception of the accomplished offerings from "Love And Theft". So significantly superior were the performances of these tracks that I wished that he had simply played the whole album from start to finish, tagged on the obligatory 'Blowin' in the Wind' finale and called it a night.

The following night, in front of an almost identical audience, the difference was not so much obvious as it hit you over the head with a shovel. Opening with 'I Am The Man, Thomas' as though a statement of rediscovered confidence and self-belief, Bob delighted his flock with a similar show of entertainment to that he had given in Brussels. Once again, the reasons for the much-improved performance are far more elusive than simply the song selection but it certainly helped. 'She Belongs To Me' had been hastily replaced at two by a solid 'I Want You'. At three these days, we either tend to get 'It's Alright Ma' or 'Desolation Row'. The former sounded tired and sluggish on the first night in Paris and was thankfully replaced on night two. 'It Ain't Me Babe' is another song that has been treated both grandly and appallingly in concert by Dylan in the past. If you are fortunate enough to come across any tapes of the fine readings of the song pulled out by Dylan and The Hawkes in 1966 or a couple of the best Rolling Thunder versions (more caution advised here) then you'll enjoy as good a five minutes as Dylan has ever provided. Predictably though, on the other side of the coin, I have recordings of it at home that would have you swearing and resorting to violence if you saw a band at your local pub execute it with so little care and esteem. Fortunately, this version of the song was closer to the first batch of performances than the second and the new acoustic arrangement, as much as you knew that it really wasn't true, did its best to convince you that you were hearing the definitive version. It was refreshing to hear the rowdy 'Highway 61 Revisited' open up

the electric section of the show, not because I had grown tired of 'Solid Rock' or 'Country Pie' but because the song was becoming a bit of a predictable encore fixture. The tune also gave the guitarists the first opportunity of the night to get involved in the nightly competitive rounds of musical breaks. 'Simple Twist of Fate' followed with continued confidence and class; *Blood On The Track's* most tender moment receiving a suitably articulate vocal delivery from Bob. Once again it was the "Love And Theft" material that took things up to the next level, tonight in the shape of 'Lonesome Day Blues' and 'Floater'.

The second batch of acoustic numbers were the killers that defined the whole evening and their placing in the set after two glorious rocking moments from "Love And Theft" was an immaculate piece of planning. 'Fourth Time Around' was the first of the three and featured Dylan's best vocals of the night, he seemed completely involved in the song as though he still stood by every word and once again, the enhanced performance quality was a clear consequence of Dylan's complete attention. 'Visions Of Johanna' is always a special moment even though it is possibly the one song in Dylan's catalogue that does not need concert performance to help it breathe, so majestic and elusive is the recording on *Blonde On Blonde*. It was though warm enough to have the whole arena on Bob's side by its harp-assisted conclusion, a situation that was actively confirmed by a harmonious 'Don't Think Twice, It's All Right'. It's only now that I write these notes do I notice the unusual absence of 'Tangled Up in Blue'.

'Summer Days' and 'Drifter's Escape' raised the temperature in the hall again and added to the stench of sweat throughout the first few rows. Sandwiched between the two was 'Not Dark Yet', its inclusion in the set probably down to the ovation that 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' received in Brussels. Remembering the Brussels moment, it was all I could do to stop myself smiling throughout the song until Bob got to the key moment. Unfortunately, when Bob told us that he'd not only been to London but gay Paris, the Parisian audience rather coldly failed to respond. Not expecting this, I let out a good loud cheer at the appropriate time, met only by the crazy looks of those around me. I felt a little foolish, of course, but I suppose I should have known judging by the Anglicised make up of the audience. As a footnote, this business does mean that if you pick up any recordings of said show on the dodgy stalls and you hear one idiot cheering at that vital point, it's probably me.

It's much of a muchness whether the last song of the main set is 'Leopard Skin Pill-Box Hat' or 'Rainy Day Women No's 10 and 35'. There is very little to choose between them these days in terms of structure and they seem to melt into one another anyway. They serve as set closing guitar showcases and that's fine but I have noticed that Bob and the band need to put the work in earlier in the set and win the audience over before this point. If all has gone well before, the audience allow these slightly indulgent set closers as a necessary and deserved release of musician steam; otherwise it's just treated as a noise. The encores were predictable but masterfully delivered and by the time 'All Along the Watchtower' had

reached its furious peak, the whole place was saluting the stage in triumph.

Rotterdam 2/5/2002

'Is there anything else I can do for you at all, Sir?'

The taxi driver had been a helpful sort and carried my bags right into the terminal.

'No, thank you very much.'

I liked the man; I think his name was James. He hadn't done anything too extraordinary but he hadn't bored me or left me standing with my bags. I would not have needed that sort of bother on a journey that was a considerable more amount of trouble than it should have been. I should have caught the train from Paris into Holland with the Canadian but, for some reason, I couldn't quite face it. The journey instead involved a rickety plane from Paris to Hamburg, an unexpected four-hour wait and then an onward connection to Rotterdam; Dylan's final stop in mainland Europe before heading into the UK.

A frustrating and unexplained airport delay always manages to beat the life out of you. There's nothing to do, of course. After a while, children, holidaymakers and business travellers tend to get right on your nerves, an unfortunate reaction when in such a location but I was in that sort of mood. My frame of mind was improved by the idea of arriving in Rotterdam, as this was to be my first visit to the city. The

Canadian had persistently carried on about how wounded he was that Dylan would not be stopping off in Amsterdam. Apparently, it was a joke that Bob would, like, go all the way to the Netherlands and not do a concert in Amsterdam where you can buy grass from nuns and police officers who will, like, skin up for you and loan you a whore because that's what is like there.

I got on the plane with very little trouble worth reporting. I was mentally prepared for the grilling I was going to receive during my check-in. Any British national attempting to board a plane from Hamburg to the Netherlands is always likely to attract some attention as this must all add up to the fact that your shoes are full of marijuana. In these circumstances, although no hostility should be exercised, it is imperative to remember that the customs official is not your friend, nor does he have any emotions or soul. Do not mistake him for a human being. If he stops you and stares with his black, robotic eyes, be calm. Say nothing. Make the bastard work. Any wit you may put his way during the course of an exchange will not be received as you intended; so staying quiet is paramount. Thank you, officer, for your thorough and intrusive search of my innocent bags. Thank you for the ominous threat of ramming your rubber-gloved finger up my rectum.

I felt a lot better once I had got into my seat on the plane; a businessman in a dark blue suit with pinstripes sat next to me and began to read a one-sided pamphlet that was to last him for fifty minutes. You have to get your money's worth out of

these things, I suppose, well done that man. In honesty, I was relieved to see him climb into the seat next to me. We should never knock businessmen such as this; they are ideal travelling companions during flights because they don't want to talk to you. All they want to do is read the paper or do some work and be left alone. That's fine with me. The last thing you need is some pest next to you harping on about stamps or their family or wine or holidays or any of that carry on. An old school friend of mine, David Elliott, once told me that the holy grail of aeroplane travelling companions is the sexy, rich, middle-aged whore looking for young flesh to devour en route to a book launch in Manhattan. Not that David ever met anyone like that, of course. In fact, the closest thing that he's ever got to joining the mile high club was an encounter with Deborah Williams at the top of the Bwlch Mountain in the Valleys but that doesn't count, even though it was a long way above sea level.

A man with a thick Irish accent called out to the flight attendant for a whiskey and the good lady fetched one around to him. I had thought about joining him but decided to resist until I got to Rotterdam.

'Actually', the businessman in the suit with pinstripes said 'I think that I'll have one too.'

'Of course, Sir'

The businessman turned around to the Irishman behind us.

'You've planted the seed in my mind.'

He said with a smile.

'As long as you don't expect me to plant

any more seeds in you.' The Irishman replied quickly to the amusement of those around who understood English. I thought that the businessman might take exception to this but, thankfully, in a playful, wry way, he assured the Irishman that no such thought had crossed his mind and smiled again as he got sucked back into his paper.

In need of a stretch of the legs, I climbed over the businessman and made haste to the washer room to give the old self a brush-up. I was delayed en route by a pretty young vegetarian who was protesting to the attendant about the meat in her bagel. It was clear to me that the assistant required some extensive Customer Handling training and I made a mental note to write that on the Customer Comments Slip slotted inside the vomit bag. Like a cat, I stepped in to assist these warring damsels in 30,000 feet, gastro-nomic distress. I was in a position to offer the pretty vegetarian some herbivorous cuisine as I had brought some along in my hand luggage. Nothing special, just a few bits and pieces but it was always good to be prepared when travelling. She was a grateful girl. I threw in some words to diffuse the situation and they both laughed. Slick man.

We were almost in Rotterdam when the businessman in the dark blue suit got out of his chair and went to the washer room. I could see the door from my seat in the fourth row and I watched with amusement when the pretty vegetarian with the sparkling eyes got up and tried the door. I looked around me, everyone was half

asleep, lulled into dry mouth slumber by the distant hum of the engine. It was to my surprise that the door had opened when she tried it and to my extreme shock when she disappeared inside. After about ten minutes the pretty vegetarian came out of the tight little door and fixed her eyes to the floor as she made her way gingerly back to her seat. My eyes were playing tricks on me. Was this real? What is going on here, my God? A minute or so later, the businessman with a red face in the dark blue suit emerged from his love patch like a victorious General returning home following a just battle to save the oppressed. He sat back down next to me and nodded knowingly. The fiend. For the rest of the way he sat staring out of the miniscule window smiling and chuckling. What a great story that would make in the bar tonight, after the conference, he was probably thinking. Did he provide her with a vegetarian alternative? No. Did he make her laugh? Well, possibly but something about this whole business was not right. He tormented me for the rest of the day. I haven't been so upset since I lost my *Genuine Basement Tapes* box set when I moved house. What did I tell you about the businessman? He is your worst-nightmare travelling companion.

I had no idea where in Rotterdam the Canadian was staying but I had managed to get myself into some lodgings in the heart of the place. A hotel with good proximity to the city centre, of course, can prove very advantageous if you are slightly worse for ware of an evening in a strange town. The elongated stay at Hamburg Airport had made me extremely grateful

that the show was not until the following night. This meant that I could spend an evening exploring the sights of Rotterdam. For what it's worth, I had held on to the Canadian's prehistoric travel guide and thumbed my way through it. According to the yellowing pages Rotterdam is the city that boasts the largest and busiest port in the world. Again, not trusting the accuracy of my source, I suspected that since it's publication, a million other ports might have taken over Rotterdam. Nevertheless, I paid it a visit and sure enough, vast and full of activity it was. However, after an hour or so of walking around and watching pungent oil carrying vessels crawl in and out, I decided my curiosity had been satisfied and I moved on into the city.

The maddest things about Rotterdam city centre are the cube-shaped apartments that balance on a long plinth. These Kijk-Kubus (viewing cubes) look fairly ropery as residential structures but are a good modern attraction. They somehow manage to look futuristic and bohemian at the same time. It would be nice to think of them being inhabited by artists and poets but I would imagine that they are, in fact, full of people who work in the city.

The purpose of this brief venture into Holland turned out to be a strange evening in an even stranger venue. If Bob had managed to avoid the Newcastle Arena and Docklands in London, Rotterdam's Ahoy would have been a strong contender for the worst-venue-of-the-tour prize. The place seemed

completely incapable of helping the band and the audience generate any sort of atmosphere. It wasn't that the acoustics were bad at all but the hall had a peculiar essence about it that made me a bit uncomfortable and appeared to have a similar effect on those around me. It is always a shame to see some obviously removable seats placed smack in front of the stage. I am a great believer in the front rows being given over to those who want to stand as I do think this improves the ambience. My evening was thrown into the bizarre as early as the third song when a lady in a pink uniform tapped me on the shoulder during *It's Alright, Ma* and asked me if I wanted an ice-cream.

The performance was good and Dylan, after a static start, seemed to get into the swing of things and his left leg was soon throwing all sorts of shapes. *I Threw It All Away* was a nice surprise at number two, as was an outing for 'Blind Willie McTell' but the strange atmosphere persisted throughout. The lazy, eccentric jazz of *'If Dogs Run Free'* was the most appropriate tune of the night, not in lyrical content but mood generated although I don't really know how to explain what I mean by that. All the talk on the way out was the position on an amplifier of what appeared to be Bob's *'Things Have Changed'* Oscar, if it really was the award itself, how typically Dylan that he didn't actually play the song that won it for him. However, whether it was the Oscar or not, I didn't care because by the end of the night and my European adventure, I was more than ready to catch my flight back to London.

Brighton 4/5/2002

I drove to Brighton from my flat in Bath on the morning of the concert. I had slept in my own bed for the first time in what felt like an age and I was refreshed and excited at being home again. I left Rotterdam immediately after the show at the Ahoy and flown back to London in time to catch the first train of the day west to Bath. Getting the train down to the south coast had been contemplated but not being in Germany, I had no idea if I would have been able to get back afterwards. The use of the car turned out to be an excellent decision as the hot Saturday morning sun and cool breeze contributed to a superb and enjoyable journey. With the car parked up, I set off to the Brighton Centre to the spot where I had arranged to meet the Canadian. I could see the boy from a good distance away, sitting with his glum and gormless expression next to his all conquering rucksack, and we headed off in the direction of one of the pubs in Brighton city centre that was showing the FA Cup Final. Like most people from his continent, the Canadian was nonplussed with the idea of watching 'soccer' but he got into the spirit of it all after a glass or two, even though the quality of the game was a bit Down In The Groove. It wasn't too long before the familiar twang of the Canadian's moaning met my ears, however, with his steady and justified outrage of the price of British beer. I didn't ask how he got from Holland to England but he told me that the Rotterdam concert was, like, clearly the best night of the tour so

far and there was no way tonight was going to be anywhere near as good.

The United Kingdom, of course, plays a significant part in the life and career story of Bob Dylan. Stories and accounts of *Dont Look Back*, The 'Royal Albert Hall' Concert, The Isle of White Festival and Earl's Court, to name but four, almost always make up some of the most noteworthy and important chapters in any biography on the subject. Add this historic, fruitful love affair between Dylan and Britain to the fact that he was mainly awesome on his last visit here in 2000 and expectations outside the Brighton Centre are high. I had forgotten, by this point, everything that I had experienced on the road in Europe; tonight was the first night all over again.

There was a friendly vibe in the line outside the venue, once again, as there had been on the whole in Europe. The local newspaper had produced a special edition with a wraparound Dylan front and back page and very small men were selling them for as little as 10p from supermarket trolleys. Naturally, the collector in me wanted to buy one but it would have got destroyed before the end of the night and there was no way that I was losing my place in the queue to take the paper back to the car. If I had spotted the special papers earlier, all would have been well because we had gone back to the car to put the rucksack in the boot. I'm sure nobody needs me to tell in full, the story of the dynamics involved in that seemingly simple operation so I'll leave it to imagination.

It is, as it has always been, impossible for the Dylan show to manage the levels of

expectation unfairly piled onto it. Once again, just like it was at the Newport Folk Festival and the subsequent 1966 tour with The Hawks, Dylan finds his audience split into two distinctive camps. I'm not talking about the acoustic / electric debate but another argument altogether more complex and subtle. Nowhere during my experiences on the Europe 2002 tour did I see better evidence of this than in Brighton and how fitting it was that audience division was once again an attribute of Dylan's British spectators. On describing the two sides of the current observation, I will try as far as possible to be objective. The first (Group One as I'll call them) are the kind we have already witnessed in Europe; the overly expectant Bobcats, of which I suppose I am one, who demand that 'Tangled Up in Blue', 'Like a Rolling Stone' and 'Blowin' in the Wind' be dropped in favour of 'No Time To Think', 'Days of 49' and 'Buckets of Rain'. Group One is made up of the people who buy any new Dylan product on the day of release; they also buy and trade bootleg albums, cassettes, CD's, CD-R's, mini-discs, video's and photographs; read the fanzines, magazines, biographies, lyric interpretations and reviews; regularly check the website and other relevant sources for the latest information; they care what songs were played on what night, in what order and in what arrangement; they have a copy of Greatest Hits but can't remember when they last played it, if ever; they attend as many concerts as their circumstances will allow; they probably don't go out and see anybody else's show. Group One people vary considerably, of course, some will

naturally be more infatuated and obsessive than others and to be put into this category, folks do not necessarily have to get involved in all of the above. The point is that Group One people are in the know, as it were; they will certainly own "*Love And Theft*" as well as being able to make a reasonable estimate of what songs Dylan may play on one particular night and how they may be sung.

At the other end of the hall is the second interesting section of the audience. Group Two consists of the more mainstream concertgoer, for want of a better expression, less Dylan-biased and probably more objective as a result. Greatest Hits is probably a prominent album here and a key influence in the decision to buy a concert ticket. A rifle through the record collection of a member of Group Two might result in you also finding *Freewheelin'*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Nashville Skyline* (though that one was a mistake) and *Blood On The Tracks*, amongst a well-rounded collection of other classic rock and pop albums from The Beatles, Wings, ELO, Led Zeppelin, Supertramp and Van Morrison to Dire Straits, U2, REM, Oasis and Robbie Williams.

Both groups have their place, of course. However, the hardcore extremist members of Group Two are those people who stand and stare in genuine disbelief at the gravel-voiced performer on the stage tearing shreds out of his classic material. A Dylan show is asking for certain reactions like this but Brighton seemed to have more than its fair quota and I hoped that this wasn't to become a trait of all the British shows. What can I say about the

far-Group-Two extremists? They are full of authentic incomprehension as to why the 60-year old singer is not reciting 'Masters Of War' in exactly the same way that he did in 1963. For their benefit, there are two reasons why this is the case, as far as I can see: firstly; age, weathering and erosion mean that he is purely and simply not able. Such a circumstance is not exclusive to Dylan; all of his contemporaries will have seen the tones and characteristics of their voices change with the passing of time, just listen to any recent or latter-day live performances by the likes of Neil Young, Brian Wilson, George Harrison, Van Morrison, Rod Stewart and Eric Clapton. None of these are as extreme as an example as Dylan, maybe, but they have all experienced a reduction in their vocal range and impact, such is the reality of nature and mortality. I could go into further examples but don't even get me started on Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood. The second reason why he 'doesn't sing them like he used to', of course, is that he has no intention of doing so, even if he could. Dylan has never sung them like he used to, such is the appeal of the artist. In 1966, for example, Bob had no interest in performing 'One Too Many Mornings' in the same way that he did in 1965 so why would he want to put in a 1965 style performance in 2002? Is anyone really attending Dylan shows so blindly as to expect him to do that?

For those of us who had been to shows already in Europe (and there were a great many, it seemed), there was little in the way of songs that we had not heard performed already. 'If Not For You' at

number two was a welcome surprise but once again, the "*Love And Theft*" tunes were the most intelligently and expertly executed. Having said this, the opening of the electric section of the set with 'Tweedle Dee & Tweedle Dum' understandably disappointed many first-timers who had read elaborate and tantalising tales from Europe of 'Solid Rock'. 'I Shall Be Released' was the one moment when Group One and Group Two were in rapturous unison; its unexpected inclusion pleasing the former and its familiar structuring (mainly due to the watchful and powerful vocals in the chorus of Larry and Charlie) and professional presentation appeased the latter. By the time the house lights came up, Dylan had won over most of those present, on balance, but it was a close run thing. The whole business ended with Bob smiling (as he had done all night) and blowing kisses into the audience that looked far more spontaneous than they would on the dates to come. Most seemed to then disappear either into Brighton town or out of the city in their cars although not before sitting in an incredible traffic jam that had more in common with Manhattan than Sussex. Afternoon drinking had meant that I was in no position to take the car to Bath so I managed to avoid the chaos but once again, I was in for another uncomfortable night.

Bournemouth 5/5/2002

'How far is Bournemouth, England from Brighton, England?'

'What does your travel guide say?'

'You know, I don't think that it has any information on, like, either of them.'

'That's no use at all.'

'Maybe these places are just not significant enough to be included. Where is that you live?'

'In Bath, it's not too far from here either.'

'Of course.'

'So you've heard of Bath then?'

'Sure, Oh my God, everyone knows about Bath, Wales.'

'Evidently.'

'Oh my God, that must be in my book.'

'I'm sure it is but it's probably called Aqua Sulis.'

'What?'

'It doesn't matter.'

'So, is Bournemouth, like, another seaside place?'

'It is.'

'Like Brighton.'

'Yes, I suppose so.'

'So, is it, like, far?'

'No, it's just along the south coast. It won't take us long to drive there.'

'Another south coast show?'

'That's right.'

'Oh my God.'

'What is it now?'

'This must be like the closest that, like, Bob has been to the Isle of Wight since the festival.'

'Really?'

'Yeah.'

'I see.'

'He must have, I don't know, just remembered it or something'

'Well, he played a couple of nights in Portsmouth the last time he was here.'

'So.'

'Well, that's fairly close to the Isle Of Wight. You can get the ferry from there.'

'Really? Oh my God.'

'Did you not come to the UK in 2000?'

'What, are you kidding me? Of course.'

'You just missed out on the Portsmouth shows?'

'I caught all the shows that year.'

'Is that right?'

'Yeah. You know, it must be great to live in England where you can get between shows in absolutely no time whatsoever. It's so, like, tiny.'

'Do you think so?'

'Oh my God, yes, I tell you, nobody has experienced what it's like to be on the road until they have tried travelling through the desert in the States.'

'You must have done that hundreds of times.'

'Are you kidding? I must have spent half of, like, my entire life in a truck at a hundred and ten degrees going through those places.'

'Going to see Dylan?'

'The Dead, mainly.'

'Of course.'

'So, how far away would you say we are from Bournemouth?'

'About an hour.'

'Great and it's the fifth day of May so that means he's going to play 'Isis''

'I'll bet you fifty quid he doesn't.'

We drove on towards Bournemouth for a few minutes in silence with the Canadian taking the time to carefully digest what had just been said. Every so often he would frantically ruffle the pages of his trusty manual until he came to a page of interest, look at it for a second and then scamper through it again. It was hot in the car and there were immense puddles of stinking sweat pouring from the face of the Canadian. If there had been any dogs in the immediate area then they would have been lapping at his jowls with their smelly tongues. However, the immediate area was apparently free of dogs so no such scene occurred. Nevertheless, the windows were rolled right down to help the overall freshness. It would sicken a man to be within close proximity to the Canadian for a good period of time without the windows being open as the smell was not a good one: a nasal offending soup of lemon zest and common urea. Not for the first time on this trek, I put it to the back of my mind though I had noticed earlier that he had been wearing the same t-shirt since Paris. I'd do anything in this God almighty world if the Canadian would just change his vest. We drove on. My cassette player was broken and I had no yearning to hear the Canadian's opinions on whatever may be playing on the radio so, in an attempt to relieve the boredom of the journey, I decided to carry on with the conversation:

'So, how long have you been on the road now?'

'Oh my God, I don't know, I've done the last couple of Dylan tours, you know, as well as the Lesh one we talked about.'

'That must all add up.'

'How do you mean?'

'Well, how many months of the year do you spend living like this?'

'I've kind of done seven or eight months of the year since about ninety-seven.'

'Wow.'

'You kind of get used to it.'

'It must be expensive.'

'I guess so, but, you know, I never really worry about that sort of thing.'

'Really?'

'I just kind of always manage.'

'How do you get your tickets?'

'I, like, buy all of them up at the beginning.'

'So, you only spend about four months of the year at home?'

'God, I guess, something like that.'

'You must have the greatest job in the world.'

'I don't get it.'

'Well, you know, your boss must be a very nice guy.'

'Why?'

'Why? Because you must only be able to work a maximum of four months a year and in that time, you earn enough money to keep you in concert tickets, travel tickets and hotel rooms for the rest of the year. Where can I get a job like that?'

The Canadian laughed but didn't answer and I was getting the feeling that this was a subject that he didn't really want to go into any further so, confident of bringing him back to it later, I let it go for the time being.

Sleeping in the car had made my back-ache and this, along with the conversa-

tion and pong was more than enough to make me approach Bournemouth at great speed.

'At least, you, like, got to stay at your own quarters the other night.'

'That's true.'

'Isn't it interesting, the term quarters?'

'Why is that?'

'Well, you know, I said that you were able to sleep in your own quarters the other night.'

'You did.'

'Isn't language, like, funny? Technically, you see, by making the word quarter a plural, you suggest more than one quarter. A half, for example; I really should have said, you spent the night at your half!'

The Canadian looked pleased with himself at this bit of phonological nonsense and sat smiling happily like a dog with its tongue out waiting for some congratulations from its master. He was laughing a pathetic, enthusiastic laugh that ran itself out after about thirty seconds. By the time he had calmed himself down, we had reached the traffic leading into Bournemouth centre and I was massively grateful that the noises of a busy town were spilling into the open windows and drowning out the twittering in my left ear.

The Bournemouth show was one of the best of the whole tour as once again, all the parts that needed to gelled together with ease. Dylan and the band played with confidence and banged through a great set that had the whole venue on its feet and dripping with sweat long before the final

chords of 'Highway 61 Revisited' had vibrated around the building. Even more surprising than hearing 'If Not For You' in Brighton was hearing it again the following night. Some expressed the opinion that this was a veiled tribute to the late George Harrison, an idea admirable enough that even those among us who were not so persuaded were happy to go along with the notion. By this stage of the tour, I had gone past the point of analysing the show as a whole because I was too familiar with the structure and form. Instead, I was looking out for the little moments here and there that makes an evening special. There were a couple of such moments in Bournemouth: 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' featured the best audience participation since 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' in Brussels when during what seemed like a microphone failure, we all got involved and yelled out a chorus that held everything together. Another was the first-class rendition of the eternally brilliant 'Not Dark Yet'.

Afterwards, the Canadian said that he had made up his mind to give Cardiff a miss. He didn't have a ticket and instead, he wanted to use the couple of days to hitchhike to Newcastle. I told him that we could probably secure him a Cardiff ticket if he wanted one but his mind was made up on making his way to the North East by the ropiest of methods. He had found someone who was to give him a lift as far as Cheltenham and left straight after the show. I don't know what his travel guide was telling him but if I was travelling from Bournemouth to Newcastle then Cheltenham wouldn't be on my route but

what did I know? I hadn't travelled through the American deserts with just a Grateful Dead ticket and two dollars in my pocket, after all.

Cardiff 6/5/2002

The Bank Holiday Monday train from Bath to Cardiff managed to make a fifty-five minute journey feel like five hours. As well as the familiar stop-start business and the worry that you might not actually come out the other side of the Severn tunnel, the train was full of football supporters who were descending on the Welsh capital for a big match at the Millennium Stadium. Cardiff Central Station was heavily policed on our arrival with everyone getting the eyes from the high number of guards. No football for me, Officer, I'm here to see Bob Dylan.

Dylan has a reasonably interesting relationship with Wales, if you are willing to clutch the right straws. The footage of Bob and Johnny Cash in *Eat The Document* was taped backstage at the Cardiff Odeon and if that isn't a desperate enough connection, how about the vague story that Tommy Farr, the heavyweight-boxing champion from Tonypany, has a son who compared at the Isle of Wight festival in 1969. That's probably going a bit too far so I'll stop this nonsense right now. Of course, many popular sources will have you believe that Robert Zimmerman changed his name after being inspired by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas although, as always is the case with Dylan, there are

conflicting opinions. I suppose that Bob's awareness of the poet at least means that he knows Wales exists which has to be a start. All too often, an unfortunate trait of musicians from the United States, who visit places like Wales tend to be ignorant of the fact that they're not in England. I can't say that this sort of thing overly upsets me but if there is one thing likely to disturb your Cardiff audience (or the ones in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Dublin and the like come to that), it is when the headline act walks up to the microphone and shouts:

'Hello England!'

There are many examples of this happening, far too numerous and tedious to bother discussing in these pages but perhaps even more awful, there is also the situation where the artist has been reminded mid set to make reference to their location and then go on to make a mess of it. If in doubt, just don't bother and say nothing. On July 23rd 1995, Michael Stipe of REM finished up an otherwise thoroughly enjoyable show at Cardiff Arms Park with the words 'Thank you very much, this is the first time for REM in Wales and we're very happy to be here.' At the time, of course, these comments were greeted with the customary elation and enthusiastic response but spoiled somewhat when you remember later that REM not only played at the Newport Centre in Gwent in 1989 as part of their Green World Tour but also played a small show at a Cardiff club in the mid-Eighties. None of this really matters,

of course, and it is understandable that a rock star from Georgia who has toured all over the world many times may not be able to recall every country that he has ever played in but to the locals, it's a little disappointing. You pay your money after all; surely it's not too much to ask that the men on stage have at least a vague idea of where they are.

For me, as someone born and raised in Wales, the best thing about Dylan is that he actually bothers to come here at all. This is especially good news for the young Dylan fan of which there seemed to be a great many in Cardiff. Obviously, the parental and financial restrictions on the shoulders of the young music fan make can make it difficult to see their favourite bands in concert. I'm sure this can be difficult for those growing up in the big cities but for the children of the provinces, it can be especially stifling. I don't want to get imaginary violins sounding off in the readers ear or anything like that but when you live somewhere like the Welsh Valleys or other similar remote areas, your heroes coming to the UK can be depressing rather than exciting because the one-night-only at Wembley Arena might as well be at Madison Square Garden for all the chance you've got of being there. It is, after all, not unreasonable for a mother not to let her 14-year old son travel alone to a midweek concert in London. It's difficult to know exactly how much input an artist has on his touring nightly spots or if he is simply 'hired' by the promoter but the concept of a Never Ending Tour certainly lends itself to the idea of playing everywhere and not just the major city spots.

The mass of football supporters meant that my usual bars of choice were either full of nylon and chants or closed to avoid any potential trouble. So, under protest, Norm and myself popped into what used to be the Owain Glyndwr for a quick pint. I say under protest because this once wonderful establishment rather sadly became one of those awful chain pubs a few years ago. The worse example imaginable of such a phenomenon ripping the character right out of British city centre pub culture.

At around five o'clock we left and headed off towards the Cardiff International Arena, one of the most comfortable venues on the circuit. As well as being big enough to hold nights like this, the CIA, to give its James Bond title, still manages to provide the intimacy of a theatre setting. Although I had been to the place many times before, including three previous evenings with Dylan, never had I experienced the sort of disorganisation that was occurring. Problem number one was that there was no monitoring of the lines outside and by the time we arrived, there were two very separate queues that had formed at opposite ends of the building. No major disaster, maybe, but it still didn't stop everyone checking their tickets a thousand times to make sure that no specific entrance door was stipulated. The last thing you need is to queue for ninety minutes only to be told that you are in the wrong place and should go to the back of the other line. The security people were on first-rate form by the time the doors were due to open. A tiny but stocky pit-bull type man in a green jacket that

made him feel important came down to where we were standing (about tenth in line) and told us that if we wanted the doors to open then we would have to move back.

'That's great,' the lady behind me said, 'but there's nowhere to move back to.' 'Madam, don't mess me about just take a step back.'

'Then she'll step on my feet,' said the man behind to much laughter as the security man turned bright red with fury.

'Look,' he persisted, 'if you don't do what I say then I'll tell him to cancel the show.'

More laughter.

'I can't see him listening to you somehow.'

Yet more laughter but this time more robust than before.

'I've got an idea for you,' the lady said, 'why don't you go to the back of the line and ask them to take a step back and then we can all do the same? That would be the thing to do if you want us to move backwards. I can see you're a clever boy.'

With that, the chubby little man turned on his heel in a sulk and headed back into the reception area. He was muttering something about getting "The Gaffer" but thankfully, he didn't come back at all. That wasn't the end of it, though, as there was a good example when the doors finally opened of absolutely no communication between Dylan's people and the local staff. Apparently, it's

common practice to give up tour ticket upon entering the building only to be asked for it ten feet later. It was all a mess but it resulted with Norm getting through without anyone asking for his ticket at all. Lucky, I thought, the Canadian and his bloody rucksack are not here and instead are busy heading north in dangerous fashion. Also successfully in was little man who had stood outside with the words "I need free Bob Dylan ticket please" written on a piece of cardboard. He had been standing there for about two hours and when the doors opened, sure enough, one of the touts gave him one. He looked truly excited and his boyish face was beaming like a child with a brand new Christmas bicycle. Those in the queue were pleased that this scruffy-looking boy with no money was now able to see the show but I wonder how many of them would have been as happy had they known that the cunning wee bugger had successfully pulled the same stunt in Brighton and Bournemouth?

The show was enjoyable though Dylan seemed grumpy throughout and some scrupulously crazy notes bounced from the stage at times. Again, the main reason for this seemed to be the occasional lack of understanding between Jim Keltner and Tony Garnier and not Dylan's curmudgeon mood. Unlike Brighton, the kisses blown to the audience at the end of the second encore did not appear to be delivered spontaneously but with a sad element of obligation. Visions of Johanna was the highlight of an evening that I found myself comparing not to last night in Bournemouth but the mind-blowing

Judas!

Cardiff show of September 2000. That was a fine evening that, for me, no Dylan show since has ever quite reached, no matter how brilliant. I can still vividly recall a conversation that I had with a Swansea man after the show who told me through one of the biggest grins that I have ever seen that the show we had just witnessed was his one hundred and seventh Dylan concert since 1965 and not once did he ever see Dylan playing better. I don't need to record the reasons as to why that night was so special because Paddy Ladd

managed to sum up everything that I felt about the evening with incredible accuracy in his Isis Anthology article. A delayed train meant that the sprint back to the station was unnecessary but the ten-minute chunk of exercise tired me out to the point where I was coughing like a sick one, completely put to shame by a man thirty-seven years my senior who puts in two and a half hours of physical work every night. God speed Bob Dylan down the M4.

Charleston, South Carolina 17th Aug 2004

