
from *Inside A Prune*

Welcome to issue nine of *Judas!* As I write this Dylan has begun another year's touring and although the set-lists may look predictable the arrangements are refreshingly, dramatically altered in many cases. Good for him.

You will notice a *New Morning* theme through this issue, with no less than three articles looking at that intriguing period. In issue 10 there will be another theme running through the general articles and reviews; in this case it will be early acoustic Dylan, so if you have anything you want to say on that please send it in. I am not saying that we are doing theme issues as such, it is more a case of giving a recurrent flavour to certain editions.

If you have resubscribed you will soon notice additions to the subscribers' area of the *Judas!* website. Steve Lescure is generously giving us his 'Dylan Commentaries'. In his own words, he is '...bringing together information from a wide variety of sources - numerous books, magazine articles, and the Internet - condensing it down into the essentials and presenting it in an easy-to-digest format.' This will eventually cover all of Dylan's official output; the debut album material will be available in the near future. Also on our website we have started an archive section to publish those issues of *Judas!* that have already sold out.

We are delighted to begin our series of excerpts from Izzy Young's back pages. These articles, notes and reviews can be found throughout the issue, wherever you see the symbol  and comprise reprints - or first prints - from his notebooks as well as newspapers and magazines and so forth, as dated.

I mentioned above that issue 10 will feature reviews, in fact it will have more than we have ever had before as, due to a variety of reasons, a number that we hoped would be in this issue will now appear where Gordon Brown aims to be - in number 10. The *Live 1964* set was delayed and came too late for this issue but Jonathan Shimkin will be reviewing that for us, following up on his highly acclaimed debut article on 'Mr. Tambourine Man' in issue eight. Stephen Scobie's *Alias Bob Dylan Revisited*, Andy Gill and Kevin Odegard's *A Simple Twist Of Fate* and Glen Dundas's latest edition of *Tangled Up In Tapes* will all be featured and, of course, it will be time again for Manuel Vardavas's bootleg column.

As well as these reviews and (other) articles on early Dylan there is lots more lined up for both issue 10 and beyond; so tell all your friends to subscribe, the more subscribers the greater the chance of colour photos inside the magazine after all.

We hope to have seen many of you at the 4th John Green Day before this issue hits the streets, and at some summer shows.

Andrew Muir

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New Morning and Beyond:

Biding Time, Biting His Tongue

by John Hinchey

New Morning initiates the second phase of Dylan's songwriting - and poetic - career, a phase that runs through the 70s and culminates with the 1980 LP *Saved*. *New Morning* is a good record, one that's easy to underestimate, but it's still several steps down from the last great record to precede it, *John Wesley Harding*, and not all that much stronger than its immediate predecessor, the engaging but very slight *Nashville Skyline*. Indeed, you could argue that *Nashville Skyline* has more good songs, and there's no single song on *New Morning* as commanding as 'I Threw It All Away' or even 'I'll Be Your Baby Tonight.'

The album's strength, such as it is, is an overall effect. Few songs stand up entirely on their own. Dylan has never performed eight of its twelve songs live, and only two have exhibited any staying power in his concert repertoire: 'If Not for You,' a song that loses much of its point outside the context of the record, so that it nearly reduces to sentimental valentine, and 'The Man in Me,' which does stand on its own - as one of the most tediously corny songs Dylan has ever composed. (I think that's what they call the exception that proves the rule.)

New Morning works best as a suite of songs, a vernacular symphony in twelve movements. Its subject is a New World, a 'New Morning' best identified by contrasting its premises with those of its predecessor. *Nashville Skyline* is about a man settling down, a man reluctantly abandoning a past for a future he can't afford not to take. *New Morning* is about a man who can't remember not being settled down, a man living in a paradisaical present, with no accessible past - and no apparent future. He has escaped history, Adam with his Eve (and their kids) on a prelapsarian dude ranch in a perpetual garden. There's nothing not to like about his situation - and the poetry of these songs does quietly evoke the delights of living at ease in the natural world - but it makes him extremely uncomfortable nonetheless. He wasn't born for this; it's not enough.

Dylan's paradise is the psychosocial cocoon we know as the nuclear family, and if *New Morning* is anything more than a report on the state of Dylan's imaginative life, it's a muted critique of the notion that the family could or should be a cosmos unto itself.

The world implied by these songs is a self-contained world that has expelled history to return us to the organic rhythms of natural time: morning, daylight, and night; sun, moon, and stars; summer, fall, winter, and spring. The 'new morning' of the title song is not a new era but a freshness any and every ordinary morning holds out to us. If it is, as the singer suggests, 'the day that all of my dreams come true,' then it announces not

so much the end of history as history's banishment to a long night that has 'passed away so quickly.' Indeed, the best thing about this charming little effusion is the way the threat of an intrusion of historical context - in the sound of 'that motor turnin' - is deftly, wittily co-opted: to identify it as an 'Automobile comin'' not into view or around the bend but 'into style' not only rolls back the historical clock but reduces historical change itself to just another blossoming of the spring-time morning. In this song, in this world, the sound of the 'rooster crowin'' and the 'motor turnin'' are equally natural, ingredients of the same pastoral.

The sense of life as an ahistorical asylum makes itself felt in various ways in these songs. Not the least of these is their feeling for weather - rain, sleet, snow, and ice - simply as weather, and not, as is customary in Dylan's songs, as a psychological or prophetic index. The fact that the album concludes with a song, the somewhat uncannily pointless 'Father of Night,' that addresses the weather as God confirms our sense that although the singer is cozily nestled in His bosom - where even 'loneliness and pain' (implausibly, to be sure) figure as forms of fair weather - he no longer shares in His power, or aspires to.¹

Their animals are even closer to the core of these songs than their weather. Elsewhere in Dylan, animals - whether as metaphors, as fable, or as dogs and horses (and a Siamese cat) attending their human masters - figure only in terms of the human drama they are invoked to illuminate. Here, the animals - domestic as well

as wild - are the story, or at least its foreground. The singer sees or hears himself in the rabbit, groundhog, birdies, wild fishes, and locusts not because of any symbolic connection but because he shares their vitality, their animal spirits. The force of this kind of immediate identification is so strong that when, in 'One More Weekend,' the singer, admitting his itchiness within his marriage, says he's 'slippin' and slidin' like a weasel on the run,' we hear 'like a weasel on the run' less as a figure for his behavior than as an incitement to it. 'I want to slip around just like that weasel!'

II

The songs on *New Morning* can be divided into two kinds, according to the primary theme they address: songs about the satisfactions of life in the New Eden I have been describing and songs that betray a gnawing sense of discomfort in paradise. That is, there are songs about his present and songs about a future he can't quite imagine for himself.

The celebrations of Eden are the most numerous, and they include the album-ending 'Father of Night,' a song whose seemingly unconscious psychological turmoil gives it a subterranean link to the songs of discomfort, and the execrable 'The Man in Me,' a song about which I refuse to be baited into saying anything except that I wish it would just go away. I like country corn as much as the next guy, but 'The Man in Me' lays it on too thick for my stomach.

'Day of the Locusts' is not primarily about the singer's new world - its main subject is his relief at escaping the old one. The song is about Dylan's acceptance in 1970 of an honorary degree from Princeton, and while he's often shown himself willing and able to deploy images of American higher education as symbols of a cultural death-wish, he fails to pull off anything like that here. The feelings the verses convey point only to the singer's peculiar temperament: the manners of academia, and of institutionalized society in general, make him anxious and uncomfortable. I know how he feels, believe me, but the matter is just not that interesting, even to those similarly afflicted.

On the other hand, the chorus is fabulous, one of the finest patches of poetry on the entire album. It's also another example of Dylan's deft way with incremental repetition. In its first and third iterations, the locusts are singing "off in the distance," but the second and fourth times around, the singer is no longer merely listening to them. By replacing the repeated first and third line ('The locusts sang off in the distance') with two lines that refer equally to the locusts and to the chorus celebrating them ('The locusts sang, yeah, it give me a chill' and 'The locusts sang their high whining trill'), he seems to be joining them in song. His chorus is truly choral.²

The other songs of this type are the two songs that open each side of the original vinyl release, 'If Not for You' and 'New Morning,' along with 'Winterlude.' All three of these songs, even before they are songs, are palpably *musical* poems,

possessing an exuberantly playful melopoeia that is their primary *raison d'être*. 'Winterlude,' certainly, either seduces us with its rhythmic and melodic insouciance or leaves us completely cold:

*Winterlude, Winterlude,
oh darlin',
Winterlude by the
road tonight.
Tonight there will be
no quarrelin',
Ev'rything is gonna
be all right.
Oh, I see by the
angel beside me
That love has a
reason to shine.
You're the one I adore,
come over here and give me more,
Then Winterlude, this dude
thinks you're fine.*

The lyric is a strategic inanity, one designed to relieve winter blahs that seem to be caused by a strain in this couple's relationship ('quarrelin') rather than by the weather, which is a main ingredient of the medicine. The song itself then is the glistening 'skating rink' mentioned in the next verse, a 'bold' gambit of 'love' to turn an icy emotional climate into a field of play. The singer, as Michael Gray observes, is skating on the surface of his own emotions here, but that does not bother me, as it bothers Gray.³ The feeling suppressed in this song is not the vague restiveness that plagues the singer elsewhere on this album. It is rather a natural phase of the emotional life of any couple,

married or otherwise. This winter is but a season of the heart, a chilly interlude in Eden and not a threat to it.

'If Not for You' is a grateful tribute to the guardian of the singer's Eden, the redeemer of his animal spirits. The song is addressed to a nymph (or to his wife in her role as the nymph) who rescues him from the doldrums of himself and restores him to the freshness of his natural life. The lyric has almost too light a touch - the impression it makes dissipates soon after hearing to it - but it's nicely done, brimming with a quiet humor ('couldn't even see the floor') and an unpretentious intellectual precision ('would not be *new*' and 'wouldn't *ring true*') that lend it enough weight to keep it from dissipating into thin air.

The song's double bridge - a new trick for Dylan - is a fine example of his use of incremental repetition not to advance a narrative but to uncover complexity and force of emotion. Unlike all the other structural elements of the song, the first bridge concludes not with the title phrase but with 'And you know it's true.' The force of this lies precisely in its superfluousness. It's a kind of pop quiz the singer springs on himself: if he finds anything pleading or challenging in his voice - anything, that is, of the voice of *Blonde on Blonde* - then maybe he still is 'lost' and 'nowhere at all.' Having passed this test - Dylan sings the line with a conspiratorial smile - he can afford, when repeating the bridge, to bring to the surface the depth of the need 'you' satisfy, changing the flat 'I'd be lost' to the dangerously open-ended 'Oh what would I do?'

Finally, while I've said that on *New Morning* the weather is just the weather, that isn't quite true. When the singer recalls his pre-Edenic existence, the weather carries its old psychological freight. The image of the 'rain [that] would gather' in the bridges is of this sort, and the 'winter' that, 'if not for you,' 'would have no spring' in the final verse still carries a whiff of it, but 'spring' does not. The winter that turns into spring is both a simple change of seasons and, more decisively, a yielding of psychological to natural weather. It is this psychic change that enables the singer to 'hear' the singing robin whom spring naturally brings.

'New Morning' is not so niftily constructed, but where 'If Not for You' is merely easy to admire, 'New Morning' is enchanting. The lyric - a celebration of the singer's arrival in Eden - is skimpy enough, a quick sketching of a spare springtime countryside, but the impression it makes is indelible. There's just something captivating in the way the words move. Even the chorus is affectingly inconsequential, the mock-articulate equivalent of a 'hey nonny no.'

Listen again to the opening verse:

*Can't you hear that
rooster crowin'
Rabbit runnin' down
across the road
Underneath the bridge where the
water flowed
through*

The rooster is a pasteboard herald, a mere logo, but that rabbit sure takes us for

a run, doesn't he? Down, across, underneath and then back on through - he seems in the end to be as refreshingly energetic a flow of life as the water that once filled this creekbed. The picture these words draw is not easy to bring into clear focus - I'm just guessing, for instance, that the rabbit darts under the bridge into a dry creekbed - but its sheer liveliness beggars parsing. It's like one of those painted opening scenes in a movie that gradually dissolves into a moving picture. The rabbit seems to burst out of the words in which he is conjured, or to lure the listener chasing him into the world the words conjure.

A similar effect is achieved in the second verse by the sleight-of-hand by which the reference of 'comin'' shifts from an idea to an image: 'automobile comin' into style/Comin' down the road.' 'Country mile' nudges it back toward an idea, but the final 'or two' slyly snatches the living image up again into the mind. The final line of the third verse - 'This must be the day that all of my dreams come true' - itself rings true because we have been seeing/hearing waking dreams 'come true' all along.

III

In *Like a Complete Unknown*, I drew attention to the way Dylan's best and most characteristic lyrics seem shaped by an uncanny listening to their own audience. The songs on *New Morning* have no such resonance. Even in the intimate address of songs like 'If Not for You' or 'Winterlude,' Dylan's singer does not

really seem to be singing to his imagined listener, perhaps because - unlike when roused by those locusts - he is not listening to himself.

Maybe he's forgotten how to. Some such alienation is what Dylan seems to be referring to when, in a series of 1978 interviews, he famously identified 'amnesia' as the cause of the long fallow period in his songwriting between *John Wesley Harding* and *Blood on the Tracks*. The remaining six songs on *New Morning* exhibit this amnesia, but they also struggle with it in ways that ambiguously suggest that the missing parts of Dylan's mind might be coming back to him.

The results are occasionally quite arresting but mostly just pretty bizarre. Consider 'Three Angels,' as odd a song - if a song is what it is - as Dylan has ever composed. It has always struck me - on the rare occasions when I even bothered to listen to it - as a trite sermon on the deafness of the world to its own spiritual reality. But when you listen to it closely, the lyric simply shakes off the moral finger-wagging with which it seems to conclude. The early morning urban streetscape evoked in the middle three verses is too charming and vital to be so easily dismissed:

*The wildest cat from Montana passes
by in a flash
Then a lady on a bright orange dress
One U-Haul trailer, a truck with no
wheels,
The Tenth Avenue bus going west.*

The effect of this 'procession' (as it is dubbed in the last verse) blends the self-

delighting abundance of a Whitman catalogue with the spare severity of a haiku, evoking a sense of the void from which show of things arises. The main affect is a sense of the precious evanescence of life, and of the wonder of it. This latter element is sharpened by occasional surrealisms, like 'a truck with no wheels' and, in the next verse, the dogs who 'fly up and... flutter around' with the pigeons. The realism of the lyric readily absorbs these absurdities because here even the ordinary strikes the eye as a marvel.

But the singer sure doesn't seem to see it this way. 'Nobody stops to ask why,' he pouts at the end of the third verse. We seem to be asked to see everyone - dogs and pigeons included - as mindless louts unable to attend to the higher meanings heralded by the Christmas angels' music. But perhaps they are simply spiritually healthy creatures engaged by the passing life God gave them. The singer later seems to mistake the bakery truck driver who 'stops' his truck near the angels to be stopping to 'ask why.' But his stop is just part of his round. He is himself the 'one face' that the singer, ironically, doesn't seem to recognize.

To the singer, the city is a prison of the spirit, a 'concrete world full of souls,' but his own vision of it in the middle verses belies this judgment. The angels are either a divine benediction on the 'whole earth in procession [as it] seems to pass by,' or they are an intrusive irrelevance, playing Christmas music after Christmas has come and gone. The singer's own spiritual anxieties both shape and fail to shape the song. The voice embodied in the lyric is

unconsciously divided against itself, alternately charmed by and alienated from the scene to which it bears witness. It's impossible to believe that Dylan wasn't at least somewhat aware of this, but it doesn't really help to assume that he was. The song is baffling.

'If Dogs Run Free' is a sibling piece, a spoken-word setting (with bonus accompaniment by indescribably manic scatting) of a poem whose exact point is not necessarily retrievable. The difference is that here Dylan is in on the game, or seems to be anyway - the lyric is such an odd mix of the sly and the goofy that it's impossible to be certain whose leg he is pulling, ours or his own. The lyric is a tissue of banal bromides, yet these banalities are somehow engaging. This is mainly due to a tonal shiftiness that undermines our ability to read the voice we are hearing. It seems to be instead a weave of voices, none of which stick around long enough to be pinned down with any confidence.

Its banalities are also weirdly unsettling. If we had only the first and last of its three verses, it would come off as an apologia for the posthippie neo-pioneer-family lifestyle that Dylan himself seemed to be embracing in his own life at the time and that much of the album seems to celebrate. But even listening just to these two verses it would be hard not to hear it also as a mock-apologia, a putdown. Its tone is too insistently glib.

And the middle verse, a parody of the first, throws everything up in the air. 'If dogs run free, why not me' breaks 'me' from the 'we' whose idyll opens and closes

the song. Thus isolated, 'me' turns out to be the snake in this Eden, a being who finds his freedom not 'across the swooping plain' but 'across the swamp of time.' Our dogs can't run free with us here because this 'swamp' is not part of the natural terrain that holds the 'swooping plain.' It exists on a psychic level inhabited only by human beings - and only by human beings who have cast themselves outside of Eden. Human freedom - the kind the singer seems to hunger for - is not the natural wildness of dogs being dogs but a wildness that opens a hole in nature: 'To each his own, it's all unknown.'

The singer's dangerous human wildness had first surfaced so unobtrusively that even he probably doesn't notice it. When looking across that swooping plain, he hears 'a symphony/Of two mules, trains, and rain.' These are images out of the fallen cosmos of *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*, and they sit here like relics of a lost civilization. The revision of this image in the second verse may seem to revert to sentimental self-deception, but a 'symphony and tapestry of rhyme' is a just characterization of the charming veil of revelatory obfuscation the lyric weaves. The singer, in his human freedom, both is and isn't here in what he sings us, a truancy his song both discloses and covers up:

*Oh winds which rush my tale to thee
So it may flow and be
To each his own, it's all unknown
If dogs run free*

'Thee' here is the other half of 'we,' the singer's partner in the 'true love' that, as we are later assured, 'needs no company.' The archaism 'Thee' lends a formal, distancing edge to these lines that is compounded by the fact that 'thee' is addressed indirectly. The 'tale' of the singer's freedom - 'to each his own, it's all unknown' - is addressed to the winds, who are entrusted to deliver these words, 'so it may flow and be.' Distance - and the freedom it affords - is a prerequisite of the connectedness that 'true love' affirms. True love may indeed 'need' no company, but love that abjures company - especially the uneasy company 'me' and 'thee' keep with 'we' - is not true, and it is certainly not a form of freedom.

At the end of this verse, the refrain 'If dogs run free' is itself freed from its literal sense to carry figurative weight. It comes across as something along the lines of 'If this dog is able to run humanly free.' The final verse begins by wrenching it back to its literal sense, resuming a form of freedom that forsakes the essence of our human freedom:

*If dogs run free, then what must be
must be, and that is all*

It's unclear whether the paean to the powers of 'true love' that follows and concludes the song is offered as the reward for this dutiful return to Eden or as a more realistic alternative to it. I lean toward the latter - after all, 'true love' can't offer to 'cure your soul and make you whole' unless it is acknowledged that we come to love sick and broken - but I wouldn't bet

on it. The song knows more about 'true love' than it seems willing either to avow openly or to run away from. By the time it comes round the last time, the refrain is utterly destabilized between literal and figurative, natural and human meanings. It's a cracked poem, but one that never fails to crack me up.

'Went to See the Gypsy' is another lyric whose meaning seems to escape its singer, but since this is a dream song, that is all to the good. The song is often described as an account of Dylan's meeting with Elvis, even though there is no evidence outside the song that they ever met. It is, however, a dream of meeting Elvis, or the gypsy spirit in music that spoke to us through Elvis.

The lyric is one of the finest sustained poetic compositions on the album - surpassed only by 'Time Passes Slowly' - and it remains a minor song only because its resonance is nearly an exclusively private one for Dylan. The account of the meeting - the first verse - is truly superb, a mythic recognition scene, rendered in the idiom of American reticence, between the King and the Prince, father and son, reigning champion and number one contender.

After this fine beginning, everything goes awry - not with the song but in the story it tells. The singer - who is Dylan's own dream self - abruptly heads to the lobby to 'make a small call out.' That 'small' is a wonderful touch, fusing the literal sense of 'short call' with the implicit (mis)understanding that this is a 'small thing.' Of course, it is anything but that. In the lobby he is confronted by a 'pretty

dancing girl' - the gypsy's nymph - who shouts a warning:

*“Go on back to see the gypsy
he can move you from the rear
drive you from your fear
bring you through the mirror
He did it in Las Vegas
and he can do it here”*

There is something quite uncanny about this. The 'pretty dancing girl' may have been there waiting for him when he got to the lobby, but her words address a later epoch in his life. The gypsy's enumerated powers possess an appropriate oracular vagueness, but the basic sense is clear enough. The singer has slipped 'to the rear' and out of the lime-light in which minutes earlier (though it already seems long ago) he confronted the gypsy as an equal. Held back by some obscure 'fear,' he's trapped inside the 'mirror,' a pale reflection of his true self. The final line is both a lovely Elvis tribute - this is how rumors of Elvis get into the song - and wonderfully droll: If he can do it for Las Vegas, a house of mirrors, then surely he can rescue you.

The bridge that intervenes between the second and third verse is the finest one on the album. The singer apparently responds to the dancing girl's exhortation by glancing out the hotel window:

*Outside the lights were shining
on the river of tears
I watched them from the distance
with music in my ears*

The connection between the 'river of

tears' and the 'music in my ears' is central. As Robert Forryan has observed, tears are regularly associated in Dylan's songs with the wellsprings of insight and inspiration.⁴ But the 'river of tears' is a reality that has been banished from the gated paradise that is the world of *New Morning*. This song may be set in a 'hotel' - a site commonly associated by Dylan with loneliness, dispossession, and suffering - but until now the singer has not taken that fact to heart.

The singer promptly returns to reclaim his destiny, but the gypsy is gone, as is the dancing girl, who seems to be something of a muse, or musette. It's too late, it seems; he threw away his chance. The song ends with the image of the sun rising 'over that little Minnesota town,' the very Minnesota town, surely, that Dylan left behind so many years ago. This image carries a double sense, an ambivalence that is really the two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, there is the mortifying sense that Dylan has been exiled from his own life. But it is also a clue to his future. It is not only a retrospective prophecy of the birthright he has betrayed but also a genuine prophecy of a rebirth that awaits on *Planet Waves*, a collection of songs flooded with returning memories of his Minnesota youth.

'Went to See the Gypsy' has a certain archetypal resonance - we've all briefly turned our back on some part of ourselves only to discover we've already lost our way back to it - but the story it tells is of considerably more interest to Dylan biographers than to the rest of us. Its main charm, I think, is that it vividly captures the flavor of a disturbing dream.

The remaining three songs on *New Morning* are shaped in part by the singer's effort to confront his amnesia. The least impressive of the three is 'One More Weekend,' a proposal that the singer and his wife cheat on their marriage with each other. The song's most telling image is the fantasy, toward the end of the bridge, of going 'someplace unknown.' What he's really looking for - even if he doesn't quite remember it - is the 'complete unknown' in himself and in her that domesticity doesn't seem to have much use for. But the imagined 'one more weekend' smacks of desperation.

The song's premise is not the most serious problem with it. Its poetry is simply too threadbare and clumsily manufactured to sustain any kind of attention. Once you get past its delightful opening line - 'Slippin' and slidin' like a weasel on the run' - there's very little about the lyric to like. There are hundreds of songwriters writing better poetry than this.

'Time Passes Slowly' and 'Sign on the Window' both possess a lovely (and thoroughly uncharacteristic) melancholy, and in each case the singer finally sounds like he has wrapped his mind around the ironies that beset him. They are easily the two most memorable songs on the album. 'Time Passes Slowly' is also the first Dylan lyric since *John Wesley Harding* to sustain from start to finish (admittedly on a diminished scale) something of that inexhaustible power to surprise that distinguishes the best poetry, the ability to reclaim its mystery from whatever sense we make of it each time we confront it.

'Time Passes Slowly' is about the human value of a terrestrial paradise - what Wallace Stevens called the 'credences of summer' - and both these snow-bred poets evince a deep ambivalence about paradisaical experience. The song turns on the emotional ambiguity of the notion of time that passes slowly: if we're absorbed by the present, it's felt as a blessing; if we're itching for change, it's a burden. Here the singer finds himself feeling both ways at once, and with apparently equal intensity. I say 'apparently' because, on its surface the lyric is a celebration of endless summer. The weariness with it all is more quietly conveyed, but I think it comes across as an equally strong feeling.

This underside of the singer's mood first makes itself felt in the couplet that concludes the opening verse:

*[We] catch the wild fishes
that float through the stream,
Time passes slowly when you're
lost in a dream.*

That 'fishes' is a deliciously childish touch. By suggesting that the singer is fishing with his children, it enhances the mood of Edenic ease. But there is also an uneasy sense that the singer is reflected in those floating fish, as encased in his 'dreams come true' as they are in their sustaining stream. Out of context, the phrase 'lost in a dream,' like 'time passes slowly,' has an ambivalent resonance, but here the darker sense seems ascendant.

The second verse jump-cuts abruptly to a remembered scene from the singer's adolescence: the amnesia seems to be

lifting. The precise memory that arises - of the delicious mixture of pleasure and pain in adolescent erotic longing - is evoked with a wonderfully tender clarity of detail. It echoes the ambivalence the singer now feels as a happy family man who eventually did get the girl of his dreams. But there is a deeper connection between these two eras in the singer's life that helps illuminate his ambivalence, and even make it bearable. The Edenic happy family teeming with kids - the Eden of parenthood - is like the Eden of adolescence in that both are transitional states. Time indeed passes slowly - but only for the time being.

An aside: Thinking about this lyric has finally explained to me my own recurrent Freudian slip of referring to the twenty-one years from the birth of my first child to the day they both were out on their own as 'when I was growing up.'

The bridge introduces a suddenly playful tone, a litany of all the places other than where he is the singer now feels at ease to acknowledge he has 'no reason to go.' His Edenic Neverneverland is OK after all - for the time being. Or is it? On *New Morning*, Dylan's vocal tone on the bridge hovers somewhere between ease and panic. (If you want to hear him invest pure delight in this thought, listen to the Basement Tapes song 'You Ain't Going Nowhere,' a song about the same long summer before it grew wearying.) 'Time Passes Slowly' is not part of Dylan's live repertoire, but if it were - and if the feelings it encloses were still alive to him - I suspect that the balance between ease and panic would vary greatly from season to season.

The final verse confirms that all is still not entirely well. The image of the singer - and his wife, presumably the other half of the 'we' invoked - staring 'straight ahead' and trying 'so hard to stay right' indicates a degree of strain not at all consonant with paradise, 'up here in the daylight.' Ma and Pa seem to be itching to get down again - something we never saw in 'J & W Cleaver (the famously idyllic 1950s sitcom couple.)'! But the song's final couplet - the best lines on the album - banishes this parental restiveness by trumping it with a sobering wider vision:

*Like the red rose of summer
that blooms in the day,
Time passes slowly and
fades away.*

The precise logic of this is rather slipperier than it sounds. The blooming, fading red rose is an image of organic, biological time. Here, the human form of time - the kind we measure as history - itself dissolves, like the automobile in 'New Morning,' into nature's timeless rhythms. And while the singer recognizes that this timeless idyll is itself temporary - historical time shall return as surely as another rose will bloom - this finale seems haunted by a darker intuition that in the end nature always trumps history. The lyric concludes on the note of an exquisitely muted mournfulness.

'Sign on the Window' is not as rich in implication as 'Time Passes Slowly,' but it's a superbly executed minor gem. It also smartly summarizes the overall ethos of the album. The singer seems to have

wandered out of Eden and back into the old world of human distress and strife, a world nicely evoked in the signs he sees, as in a vision, as he strolls through town in the song's opening quatrain. The second verse, like the second verse in 'Time Passes Slowly,' feels like an incident from the past teased out of memory by the preceding verse. The singer may or not be the 'boyfriend' whose girl seems to have abandoned him, but the incident figures as a vivid reminder of the wounds the larger world can inflict - a world from which he retreats, in the final verse, to the Eden of wife and kids. Before he heads back, though, a bridge glances mournfully and perhaps guiltily back on an inhospitably cold and rainy 'Main Street' and offers it a wryly paltry goodbye: 'Hope that it don't sleet.'

There is, of course, more to it than this. The final line of each quatrain is repeated, so that the singer may savor the full flavor of those lines, and the heart of the song is in the way they taste. The concluding line of the first verse, 'Sign on the porch says 'Three's a Crowd,' sharpens our sense of the distinction between life on Main Street and life in Eden in the way it (in tandem with its earlier rhyme mate, 'No Company Allowed') demonically parodies the love that, as we were told in 'If Dogs Run Free,' 'needs no company.'

The effect of the repeated concluding image of the second verse - 'Brighton girls are like the moon' - is more crucial. In a sense, the song never gets past it because the singer never does. Yes, one's 'true love' excepted, girls can be treacherously fickle.

But, as the lovely glamour of the line itself attests, that doesn't dim their allure or dampen the energy they arouse. To the contrary, it's a provocation to the dormant poet in him. His wife and kids may have his heart, but the Brighton girls still have a hold on his mind. That's why, I think, the final verse - an image of the good life he now has - is presented prospectively, as if as a proposal to himself: he's trying to find out how he'd feel about choosing a settled family life if he had the choice to make over again. And that's why, when he turns over the song's final line - 'That must be what it's all about' - his voice, as Michael Gray observes,⁵ fails either to nail it with conviction or demolish it with irony. He does and doesn't believe it because his own nature is divided against itself. He savors his domestic happiness, but there is also some bitterness in the aftertaste.

IV

New Morning inaugurates a new phase in Dylan's songwriting, one in which Dylan's earlier preoccupation with the nature of freedom is replaced by an equally consuming obsession with finding and keeping faith with that which 'rings true.' Obviously, *New Morning* starts this phase much less impressively than does its first-phase counterpart, *Freewheelin'*, and it's also less clearly the beginning of anything. It barely moves forward from *Nashville Skyline*.

And with no further collections of new Dylan songs forthcoming until the release of *Planet Waves* nearly four years later,

New Morning would have soon looked like the end of everything were it not for the inclusion (perversely enough) of two sparkling new songs on the 1971 *Greatest Hits, Vol. 2*, 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' and 'Watching the River Flow,' the latter released as a single that achieved moderate commercial success - it topped out at #41 on the Billboard charts - a few months earlier. Although neither song touches what I have identified as the ruling themes of Dylan's songwriting in the 70s, both look anxiously forward to a return to a center stage that by 1971 Dylan had long ago abandoned. More crucially, both songs are enlivened by unrulier imaginative energies than anything Dylan had attempted since the *Basement Tapes*.

Both songs strike me, however, as somehow unfinished - not in their music, but as lyrics, as poems. Dylan fiddled for a few years with the lyrics of 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' in ways that seemed on the verge of bringing its poetic energies to a fuller realization, but I don't think he really got there. The lyrics he currently sings are not so much completed as ossified in a state of near-completion. For instance, in the final verse, the 'plane ride' on which he 'landed in Brussels' is later transformed into a 'train ride' on which he 'pulled into' the Belgian capital.⁶ This change picks up the 'train wheels' running though the back on his memory in the previous verse, nicely enforcing a sense of the interchangeability of the interior and actual journeys that shape the arc of the lyric. When Dylan revived the song in the mid 90s, however, he was back on the plane, but still pulling in nonetheless!

A digression on a related matter: Those 'train wheels' also soon mutated - during the 1975 Rolling Thunder Revue, it seems - into 'train wrecks,' in which form it has since remained. Here the revised version makes little sense - unless you remember the original, in which case it works wonderfully as a wry gloss. Another change works in a somewhat similar way: 'Boticelli's niece' - who is waiting for the singer back at his hotel room in Rome in the opening and who's promised to be 'right there with me' when he paints his masterpiece - eventually becomes a 'pretty little girl from Greece.' The revision makes perfect sense without reference to the original, but I think we are meant to remember the original - and to suspect that it's the same girl, that that pretty but unassuming Greek girl *is* Botticelli's niece. (Her deliquescence in the 90s to the rather less fetching 'girl from Greece' perhaps indicates Dylan's growing wariness toward or even weariness with the illusion of eventual grandeur that animates the song.) The motives for these revisions strike me as something different than a final touching up, like the substitution of a train for a plane. These revisions function rather as interpretive glosses. Unlike almost all the songs written before and after them, most of the frequently performed songs from *New Morning* through *Blood on the Tracks* have been subject to an incessant, almost obsessive process of continuous lyrical revision. It's as if there is something about the poetry of them - or maybe their subject matter - that invites such treatment. Perhaps its because the agency of memory plays so

crucial a role in most if not all of these songs that Dylan somehow instinctively sees them, like memory itself, as palimpsests whose multiple layers he raises to the surface in successive versions of the song. I really don't know.

To return to the matter at hand. 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' is shaped by two foci: the body of the song is an autobiographical allegory, a comic version of the archetypal American dream of abducting the European muse - and her dowry - and bringing her home to the refreshing waters of 'the land of Coca-Cola.' Each of the songs three 2-quatrain sections culminates with a refrain-like couplet that brings this raffish tale up against the more complexly troubling prospect of the day 'when I paint my masterpiece.'

The lyric offers three versions of what that will be like before settling on one that rings true - or at least not somehow manifestly false. Initially, as we have seen, he imagines that the muse will be there at his side. But as Dylan discovered in *Nashville Skyline*, that is a lie: as soon as the masterpiece is completed, the muse is gone: the girl is no longer a muse, the muse no longer his. Next, he imagines it will be 'smooth like a rhapsody.' (Eventually, the word 'smooth' was dropped, probably because it belabors the obvious.) But that's not right either. As we saw in looking at *New Morning*, the life as a rhapsody is not all that rhapsodic, its smoothness all on the surface. Finally, though he gets it right, evading all experiential refutations of romance with a demotic pragmatism: it will be 'diff'rent.' It's not much, but it does hold out the prospect of more

life between now and then, and to borrow a similarly sublime evasion from 'Highlands,' that's 'good enough for now.'

The rest of the song, though variously and consistently engaging, doesn't quite keep up with the suggestive power of this sequence. The opening evocation of the double vision induced by the 'footprints' of the past that litter Rome is a charmingly comic (and no doubt unwitting) revision of literary critic Harold Bloom's melancholy musings about the 'anxiety of influence' as the source of revisionary impulse in poets, and the bit about 'dodging lions' in the 'Coliseum' [sic] reprises Mark Twain in *Innocents Abroad* by way of W. C. Fields. But - well, it's hard to say. It just seems, for example, that the connection between the singer's 'seeing double' and the 'train wheels at the back of my memory' is both central and unrealized, as is the unexpectedly startling force of the memory those train wheels dislodge: 'When I ran on the hilltop following a pack of wild geese.' And I won't even go into the scene at Brussels, which feels like an entertaining distraction from the matter at hand - or perhaps an episode from a completely different chapter in the story of the hardships that face an ambitious popular artist. I'm not really complaining, just trying to explain why I can't get as excited about this lyric as I want to.

'Watching the River Flow' is a similar case, although it strikes me as even less fully realized. The incremental repetition in the opening quatrains of the otherwise identical final two verses spans too small an increment really to advance, let alone

resolve, the sense and feeling of the lyric. Indeed, when performing the song, Dylan usually abandons all pretense of resolution, dropping the third verse and singing the fourth verse twice.

The lyric is simply too haphazardly sketched to afford Dylan a real opportunity for resolution, but it is absorbingly suggestive nonetheless. The singer finds himself with a itch to return to a life in the city, which is implicitly defined as a place to cope with the restlessness within himself that has landed him in the 'all-night cafe' and with the strife and distress he is finding even out here in the country. But he decides to sit himself 'so contentedly' on a 'bank of sand' and 'watch the river flow.' That 'so contentedly' might seem ironic, but if it is, it's an irony he is enjoying at his own expense. The singer quite enjoys the power to choose - to stay in the country or to return to the city - a power he will lose as soon as he exercises it.

The river - which finally figures both as the genius of the countryside and the 'river of tears' that is the flow of urban life - may forever 'keep on rollin'.../No matter what gets in the way or which way the wind does blow,' but the singer exercises a comparable if contrary power by choosing to 'stop' - to 'wonder why,' to 'read a book,' and in an act that is both a form of wondering why and of reading, to 'watch the river flow.' This singer, it's clear enough, will eventually choose the city, but he'll make that not-all-that-free choice in his own good time - 'No matter what gets in the way or which way the wind does blow.' This song reached its pinnacle in the mid 90s as a breathtaking

rockabilly rave-up, a musical transformation possible because the feeling at its core is the singer's burning thrill with his own harried but unhurried power of self-determination. By the end of the song, the abashed confession with which it began (and surely the main reason he hasn't yet returned to the city) - 'I got nothing to say' - has been retroactively transmuted into an act of defiance.

There is one more song I would like to consider, the 1971 single 'George Jackson,' which does address the central themes of Dylan's 70s work. It's a protest song of sorts, lamenting the death of an African American petty thief-turned-revolutionary allegedly murdered by prison guards. But it's Dylan's first protest song to hold out no apparent hope of social change. Indeed, the song's real subject is not outrage at Jackson's death but grief - and even terror - at what it signifies. The most satisfying parts of the song are its first and last verses. The inconsolable sense of loss with which the song begins seems to have erupted from the singer's unconscious; one feels that even now he is aware of it only because upon awaking he sees the 'tears in my bed,' tears that are part of that 'river of tears' from which he has been keeping his distance. The closing image of the world as a 'prison yard' where 'some of us are prisoners, the rest of us are guards' is particularly unsettling, in part because, if you think about it, in such a world all of us are *both* prisoners and guards.

The problematic portion of the song is its middle three verses, which establish what has been lost. These verses read - and

sing - as if excerpts from a hymn to a martyred saint. But George Jackson is not a saint. Perhaps he should be, I don't know. Dylan seems to have taken at face value a myth that, however much truth it may or may not hold, carries little if any weight among the song's intended audience. He will do the same thing on *Desire* in both 'Hurricane' and 'Joey,' but he gets away with it on those songs because the singer's embattled partisanship is central to their meaning. 'George Jackson' works only if you can take Jackson's sainthood for granted - or if you quietly treat him as a fiction of the song or substitute the image of some comparable saint your mind can get behind.

And you're probably going to have to make it a Christian saint, too. The crucifixion of Jesus - by 'authorities [who] hated him because he was too real' and who were 'frightened of his power [and] scared of his love' - lies palpably close to the surface of this song. Even at this point in his life and career, it's hard to dismiss the recurrent, if usually submerged, presence of the figure of Jesus Christ in his songs as no more than the default figure his culture - particularly his musical culture - affords Dylan for representing certain spiritual values. As he put it in the ineffably weird Basement Tapes song 'Sign on the Cross,' the figure of Jesus 'worries me.'

1. John Gibbens finds an implicit invocation to Christ in the grammatical incoherence of the song's final line. Gibbens suggests that 'Father of whom we solemnly praise' is an elision for 'Father of Him whom we solemnly praise' (*The Nightingale's Code: A Poetic Study of Bob Dylan*, p. 289). This sounds plausible to me, especially since there is no need or even room for Christ in the world of this song, where the Edenic relationship between God and his creation has not been sundered. The invocation of Christ has not been merely elided, then, but violently suppressed, suggesting that Dylan's imagination is divided against itself in this song. On the other hand, the explanation for the grammatical oddity of this line may be a lot simpler. Perhaps Dylan began to sing 'Father of whom we offer the most solemn praise,' shifted the grammar in mid course, liked the feel of the result, and let it stand.

2. Neil Corcoran finds an implicit resumption of a prophetic voice in this self-identification with the locusts ('Introduction: Writing Aloud' in *Do You Mr. Jones?: Bob Dylan with the Poets and Professors*, p. 10). That may well be true, at least at some unconscious level. But for me that sense of the image is purely vestigial, a resonance that doesn't get activated because I can't take the song's putative anti-academic jeremiad seriously. And in any case, the sense of the locusts as a plague is at most a secondary note. They figure primarily as a beckoning home.

3. *Song and Dance Man III: The Art of Bob Dylan*, pp. 175-176.

4. *Judas!* 4, 41-42.

5. *Song and Dance Man III: The Art of Bob Dylan*, p. 172.

6. The text I use here is the published one, which seems to be the original version, as it's the one recorded by the Band (and released on *Cahoots*) shortly before Dylan recorded the slightly revised (and bridgeless) version that appears on *Greatest Hits, Vol. 2*. In Dylan's version, while he is still clearly flying into Brussels, the line that describes the 'plane ride' is replaced by 'With a picture of a tall oak tree by my side.'

‘AN ABSORBING FILM!
A SPECIAL, HIP FUN!’

-*New York Times*

‘ENDLESSLY FASCINATING!’

-*Newsweek*

‘PULLS NO PUNCHES!’

-*The Christian Science Monitor*

‘AN ESSAY IN CINEMATIC
TRUTH TELLING’

-*Time Magazine*

**Folklore Center - Fretted
Instruments Newsletter,
Monday, September 11,
1967**



I've seen so many reviews of the Dylan movie that was released in NYC last week and I didn't care for any of them, so I'll add my notes taken when I saw it in San Francisco in July as my contribution: ‘...we went to see D. A. Pennybaker's film on Dylan based on his trip to England in 1965. A sad event. Dylan is surrounded by machinations, appearing whenever he's told to, and resenting it. He is abusive to interviewers. Why? He didn't have to agree to it. If he didn't like England, why go there? He has enough money to stay away from anywhere. Not once is he

shown close to the audience as he insincerely sings the songs he made his reputation on in America and had freshly repudiated. Neither is there a rock band that he found so necessary at Newport to communicate his new ideas. Joan Baez comes across like an idiot reduced to making faces for photo people as her main contribution to the film. If you don't like the form of what you are doing, don't do it. Don't pick on the doorman of a hotel. Don't pick on a TV functionary. Pick on an equal. A Rockefeller. If you don't respect TV don't do TV shows. If you dislike large hotels and their beaten down unctuous staff don't inhabit them. The communication was on the ‘wow, that's where it's at' level... Never more. Never less for that's not possible. Only one good scene. Money. BBC buying Dylan as they might buy Lassie for he just went from 45 to 6 on the charts, ho ho, while Al Grossman, manager, looks on with non-care until the moment of financial triumph. Grossman is always near Dylan at show time but never speaks to him. He merely indicates to Dylan that it is time to release himself to the audience.

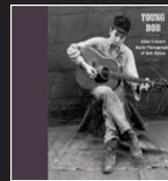
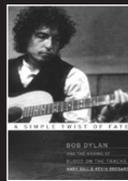
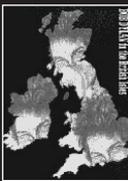
More interviews in which he spits back at inferiors. He doesn't like Time, Newsweek. He doesn't read them for the truth. Dylan would rather see a photo of a tramp vomiting next to a picture of a Rockefeller eating. A true statement he doesn't live up to in the film. The film could have been made in Dar Es Salaam for all the contact with the English people shown. These are spoiled capitalistic products enjoying themselves nervously, and at the expense of others. In all of England Dylan finds only one thing to get really angry about, a broken glass thrown out of a window. Joan Baez appears and re-appears but never on the stage with Dylan as was originally envisaged. Dylan is bigger now than Baez so who needs her on his stage, just because she squired him on her stages for two years. Sad for Baez, but musically

meaningful. She kisses him once on the back of his head to prove that she's close to him while he types something. The camera tries to capture the suggested immortality of the moment by trying to focus as clearly as possible on the words. Not quite possible, just, the majesty of human thought transferred to paper via clicking typewriter keys.

There is one fine moment, though, when he gives an autograph to a girl in a record store and asks her to think for herself, the only warm moment in the film. He should dump the management around him and the prisons of his friendships shown in the film.' End of notes. Now some more comment.

Derroll Adams has a role in the film as a seated stumble bum. He should have at least been given a line to recite. I missed what Donovan had to say as I didn't see the film again. I notice that the film is being released as slowly as possible around the country, as if were a new soap, to see if the 'put-on' will be accepted by the general American audience that now calls itself 'hip'. I am convinced that the owners of the film are not so sure now that they made the film in the right way. But they're willing to take enough risk to present the film rather than bury it. I hear from friends that the film is a masterpiece in spite of itself, a coup de cinema verité, exposing the producers for what they are, and at the same time preserving the genius process for the first time so that future professionals will be able to tell what was going on. You know the argument. Just think if we could have done the same for Rembrandt or Bach. Now, if you want to see a good movie underlined by hand-held-camera work, and lousy film technique and terrible soundtrack - go to see Barbara Rubin's film on Allen Ginsberg's London journey of about the same time where he is caught reading poetry at Albert Hall. You can feel his oneness with the audience as he enfolds them in a pan-sexual embrace, full of mystery and open love, so unlike Dylan in the same hall, alone and blinded by lights. And there is a wonderful touch of non-rude pleasantry as Allen writes in his journal while sitting on the grave of William Blake. I think that Dylan made a serious mistake in allowing this film to be released. I'd feel worse if he has no control over its destiny.

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The Gypsy Trail

by Nick Hawthorne

It was one of those typically memorable Bob Dylan lines when, after surviving his histoplasmosis infection in 1997, he deadpanned:

'I really thought I'd be seeing Elvis soon'

As with so many Dylan remarks, the comment is a wry quip. Part charm and part tease. It is in no doubt whatsoever that Elvis Presley, the 'King' of Rock 'n' Roll, was a major influence on Bob Dylan, from his childhood in the 1950's right through to the present day. It would not be misleading to say that Presley's was a seismic influence, as Dylan's recollections of his first memories of Presley's voice testify:

'When I first heard Elvis' voice, I just knew that I wasn't going to work for anybody; and nobody was going to be my boss... Hearing him for the first time was like busting out of jail'

Dylan gives credit to Presley for empowering him towards a fresh sense of freedom and a realisation of what he could achieve way back when. In 2003 Dylan was still 'proposing a toast to the King' on a nightly basis via his own retro 1950's rock 'n' roll show stopper 'Summer Days', a toast repeated every night so far in 2004. Dylan has recorded songs made famous by Presley throughout his career, from 'That's Alright Mama' through 'Can't Help Falling in Love' to 'Any Way You Want Me', (Presley repaid the compliment by recording several Dylan songs) and was seriously affected by Presley's death in 1977, so much so that he said he 'didn't speak to anyone for a week', and apparently became depressed and morose, which shows the depth of feeling Dylan had for Presley and what he represented. He has also paid his dues to Presley in more interviews than I care to remember. So it was fitting, then, that he should namecheck the immortal King after surviving a brush with his own mortality.

Presley's influence is not in doubt, and therefore neither is the fact that a meeting with Presley would have presumably appealed to Dylan. An interesting point is whether a meeting with Dylan would have appealed to Elvis Presley. There is virtually nothing to guide us in second guessing this, the merest breadcrumbs for evidence. Presley made two comments on Dylan, one was during his '68 TV Special, when he listed Dylan amongst people he liked on the 'current' scene, and the other was a throw away quip about feeling as if *'Bob Dylan has been sleeping in my mouth'*. This last remark can be interpreted in numerous ways, but it appears to be nothing more than a jocular remark. Perhaps the most telling insight into Presley's opinion on Dylan comes in the four Dylan songs he recorded. The two officially released tracks, 'Don't Think Twice...' and 'Tomorrow Is a Long Time' do not reveal that much, neither does a run through of 'Blowin' in the Wind', but an outtake rehearsal of 'I Shall Be Released' leaves us in no doubt that Presley is more than aware of the songs author. After a brief but beautifully solemn glimpse of the chorus, Presley bellows *'Dylan'* in his deep baritone, one word filed with respect. It seems reasonable to think that Presley was well aware of who Bob Dylan was, and just as he entertained the Beatles, there is no reason why he should refuse the opportunity to meet Dylan, out of curiosity if nothing else.

But what is in doubt is whether any such meeting between Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan ever took place, and if so,

when. You would think it impossible for a meeting of two such important figures in music history to occur without it being recorded by someone, somewhere, or being told as an anecdote by someone, somewhere, even Dylan himself. But that has never happened. Dylan has never admitted to meeting Presley, and no-one, no friends or hangers-on from either camp have told of a meeting between the two. So that opening comment made by a Dylan, referring to leaving this world and going on to the next life and meeting up with Presley, left open that niggling question we would love to ask him, did he think he would be seeing Elvis 'again'?

When it comes to deductive theory, there is only one worth a damn, which is that of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's brilliant detective Sherlock Holmes. Doyle's creation, a cold steely drug addict, had a deductive basis that was second to none:

When you eliminate the impossible, whatever you are left with, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.

Exactly right. It is this theory that made Holmes such a superb detective (that and his detachment from ordinary human emotions that cripple many a well intentioned sleuth), and that theory that can be used to follow the clues available to pin down a meeting between Bob Dylan and Elvis Presley.

The whole saga emanates from the Dylan song 'Went to See the Gypsy', which was described by *Rolling Stone* magazine in its enthusiastic review of *New Morning* (the album which the song hails from) as:

'An obvious Elvis parable'

It is interesting that the reviewer uses the word 'parable' as opposed to the more straight forward 'story' or 'tale'. The word 'parable' indicates that there is more to the story that meets the eye, something other than fact alone, something from which a lesson is to be learnt, and it is indeed defined in the Collins English Dictionary as being:

'Parable: - A short story that uses familiar events to illustrate a religious or ethical situation'

The story being told is in one sense a common tale, one of going to see a 'gypsy' or any mysterious figure in the hope of solace and/or enlightenment. The notion of two well known figures getting the chance to meet and size each other up or exchange their mutual appreciation is also a familiar one.

The view that the identity of the song's titular 'gypsy' is in fact Elvis Presley seems to be confirmed in any Dylan book you care to refer to on the subject. Everywhere you look, you will learn that 'Went to See the Gypsy' is a song about Dylan meeting Elvis Presley. This 'fact' seems to stem from various sources such as Howard Sounes, who says in his Dylan biography *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan*:

'The song 'Went to see the Gypsy' was about a meeting with Elvis Presley, as the session musicians understood it'

This implies that Dylan may have confirmed the identity of the 'gypsy' to those playing on the song, but frustratingly Sounes leaves that bit of information there, with no actual back up of substance. Other writers such as Michael Gray, in *Song & Dance Man III*, look to the lyric

itself to reveal the identity. Turning to a trusted right hand man in all matters of date and whereabouts, the Dylan detectives 'Dr Watson' as it were, Clinton Heylin's indispensable *A Life in Stolen Moments, Day by Day 1941-1995*, does not help in this specific case, i.e. it does not give a date and venue or even a guessed date and venue, for any meeting between Dylan and Presley. It does give us lots of other clues in our search however, which we can use later. There is also no reported meeting between Dylan and Presley in Clinton's *Behind the Shades - Take Two*. We do get more rumour and fuel to the fire however, as Clinton describes the song as:

'an account of his [Dylan's] long awaited meeting with Elvis in a "big hotel" in Las Vegas'

However, what you will not find in any of these books on Dylan, or any others, whether they are biographies or otherwise, is firm detail on any actual meeting. When it happened? Where it happened? What happened? Nobody seems to really know. Those details are left out because, presumably, the authors have no real factual answers to any of these questions. In his biography cited above, Howard Sounes confirms this:

'It remains unclear when and where Dylan and Presley actually met (Dylan himself has never spoken about it).'

That at least is true, Dylan has never confirmed a meeting with Presley, refusing to confirm when, or if, the two ever met. He has spoken about visiting Graceland in the late eighties, and indeed we have photographic proof of this event, but never of meeting the living Presley.

This is singular on the one hand, yet typically Dylanesque on the other, forever the impish tease protecting his sources and privacy. Why would he not wish to speak about a meeting with Presley, especially now, some 25 years after Elvis's death? Maybe the multi-volumed autobiography 'Chronicles' that Dylan is apparently penning will finally reveal all, but if the time it is taking for part one to see the light of day is anything to go by, it would not be wise to hold your breath waiting for that clarification.

Browsing the Internet, that great god of ramshackle research, will lead you to all sorts of wild and wonderful theories concerning the meaning of 'Went to See the Gypsy'. Depending on which you read, the song could either be about Dylan and Presley's hometowns in Minnesota (very good, except of course, Presley was not born in Minnesota); it is about them meeting in Minnesota as Presley prepared for a show there (impossible, as we shall learn); it is not about Presley at all, but rather *insert name here*. Divertingly interesting, but nothing there of real substance, so it is best that we start with the lyric of the song itself.

Before continuing on this deductive path, and aside from the question of whether the lyric outlines an actual meeting with Presley or not, let us briefly look at the song itself and the album it comes from. A minor work on a minor album, relatively speaking, it may be, but it is a strong minor work on a very strong minor album.

New Morning is an album that brings endless joy. It was hailed upon its release

by many as a true return to form, following the puzzling-for-many dead ends of *Nashville Skyline* and *Self Portrait* and Dylan's general retreat from the world he had immersed himself in up to his infamous motorcycle accident in 1966. (History misleads a little as *New Morning* was released after *Self Portrait* and many saw it as Dylan's answer to the critical backlash that album had suffered. However, the two albums sessions very much overlapped, with much of *New Morning* written before *Self Portrait* was released, so it was not as planned as many see it.) The album then suffered something of a backlash as many decided it actually contained little substance and was something of a phony imitation, nothing more than Dylan treading water artistically and repeating himself, relying on old tricks. Although there is some truth in all of these accusations, the album still had much to offer. And it would be the subsequent work of *Planet Waves* (to a lesser extent) and *Blood On The Tracks* (to a major extent) that would start casting a very large shadow over the immediate work beforehand.

Now almost thirty-five years old, *New Morning* has aged very well, and revealed itself to be a star amongst Dylan's minor work. The album captures Dylan at a very specific and crucial moment in his career. The blazing drug-hazed glory of the mid-sixties was behind him, and he had suffered troubled times, injury, negative reviews and a search for a new direction. He had seemingly retired from live touring and immersed himself in the world of the 'standard' and in country

music, duetting with Johnny Cash, recording country and popular music standards, trying to escape his fame and his audience and maybe even himself. Or the self he had created. *New Morning* was recorded amidst all that uncertainty and doubt about the present and the future, as Dylan was living in Woodstock trying to be the family man with his wife and children. His personal life was seemingly a success, but what of his art and the lust for live performance that was in his blood?

The fact that the album was recorded after Dylan's 'comeback' concert at the Isle of Wight festival in August of 1969 is a vital point, especially with regards to this song, as we shall see. Before the flood that was to engulf Dylan in the next decade, which saw his personal life fall apart while his muse soared, propelling him artistically through the 1970's with a series of powerful albums and tours, the connecting point, the bridge between what went before and what came after, is *New Morning*.

The album has a readily identifiable sound all its own. Dylan's vocal is a mixture of the 60's precision, power and tease, the croon he had developed in recent years (a voice he had first developed many years previously, before the fame), and the uniquely human voice he was to find on *Planet Waves* and *Blood On The Tracks*. The voice is a little throaty and Dylan was apparently battling a cold for a period of the sessions, but still it is the sound of a voice in transition, for an album that showed us a Dylan in transition. The other ingredient that makes the sound so identifiable is Dylan's own piano

playing. Dylan plays the instrument of his youth throughout the album, often bringing a spiky discordant tension to the songs. An irregularity that 'Went to See the Gypsy' particularly benefits from.

The album derives much of its depth from the levels it operates on, and it is this which enables it to ultimately overcome its flaws. The cover offers us a headshot of Dylan looking bearded and somehow different to the last photograph we had seen of him, beaming at us from the cover of *Nashville Skyline* like the embodiment of the hick country gent, and the previous album cover which showed us the painted 'self portrait' of Dylan. Photographed in black and white from side on, Dylan is not smiling, but rather is looking like he knows something we don't. Knowing and sly. He is staring straight at the camera and the more you look into his piercing eyes, the more alarming the effect. Like looking for a prolonged amount of time into a mirror at your own reflection.

The back cover of the album has another black and white photograph, but this one is of a much younger Dylan pictured with singer Victoria Spivey. The look he is giving into the camera is almost identical however, except it is taken from the other side, so we get the effect of seeing both sides of Dylan's face in the two pictures, about 10 years apart. Poised, knowing, disarming and slightly foreboding. Interesting that for the back cover such an old picture was chosen. What was being communicated by the use of this particular picture? A re-emphasis of the themes of the album, of looking back at his youth, of a simpler, purer way of life,

and the reconciliation of all that had followed with where he now found himself? At first glance the front cover portrait may seem to be a picture of a contented more mature man, with his beard and suit, but the eyes give the indication that there may be more going on... think of *New Morning* as Dylan pre-dating David Lynch. This is his 'Blue Velvet', the town and the country colliding head on, along with family life and the life of the poet following his muse, the touring musician against the settled husband and father. *New Morning* is the sound of those things crashing up against one another, and the tension and uncertainty that results.

The title track is a magnificent ebullient paean to the joys of contentment, all the good that life has to offer. Country living and being with the one you love. The song is uplifting, infectious and inspirationally joyous. By calling the album after this song, Dylan showed that he was alert as ever he was. The title is in turn accurate and misleading. Forever the tease. Despite the fact mentioned earlier about the close proximity of the *Self Portrait* and *New Morning* sessions, an album from Dylan at that stage of his career, directly following *Self Portrait*, which was, by Dylan's own admission, an attempt to throw his fans off the scent, with a title such as *New Morning*, is delightfully impish. Dylan was playing with his audience again. Was this album heralding a new dawn, or was it to be a false dawn? A return to form? A change in approach? A new happier Dylan, content at last, but back writing great songs? The

title track seems to imply that, but it is significant that Dylan did not use that title track as the album's opening track. That honour went to 'If Not for You', another song of love and devotion, a husband expressing love and real emotional and (dis)functional need for his wife. But beneath the happiness and contentment were darker musings on such fulfilment, in songs such as the album's true masterpiece 'Sign on the Window'. Like an apple pie full of rotten fruit.

The album is also a snapshot, as apart from detailing Dylan's domestic and personal life at the time, it also deals with other events as they were happening. Another of the album's songs, 'Day of the Locusts', was written about Dylan collecting his honorary diploma, a mixture of the actual and the fantasy produced from Dylan's mind, and 'Went to See the Gypsy' seems somewhat similar in approach.

Two very distinct arrangements of 'Went to See the Gypsy' exist. The one we hear on the album is an unusual mid tempo choppy song, a fractured waltz not even three minutes long, driven by Dylan's piano and the way he forces the vocal to somehow fit. Al Kooper's organ swirls around Dylan's jerky piano as the drum fills in and an electric guitar spits in and out before finally bursting into life at the very end of the song. The other is a slow dream like version, this time centered around Al Kooper's crescendoing electric piano. In this guise, the song appears to be simply the telling of a dream, peppered with the usual mysterious symbolic dream characters, a gypsy,

a dancing girl, and shifting time and place. The two sides of the song are represented by these two distinct versions, one very real, urgent and relentless, and one very dreamy. What can we gather from Dylan's decision to put the urgent, restless version of the song on the album, and leave the dreamy version in the vault? Can we deduce from this that events being presented were more fact than fiction? Or did Dylan just not want to make it so easy for the listener? Whichever, as interesting as it is to hear the flip side version, the other side of the coin, the better arrangement was put on the album and it is that version that is being used for our investigation. It is now time to turn back to the clues in the lyric, which is almost the same in both versions of the song.

It would be appropriate in this case, to have the lyrics to 'Went to See the Gypsy' here to refer to, so here we go with Exhibit A:

Went to See the Gypsy

*Went to see the gypsy,
Stayin' in a big hotel.
He smiled when he saw me coming,
and he said 'well, well, well'.
His room was dark and crowded,
Lights were low and dim.
'How are you' he said to me,
I said it back to him.
I went down to the lobby
To make a small call out.
A pretty dancing girl was there,
And she began to shout,
'Go on back to see the gypsy.
He can move you from the rear,
Drive you from your fear,
Bring you through the mirror.*

*He did it in Las Vegas,
And he can do it here.'
Outside the lights were shining
On the river of tears,
I watched them from the distance
With music in my ears.
I went back to see the gypsy,
It was nearly early dawn.
The gypsy's door was open wide
But the gypsy was gone,
And that pretty dancing girl
She could not be found.
So I watched that sun come rising
From that little Minnesota town.*

The vocal is driving and urgent, with Dylan snarling out the 'Las Vegas' at full throttle, full of urgency and hunger. Just from reading the lyric, we can learn so much of what the song is truly about, regardless of whether it details an actual meeting between Presley and Dylan. The 'gypsy' is clearly one of the two key characters in the song. The singer is looking for something, and just maybe he can find that something in the gypsy. Why a 'gypsy'? Gypsies are nomadic people that originated from India and made their way across the continents, a roaming and rootless travelling people. Stereotyped images that leap to mind are of caravans, earrings, fortune-telling and petty theft, but the fortune-telling aspect leads to a sense of wisdom. The initial meeting between the singer and the gypsy seems a little awkward, but after leaving the singer is further persuaded of the gypsy's powers, the most appealing one being:

[he can] bring you through the mirror

Dylan seems to have had a fascination with mirrors (despite not being able to

pronounce the word properly) in his songwriting. In 'Dignity' the room is full of 'covered up mirrors', 'Changing of the Guards' has a 'palace of mirrors' and so on. In literature, stories and symbolism surrounding mirrors is rife, but this use immediately conjures thoughts of 'Alice through the Looking Glass'. That idea of being able to not only look into a mirror and see your reflection, but somehow go through it into some state of altered reality, a fantasy world where you are something other than yourself, is one that is important when considering this song, and what the singer is wanting from the gypsy. This gypsy certainly seems to have many powers according to the messenger, the dancing girl. He could 'move you from the rear, drive you from your fear, bring you through the mirror'. The singer returns to see the gypsy and benefit from these powers, but he has gone. The singer is going to have to do it for himself, with the memory and inspiration of the gypsy to help him.

It is a wonderfully characterful and quirky song, one of the key tracks on *New Morning*, along with 'Sign on the Window' and the life-affirming title track. Led by Dylan's unique off-kilter jabbing piano style, the peculiar rhythm infuses the song with real identity and makes it one of those songs that gets under your skin. Dylan's phrasing is masterful, especially on the conversational lines:

*'How are you' he said to me
I said it back to him*

Dylan is an absolute master at both writing and vocalising conversation within song, from this song back to 'Boots

of Spanish Leather' and on to 'Isis'. Conversation always adds a rock of reality to any song it appears in, puts words in characters' mouths, gives them life in a very everyday sense. This song uses the proverbial 'I' that Dylan uses so often, but it is a mistake to assume this is autobiographical. But this song establishes three characters, one of them being sung in the first person by the singer, all with dialogue attributed to them.

As Dylan has always said, anything we need to know is in the songs. The song is our primary piece of evidence. What leads us to think that the 'gypsy' could in fact be Elvis Presley? Primarily it is the mention of 'Las Vegas' and a hotel. Presley was launching a mighty performing comeback of his own in 1969 and 1970 in a Las Vegas hotel. Paul Lichter outlines the success of Presley's comeback in his book 'Elvis - The Boy who dared to Rock':

'Elvis gave his first live show in almost eight years at the Las Vegas International Hotel. During his one-month stand, Elvis broke all existing Vegas records of attendance. Critics from every newspaper in the country shouted that Elvis was certainly the King of entertainment. The Vegas performances were a major triumph. They were a continuation of the spectacular TV special. Every seat for the month-long engagement was filled; fans from all over the world flew in for the historic happening. Barbara Streisand had opened the Showroom on July 2 and was not able to fill the 2,000-seat room. The talk was that if Streisand couldn't fill the room, nobody could. To

this day (1978) Elvis is the only star to fill the giant showroom, which has twice the capacity of any other in town.'

And as Jon Landau put it:

'There is something magical in watching a man who has lost himself find his way back home. He sang with the kind of power people no longer expect from a rock and roll singer. He moved his body with a lack of pretension and effort that must have made Jim Morrison green with envy.'

The first sentence of Landau's remarks could easily apply to Dylan at various stages of his career, especially the stage he found himself in around 1969-1970. This gives further credence to the notion that the 'gypsy' is Elvis Presley. Who better for the singer to consult than someone who had just made a mighty comeback, showing his power all over again, and who better for Dylan to get inspiration from as he perhaps faced a crisis in performing confidence, than the King of Rock n Roll who had just made a triumphant return to public performance. If he could not 'drive you from your fear' then nobody could. So if the 'gypsy' is indeed Elvis Presley, which seems likely, then it gives us many clues in trying to deduce if Dylan and Presley did ever meet.

There are a few very important dates and facts surrounding our investigation. On Dylan's side, the song was first recorded on 3rd March 1970, so written presumably sometime in late 1969 or early 1970. This is key, because, remembering the Holmes principle, if the song is about a factual meeting, then any such meeting has to have occurred before 3rd March

1970. As mentioned above, Dylan had made a performing comeback in August of 1969 at the Isle of Wight, with his first full concert since 1966, so the song was written about that time, and any meeting with Presley would have been either just before, or not long after this performance. So what of Elvis Presley? He was about to follow up his tremendously successful '68 TV special, with his first live appearances for many, many years. After years of performing only in films, Presley was about to make a huge comeback to performing live and touring. He played from the 31/7/69 until 28/8/69 in the Las Vegas International Hotel. A residency of some 57 shows, both afternoon and evening performances that were to launch Presley into a never-ending touring schedule until his death in 1977 (sounds familiar?). After the first Vegas residency, Presley was back there on 26th January 1970 until the 23rd February for another residency. Then it was on to Houston for 6 shows from 27th February until the 1st March. After this he had a few months off, before returning to Vegas again on 10th August 1970 for his third Vegas residency in just over a year.

So tying those dates together, if Dylan recorded the song on 3rd March 1970 then the only shows that Presley would have played prior to this would have been the Vegas residency in 1969, the Vegas residency in early 1970, and the six Houston shows. So we can focus our attention on these periods.

The song seems to point to a meeting surrounding a concert. Why else would Presley be staying in a hotel? If he was on

holiday, I am sure he would not have been receiving guests in a crowded room. And the use of the word 'staying' implies that the 'gypsy' was in this hotel for a longer period of time, this was not simply a vacation. Of course, there is a possibility that the two could have met anywhere before 3rd March 1970, but the clues point us to those residencies.

Starting with the first of these, the Vegas residency of 1969 saw rehearsal shows from the 26th July, and the first show proper on the 31st July 1969. Going back to Clinton's excellent day by day guide, he has Dylan in Woodstock at this time, rehearsing with The Band for the upcoming Isle of Wight appearance. The only blip in this comes on the 2nd August, when Clinton reports:

August 2nd

The Moose Lodge in Hibbing hosts a 10-year reunion for Dylan's year at Hibbing High School. Both Dylan and Sara attend, meeting (among others) Dylan's old flame, Echo Helstrom.

This is a key piece of evidence, so keep it in mind. After this Dylan is frequently interviewed in his Woodstock home before they fly to Heathrow Airport in London on 25th August 1969. Dylan is then in the UK until 2nd September, by which time the first Presley residency in Las Vegas had come to a triumphant close. You may be asking what the relevance is to Dylan's appearance at his high school reunion? Well, it is another clue, and now that we have gathered a few it may be time to stand back and see what we have got.

From the lyric of 'Went to See the Gypsy', there are several big clues. The

first verse perfectly describes a meeting between Dylan and Presley as it could have happened, right down to the almost journalistic description of the dialogue. There is a 'big hotel' mentioned, and Presley was staying in the Las Vegas International around this time, undeniably a big hotel! He stayed there to rehearse and play both the 69 and 70 residencies. The hotel room is described in the way Presley seemed to like his hotel rooms. He did not like the windows being uncovered, so the room would have seemed dark and dim. It was either day, and the electric light made the room appear gloomy, or it was night. Whichever, the curtains were drawn. The room was crowded, because Presley was the King again on the comeback trail. He had reclaimed his crown with the 68 TV special, and was continuing that return to form with the live shows, freed from the stale lame films he was churning out by contract. The dialogue is given to us exactly as you can imagine it happening. In those few words, we get the image of both legends sizing the other up, a slight awkwardness as to what to say, a joy also in meeting. You can see the wry smiles, picture the scene, and hear the words. A mutual respect comes out of the 'well, well, well'. A 'look who it is' comment.

On to the second verse of the song, and the meeting is already over, everything Dylan wanted to tell us about it is contained in those magical lines of dialogue. Maybe it was an awkward meeting with no real opportunity to speak properly, given the amount of people and the circumstances. Now we are in the

lobby of the hotel. Again all the images ring true. The Las Vegas International had a huge lobby which had a circular couch. It was here that girls used to gather to be selected to go up to Elvis' room, to 'enjoy the party'. So no surprise that Dylan should meet a 'pretty dancing girl' in the lobby of this big hotel. And there is a wonderful piece of writing from Dylan when he tells us he went to the lobby, 'to make a small call out'. Not a 'short call out' which would seem to be the natural way of writing this, but a 'small call out'. The fact that the call is described as 'small' emphasises just how big and perhaps overwhelming a moment meeting Presley was for Dylan, everything else pales in comparison. This can all be reasonably deduced from a mixture of the song's lyric, and the facts we do know.

However, there is always a spanner in the works of any investigation, and here we meet our first set of spanners at the end of verse two. The words spoken by the dancing girl throw us off the scent somewhat. In encouraging the singer to return to the 'gypsy' and extolling his powers, she utters the mysterious lines:

'He did it in Las Vegas and he can do it here'

That would seem to imply that wherever the singer and the girl are at that moment, it is not in Las Vegas. Las Vegas and 'here' are clearly two different places. At first, it may seem that this cleared everything up, it must be Houston, they must have met in Houston! It was the only other place Presley played before Dylan recorded the song, it was also a big hotel, and he had just played Vegas hence the

dancing girl's comments. It all fits. Presley played Houston from the 27th Feb to the 1st March 1970. Dylan recorded the song on 3rd March. He could have written it very quickly, as a direct result of the meeting. If he wrote 'I and I' in 15 minutes, I am sure he could have written this in a day or two.

However, the more you look at the lyric and listen to the song, the more it seems appropriate to dismiss this piece of deduction, although it still is a possibility. Dylan's movements in early 1970, before he entered the studio on 3rd March are very unclear, so it is not impossible that the Houston theory is the correct one, but the song is becoming more of a 'parable' and less of a completely true story, the deeper we delve into it.

We then get the bridge of the song, and more clues and more confusion and red herrings a plenty. We have a 'river of tears' mentioned; is it an actual river? There are no rivers running through Las Vegas. The lines describe:

*'Outside the lights were shining,
On the river of tears'*

The lights do put you in mind of Vegas however, all those dazzling neon signs. The lights in Vegas have sometimes been dubbed a 'river of tears' by unlucky gamblers, who stagger penniless into the night, out of luck and out of money. 'Music' is then mentioned:

*I watched them from the distance
With music in my ears.*

Which you would initially and reasonably think was the music from the Presley show. Did Dylan attend a Presley show, and meet him before or afterwards? The

only reported sighting of Dylan at a Presley show that I could find was in 1972, years after the song was written and recorded, and is mentioned by Michael Gray in *Song & Dance Man III*:

'In June 1972 Bob Dylan was "spotted" attending one of Presley's four concerts at Madison Square Garden NYC'

And Gray goes on to assist us in our investigation by stating:

'The idea, suggested by "Went to See the Gypsy", that Dylan might have met Presley in Minnesota a) when both were famous, b) after a Presley Las Vegas stint and c) ahead of the New Morning songs being recorded, is impossible, though they might have met elsewhere'

However, the bridge is a bridge in more ways than one. It is not only the bridge musically in the song, between the first two verses and the third and last, but it is also the bridge between the two strands of the song. Part of the song seems to be based on fact and part on dream/fantasy, but more on that soon.

This bridge is more abstract than the two verses, less definable, less placeable. We presume that when the singer says he is 'outside' that he is in the same place on the same day as what has gone before. But that is not necessarily the case. This is a non-sequitur song.

On to the final verse, and as we hope for some serious evidence, we are left with more curveballs, more teasing, and more headaches in trying to crack this case!

The singer heeds the advice of the dancing girl, persuaded by her passionate testimony regarding the gypsy's powers,

but finds the gypsy has gone, his room deserted. He also is subsequently unable to find the dancing girl, she has gone off, presumably with the gypsy, or is following him at least, or else she was a figment of the singer's imagination, a dream. Then the final two lines of the song place us somewhere unmistakable... 'that little Minnesota town'.

That is the final mystery of this mysterious song. We end up in Hibbing. It can only be Hibbing that Dylan is describing one would think. It is brought immediately to mind in that line. The lines explain Michael Gray's analysis above, in placing the meeting between the two people described in the song, as having taken place in Minnesota. Now we know that it is unlikely that Dylan could have met Presley in Hibbing, or anywhere else in Minnesota for that matter. Presley certainly did not play a show there, and there is no record of him going there at this time, although Presley did play shows in Minnesota that Dylan could have seen, firstly in 1956, then again in 1971, 1974, twice in 1976 and twice in 1977. One of these concerts was even in Duluth, so there is every chance that Dylan went to see Presley in concert after he wrote and recorded the song, but that meant it could not have been an event that inspired the song in any way. The 1956 show could indeed have informed the song in some way however*, not in terms of the kind of meeting described, which is clearly

* However, it seems unlikely that the 15-year old Dylan attended a show a very long way indeed from his place of residence, albeit within the same state, and even less likely that if he did the experience has never been mentioned subsequently.

between two well established, well known and successful people, but in terms of the other issues the song deals with, namely the past and Dylan confronting his roots in looking towards his uncertain future. So why Hibbing, why does the song end there?

To offer possible explanations for that, we have to go back to that High School reunion in 1969. Dylan had returned to Hibbing the year before, in 1968, for the sad occasion of his father's funeral. Then he returns shortly afterwards for his High School reunion. An odd thing for anyone to attend, not odd necessarily to go, but certainly odd to experience. High School for Dylan was a time associated with rock 'n' roll, early friendships, early loves, the Golden Chords, Little Richard, Buddy Holly and Elvis. And also of playing the piano which he just happens to do on this song. Images of the North Country and Dylan's youth started to work their way into a couple of songs on *New Morning*, and would fully manifest themselves on *Planet Waves*. It was clearly influencing Dylan greatly at this time.

'Went to See the Gypsy' seems to tie in a meeting with Presley, with images of Hibbing and Dylan's childhood there, when it was rock n roll, not Guthrie influenced folk music, that Dylan was inspired by. As with many Dylan songs, the song is telling a story, but the commonly held notions of chronology don't apply. Would it have been possible for Dylan to have attended the first night of Presley's residency on 1st August 69 and then be in Hibbing the next night? Possible, but likely? If that could have happened it all would have tied in, if we deal with that

irksome line about doing it in Las Vegas and doing it here.

The song of course could be a dream/fantasy piece full stop, and had the alternative version of the song been the one that made it onto the album, then it would have been a great deal easier to go down that particular road. Dylan deals in that often in his writing and seems to delight in blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, our dreams and our waking selves. Factual happenings are often the spark for the artistic self to take up the flights of fantasy. Presley would have been in the news a great deal at the time, and dreams are made up of those kind of fleeting images. The High School reunion could have fused with the images of Presley on TV and radio at the time and given Dylan a dream/idea, which resulted in the song. The song sees Presley's comeback tied in with Hibbing and a fusion of Dylan and Presley themselves. In dreams, there is no chronology as we understand it consciously. Everything mixes together. If you read the lyric of the song from this standpoint it is extremely effective.

However, it seems most likely that an actual meeting took place between Dylan and Presley which prompted the song. There is much writing on *New Morning* of actual events. We have 'Day of the Locusts', an account of an actual event. The title track, 'If Not for You', 'The Man in Me', 'Time Passes Slowly' and 'Sign on the Window', deal with Dylan's personal and domestic life. 'Three Angels' was said to be inspired by a Christmas decoration Dylan saw. There is no reason to think that 'Went to See the Gypsy' is not in

someway based on fact. The fact that the meeting leads into a dream/fantasy like setting is the art of the songwriter. That is where Dylan confronted his own unease about returning to performing live, seeking the strength of another. The fact that Dylan ties that into Hibbing and his youth, again, is the art coming to the fore.

Looking at that second verse, you do not get the same journalistic feeling that you get with verse one. The second verse seems more symbolic. I doubt if Dylan had this conversation with the girl as it appears. The line about Las Vegas can be viewed in two other ways. 'He can do it here' can refer either to Hibbing, or to the heart. Hibbing, because time has become unimportant and Dylan could have written the song in Hibbing, imagining the King playing there, remembering back to his old rock'n'roll teenage years. The heart is a possibility if you imagine the girl touching her heart as she says the lines. He can do all these things, move you, drive you from fear, bring you out of yourself (bring you through the mirror) in Vegas as he is proving, and here, in your heart, inside of yourself.

So in the end, the song throws up as many questions as it answers. But what we do know, going back to the Holmesian theory is that, if the song is based on fact, Presley and Dylan must have met sometime up to 3rd March 1970. The song sees them meet in a crowded hotel etc, the scene is one of Presley performing, preparing to perform or just after a concert. So we have the two Vegas stints, and the Houston shows. Houston seems very close to the song being recorded, and

further from the trips to Hibbing to end with a Hibbing reference. So probability leaves us with the 69 Vegas stint and the 70 Vegas stint. Likelihood leads us towards a meeting on 31st July 1969, after the first triumphant show. It is well documented that the audience for that first show was star studded and that Presley received many visitors in his hotel afterwards. Dylan could have been one of these. It is not recorded anywhere, but again we have to remember that in 1969, Dylan looked very different to how people remembered him, he had been out of the public eye for three years. With his glasses and wispy beard and different looking face and hair, he could have passed relatively un-noticed amongst the likes of Frank Sinatra and Barbara Streisand. He then went to his High School reunion and the song was born. As Dylan was then tied up with the Isle of Wight, the other possibility is a meeting during Presley's second residency in early 1970. Again Presley received visitors, and the impact of the reunion may still have loomed large. Dylan may even have been back to Hibbing around this time, and it simply has not been documented.

The third possibility would be a Houston meeting, and the fourth would be the dream/fantasy theory, one in which they did not actually meet at all.

Sherlock Holmes would know instantly which of the above was true, but hedging our bets is the best we can do. The order the options are listed in, is the order of likelihood based on the evidence in the song, and in all the supporting material. There was very much of a connection

between Presley and Dylan, Presley made a comeback at a time when Dylan was about to, or had just done the same, a song appears, written by Dylan at this time, which contains references that appear to describe a meeting with Elvis. In all these ways the song seems based on too much fact to be entirely from Dylan's imagination. It was a fascinating investigation to get into, and Duncan Hume (see PS) really gave me the bug and made me spend a great few weeks working on the various theories, gathering evidence. It was like unravelling a thread from a sweater, the more you pulled, the more it unravelled, but it was tremendous fun nonetheless.

As to a meeting between the two after 3rd March 1970, that is another matter. It could have happened, but it was obviously not a meeting that triggered the song 'Went to See the Gypsy'. The final words as ever should go to maybe the only man alive who can solve this mystery for us, Bob Dylan, in his answer to this question in the Rome Interview of 2001:

Q - *Did you ever meet Elvis Presley?*

BD - *No, I never met him. That's what I'm supposed to say.*

Helpful as ever, never one to do the work for us! But his non-answer here is as close to an answer as we are likely to get for the time being. The first part on its own would seem to close the book once and for all:

'No, I never met him.'

That is as clear as it gets. But the second part, no doubt said with that wry grin and deadpanned wit, seems to be a knowing wink, a 'yes I did meet him, but I'm not going to tell you about it':

'That's what I'm supposed to say.'

Case closed. And until *Chronicles* explains all, or someone else emerges with information on a meeting, all we have is the song. A song in which Dylan the artist beautifully deals with his own fear of performing live again, making a 'comeback' to public and performing life, and blends that with his own youth in Minnesota and seeks guidance from a 'Gypsy', from Presley, the King of Rock n Roll who had just made one of the greatest comebacks of them all. Dylan was looking for inspiration and reassurance to go on and make the next steps. On *Planet Waves* he would deal more fully with images of Hibbing and his childhood, and then he would once again immerse himself in live touring and surrender himself to his art on *Blood On The Tracks* and the Rolling Thunder Revue. So whether 'Went to See the Gypsy' actually in part was inspired by an actual meeting between the two or not, and it is reasonable to think it was, it remains a beautifully touching minor gem of a song.

PS: My real 'Dr Watson' in this intriguing journey was the esteemed photographer of this magazine, Duncan Hume. It was Duncan that got me thinking about all of this via some exchanged emails last year, and many of the ideas contained in the article above were actually his, such as the notions of the 'small call out' and the 'river of tears'. Thanks to Duncan for getting me started down this path, on the trail of the gypsy.



Little Rock, Arkansas, 14th Aug 2001

The Stephen Scobie Interview

conducted by Andrew Muir

This interview took place in August 2002 at a hotel in a village called Cardross on the banks of the River Clyde in Scotland. The hotel is called the Muirholm, and the bar we were sitting in used to be known as this Muir's home when I lived in Cardross nearly quarter of a century ago. By one of those strange twists of fate, Stephen's brother, Andrew, has been the parish minister of Cardross for the past 40 years.

AM: Thank you very much for turning up for the *Judas!* interview. I'd like to start by asking if you could give us some personal background on yourself, how you grew up and how you came in to the Bob Dylan world?

SS: I was born in Scotland, born in Carnoustie on the last day of 1943. I went to school in Glasgow, went to the University of St Andrews, then in 1965 I went to Canada for what I thought would be a one-year stay, a kind of fast graduate degree in Canada and then back home to Scotland. And that never happened. The one-year degree turned into a four-year PhD, and in 1969 I got a job in Edmonton, Alberta, where I suddenly found myself

transforming into an academic expert on Canadian Literature. I've stayed in Canada ever since. So I'm now, I guess, a lot more Canadian than Scottish, although when I come back to Scotland I wonder about it.

But as to getting into Bob Dylan - in the early 1960s I was at the University of St Andrews, and regularly attending the St Andrews Folk Club, which used to meet in the bar of the Cross Keys Hotel. I had the chance to see and hear wonderful people like Archie Fisher (and I still worship Archie Fisher, he is THE Scottish folk singer) - but I was also listening to LPs by mythical creatures called Joan Baez and Pete Seeger. I began to notice, sometime in about early 1963, that a great number of the songs that I liked best on these Baez and Seeger LPs were credited to one B. Dylan. Then in November 1963, the week of the Kennedy assassination, I heard for the first time the Peter Paul and Mary single of 'Blowin' in the Wind.' People of my generation always say that they can remember what they were doing when they heard that Kennedy was shot. I was in the University Library at St Andrews. And then all weekend long I played that record. 'How many deaths...'

A couple of months after that, on a curious CBS compilation album called 'CBS Hootenanny' or something like that, there was a single track of Bob Dylan singing 'Blowin' in the Wind,' and once I heard that, that was it, I was lost, gone forever. [laughs]

AM: It 's very interesting for me, being slightly younger, that when I was growing up Bob Dylan was already a star that I was eventually introduced to, and before I heard any cover versions of Dylan, or before they had made any impact, I'm not sure that hearing Peter Paul and Mary or Joan Baez would have appealed to me. It's impossible now to put myself in that situation, but you're saying that there was a distinct appeal of songs written by him.

SS: When you listened to, say, *Joan Baez in Concert Volume 2*, or *Pete Seeger at Carnegie Hall* (that album was the first time I ever heard 'Hard Rain'), it was clearly evident that 'B. Dylan' was an exceptional songwriter. Then I heard the voice - and a lot of my friends in St Andrews at that time, I remember them distinctly saying about the recording of 'Blowin' the Wind,' 'Well, it's his song, I guess he has a right to ruin it if he wants to'! But I never had that problem, I never had a problem with the voice right from the very first time I heard it, it just struck me as so entirely right for the songs, for what he was doing. Neither - and this is probably relevant to *Judas!* magazine [laughs] - did I have any problem with his 'going electric,' because by that time in 1965 I was deep into the Rolling Stones. A lot of the great camps in Britain at that time were 'Beatles or Stones' - I was always

in the Stones camp. Right from the first time I heard the Stones I thought they were doing something a lot more interesting than what The Beatles were doing. So 'going electric' didn't bother me. My first published writing on Bob Dylan was a letter to the Glasgow Herald in the summer of 1965, defending *Bringing It All Back Home* against a very negative review that was anti-electric and saying that Dylan was going commercial, Dylan was gone.

AM: Can you remember if the reviewer liked the second side, I can't imagine anyone not?

SS: I think it was mainly one of these 'Judas' reviews, he was just so shocked by 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' and 'Maggie's Farm' that he didn't see anything beyond it at all. It was probably - I don't think it was, but it could have been - by Ewan McColl! [laughs]

AM: Fair enough. So you were immediately attracted to the voice, I mean, I have read people saying and, said that at first they had a problem with the voice, even Michael Gray in his *Judas!* interview...

SS: No, I never had any problem right from the start, I never had any problem with the voice. Increasingly over the years people have asked me, what it is about Bob Dylan that most attracts you? I've taken to replying, HIS VOICE, which is probably a provocation.

AM: But it's also basically true isn't it? One of the very first things I heard was a bootleg of a mid sixties sessions with the Band and I didn't know what the words meant but I knew they meant something profound because the voice was so true, that I trusted it.

SS: That to me is one of the marks of a real Dylan fan, if you don't make apologies for the voice.

AM: No need, to me it's still his greatest gift, but maybe not so far this year! [laughs] Over his career, certainly though.

SS: What's interested me in recent years is that I think he has adjusted to the increasing limitations in the voice. There were times, especially in the early nineties, when he was still trying to sing the old way and the voice was no longer there to do it, but in the last four or five years I think he's quite strikingly succeeded in adjusting his performances to within the limits of the voice he now has. Clearly it's not the sixties voice, it's not the Rolling Thunder seventies voice, glorious in their way, it's a very different voice now, but I still love it.

AM: Yes, I didn't mean that I didn't love it, but it is so restricted now. However, it's making him write in that register as well, he now writes songs with that in mind.

SS: He writes what he can sing.

AM: Yes, exactly. You were saying when you first came across Dylan you were in the club, the Cross Keys Hotel. Perhaps that was not academic, but in general was your situation in St Andrews an academic situation?

SS: It was an academic situation in that I was doing an honours degree in English Literature at St Andrews, but at that time in St Andrews that department was very, very conservative, and basically poetry and indeed the novel ended with Thomas Hardy. So there was a great deal of opportunity for students to discover 20th century and contemporary writing on their own. There was an excellent under-

graduate society called The Phoenix which interested itself in contemporary writing, and it was through The Phoenix that I first heard Edwin Morgan, first heard about contemporary Scottish poets like Ian Hamilton Finlay, and first came across the Beat poets, like Allen Ginsberg. I remember reading Ginsberg in the pages of *Evergreen Review*, which I got through the Phoenix Society - so in some ways it was better than getting it 'officially.' I say this with an element of schizophrenia, because I make my living now teaching contemporary literature! But in some ways I think I got the best education in contemporary literature not in the classroom but in the informal student society.

AM: That's interesting, when I first studied Eliot, who to me is a very conservative establishment figure, I was astonished to find that when he became famous in academic circles it was students saying to their lecturers and professors: you must read this. He was considered too modern, as you say, for the syllabus. Is it the the same kind of thing with Ginsberg and Dylan?

SS: Yeah. Now, of course, we have a whole anthology of Dylan criticism edited by a St Andrews Professor - Neil Corcoran. I find that incredibly funny, sad, frustrating, mind-boggling. It stands on its head everything I remember about my alma mater.

AM: Talking about the convergence of the academic and the fan, I remember the very first *Telegraph* had a letter on the cover, I think from Nigel Hinton, that said Bob Dylan was the only man you could follow with academic interest and then also feel,

and I'm paraphrasing, something like a teenage groupie fan. I got the feeling from the introductory pages to *Alias* that you have a similar feeling.

SS: Very much so. I've been quite abject. When I went to Hibbing in 1989, I toured the Zimmerman family house and lay down on the bed of the teenage Bob, and I looked up at the ceiling - I don't know whether it was an original fixture or not, but on the ceiling of Bob's bedroom where he slept as a teenager there was a light fitting, which was circular, with little knobs sticking out of it like the steering wheel on a ship. As I lay there and looked up at it, I thought 'This Wheel's on Fire' [laughs]. So there I am, a serious middle aged professor lying down on the teenage bed of my idol, about as abject as you can get in fandom, and this esoteric reference comes into my mind, so there's a combination. I really do seriously think that you can approach Dylan on all these levels. He repays the most serious academic study of his music, his whole career; and in the book I toss around big name academic references like Jacques Derrida, and it works for me, there's a lot of Dylan which I understand through Derridian concepts. And yet at the same time I'm a fan. When Dylan is on tour, the last thing I do every night before going to bed is to check Bill Pagel's web page to see what tonight's setlist was.

AM: It is amusing, I actually had a couple of made up examples, but nothing quite beats lying on the teenage bed with these post-structuralist thoughts going through your mind. We met today for the first time in many years and one of the first things

we talked about was his hair at Newport, this does open us up to a certain amount of scorn, I have had it from my friends. For example, a non-Dylan fan reading *Razors Edge* said to me why do you care what he wears? The question astounded me, I mean it is Bob Dylan, you care about everything.

SS: Yeah. And especially something like a wig and a false beard, that is so much a part of the imagery of the mask and the disguise and the alias that he has projected over the years, It's too late to make it into the latest edition of my book. Had it happened a year ago you bet you there would have been two pages of serious analysis of the wig!

AM: It certainly fits the themes perfectly, and we'll move on to 'Alias' now, but just one last thing about the fan and academic connection. I remember the late John Bauldie once writing that if a Shakespearean scholar was offered the chance to rifle through Shakespeare's dustbin, obviously making a reference to A J Weberman, he would be applauded for doing so and if he refrained he would be scorned, but it's because Bob Dylan works in a popular medium that you get scorned for doing so. Again I thought that was a good point, if you actually are studying someone who is 'important,' you are allowed these excesses of 'lying on his teenage bed' etc.

SS: Throughout my career I've had some problems with my academic colleagues who kind of indulge my Bob Dylan interest, and are faintly, quaintly amused by it. Fortunately I am now so well established, a senior professor, tenure, they

can't do anything to me now! But seriously, if I was a young assistant professor at the very beginning of an academic career, I would think twice, from a purely careerist point of view, about having such an excessive interest in Dylan. I think we've come quite a way but not all the way. Dylan is in a curious position, because he's too GOOD for, say, the cultural studies ethos which is strictly interested in mass culture, almost the lowest common denominator of popular culture. You can get anywhere these days, studying 'images of the body in top ten rap songs.' Dylan still demands at some level an appreciation in terms of high culture, academic culture. It leaves him in this curious limbo. He's not quite accepted as serious literature and yet he's obviously too good for cultural studies. Mind you, there's still an enormous literature on Dylan; there's probably going to be about six new books in the next year.

AM: In academic circles he is frowned upon, I mean Professor Ricks's book is going to be looked on as an indulgence. 'There's a Tennyson scholar, doing this as an aside' will be the attitude. And what you were saying about Dylan being in-between works in reverse as well, because in rock culture he's considered a bit too highbrow at times. You know the 'get up and dance, don't listen to the words' - that kind of attitude. It is not so prevalent nowadays thankfully but it used to be, but he's in limbo both ways.

SS: If you look at the big magazines, Rolling Stone still pays attention to Dylan. Spin for instance would never publish Dylan, we had that one wonderful inter-

view with him back in 85 and I don't think they've mentioned him since.

AM: I think they got into some trouble for that. It was nice though.

SS: It was one of the great interviews.

AM: You mentioned *Alias* and that's the main point really of the interview, because *Alias* is about to be revisited. For our readers who perhaps, and we shall scold them for this, haven't read it recently or even not read it at all, perhaps we should do a little review of the basic premise (which I presume hasn't changed) of *Alias*, which you set forward very clearly in your introduction starting from Hibbing, and 'Bob Dylan' not being Dylan's 'real name,' shall we say.

SS: It's changed a little. Let me start by giving some of the background. *Alias Bob Dylan* came out in 1991 and it very much reflected the way I was thinking about Dylan at that time, written mostly in the late eighties. It was a successful book, it went through two or three printings, then about 1996 the publisher, Dennis Johnson, and I agreed that we would not reprint it any more, but that we would let it go out of print, on the understanding that in about another five years or so we would do a second edition. That was about the time that things like *Good As I Been To You* and *World Gone Wrong* were coming out, and I was already sensing that there was going to be a lot more to be said, although I could scarcely have anticipated *Time Out Of Mind* or "Love And Theft" at that point. I wanted to let about ten years, twelve years go by between the first edition and the second. So the second edition is unimaginatively titled *Alias Bob*

Dylan Revisited. It contains I think about half to two thirds of the original edition; quite a number of bits have been cut and a lot has been added over the years. Some of the new stuff had been published in magazines like *On The Tracks* and a lot of stuff was written especially for the second edition. It's close enough to the original that we can get away with calling it a second edition and has enough new stuff that we can justify ourselves in asking people to buy this one too!

But to get back to the initial point of the question about the alias and the mask - the basic conceptual framework that I'm setting out for the new edition is to claim that all of Dylan's work consists of an alternation, or a dialogue, or some kind of combination of two basic stances, which I call the prophet and the trickster. On the prophet side you have the intensely serious and public and at times political, at times religious, stance of Dylan as someone who is really concerned with enunciating general truths about the state of contemporary society. I think this prophet aspect of him has gone through various manifestations, from the 'protest singer' of the early sixties, to campaigns for people like Hurricane Carter in the seventies, to the whole religious phase of the late seventies and early eighties, and in recent years seems to be to have centred itself in this very profound grounding of his work in the tradition of American song. That's why *World Gone Wrong* is to me a really key album, probably because of the title - a 'world gone wrong' is the essential position that the prophet takes, that something has gone wrong with the

world and this needs to be stated and it needs to be publicly stated. The response to it is not just an individual response but a public social response, and one that Dylan finds increasingly, it seems to me, in that whole tradition of American music, which goes back to gospel, to blues, to bluegrass, to all kinds of modes that he has been mining tremendously in the last ten years or so. This all seems to be part of the public stance of the prophet -

- but at the same time, and equally and constantly interacting with it, there is the aspect of the trickster, which refuses to be bound down to any single position. So you have also all the quicksilver changes of Dylan throughout his career, from folk to protest to rock to country to gospel, whatever, you know the way that for twenty years there were scarcely two albums in a row which sounded the same. And there is also the constant preoccupation with the imagery of theft. Mythologically, the trickster is always the thief. He is Prometheus stealing fire, he is Coyote playing tricks on Mankind. 'Why must I always be the thief?' - in that great line from 'Tears of Rage.' And what really fits in most strongly with the trickster image is this constant play with identity, which involves all these images of the alias, the mask, the mirror, the ghost, which are constant images in Dylan and always seem to me images of 'identity at one remove.' 'This is who I am but it's not quite who I am.' And the archetypal image in that sense is obviously the assumption of the alias, the transformation of Robert Zimmerman into Bob Dylan - the creation of 'Bob Dylan' as an artistic

personality, which dissociated itself from the Zimmermans, from a Jewish background, from an immigrant background.

I think one of the big changes between the first edition and the second edition is that the first edition really concentrated very much on the alias, the mask, the disguise, whereas I think the second edition tries to strike a more even balance between the trickster and the prophet, to say that they are always both there, that they're always in dialogue with each other, and you can never quite fully discount one or the other. There are moments when it seems that the prophet is more in control, like *Slow Train Coming* (though even there, there are all kinds of sneaky things going on), and there are other times like *Renaldo and Clara* where it seems as if the play on variable images of identity seems to be at the forefront, but then bang in the middle of *Renaldo and Clara* you get the long sequence on Hurricane Carter, which was a reassertion of the prophet's stance, that you know something is terribly wrong in this society that this kind of injustice can be perpetrated.

So I'd written all this before "*Love And Theft*" came out. I mean, the title bowled me over, it sounded like the title of my book, it sounded so programmatically what I was trying to say. On the one hand there's this clear love for the traditions of American music and the whole social aesthetic background and the continuity of it - I mean the way in which that album sounds as if it could have been made almost any time in the last hundred years - and yet at the same time there's the mischievousness of it, the theft aspect. I

don't know if you've heard this, but there's a group called Johnny and Jack, who were a 1950s American pop group, and their best known song was 'Humming Bird,' which Dylan has sung as an opener several times over the last few years. A friend of mine in Victoria, Eric, was doing a kind of mp3 trawl of the internet and came across a whole bunch of Johnny and Jack titles and for the hell of it downloaded them, and came out with one called 'Uncle John's Bongos,' probably a 1958 pop song. The words are nothing to do with Dylan, the words are quite ordinary, but the music, the basic accompanying instrumental track and the guitar solos, which were very prominent on it, are note for note identical with 'Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee.'

AM: And there are other surprising lyrical rather than musical ones, this is a fascinating musical one, but there are other lyrical ones people have said to me - things like: 'Do you realise that in the charts when Dylan was sixteen or seventeen there was a song with the couplet...' and they quote something from 'Moonlight' for example and you hear it word for word and it's amazing.

SS: But 'Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee' is amazing, you put on 'Uncle John's Bongos' and you can swear it was exactly the same thing. Which is also of course a tribute to the band. What must have happened was that Dylan walked into the studio in New York one day that April and put on Johnny and Jack and said this is what I want for this song and the band just went out and did it, Charlie Sexton is playing note for note the solo that's in the original.

AM: Charlie Sexton is a really great musician, and I was mentioning to you earlier that I really liked the Leipzig show. He was kind of let off the reins, he was giving head to the songs, and Dylan seemed to thoroughly enjoy it.

Not having read the new version of *Alias*, I'm still rather mired, shall we say, in the previous version; and one of the things that interested me greatly was near the beginning of the book, when you're explaining the basic premise, you talk about intentionality - what the author intends and if this is important and in what way it is. It's something that I think is often written about loosely in Dylan writings. For example, when Don Was was producing 'Under the Red Sky,' he burst into a room and told Dylan that he'd 'cracked it,' as though it were a crossword clue, and it was about ecology, and he goes on to explain that Dylan said, 'You know, it's actually about Hibbing.' Dylan didn't actually use the word 'Hibbing,' that was Don Was's interpretation, but basically Dylan said it's about the town I grew up in. My point is that hearing the song 'Under the Red Sky,' one would not necessarily ever think of the town Dylan grew up in. Is it important that Dylan intended this reference, and how does it affect one's future hearing of the song to know that?

SS: May I approach this in several stages. One, I think a lot of the stuff that I said about questions like this in the original edition of *Alias* still stands. So I would still be very sceptical and careful about 'the author's intention,' even when/if we can determine it. That is always a difficulty -

how it can be determined, how seriously to take a Dylan interview, is he telling you the truth or is he just playing with an interviewer? There are all kinds of questions about the reliability of what any author says about his own work, but when it can be determined, it is always interesting to me - though it is never definitive, and it is never exclusionary. What I find objectionable is the kind of Dylan interpretation that says, okay this song is about Joan Baez and that's all we need to know about it, as if that explained everything. Maybe a key illustration here is 'When the Ship Comes In,' which, as Scaduto explained years ago, came out of this curious incident in which Dylan and Joan Baez were travelling together and they came to a hotel, you know the story, and Baez sent Dylan in to claim the key and they turned him away because he was a scruffy nobody. Baez went in and they gave her the key immediately, without a murmur, and Dylan that night sat down and wrote 'When the Ship Comes In' as a kind of act of vengeance on the pettiness of the officials. That kind of explanation does nothing for me - if anything it really diminishes the song to think of it in these terms. I'd just rather not know that story. But on the other hand I DO know that story and so I can't cancel it out, I can't forget it, I can't not make it part of my hearing of the song. And at the same time I hear it as an adaptation of Brecht's 'Pirate Jenny,' so it is both less biographical (filtered through Brecht) and more (Suze Rotolo as well as Joan Baez). So when biographical knowledge is used to limit the interpretation of a song, to say this is all you need to know about the song, then I very strongly object. Authorial

intention is only one part of the song and it may be interesting, but it can never limit, it can never define the meaning of the song. Now it does seem to me that there were times, and I think the mid seventies is a main instance of this, in which Dylan very deliberately used a biographical reference - the phrase I use in the book is that he 'stages' it, he takes personal relationships and puts them on stage. He displays them to us like dramatic images. The most extreme example is *Renaldo and Clara*. I'm thinking of a lot of improvised scenes with Sara and Joan at the end of that film, but also about a song like 'Sara,' from *Desire*. It's impossible not to interpret that song at least in part in relation to his actual life, and wife. Of course you can also say that it's all about Abraham's wife in the Old Testament - and I actually believe, I already invoked in the first edition and have retained the passage in the second edition, that there is a lot of very interesting stuff, if we start looking at the song in relation to Genesis...

AM: At the same time he knew his audience would think of his wife.

SS: Yes, he was shoving the biographical reference in our face. But at arm's length! There's no way that you can respond to that song without taking into account the possible biographical references. But neither can you let them dominate your reading. Some of the recent songs are a bit less obtrusive in that respect. It's just barely possible to look at all the references in *Time Out Of Mind* to lost loves and old loves and say that these are not still songs about Sara, but it's much easier to do a totally non-biographical interpretation of

Time Out Of Mind than it is of *Desire*.

AM: Or even something like 'Most of the Time,' which I cannot hear without thinking of Sara.

SS: Oh sure. Cast aside all academic quibbles. 'Most of the Time' IS about Sara!

AM: OK, although we're in agreement about that, it kind of runs counter to the main point of my question, which you've answered very well, but I think for myself I'd almost push it further and I get the feeling from you that you would too. The difficulty here is that 'Sara' is such an extreme example, because it mentions the kids, there are actual details there, the hotel and so forth, there's just too many details to ignore...

SS: Let's take something like 'Tangled Up in Blue,' which may or may not be about Sara (though I don't really think it is). It far exceeds any possible biographical thing done with it. I would say the total meaning of a song or of any work of art always includes but exceeds the artist's intention.

AM: OK. it's your interview not mine! Mine would be that it always exceeds. On that note though, you picked 'Tangled Up in Blue.' Had you picked the next song, 'Simple Twist of Fate,' what would you have said?

SS: I was wondering about that one even as I said 'Tangled Up in Blue,' because Dylan has frequently said 'Simple Twist of Fate' is a true story.

AM: He has given two great clues as to what it's about. In 1981 in London he sang 'Susie' while singing 'Simple Twist of Fate' - 'Susie walks' - and the original title in the little red notebook is 'Simple Twist of Fate (4th Street Song).'

SS: I didn't know that. It 's a curious song. I've never really liked it.

AM: Really? I love it. But it's interesting that the only biographical references we've had actually predate 'Sara,' and we also know from a *Judas!* interview with Ellen Bernstein that 'You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go' clearly seems, with all the references [Ashtabula, Honolulu etc] to have been written for her [Bernstein] at that time. That to me almost detracts from the song. I have great problems with now knowing that, because for years I listened to the song without knowing it and thought they were wonderfully creative names put together. I am very pleased though for that lady because she sounds like she deserves a song written for her. On the other hand it makes me wonder... I mean, most people in the world who hear the song will never know that.

SS: No, well, I didn't know it until I read the interview in *Judas!*

AM: And this is to do with your book: how does this affect the song as text? To me that's now a text that is different for us having read that interview than for people who haven't, and yet the song hasn't changed.

SS: But text always implies intertext, and this is one of the tricky things that happens when you're dealing with contemporary writers. There always is a possibility that some interview is going to come along and say, this is the reason why Ashtabula is in this song, whereas, you know, we're never going to be able to go up to Shakespeare and say, why did Hamlet really hesitate? (The reason

Hamlet hesitated is because if he killed the king as soon as the ghost told him to, the play would have been over at the end of Act 1 and there would have been no intermission in which the theatre could sell popcorn!) I have colleagues who work on medieval literature, and who labour for years over a single line or single reference in some archives somewhere and construct these vast theories and sometimes they look at me and say 'How can you handle so much information, how can you possibly write about somebody you know so much about?' There are people who spend an entire career trying to establish one new fact about Geoffrey Chaucer. Of course when you're dealing with a contemporary artist you're just deluged. So there's a great deal of information that does not make its way, strictly speaking, into the text, but suddenly becomes available to you whether you like it or not. I tend to agree with you, I wish I hadn't heard that biographical reference. The rhyme of Honolulu and Ashtabula is such a delightful rhyme - to know that the two names were given to him by circumstance doesn't diminish the delightfulness of the rhyme but it does (alas) diminish the inventiveness of it. But the intertext is always there. Text and intertext are always bound up with each other. I know in my own writing, there are lines which I am particularly pleased with, and which I hope the readers will be really pleased with, which I didn't particularly invent but which were just been given to me necessarily by circumstances - and part of the artistry there is knowing how to use the chance when it comes. The fact that

Ellen Bernstein was associated with both Honolulu and Ashtabula is fact, it's there, given to us now, but it still took someone with a certain delightful ear to come along and decide to put these two names into the song and rhyme them.

AM: This 'deluge of information' you mention is interesting and we are also, with Dylan, faced with a deluge of versions. I'm still belabouring my point about fixed text and multiple texts etc. One of the bits that I've both agreed and disagreed with is when you were talking about 'Like a Rolling Stone,' and saying that the 'text' of a song like that is not just the official studio recording, but also an accumulation of all its many performances, the song's total history.

SS: I still agree with that.

AM: Yes, and I do too, but I have disagreement at the same time, if you don't mind me airing it. It slightly concerns me that in the example you give, let's say at the last live version, you and I stood side by side and watched and listened - our histories of the song would have been different. I have heard different versions than you have, and you than me; we've different memories of them, different 'intertextual histories' if you wish. But also, someone coming along to see Bob Dylan for the very first time, who may not even have heard the original single far less any out takes like the waltz time version. The song seems to me to exist in two forms there, one for the person hearing it for the first time, and then different again for you and me.

SS: I think that's part of the fascination of live performance, and of this very peculiar

art form that we are studying, which is not just a single text. There is a single definitive text of say, Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' - yes, we have to acknowledge that there are an infinite number of variations on it in terms of readers' experience, people who read it in 1912, people who read it for the first time in 1920, for the first time in a high school class or first year university class in 1990, all these different readers' versions - but at least all these different versions relate to a single fixed text. But with song, and especially with a performer like Dylan who so continuously recreates his own works, it's less absolute than that. I would still at one level want to insist that anyone who pretends to have a complete understanding of 'Like a Rolling Stone' must have heard and responded to the official 1965 studio version, that you can't have a complete understanding of the song unless you know that version, whatever other versions you've heard. So in that sense it's kind of a reference point or a beginning point from which all the other versions diverge. But again the 1965 studio version no longer concludes the song and no longer encapsulates the whole song. The experience is much bigger than that, and there is a sense in which the total text of 'Like a Rolling Stone' has to include the Isle of Wight version, it has to include the early waltz version, has to include that wonderful celebratory version from 1974, and has to come up to the present, and all the fancy lighting effects we're now being bombarded with. (Incidentally I loved the lighting the first time I saw it and was bored the second time.)

AM: Yes, it's a one trick pony, isn't it?

SS: Even by the fourth chorus you're starting to think, okay, enough.

AM: I think it's kind of designed for 'Silvio.'

SS: It is a wonderful moment when he sings that first time, 'how does it feel?' and the lights sweep onto the audience, but it doesn't last very long.

AM: I was saying that, for people who haven't heard as many versions as you, that definition of the text as an accumulation seems to exclude them from 'knowing' the song. Although I agreed with you, because for me it is a process, I also felt that in a way it isn't true. The first recording is a blueprint, it's a reference point.

SS: It's an accumulation, but no one will ever have the whole thing. You can't totalise the text. Everyone will have a different text - but I think they all have to include the 1965 version!

AM: OK. Now, a bit of a cheeky question really. Given the intensity of writing on Dylan with such an all encompassing theme of trickster and prophet, do you ever find that it restricts your enjoyment of just basically sitting back and enjoying a Bob Dylan song? If he suddenly mentions something like a mask in a line, of course you've immediately got to bring all the work you've been doing to mind rather than just sit back and enjoy the song he's performing on record or on stage at that time?

SS: That does happen. I'd like to think that there were times when I was so relaxed that I can just sit back and listen to the songs for their own sake and not

worry about how they relate into my book, and I think it will be a lot easier after the book is actually published and there is less of a temptation to think, 'oh my God I've got to rush back and revise this chapter!' Once the book is out and there's absolutely no possibility of making any changes to it, I might just be okay.

On the other hand I'd have to say that part of my enjoyment is in fact the appreciation of the kind of intellectual play of images that is going on, so that when, as I mentioned earlier, when "*Love And Theft*" came out, part of my reaction was sheer dismay. Here was an album which has already pre-empted my entire theory and part of me is sitting there thinking, this is almost too programmatic, it's almost as if he himself is hammering home the kind of interpretation that I want to suggest. And yet I also loved it, and I do love "*Love And Theft*," it's a magnificent album, and part of the reason that I love it is that it does in fact so perfectly exemplify and do wonderful new things with precisely the kind of concepts and images that I'm talking about in my criticism. The reason that I enjoy Dylan is not just because it's good music to dance to or something like that, it's because it does engage me intellectually, as well as emotionally, as well as rhythmically. And everything goes together for me, the voice as I said before, that incredible voice, and the music and the lyrics and the kind of place that it occupies in a historical career.

I think I'm very lucky, you are too, and so are all of us who are roughly the same age as Dylan and have in effect been able to grow with him, so that his history

reverberates in my history. I can't imagine what it would be like to be, you know, a sixteen-year-old teenager coming to Dylan now and thinking 'Wow, this guy is great, which album should I buy next?' I mean, to be faced with the fact of trying to cope with forty albums and God knows how many bootlegs and several shelves full of books. Where do you begin, how do you put all of this into a historical context? For me, it is no problem because his historical context is mine. We're only three years apart in age, so that I went through exactly the same time periods. Give me any Dylan record and I will relate it precisely to what was going on in the social, cultural and political history of America and the West, at the time that record came out, but for a sixteen year old trying to do that now, how do you explain to them what was the difference between 1966 and 1974?

AM: Yes, but they are coming to Dylan, and in increasing numbers, which is a great thing.

SS: Oh they are, which is tremendous - but I think they have a difficult job ahead of them, much more difficult than we ever had.

AM: Absolutely, It's something we're looking for in *Judas!*, that is, young voices and their different experiences. I actually know people who have every concert of this century and a couple of albums. That's a different Dylan.

SS: Weird, that's a totally different Dylan.

AM: Anyway, I was asking a cheeky question, so I'm going to ask a cheekier one now. This is, sometimes you have a theme and it runs through Dylan and you picked

absolute central themes which his entire work was always riddled with, no pun intended, and of course as you say now "*Love And Theft*" largely encapsulates those themes. But moving back slightly further in his career, do you feel at times, because you have a theme that overrides so much, that you always interpret Dylan's lines as fitting your theme when in fact sometimes they may have a completely different and more obvious meaning?

SS: Well, in general, yes, there is always that danger. If you have a set of critical preconceptions about Dylan, then there is always the danger that you're going to fit your own experience into these preconceptions. But one of the nice things about Dylan's career is that he contains so many exemplary instances of the folly of that approach - and 'Judas!', not the magazine but the original call, is the absolute archetype of this. The whole spectacle of what happened in the mid 60s when all the folk purists objected to Dylan going electric is such an exemplary instance of people having a preconception of what Bob Dylan ought to be doing and thus being totally unable to see whether he is actually now doing it, that if studying Dylan teaches you anything, it should be in fact precisely not to rely on these preconceptions, to be very suspicious of these preconceptions and to be willing to go along with whatever it is that's happening now. And I think I've been pretty good at that over the years. I've certainly had my problems with the Christian phase in '80, '81, it took me a long time to come round to really liking these albums, but as I was saying earlier, I had no trouble in '65 when

he turned to electric and I have thoroughly enjoyed the developments in the nineties and this swing towards the mining of American traditional music and wholesale 'love and theft,' I think I've welcomed that. I would really distance myself from people like Michael Gray and Clinton Heylin who are very scornful of the recent work.

AM: I'm speaking for someone else here, but because I know it and it's so counter to what you're saying, I should say that Michael Gray adores "*Love And Theft*".

SS: I am glad to hear it.

AM: And I say adores in both the senses we were talking earlier - about being a fan and being an academic critic.

SS: Yeah, I do too. I think "*Love And Theft*" actually broke through the wall of resistance that *Time Out Of Mind* didn't.

AM: I have problems with *Time Out Of Mind*, in as much as I only think there's four great songs on it and I detest much of the production, as you know. And I'm not alone in that, albeit in a minority. If you don't like the sound of an album, it is impossible to actually grow to love it, whereas "*Love And Theft*" I loved from first hearing and it was still, a year after I first heard it, the most played album in any given week, official unofficial, I still play it more per week than any other album. That's never happened to me before.

SS: "*Love And Theft*" was terrible for me, writing a second edition, because I had all these neat formulations and conclusions and a lot of the time it was *Time Out Of Mind* which provided the final word on a lot of the arguments. Aidan Day says

exactly the same thing, you know, he says that *Time Out Of Mind* was a great book closing album. It was ideal for the final chapter of all kind of studies. But "*Love And Theft*" just busts it all wide open again, all the neat conclusions that you had come to, all the phases which seemed to be rounded out and so on, suddenly "*Love And Theft*" just opens things up again.

AM: And it's a joyous opening up.

SS: Yes, it is such a joy.

AM: Even on the saddest things it's such a joy. It's so Dylan being Dylan. Now it seems like you've had it all your life, but when you first heard it, it was so ridiculously unpredictable, even by Dylan standards.

SS: It was crazy.

AM: I read somewhere fairly recently, and I'm sorry I don't have it the exact reference, but you were talking about a print of *Renaldo and Clara*, which you contrasted with the version I know, and I think many people know, which is the Channel Four broadcast and you were particularly talking about a print where the colours were different. You actually said the colour blue dominated the whole film in a way that you never noticed before. This fascinated me.

SS: Yeah it was one of the Manchester conventions, it'd be about ten years ago now, early nineties, and they were showing a 16mm print, not videotape. I'd never seen it in such rich colours. I think we all have copies of copies of copies of that Channel Four broadcast, which is fine, I love it, but I'd never seen the colours like this before and especially I think the blue. The blue was what really

impressed me. The film was gorgeously photographed.

AM: Which doesn't come across really, as much as I love it.

SS: I think that there is probably a whole interpretation to be made on the basis of the colour values which we can just guess at in the VHS versions.

AM: Apart from the poetic themes of colours, the very fact you mentioned blue: you can imagine immediately what I leapt to.

SS: Oh yes, the centrality of 'Tangled Up in Blue,' and even the character David Blue.

AM: Exactly. It just hit me that maybe there's a whole imagistic theme here I'm missing.

SS: And to some extent the reds too. Red I find a colour that survives least well on videotape. Also, of course, I'm not happy with the interpretation of the rose as the vagina travelling around.

AM: I think it's a bit glib to say the least, and fastened onto with distasteful glee I thought.

SS: I try not to mention that very often.

AM: A double-barrelled question Stephen. When did you last see Bob Dylan and when will you next see him?

SS: I last saw him in Paris on the 30th of April, I will next see him in Edmonton one week from today.

AM: And are you hoping for 'Quinn The Eskimo'?

SS: Now that you've told me that 'Quinn' has appeared, it sort of shoots straight to the top of my wish list. Otherwise what I want to hear is 'Blind Willie McTell,' because I've never heard it live.

AM: Fair enough. Just to put this in context: before the interview started, Stephen asked me if I'd heard anything about the tour and I said, the last thing I heard knocked my socks off, and I mentioned that Dylan had played 'Quinn The Eskimo.' It would have been a great video interview to see his face at that point.

SS: Or to see yours. [laughs]

AM: Or to see mine, yes. What did you think of the Paris show? I was actually at it as well so I'm very interested.

SS: I was at both nights in Paris and what fascinated me was the extent of the variation between the two nights. In the main body of the show, not including the encores, there was only one repeat song between the two nights and it came at about slot number 12, so round about slot nine or ten I was starting to seriously think that the guy would make it a complete non-repeating show. I think of the two nights, the second night had the more interesting set-list whereas the first night actually had the better performance.

AM: That seems to be the general view of people that were there. I, of course, chose the wrong night.

SS: I think the second night was in fact the one that had originally been announced, and then they added a second night when demand seemed to warrant it but the second night actually was the 'first night.'

AM: Yeah, because I bought my tickets for German shows and the Paris one, there was only one which was the second. Interestingly enough, you said that when it got to about the twelfth song you were beginning to wonder if it would be a

repeat that would be kind of fun. Going back to the beginning of the interview, with the fan impulse as well as the academic background, there was in you there a fan sense of the 'collectible.'

SS: Yeah, you're always looking for something memorable about the concerts you go to and it's not always something that you could possibly write up academically, but you just want to say: 'I was there when...'

I was at the November 18th 2001 show in Madison Square Gardens in New York, which was the first time that Dylan had played New York after September 11th. As a concert it was a fairly standard set list for late Fall 2001, but there was an atmosphere in Madison Square Gardens which was just incredible. There are good bootlegs of the concert, but I don't think they can capture the kind of feeling in the audience of welcoming Dylan to New York two months after September 11th. And there were two moments especially when this became very clear. He started singing 'Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues,' and it was as if the entire audience just drew in its breath until the final line: 'going back to New York City,' and when it got to that final line there was just this huge cheer that moved all the way through the audience, it clearly at that moment had a very, very special meaning for everyone in there. Then there was this weird, very strange, moment when he got to the band introductions, he said this wonderfully dignified and beautifully restrained line, he said: 'Most of the songs we've played tonight were recorded in New York City, and those that weren't

recorded here were written here, so nobody has to ask me what I think about this town.' And that was all he said, and again you could feel this huge wave going round the audience. And then he went on to one of his dumb jokes, and said: 'Hey, the drummer got a five dollar scarf for his wife. Good trade.' The jokes are so awful and it was almost as though he felt, after this incredible loaded line about New York City, that he wanted to defuse the atmosphere by pulling out one of these dumb jokes.

AM: I'm always very hesitant about people calling Dylan a prophet, not in your sense, I mean the casual: oh, he's a prophet. Yet you can't separate "*Love And Theft*" from that atrocity, because the official release date was that terrible day. I still don't believe in 'prophecy' or something like that but it is extraordinary that it is so imbued with the feelings and those lines ... it feels like a September 11th album, you can't sweep it under the carpet and say it's one of those things it.

SS: Yeah, it's weird. A number of lines on "*Love And Theft*" sound so much as if they are a response. It's the same way in which so many people interpreted *Time Out Of Mind* as a response to his heart disease, even though that had all been recorded before his illness. It is partly because a lot of Dylan's lines are in fact so generalised in their imagery that they can be applied to a number of situations. Yes, there's certainly something a little uncanny about "*Love And Theft*" and September 11th.

AM: Yes, that's the word I was looking for, 'uncanny.' I agree with you on *Time Out Of Mind*, but I can explain that away

because of the kind of background of the songs, the mood and mode of the songs. OK, they were actually written considerably before, but they were written in a storm in winter, there was a blackness and a bleakness if you know what I mean.

SS: I go way back with this. I remember I was saying earlier in the interview that I first heard Peter Paul and Mary singing 'Blowin' in the Wind' in the week of the Kennedy assassination, and so for me the lines, 'how many deaths will it take till we know / that too many people have died,' have always been for me about John Kennedy's death. It just so happened that the Peter Paul and Mary single hit Scotland - due to the distribution system in those days - in November 1963 and I was listening to it that week, and so that's another instance where the wording of a song is general enough that it can in fact be applied to specific situations retrospectively.

AM: It's fascinating... for many people who didn't hear it that week, who heard it later in the sixties, they thought of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Whereas myself, I came to Dylan in the mid seventies, when I hear the line, to be honest the exact image it brings to me is First World War and the trenches. It's just one mass slaughter that it brings to mind. That's what it brings to me, it doesn't bring the sixties at all. This probably sounds heresy to you but it's just how one hears the song. I think it's the word 'cannonballs' which puts it in a historical framework.

SS: 'Blowin' in the Wind' is like a lot of these early songs, strikingly non-specific in terms of its historical situating of itself.

Yeah, I mean, in the early 1960s who was still shooting cannonballs? Or even in 'John Brown': 'a cannonball blew my eyes away.'

AM: I mean I didn't relate those to Vietnam you see. I know in a way I should have, but I never hear them like that.

SS: 'Cannonball' was surely an anachronistic term at the time that he wrote it and deliberately not contemporary. What war is John Brown going away to fight in?

AM: Again I think First World War, but it's something in my mindset, it's not Dylan's lyrics, it's just the way I look at it - that's the big example of futility of war, I suppose, in my mind. The poignancy of the War Poets that first spoke to me of such things.

SS: I think it's quite deliberately non-specific on his part, that he did not want to confine the lyrics to a specific war. Even songs like 'Hattie Carroll' and 'Hollis Brown,' even though they use proper names, seem to be very careful not to specify time period. 'Hollis Brown' is presumably set in the 1930s and 'Hattie Carroll' could have happened anytime in the last hundred years. There are quite a number of Dylan songs which have proper names, there are very few that mention dates.

AM: It's a bit like the opening of 'With God on Our Side,' deliberately non-specific. But with 'John Brown' and 'Blowin' in the Wind' it's deliberately pushed back.

SS: In 'Joey,' there is a reference to winter of 68, something like that.

AM: Yes, of course: 'he dressed like Jimmy Cagney and I swear he did look great.'

SS: That may be the only specific date I can remember in a Dylan song. I haven't thought about that before, this is an interesting point. I'll have to go back and scour all the words.

AM: You mentioned 'Hattie Carroll' there, which kind of connects with 'Hurricane,' which I want to come back to. One of the things coming to Dylan late as I did in the mid-seventies was that I had a lot of stuff to catch up on. And for me, for example, the first album I really listened to was a Batch of the Little White Wonder, which had an acoustic and an electric side. The divide meant nothing to me because I hadn't grown up with it. There wasn't even a question, it was nothing. Similarly you said the Stones and The Beatles, I feel like saying to you why not like both, because I grew up a decade later, it didn't matter.

SS: It mattered in the mid sixties. I mean now I like both and now I can have the luxury of liking both but believe me, in 1964 you had to declare your allegiance.

AM: I believe you! I prefer having both if that's okay, though. When I had this mass of material, one of the first things that struck me - and in early listening it's only very obvious things that strike you - was 'My Back Pages,' with this gorgeous melody, telling me not to listen to the other songs I'd just discovered; and I thought it was a tremendously brave thing. I mean, its lyrics can perhaps be criticised on some level for being overblown etc., but the melody and the words seem to me extraordinarily mature. (Remember this was the middle of glam rock.) It seemed to me extraordinarily

mature that someone had written these songs that I was just discovering and loving could have repudiated them so quickly, and I've always kind of worried that something like 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll,' masterpiece of a song though it is and masterly look at how racism operates at so many levels, ties to a specific incident, and there are grey areas, even here in this seemingly black and white situation, as to how Dylan actually portrays that incident. Many years later he would, in 'Hurricane', I would almost say falsify (though that may be too strong a word) the events line by line and completely forget the lesson he told us in 'lies the truth is black and white' and that has always worried me. I think being a Canadian you should have a view of 'Hurricane' because it was a few Canadians that 'sprung' him. Does it worry you too? Is what I'm asking.

SS: It's a very interesting question. I've never had much problem with 'Hurricane'; 'Joey' is the one that bothers me. I can never take 'Joey,' but then I think that the problems in 'Joey' are actually within the words of the song. I realise from the very little I've read about Joey Gallo that he was an absolute thug and mobster and nowhere near the kind of person that Dylan presents. But even without that knowledge, there are things within the text of "Joey" itself which bug me. I'm thinking of the line when he goes to his Boss and says 'I want what's mine,' and you can't help but think, but "what's mine" is what he's stolen.

AM: He does it like a war veteran coming back and saying: I want my job back.

SS: Yeah, but 'what's mine' is here what he's stolen, and you don't need any biographical information about Joey Gallo from outside the song to know this, and to be bothered by it. So there are internal contradictions within 'Joey,' which means I've never been able to take it seriously. On 'Hurricane,' when the Norman Jewison film came out about three or four years ago, I did a thoroughly intensive study of all the websites and the books and all the arguments that were going back and forth on the question of Carter's guilt or innocence. There's still a very strong faction which holds that Carter was in fact guilty of the murders. I felt at that time that the film distorted things in Carter's favour much more than Dylan's song does. It was quite untenable.

AM: The film actually makes up characters who didn't exist. It does say at the very end, I don't if you've noticed, it says some characters and scenes have been made up.

SS: It's a wonderful, wonderful performance by Denzel Washington, but as an argument for Carter's innocence it's completely untenable. I certainly came to the conclusion then that absolutely there was not enough incontrovertible evidence to convict Hurricane Carter. From a legal point of view it's perfectly clear that the not guilty verdict is the correct verdict, although it might be closer to the Scots verdict of 'not proven'. I'm convinced that from a legal point of view, if you apply the standard of 'beyond a reasonable doubt,' there is a very, very reasonable doubt that Carter was guilty.

AM: There's a big difference between those two. He was never actually found innocent, was he?

SS: He was released on procedural grounds. 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, but legally I think there is no doubt that he should not have been convicted, because the evidence simply was not there and the evidence which is still being brought and argued against him is riddled with inconsistencies and ambiguities. I simply don't believe the eye-witness evidence. It's been shown over and over again that eye witness evidence is unreliable - especially, as Dylan says, seeing a black man on a dark night across the hundred yards of a street, there's no way in which that kind of evidence is reliable.

AM: But a lot of eye witness evidence, which I also don't believe, is what got him released. Obviously I'm not speaking from the point of a racist or being in favour of having an innocent man being incarcerated here, I just feel that the message of 'lies that truth is black and white' is completely countermanded by the song.

SS: 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.

The original interview ended with Stephen and I speculating on what we then knew of *Masked And Anonymous* and its possible

correlations to *Alias Bob Dylan Revisited*. As we both (and most of you will) have now seen the film, and Stephen's first impressions of it are recorded in *Judas!* issue 7, it would serve no purpose to publish that part of the conversation. Though I would, naturally, wish to extend my thanks to Stephen for his generosity with his time and for his insights. Were the interview talking place now, I suspect it would have ended with a discussion of the relevance of the Bob Dylan 'mask' comment about to be released on *The Bootleg Series Volume 6*; it is a theme that is always present, it would appear.



Jan 8, 1967 page 19

Paul Nelson's introduction (and notes) to Bob Dylan's songs (as published in the music sheets for *Blonde on Blonde*) is disgraceful. If a critic is so overwhelmed by an artist that he has no means to explain that work he shouldn't take the job of writing it. So Paul puts himself into the position of being useful messenger boy for the powers that be and he will continue down that path for he doesn't have enough imagination to cut through things. He may be convinced of his position but he can't defend it. The pity is that he works so hard at it.....

Jan 8, 1967 page 18

Bob Dylan is supposedly to record now for MGM and it is not supposed to be true that he is leaving his manager, Al Grossman.



Dear Andy and Keith,

First of all, I would like to say that I probably would have never written this note if it hadn't been for Sheila Clarke's letter last issue. I too happen to believe that readers' letters are an essential part of any vital magazine and are 'often memorably entertaining in their own right', as Sheila rightly points out. Thus, in spite of my proverbial laziness, I have forced myself to bring some semblance of order to the ideas I've been turning around in my head since I read Nick Hawthorne and Peter Vincent's article on the Hammersmith show, and commit them to paper.

I should expect most fans readily agree on the extraordinary quality of Bob Dylan's European 2003 Fall Tour, and particularly of its grand finale, the three awesome London theatre shows. This, merely judging by the standard of the last few years, I hold to be an indisputable fact. There is probably also unanimous assent about the need to try to assess adequately what this tour and these particular concerts represent in the overall scheme of Dylan's NET. However, in spite of what the editorial in *Judas!* # 8 implies, this is precisely what Hawthorne and Vincent's article fails to do, and how! To be honest, I don't think 'invigorating' is the term that suits it best: 'irritating' would be more like it. Also, let me say again that articles such as this one, with its distinctly fanzinerish touch, do not belong in *Judas!* Sorry if I sound like a prig.

In their eagerness to lavish praise on the final London shows, a commendable enough wish, the authors start by being unfair to all the concerts that preceded these three in 2003, and thus also to Dylan's work. Do the London shows stand out on their own? Of course they do, and majestically. But creation doesn't (usually) happen in a vacuum, and not only is the authors' cursory dismissal of the 95 shows leading up that year to these theatre gigs uncritical and opinionated, it is also patently fallacious. My point is that if the London shows were so good it was due in no small measure to the fact that they were the concluding stages of a process. Yes, one of continuously improving performances which had intensified particularly during the European tour (at least all the way up to Paris), but which had actually started earlier, if less consistently, during the US Spring tour that year, and which might arguably be traced all the way back to the August 2002 tour of North America.

Dylan's 'singing voice', which Hawthorne and Vincent proclaim returned 'miraculously' only for the final UK shows had been apparent during most of the Fall tour (albeit with occasional and isolated relapses into what the authors call the 'wolfman' and 'sing-song' modes), and the beginning of its recovery can also be traced back to the Spring and Summer of 2003 (the New Orleans April 25th 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' is not as bad as the authors make it, and I dare them to find fault with the Casper, July 13th performance of 'It Ain't Me, Babe', for instance, which could have never happened in 2001), with isolated instances in the second half of 2002 as well. In truth, far from this last year having been 'littered with unlistenable, painful vocal performances' (p. 5), I believe we have been very fortunate to witness some of Dylan's best and most committed singing (and playing, both piano and harp, but that's another story) in years. As to the band, who 'sounded glorious' and 'rose to the occasion' (p. 8) in Hammersmith, but apparently nowhere else, lack of space precludes my entering into this discussion as well: the authors should listen to the tapes of the other shows. Besides, all these complaints about how Dylan sings today strike me as futile: there is no point in remembering how well he sang in 1966, 1981 or 1995 and use that as yardstick all the time, because he 'can't go back all the way', and neither can we. There are other things to his performances, as Hawthorne and Vincent surely know.

There is something radically wrong in the article's tone, besides. One must allow a little leeway for subjectivity when dealing with concert performances, of course, but subjectivity is one thing, mind reading another. I couldn't believe my eyes when I read how the authors smugly described what Dylan was thinking or feeling at the time of the London shows: he 'wanted to reward the serious fans' (p. 7), Hawthorne and Vincent boldly state, he had 'decided to pull out a very special show' for them; later on, we learn that 'he knew the magnitude of what he was doing, and how it would be received' (p. 11). None of your 'perhaps' or 'arguably' or 'we would like to believe' for them, our intrepid authors were right there, inside Dylan's head, and they know better. They also know exactly how Dylan would have addressed his 'serious' followers at Hammersmith (or was it at Brixton?) if he had chosen to: 'it is a song I play almost every night, which you are bored to tears with, but you have never heard it in this slot before. So now you can listen to it', thus spake Dylan (p. 14)... in the authors' daydreams.

And who be these 'serious' fans, pray? Is this an accolade bestowed upon the worthy few by Messrs. Hawthorne and Vincent? I reckon I probably would never qualify as a 'serious fan' in the authors' little book: I could not be at Hammersmith, but I did go to Wembley, worse luck. I also happen to enjoy the songs that apparently bore them to tears: I'll even admit that I never went to take a leak during 'All Along The Watchtower' when that old chestnut came up third every night. Frankly, all this gobbledygook is insulting to the cultivated, seasoned fans who form, I believe, the larger part of the magazine's readership. This sort of infantile speculation is what fanzines abound in, and to analyse the

Hammersmith concert with this 'method' is nothing short of presumptuous or imbecile, which I sincerely don't hold the authors to be (at least, judging by Hawthorne's earlier articles on his own, including the one in this same issue). If it is a joke, it is one in very poor taste, indeed. The preposterous bit about Dylan singing 'Tangled Up In Blue' in the fifth slot at Brixton as a sort of private homage to his 'serious' fans (pp. 14-15) can only be some sort of sick joke, but then again, this is not the place for this prepubescent humour.

As to the authors' detailed commentary of the performance of 'Romance In Durango', it would warrant a complete letter by itself. I'll simply note, once again, how well the authors seem to know Dylan's most inner thoughts: I particularly like the part where they explain how Dylan gracefully concluded the song by repeating its 'famous opening lines (...) realising that many would have missed them and not been able to savour them' (p. 11). Indeed. Equally remarkable are the quite obnoxious references to the different quality of the respective audiences at Hammersmith and Birmingham. According to the authors, if Dylan had played 'Romance in Durango' at the latter venue, 'half the audience would not have recognised it' (p. 11). Come on! Actually, judging by the tape I've heard, that's exactly what happened at Hammersmith, and one cannot help but wonder, if the hall was 'silent as people tried to identify the song' (p. 10), how come all those 'serious' fans at Hammersmith managed not to make out the first lines. Not serious enough, perhaps?

I think most readers will agree that there must be better ways to discuss the significance of the London theatre shows. Many important things have happened in 2003, and particularly during the European tour. I know there is talk of rigid set lists -and I don't quite agree-, I know there also have been a few ordinary shows, and an occasional song badly butchered (but if the Wembley rendition of 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue' was 'really horrific' (p. 6) I wonder what the authors would say of the Gothenburg 'To Ramona'). But the main points are, besides the quality of Dylan's voice, that the band is playing wonderfully, and Dylan too; that many new and daring arrangements were debuted, worked on, and brought to fruition during the tour: take 'Girl Of The North Country', 'Desolation Row', 'The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll' or 'Boots Of Spanish Leather'. Also, that Dylan displayed a renewed commitment to his material, using cue sheets to make sure he didn't mangle the lyrics (one of the reasons for the almost word-perfect versions of 'Jokerman' and 'Romance In Durango', of course); more remarkably still, it was soon apparent that he had rewritten in part ('If You See Her, Say Hello', 'Man In The Long Black Coat', 'Trying To Get To Heaven', 'Jokerman') or completely ('Down Along The Cove') some of the lyrics. Wouldn't it have been more interesting to discuss all this in connection with the extraordinary shows where it all came together, and which brought the quite remarkable tour year of 2003 to its end in London?

Last but not least, I cannot avoid the uneasy feeling that, after all, Messrs. Hawthorne and Vincent, like so many other fans, rate so highly the London shows (and particularly Hammersmith), simply because Dylan performed 'Romance In Durango' and so many other 'unusual' songs. A more 'ordinary' set list, and we would have been spared their memorable essay. Have Dylan perform 'Every Grain Of Sand' almost every night, and it's a boring old staple, or whatever; have him sing it only once that year in a little cozy venue, and it's history in the making. I do not believe one-off performances are reason enough to make a show 'historical', and extraordinary as the performance of these songs at Hammersmith was, and much as I regret I was not able to be there myself, I still think that it is more rewarding, and more in the natural scheme of things, to be able to enjoy a 'rigid' set list and to look forward to an extraordinary performance of 'Like A Rolling Stone' or 'Summer Days' (and there have been a few in November), because that is where the challenge really lies. And if you don't believe me, have Hawthorne or Vincent pry into Dylan's mind and see what he thinks.

Anyway, congratulations of course for your excellent work: *Judas!* is always a delight to read. My compliments specially to Andrew Davies for his witty tour diary, and my apologies to Sheila Clarke if this letter doesn't match her expectations. We can but try.

Keep on keeping on, etc.

Antonio J. Iriarte
Madrid

Thank you for another great issue. Couldn't put it down. Attended three concerts this autumn: two in Amsterdam and one in Brussels. I thought the second night in Amsterdam was the best. I'm sorry I missed the London shows, but have downloaded them through Bit Torrent. Really extraordinary.

Ronald M. van der Vliet
Amsterdam

Cheers, Ronald. Bit Torrent, just for those unaware of it, is a marvellous means of sharing music and films in full quality via the Internet.

Dear Andrew

Thanks for the reply that accompanied my letter in *Judas!* 8; seeing it at the head of pages of letters when my complaint had been about the lack of a letters section, leaves me suitably chastened and no longer 'Disgusted of Chester'.

Picking up a point from a Paul Sutcliffe E-mail - Dylan's perceived lack of respect for women - I've never found this so. Although I would not be upset by 'Just Like A Woman', I would call myself a feminist. He's often bewildered, angry and hurt (aren't all men sometimes?) ['Good Lord, no, definitely not' - Ed.] but not, I believe, disrespectful.

It made me wonder again if this is so why so few women write about Dylan; it would be interesting to see what others think.

Michael O'Connell's timely piece on *World Gone Wrong* was short and evocative; it was good to see 'Boots Of Spanish Leather' and 'Mr Tambourine Man' looked at in depth and with fresh insight and Andrew Davies treated us to a most entertaining bit of 'on the road' writing, leaving me to wonder what happens next.

Nick Hawthorne and Peter Vincent did a great job with the three London gigs, even if they did have me gnawing at my limbs because I wasn't there, and then I came across the infamous Rome interview quotes, reminding me I have never quite got my head round this one.

Having been a sad case for so long, I've stopped caring what anyone thinks - even Bob - so I wouldn't say I was in denial here, but I'm not sure he did mean 'everyone reading this...' as Nick and Peter claim.

(Would he really 'reward' us with Shepherds Bush, Hammersmith and Brixton if we were held in such low regard? Who knows? I hear you say.)

I've always thought he was misinterpreted (yet again) in that interview, the preceding paragraph referring to 'a legion of critics, biographers and professional fans' and Dylan then saying 'these so-called connoisseurs of Bob Dylan music'. And later, with what interviewer Alan Jackson calls a 'sneering tone', 'hardcore fans who are obsessed with finding every scrap of paper I've ever written on'. (Dustbin rooters?)

But what do I know? he may indeed hold us all in contempt (incidentally. I wonder how Peter Doggett, in issue four's 'Why Does Bob Dylan Keep Touring?' debate knew, even from his good vantage point, that it was contempt for the fans in Dylan's eyes and not a touch of indigestion?) and this might even add to the vicarious thrill of being a Dylan fan, but I still think he was badly served by an interviewer trying to make him look petty and peevish in contrast to the more expansive Dylan he'd met four years previously.

Returning to the main point - the three London gigs - I was going to add 'It's clear you love doing this kind of thing, so could we please have some more soon?' but it looks as if this may happen anyway, so 'Cheers Bob! You know it makes sense'.

And the last word should go to a new friend I made in the bar at Birmingham in November:

'We're here at Bob's convenience, he's jamming with a few mates and if it works...'

Quite. Do what makes you happy, Bob. You've earned it.

Sincerely,
Sheila Clark
Chester

Whose Masterpiece Is It Anyway?

Leon Russell & The Blue Rock Sessions

by Peter Doggett

‘Working outside the confines of Columbia for the very first time, Dylan had booked three sessions with pianist/songwriter Leon Russell, Dylan’s first independent producer. If Dylan hoped that the prospect might inspire him to take up the pen again - as it had in his younger days - just two new songs resulted from the sessions, the remainder of the time being spent flitting from cover to cover. (...) Even the kind of sustained studio work required to carve out something as lightweight as New Morning now seemed beyond Dylan.’ (Clinton Heylin: *Bob Dylan - The Recording Sessions*)

‘By March 1971, Bob was back in the studio, this time with a group of top-flight L.A. sessionmen led by Leon Russell. The material from those dates wasn’t meant for an album, and Bob had to cut through considerable red tape to hold it outside the purview of Columbia Records. (...) [Studio manager] Joe Schick recalls that Bob and Leon Russell got along respectably enough, but there was no real chemistry there, no magic, and as a result any talk of an album was scrapped.’ (Bob Spitz: *Dylan*)

So what was happening in March 1971, at this session where there was no chemistry, no magic, just a man flitting away from sustained studio work? The three (or two, or maybe four; sources disagree) days of work at Blue Rock Studio on Spring Street in New York’s SoHo district scarcely attracted the attention of one Dylan biographer, Howard Souness, despite the fact that they produced two songs that have endured in Bob’s catalogue, ‘Watching The River Flow’ and ‘When I Paint My Masterpiece’.

Even the fuller accounts in Heylin and Spitz depend on conjecture and contradiction. *‘If Dylan hoped...’*, Heylin suggests, before accepting his theory as fact: *‘sustained studio work . . . now seemed beyond Dylan’*. But what if sustained studio work and taking up the pen again were never the purpose of the exercise? Spitz hints as much - *‘the material from those dates wasn’t meant for an album’* - before switching tack and asserting that *‘any talk of an album was scrapped’*. But he also provides the only detailed account of out-takes from the sessions:

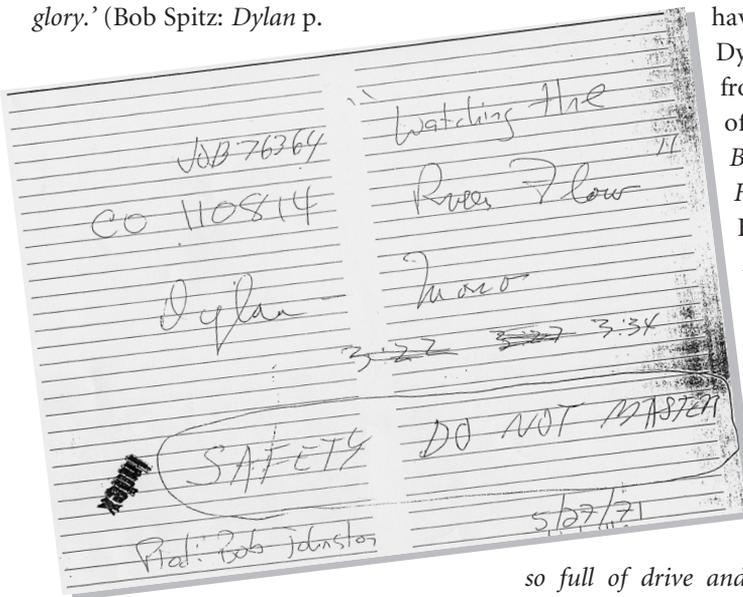
‘Unfortunately, some stupendous performances from the Blue Rock sessions wound up on the cutting-room floor. Most notable was a cover of “Spanish Harlem” . . . Bob’s version is much sparer than [Ben E.] King’s, without the advantage of lush strings and a female backup. Yet Bob’s rich, hoarse delivery established a real feeling for the song and its bleak urban scenario. “I love that one”, he sighed to a musician after a false start, and his subsequent performance left little doubt of his sincerity. Bob also tried a performance of the Ray Charles ballad “That Lucky Old Sun” with somewhat less success, but two blues ballads - “Alabama Bound” and “Blood Red River” - captured the spirit of Bob’s partnership with this band, however fleeting, in all its rollicking glory.’ (Bob Spitz: *Dylan* p.

of this paragraph has not yet surfaced amongst even the most select coterie of Dylan collectors. Examination of the Columbia tape logs by both Heylin and Michael Krogsgaard revealed that just one reel from these sessions was handed over to Dylan’s record company. It contained ‘Watching The River Flow’, as released on a single in July 1971, and 11 takes of ‘When I Paint My Masterpiece’ (five of which were either false starts or breakdowns). Of the other material cut during sessions that were described at the time by *Rolling Stone* magazine as ‘well oiled’, there is no sign. Spitz’s unnamed source aside, the most likely owner of the remaining tapes must presumably be Dylan himself.

Never mind: at least we have the two known Dylan compositions from the sessions, both of which surfaced on *Bob Dylan’s Greatest Hits Volume II* (or, in Britain, *More Bob Dylan Greatest Hits*) at the end of 1971. About their musical merits, Dylan’s chroniclers are unanimous:

‘The performance on “Watching The River Flow” is so full of drive and good humor that it conveys to the listener a camaraderie between Bob and that band that actually was quite transitory.’ (Bob Spitz again)

‘...a honky-tonkin’ roller-coaster of a single...’ (Heylin: *Behind The Shades*)



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You might almost think that Spitz had heard the tapes. If so, he’s apparently the only one. Despite optimism when his book was published, the tantalising aural proof

‘Perhaps it was the booze and the camaraderie; perhaps it was the simple honesty of the first words of “Watching The River Flow”; in any case something has loosened up our hero and (at least momentarily) set his genius free. “Watching The River Flow” is a wonderful performance. (...) Dylan when he’s on has an uncanny ability to inspire the musicians he works with, and they in turn inspire him.’ (Paul Williams: from *Performing Artist* p. 262)

Both recordings are certainly precise and tightly controlled in a way that promotes the merits of allowing a fellow musician to produce Dylan. There is no sense of that crust-of-the-volcano tip-toeing that is the trademark of so many of his studio sessions; that hint of a wild card overturning a fixed game. The songs begin and end with Russell’s piano; the time-keeping is exact and meticulous; and yet the instrumental performances have a certainty that comes from mutual understanding and self-confidence. Such certainty, as we know, is rarely the bedrock of Dylan’s studio engagements: he prefers to invoke the laws of chance and chaos. So how did Leon

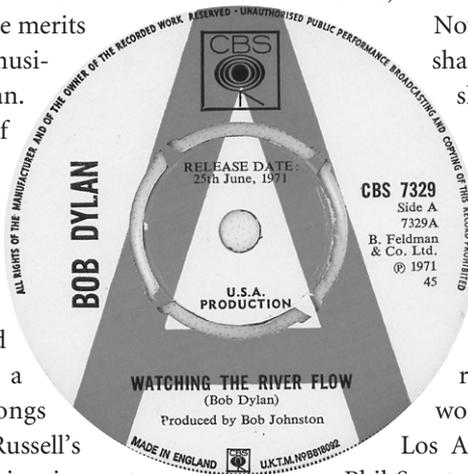
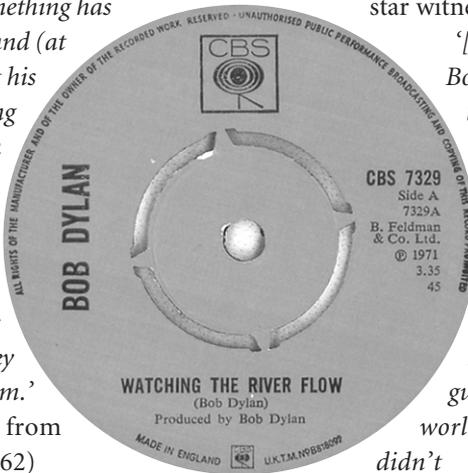
Russell succeed in stamping his authority on a man he is proud to acknowledge as a musical hero? It’s time to introduce our star witness.

‘[Around 1972] I took Bob out on a boat on the lake [Brand Lake, Oklahoma]. I pulled in to this gas station. The old lady came up to fill up the gas can. She went up to Bob and pointed to me and said, “You know, this guy is a star all over the world?” Bob said, “No, I didn’t know that.”’ (Leon

Russell, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 18 October 2001)

Now that he’s reduced to a shadowy world of club shows and cottage industry albums released from his Nashville home, it’s hard to remember that Leon Russell was once one of the most charismatic figures in rock culture. He’d been working as a sessionman in Los Angeles since 1963, for

Phil Spector, the Byrds and Frank Sinatra among many others, when he was recruited to sit in at a session for Joe Cocker’s second album in 1969. The following year, he acted as cheerleader and musical organiser on Cocker’s Mad Dogs And Englishmen tour; and he emerged from the tie-in documentary movie as a



star. His larger-than-life stage persona established him on the arena circuit; his songs were covered by everyone from the Carpenters to Ray Charles; Eric Clapton and George Harrison lined up to participate in his sessions.

On the *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* album, Russell and Cocker duetted on Dylan's 'Girl From The North Country' - because, so Russell claimed from the stage, Dylan was there in the Madison Square Garden audience as the record was being taped. Recently, Russell recalled that he regularly saw Dylan backstage at another New York venue: the Fillmore East. 'He said he was amazed that I seemed to be able to get on stage with large groups of people and it came out all right,' he told the *Hartford Advocate* (19/2/04). 'He felt that when there was anyone else but him there, it was a disaster.' It may well have been Russell's presence that persuaded Dylan it was safe to take part in Harrison's Concerts For Bangladesh in August 1971.

'I was a huge fan of Bob's,' Russell told me, 'and when I got the chance to meet him, I really sort of fanned out.' (This and all subsequent Russell quotes are taken from an interview I conducted at his home in June 2002.) 'At the *Bangla Desh* concert, between the shows, he was sitting round and messing with his guitar, and I said, play "Hollis Brown", and he did. So I said, play "Love Minus Zero", and he did that. It was like a Bob Dylan guitar bar between shows. For all of his mind-guard mentality - that's how he referred to his bodyguards, as his mind-guards - he endeavoured to show me all the stuff that I asked him. I'll always be grateful for that.'

As Russell explained, the subject at an earlier encounter turned to Dylan's spontaneity in the studio: 'I said to him, "I've heard that when you were doing Nashville Skyline, while the producer was listening to the playbacks, you were out in the lobby doing the next song. I'd like to see you do that!" I begged him and begged him, and after a little while he agreed to show me. So I called my guys - Carl Radle on bass, Jimmy Keltner on drums, and [Jesse] Ed Davis on guitar - and we went up to Blue Rock Studios in the Village, and I cut these two tracks for Bob. It took about 30 minutes. Then Bob came down, and I said, "let me see you write songs to these".'

It was a method that Russell was already using to kick-start his own muse. He would sketch out the structure of a song, from the introductory piano riff to the chord sequence, and then invite his band to cut the track, solos and all: 'I did that when I was finding it hard to write songs. One time I cut a track, and then came up with the words a little later. Then I made up three different melodies for the same words, as long as it fitted the track, and chose the one I liked best.' The result was 'This Masquerade', a Grammy-winning jazz song in the hands of George Benson. 'There was a period of time when I was trying to write the songs while I was recording them. My aim was to walk in, turn the tape machine on, play the song, and write it as I played it. That came from Bob. He was very much into that kind of immediate art.'

Back at Blue Rock, Russell recalled that 'they put the tracks on the tape machine, and Bob got his pad out and started walking

around, writing stuff down. I followed him round the room, watching him as he was writing. When it got to the end, they'd rewind the tape and play it again, and he kept writing. And then when he'd got the words the way he liked, he cut the vocals.'

Of the two tracks, 'When I Paint My Masterpiece' came close, so Russell realised as he listened to the play-backs,

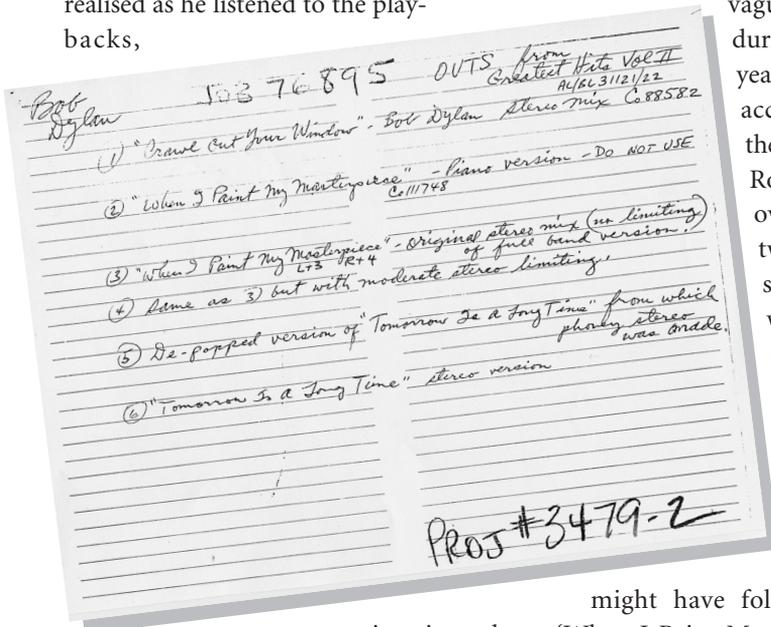
doing. The key line on the other one was "You'll be right there with me, when I paint my masterpiece"; and I WAS right there with him. It was amazing to watch him do that. I don't think he normally worked that way. But he endeavoured to give me that, as I'd asked to see it happen.'

Russell's memory was understandably

vague about dates and durations more than 30 years after the event. His account suggested that the first day of the Blue Rock sessions was given over to completing the two written-to-order songs. One of them was almost immediately earmarked as a potential single; it's not impossible that had 'Watching The River Flow' climbed higher than No. 41 on Billboard, Dylan

might have followed through with 'When I Paint My Masterpiece'. Instead, both songs were available to fill out the compilation that fulfilled his contractual obligation to Columbia that Christmas.

But what of the other results of the Blue Rock sessions? Russell could remember nothing about 'Spanish Harlem' or 'That Lucky Old Sun'. Instead, he told me that 'Dylan cut about fifteen Jimmie Rodgers songs while we were up in that studio. They were real obscure songs that I'd never heard before.' As a perennial sessionman and R&B aficionado, it's hardly likely that Russell could have



to mirroring the chord sequence of the 1960 Dorsey Burnette hit, 'Tall Oak Tree'. Dylan slyly incorporated a reference to that tune into his lyric. The other track began with a piano riff virtually identical to the one with which Russell had opened 'Dixie Lullaby' on his 1969 debut album. 'The first thing he wrote was "What's the matter with me, I ain't got much to say",' Russell told me. 'I thought that was real funny, that he was writing about the fact that he couldn't think what to write. But both songs were like that, inspired by what we were

classed ‘Spanish Harlem’ in that category - nor, indeed, as a confirmed Ray Charles fan, that he could have failed to recognise ‘That Lucky Old Sun’ and ‘Alabamy Bound’ from Brother Ray’s back catalogue. But what happened to the tapes? *‘After he got through cutting these songs, he went over to the engineer and demanded that they erase the tape. He watched them erase it. He said to me, “I don’t want anybody to know that I know those songs”. I thought that was interesting. He told me that he’d written literally hundreds of songs that he’d play once, and then throw away and never play again.’*

A pause for breath. After the Bangladesh concerts in August, Dylan and Russell recorded together just once more, at the ‘George Jackson’ session in November 1971: *‘He called me up to play bass - I don’t know why, because I don’t usually do that [although he had done it at Bangladesh]. We did a take of that song about the guy who was in jail, and I said, “Are you going to do another take?” He said, “No, I don’t think so, because if I do another one, this thing will be better, but that thing will be worse, so I’ll probably use the one we’ve got”. I remember that the backing singers were still walking in the door of the studio as we were starting to cut the take that was the master.’*

‘I have this thing I do on the piano, which is to play something that sounds like a harmonica with my right hand and this little bass thing with my left. I’ve played it for great piano players, and they can’t copy it. But I showed it to Bob one time, and he sat right down and played it exactly.’ (Leon Russell, June 2002)

Russell’s account solves several of the mysteries surrounding the Blue Rock dates. The non-Columbia studio wasn’t an affirmation of independence or a deliberate attempt to shake himself out of creative torpor; it was a convenient location for a playful piece of showing off to a friend. (Spitz quotes one Joe Schick, studio manager at Blue Rock: *‘He simply knocked on the door one day and said, “I was in the neighbourhood – mind if I look at your place?”’*) There are gaps in the Columbia tape archive because the tapes were never intended for Columbia: it was only Dylan’s decision that the two original songs were worthy of release that ensured one of the tapes ended up with his record company. An album was never under consideration: in his customary spirit of experimentation, Dylan took advantage of the gathered musicians to cut some covers for his own enlightenment or enjoyment. Maybe the tape that Spitz heard was made surreptitiously in the control-room before Dylan ‘watched them erase’ the others. But regardless of the aural evidence, any sense of camaraderie between Dylan and the band was simply imagined by the listener. On the two songs that were released, Dylan performed over a tape, not a live backing track.

‘Watching The River Flow’ is the simpler of the two songs, though not remotely simplistic. Christopher Ricks provides a convincing defence of Dylan’s vocal artistry (it’s on pp. 116-117 of *Dylan’s Visions Of Sin*), while Heylin notes that both songs ‘confronted the same subject matter, a continuing dearth of inspiration, in a refreshingly honest fashion’. Stephen

Judas!

Pickering (*Praxis: One*, p. 36) compares the lyric of 'River' to Hermann Hesse's visionary novel *Siddhartha*, and also quotes Carl Jung: 'water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious'. It's also, he might have added, an even more common symbol for the substance we choose to call water. Sometimes a river is just a river.

'When I Paint My Masterpiece', with its enigmatic narrative and surreal imagery, begs more complex interpretation. Keats, who collapsed at the foot of the Spanish Stairs in Rome, is a potential source favoured by many critics; in an early edition of *Song And Dance Man*, Michael Gray alluded to a possible reference to the character of Dick Diver in Fitzgerald's novel *Tender Is The Night* (the title of which was borrowed from, of course, Keats). Others have made comparisons with Henry James' fictional American heroes and their vexed encounters with Old Europe; or suggested that the 'wild geese' are a direct reference to ancient Roman legend; or claimed that if,

like the unfortunate Keats, you stand at the foot of the Spanish Stairs, you can see two identical church steeples above you, and 'you can almost think that you're seeing double'. There might also be a case for suggesting that despite most critics' assertion that the song reflects a fear or acceptance that the masterpiece may never be painted in the future, the narrative is rooted firmly in the past, with Proustian 'train wheels' (which needn't be nearer to Rome than the subway beneath Manhattan) 'runnin' through the back of my memory'. (A critic unworthy of the name could even suggest that Dylan was reliving a mood or a moment from his first trip to Rome with Odetta in early 1964.) Even without that pathetic fallacy, imagining the narrative into the past tense alters the thrust of the song, as it allows for the fact that, far from being incomplete, Dylan's masterpiece had already been created. Past or future, the errant masterpiece leaves another song's narrator to regret: 'I don't have much to say'.

In the end, the origin of the imagery doesn't matter. It's intriguing that in the original lyric, Dylan refers to his date with 'Botticelli's niece', as art history teaches us that Botticelli's regular model for his portrayals of the Madonna and Venus was a Florence girl called Simonietta Vespucci, niece of the more famous Amerigo Vespucci. Intriguing, but irrelevant, as such sourcing tells us nothing about the way in which the song works upon our minds and our emotions, or its artistic success. And neither, on this occasion, will I - beyond noting here

CBS RECORDS RECORDING STUDIOS TAPE DATA SHEET NOTE: Complete this form. Secure to box containing tape described hereon.

PROJECT NUMBER 3436-2	STUDIO B.	JOB NUMBER SW. 79017-	REEL SW.	SPEED 15, ps.	
DATE 11-4-71	PROGRAM Bob Dylan	CLIENT Bob Dylan	<input type="checkbox"/> MONO	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 TRACK	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW YORK <input type="checkbox"/> CHICAGO	PRODUCER Bob Dylan	CO. ENG. Pulser	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 TRACK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 16 TRACK	
<input type="checkbox"/> HOLLYWOOD <input type="checkbox"/> SAN FRAN.	RE. ENG. Bosman		<input type="checkbox"/> 3 TRACK	<input type="checkbox"/> DOLBY	
<input type="checkbox"/> NASHVILLE <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER			<input type="checkbox"/> 4 TRACK	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	
TIME	MASTER NUMBER	PROGRAM TITLE	TAKE NO.	CODES	TIME MARK
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** TIME START AT MARK 000,00 <input type="checkbox"/> FILE <input type="checkbox"/> HOLD <input type="checkbox"/> PICK UP <input type="checkbox"/> SHIP					
• CODES: v = FALSE START, b = SHORT FALSE START, B = LONG FALSE START, C = COMPLETE TAKE, (C) = MASTER					

that the wonderful phrase ‘*smooth like a rhapsody*’ is a perfect example of a contradiction in terms. My Oxford dictionary provides several definitions of ‘rhapsody’, among them: ‘*a romantic piece of music that is not regular in form*’. Ecstatic, then, but never smooth.

But there is one final piece of history to consider: the existence of two markedly different sets of lyrics for ‘When I Paint My Masterpiece’, plus a series of variations. There is the single version, issued in June 1971, and reprised on *More Greatest Hits* in December. And there is the version recorded by the Band and issued on their *Cahoots* LP, released in October 1971. The Band’s verses lost the references to those wild geese, symbolic or otherwise; Botticelli’s niece was kicked out of bed in favour of ‘*a pretty little girl from Greece*’; and Dorsey Burnette’s ‘*tall oak tree*’ was also razed to the ground. Typically, the lyrics printed in Dylan’s *Writings And Drawings* collection, prepared in late 1971, reflected neither rendition exactly, although they seemed to use the Band’s selection as their template.

‘In the middle of the sporadic sessions for the album, Bob Dylan came by Robbie’s house and the two of them spent an afternoon hanging out at the painting studio beside Robbie’s house. After Robbie played Dylan some of the songs that The Band were already working on, he asked Bob whether he had any material that might be appropriate for the album. Dylan proceeded to play an embryonic version of the still unfinished “When I Paint My Masterpiece”. Inspired by Robbie’s enthusiasm, Dylan completed the song shortly thereafter.’ (Rob Bowman: liner

notes to the 2000 reissue of *Cahoots*)

By Russell’s account, Dylan’s visit to Robertson must have taken place after the mid-March recording sessions at Blue Rock. *Cahoots* was still being recorded as late as June or early July, so there is plenty of time to kill. Unless he arrived already prepared to offer the Band ‘Masterpiece’, Dylan’s ‘playing’ the song to Robertson presumably meant demonstrating it on guitar, rather than ‘playing’ the version cut at Blue Rock. Dylan had already elected not to use the song on his upcoming single; now he ran it down for Robertson, rhapsodically smoothing out the more subtle of the piano chords from Russell’s original chart. When he was talking to me about the similarity with ‘Tall Oak Tree’, Russell made a passing comment that I only caught when I transcribed the tape afterwards: ‘*they changed that later to something else*’. The change couldn’t have been made on the Dylan recording, which was locked in place before Dylan arrived; so he was presumably referring to the mildly rearranged structure and chord pattern of the Band’s recording.

In Dylan’s eyes, then, ‘Masterpiece’ was ‘still unfinished’ even after he had cut his own studio version. So he reworked the lyrics - and also made the most obvious change to the song. This was the addition of the rumbustious two-line linking section, ‘*Sailing round the world in a dirty gondola/Oh to be back in the land of Coca-Cola*’, which he has retained ever since, and which duly appeared in the *Writings And Drawings* transcript. And so it was that the Band, rather than Dylan, recorded the definitive text of a masterpiece that its creator chose to paint twice, after a sketch

Philosophical Reflections

by Martin van Hees

'It Ain't Me, Babe'. Sense and Reference - 1

When I use a name – 'George Bush jr.', say - or a description, such as 'the current president of the United States', you can understand what I am talking about because the name (George Bush jr.) and description (president of the United States) *refer* to a particular person. Indeed, since they refer to one and the same person, the statement 'George Bush jr. is president of the United States' is true. Similarly, words like 'he', 'we', 'that', 'now', 'it' have references, although the references will depend on the specific context in which these words are uttered. (If, while pointing at Bush, Senator Kerry makes the statement that 'he will lose the upcoming elections' you can safely assume that the 'he' to whom Kerry refers is Bush and not, say, the president of the French Organisation of Poodle Owners, who is also up for re-election later this year.) Straightforward as this account of the way our language works may be, it runs into problems. A statement like 'George Bush

jr. is the current president of the United States' is a statement that conveys some information. But if names and description *only* allude to their references, then we can substitute names and descriptions that have identical references without changing the meaning of the sentence. Now suppose we substitute 'the current president of the United States' by 'George Bush jr.'. We then get the sentence 'George Bush jr. is George Bush jr.'. Clearly this sentence differs from the statement that Bush is the current president of the United States. Whereas that last statement gives some information - it says something *about* Bush - a statement of the form 'x is x' does not. Even a hermit can without hesitation agree with the statement that George Bush jr. is George Bush jr., but - assuming that he is a truly dedicated hermit - he may not know that George Bush jr. is president of the United States. That the meaning of an expression need not coincide with its reference can also be seen in the context of statements that involve attitudes like 'believing', 'hoping', 'wishing' or 'loving'. There is for instance

a difference between Mrs. Kerry declaring that 'she is in love with John Kerry' and her stating that 'she is in love with the Democratic candidate in this year's presidential elections': the last statement would strike us as somewhat odd, to say the least. Again, we cannot simply substitute the names for the corresponding descriptions. To take account of the fact that the meaning of a term need not coincide with its reference, philosophers have made a distinction between the *reference* and the *sense* of a word. The name 'George Bush jr.' then refers to the same person as the description 'the current president of the U.S.' but the way the reference is presented differs in the two expressions, that is, the expressions have a different *sense*. Similarly, 'John Kerry' and 'the Democratic candidate' have the same reference, but a different sense. It is the difference in sense that precludes that one can use the expressions interchangeably.

One possible way of listening to 'It Ain't Me, Babe' (one of several, I hasten to add) is to understand the lyrics as a very sophisticated and poignant use of the fact that words have both a sense and reference. The narrator (the 'me' of the song) states that he is not the person the other is looking for: he does not fit the description of a person who will always be strong, who will always be supportive, who will always be there, etc. In the philosopher's jargon, he is arguing that he is not the *reference* of the other person's quest: 'it ain't 'me'. Since she is presumed to be looking for someone who does fit the requirements, he concludes that he is not the one she is looking for. But note that such a conclusion

does not follow from the premises. Just as a person can vote for George Bush jr. without thereby knowing that he is voting for the incumbent president, so one can be in love with a person even if that person does not meet all the requirements one attributes to the ideal partner. In fact, being in love is usually accompanied by an acceptance of the flaws of the person one is in love with. Conversely, even if the narrator were the only person in the world who would meet all the requirements spelled out, we would not yet be justified in concluding that she is looking for *him*. As we saw, since the senses of the expressions that we use may differ, substituting these expressions for each other may affect the meaning of our words.

Dylan lets the narrator ignore the distinction between sense and reference. By suggesting that the person addressed is looking for someone who meets a certain list of requirements, rather than recognising that she is looking for *him*, Dylan lets the narrator degrade love. That is, by failing to distinguish between the sense and reference of what she says about the person she is looking for, the narrator is not only suggesting that being in love is the result of some sort of cost-benefit analysis but also plainly ignores the other person's love for him. In doing so, he not only degrades love but also himself, thus convincingly underscoring the point he is trying to make: that he is not the right one for her.

Good Enough For Now

The Masked And Anonymous

DVD Review

by **Trev Gibb, Webmaster of 'The Masked & Anonymous Database'**

Finally, after months of obsessively watching 'Masked and Anonymous' on both a hazily dubbed VHS tape and then a rough and ready DVD-r, the official 'Masked And Anonymous' DVD arrived on my doorstep, a few days after its American release. Yes, it's a region 1 and before you ask no it isn't RCE encoded; it appears to play on non-region 1 DVD players. At least it does on mine and I probably have the cheapest DVD player available. Although saying that, don't take my word as gospel, I don't want death threats if someone else has trouble playing their DVD.

Ok where do I begin? On the heels of Rimbaud? Well not exactly, more on the heels of Larry Charles actually.

Of all the special features featured on the DVD, including numerous deleted scenes, a song performance and a behind the scenes documentary, the director's commentary was where I wanted to begin my adventure.

Larry's commentary follows the typical mould we have come to expect from most film or TV series DVD's, we gain insight into the methods and techniques used by the director, his crew and the actors during the filming process. We also learn about the context of the film, about particular scenes and why they were filmed, but most importantly we see things from the director's perspective. It's a chance to get into the mind of the director. One of the best things about Larry's commentary, however, is that you feel his burning enthusiasm for the film. He appears conversational and eager to fill us with as much detail as possible and he is constantly relaying information our way, such as how the Networks office was constructed hastily on the soundstage with corrugated metal and bits of scrap when the previous location fell through. As Charles points out, it highlights the 'resourcefulness' of the crew, something one could also align with the movie itself, which survived remarkably well on a budget of around £6.9 million. Of course the commentary is also another chance for the director to try to explain certain elements of the film, and there are many, many that most certainly evaded not only the viewing public but also the critics, who as we know have to a large extent refused to engage directly with the film and thus failed in getting anything constructive from it.

I had been fortunate enough to have interviewed Larry Charles a few months prior to the release of the DVD and had the privilege to speak to him for longer than the duration of the average football match. It was an amazing and inspiring experience, and what you notice about Larry from the moment he begins speaking is how enthusiastic and passionate he is about *Masked And Anonymous* and also about Dylan. Unfortunately however, this passion and enthusiasm when it came to the DVD seems only to have extended itself as far as the commentary.

Larry's influence on the production of the DVD was not as major as his influence was in actually making the movie and this is a real pity. So before people begin to throw stones at the current DVD version - as I'm sure some will - it is important to note that - as he actually told me when I asked him about the DVD - he could only really suggest ideas for the DVD and the final decisions would fall to those involved directly with the DVD production and, crucially, to Jeff Rosen. Of course this has in many ways been an opportunity wasted, because many of the great ideas I'm sure Larry would've had for the DVD release never came to fruition. However, we're not just dealing with any normal movie, we're dealing with Bob Dylan which of course means that overall, the feelings he and his management would have concerning the DVD and the film in general would probably take precedence over everything and everyone else. Furthermore, the people involved in the DVD would of course be looking at the

financial feasibility as well as the marketability of the DVD more than at loading it up with more scene outtakes and live performances, to keep us Dylan-nuts happy. And so in a way the art suffers, but I guess that's what happens when business and art combine. That being said, the special features that are included are worthy of discussion, its just a pity a bonus disc was not included with the DVD including the live performances, which would've been a brilliant idea considering that currently we don't have much at all in the video/DVD field to represent Dylan as a live performer. In this medium Dylan is considerably lacking in comparison with many of his contemporaries.

In talking of the special features, as I've stated above, we're not necessarily left as high and dry as it may appear, though considering the never-ending thirst of Bob Dylan fans the features on the DVD are in some ways an anti-climax. This even appears to apply to the up and coming *Unplugged* DVD, which I believe has no special features worth mentioning at all. Where is I Want You? It was featured on the original broadcast and being the performance of the two shows it should rightly be on the DVD.

Anyway, back to *Masked And Anonymous*.

I was initially excited about the inclusion of 'Standing In The Doorway' as one of the deleted scenes in the special features and admit that I got the goose-pimples while watching it, but it seems we were misled. Am I the only person who was actually expecting a full version of the song without dialogue over the top? I

understand it was a scene in itself, and thus in the context of the film not meant to be the full song, but why not have the full song instead? As enjoyable as I found the scene to be and as great as it was to see Bob doing 'Standing In The Doorway', I found it to be rather teasing and irritating, in fact I felt cheated. The video quality of this particular track was also questionable. Whether this was to ensure it would fit on the DVD - as the two final deleted scenes appear to be poorer quality - I don't know, but surely there is a better copy of this in the vaults?

However, on a lighter note I found the performance of 'Standing In The Doorway' - even if only two verses - to be a wonderfully transcendent moment and one I look forward to seeing and hearing in full some time in the future. The way Dylan articulates the words, the way he strikes the guitar in his rather perfunctory style and how it echoes back at him in the midst of Larry's chordal finesse and Charlie's soaring organ-style guitar chimes is just beautiful and one of those truly brilliant Dylan moments. This is Dylan captured at a moment when he and his band of the time had a real *distinct sound*, and a *real groove* happening. And for that reason alone that performance - as with the ones on the soundtrack - is important.

I'm sure when the *Masked And Anonymous* concert performances finally surface in full, they will be the goldmine that Larry has mentioned. Charles himself believes all of the footage and recordings from *Masked And Anonymous* will prove to be 'a great historical archive', one not 'to be exploited commercially' but one

that at some point may see release. From what he told me and from what I've seen I certainly agree with him. I'm especially excited to see and hear the transcendent instrumental version of 'All Along The Watchtower' he mentioned in our interview and that would definitely have been a wonderful addition to the special features.

Aside from 'Standing In The Doorway' the only other musical inclusions we get are very brief fragments during the behind-the-scenes documentary titled *Masked and Anonymous Exposed*. These fragments are teasing, yet pleasing. We get to see part of what appears to be a haunting 'Knockin' On Heavens Door', which apparently brought many on the set to tears. Seeing these live performances in such an informal way - even if fragmentary - is fascinating because we get to see Bob interact with his band in ways we may not see as an audience at a concert, such as Larry laughing at Bob's Rainy-Day-Women-styled blues riff at the closing of 'Heavens Door' or Tony Garnier consulting with and advising Bob over the songs. Also of interest, especially to me, was the brief fragment before 'Heavens Door' of Dylan and band playing a rather jazzy song. I'm sure I'm not the only one wondering what that song was?

'Exposed' is an interesting little documentary and one of the more endearing qualities of the special features, although it is short. For one, we actually get to see Dylan appearing rather naturally, laughing and joking and basically enjoying himself. As Charles said to Dylan regarding the filming, which I think is important in this context:

'Listen, we have 20 days to shoot this movie, if you go back to the trailer after each shot, each take, the crew is just not gonna care, but if I get you a comfortable chair and you sit on the set between takes and so as the crew walks by carrying the cables, carrying the ladders, they can go "Hi Bob" and you can nod at them, these people will die for you.'

And it was perhaps Bob being present on set throughout the movie, without ever going to his trailer, and allowing them as Charles said 'to have a personal relationship with Bob' which enabled things to run so smoothly and for the film to be so wonderfully shot and wonderfully performed by the cast. In *Exposed*, this, and the ease between Dylan and the people around him is notable and poignant.

Also in reference to this Charles also said that Dylan needs to be called 'Bob', 'because 'Dylan' is *our* problem. Dylan is what we've imposed on him', it's 'the mythological part', the part that's 'too big a burden for him to bear', and at least on the set we seem to see that burden lifted. Dylan appears comfortable and able to be at least as natural as is possible for Bob Dylan. Seeing Dylan laughing with Jeff Bridges, joking with a crew guy and in deep conversation with Jessica Lange is fascinating and intriguing. Alex Brunner (writer and director of *Exposed* with Matt Radecki) must certainly be commended on this, as it was he who filmed the behind the scenes shots. He captures the mood, and as short as the *Exposed* documentary is, there are some wonderful moments.

The interviews with the actors, conducted by Jeff Rosen, also provide great insight into the Dylan myth and we see how much actors such as Penelope Cruz and Luke Wilson respect Dylan. In fact some of the comments made by Luke Wilson are the most pertinent, such as when he ends with 'I don't know who Jack Fate is, but I know I'm interested in him' and I think that applies both brilliantly to the movie and to Dylan himself.

Jessica Lange's comments in reference to Dylan and his similarity to Tennessee Williams are also intriguing. She explains how all good writing is musical and rhythmic and how Dylan's experience in music lends itself perfectly to the acting profession and to writing in movies. Giovanni Ribisi's comments on working with Dylan and how his own performance - which for me echoed the intensity of Pacino in *Godfather I* - was squashed by the intensity and amount 'soul coming from my left side', is also pertinent and in many ways explains why people find Dylan so hard to accept and understand as an actor, let alone a musician. Basically, Dylan is an actor and a great one; he's been playing the role Bob Dylan all his working life, so he must have a bit of experience.

As an actor the key to his effectiveness often lies in his face. Dylan's face is a paradox, it simultaneously implies and hides a thousand things, he's ambiguous and his Bogart-like cynicism is what drives his performance in the film. Dylan's lack of dialogue in many of the scenes is not the shortfall that many believe it to be. In fact his lack of dialogue is essential to the power of his performance. The intensity of focus and the Sergio Leone styled close-

ups on his face speak volumes, more emotionally than any dialogue. In many ways Dylan is as much the cynical film-noir Humphrey Bogart as he is western-noir Clint Eastwood. It's what he doesn't say that's important.

John Goodman's comments on Dylan and Charles's script being stylised like a classical piece, in that you approach in the same way as you would Marlowe or Shakespeare is also an interesting statement. Whether true or not and it harks back to what Charles said in my interview with him about Dylan 'being a bard' on the level of Yeats, or Blake, or Byron, as well as Marlowe and Shakespeare. But perhaps one of the most pertinent comments made by Charles - one that perfectly aligns with what many of the actors have said about his script - is how Dylan is perhaps one of the 'last well read people'. And essentially it's true. Dylan can quote almost anything, and in recent times, he has used this talent and this knowledge and wisdom in his song-writing, which has led importantly to the lyrical intensity of both *Time Out Of Mind* and "*Love And Theft*" as well as finally in the film based context of *Masked And Anonymous*. Charles calls Dylan's technique the aligning of 'the quaint with the post-modern'. Although to a certain extent Dylan has always toyed with allusions and references, with many of the characters in his songs being both literary and important cultural figures, it only appears to have been executed with such precision and consistency with "*Love And Theft*", *Time Out Of Mind* and *Masked and Anonymous*, although it was always there below the surface and initially most obviously in 1985

with the release of *Empire Burlesque*, where Dylan played with the use of lines from films such as *The Maltese Falcon*, between re-emphasising the connection with Dylan and Humphrey Bogart.

Larry has himself called Dylan a 'Post-apocalyptic Humphrey Bogart', and I would tend to agree with him. Dylan, as the person we see on stage, hear in song and see on the movie screen, is very much the character to which Charles refers. Bob Dylan is a great actor. It is this richness, this almost impenetrability as an actor, as a person and as a writer that baffles and confounds many people, including, importantly, many of the critics, who instantly panned M&A upon release. The lyrical and poetic quality of the film overall was too much for them; too much to handle. They were unable to engage and unable to respond and they wouldn't allow it to wash over them.

In thinking of the script and its Shakespearian quality, comments made by Dylan in an interview with *Songtalk* magazine from 1991 apply perfectly. In response to comments made by the interviewer, Paul Zollo, about Shakespeare's work, Dylan replied 'People have a hard time accepting anything that overwhelms them' and this essentially seems to be the problem not only with *Masked And Anonymous* but with Dylan himself.

The behind the scenes documentary for all its shortness in length helps to expand on the perceptions we have of Dylan, even if paradoxically adding mystique and intrigue to it, because we are confronted with what appears to be a very human Dylan, a perception contrary to popular belief.

The outtake scenes as part of the special features are also wonderful to see, particularly the alternate scene in the bar with Fred Ward and Luke Wilson, which I personally prefer to the official version. It has a real noiresque yet comic feel, and the violence in the scene works perfectly as a contrast to the 'Lady In Red' scene which follows - the scene left off the official cut - with Lara Elena Harring and Dylan. There are some brilliant pieces of dialogue in the bar scene however, particularly when Wilson exclaims, 'you want the world to be flat it's flat, you want it to be round, it's round' to which Ward replies 'I know some things too you know' with Wilson explaining that 'the more you'll know the more you'll suffer'. This is a classic piece of dialogue - and one of many great pieces in the film as a whole - which I find both beautifully sad and poetic, yet hilariously funny.

The following scene, in the station with Harring, is also wonderfully dark, but it has an almost dreamlike quality, with the distant saxophone and the vague acting style of Harring making the interaction between her and Dylan enchanting and mesmerizing. The scene is almost like a memory, as if the 'Lady in Red' isn't there and is just a dream, a figment of the imagination. After all in the scene with Giovanni Ribisi in the released cut, Dylan as Fate states that in his dreams he's 'walking through fire with intense heat' and in the 'Lady in Red' scene we discover Harring's character met Jack Fate in The Inferno Club, perhaps a reference to Dante but of course the important motifs here are those of 'Dreams' and 'fire'. In

many ways *Masked And Anonymous* is concerned with parallels and oppositions and with 'what is real and what is not'.¹

The scene with crew guys Chris Penn and Christian Slater is also refreshing to watch. Its playfulness and the elements of light comedy work in perfect contrast with the two previous scenes. They have the feel of a comedic moment often found in Marlowe or Shakespeare or in the use of rustics or a chorus in 18th and 19th century novels, whereby they provide a temporary release from tension and friction in the plot. The bull whip joke of course is priceless and ridiculously funny and again we get that feeling of the Carnavalesque which dominates much of the movie, both in the dialogue and visually.

Of all the deleted scenes, aside from the scene with 'Standing In The Doorway', I find the scene with Penelope Cruz as Pagan Lace and Jeff Bridges as Tom Friend particularly moving. To me it presents Penelope Cruz's best performance in the film and thus it is a pity it didn't appear in the finished cut. Bridges' performance is also particularly intense. As perverse as his dialogue appears, his emotion is convincing, although contradictory in comparison with the character he plays in many of the other scenes, particularly when he harasses Jack Fate. Again this scene symbolises how contradictory each of the characters are, and how they all seem to have suffered an element of pain in their lives and how it leads them into being contradictory, into being controlled or perhaps out of control because of their cynicism and perhaps lost in the chaos of

their lives so much so that they become masked and anonymous. Tom Friend's story in many ways outlines one of the themes of the film, and perhaps a theme in life, that in times of trouble, in times of pain, in times when the mind can not comprehend or accept reality, when life is at its most carnivalesque, 'everyone had to put on a mask'

Larry Charles said to me in reference to the DVD you've all seen or are about to see, that it's:

'Not the definitive version, there's still yet my directors cut somewhere down the line, if we can get the financing together we'll put that out too, that's kind of more expensive to put together'

Larry is right of course, it's not the definitive version, if there ever could be a definitive version, which would mean having the complete script-version released. But for the moment this DVD is the only version we can legally own, and as thirsty as we all are for more we're going to have to sit around and wait for a while. However, the DVD release isn't actually that bad. The behind the scenes documentary is enlightening and revealing and the commentary is more than filling and impressive in the facts and information it relays. The deleted scenes are exciting and intriguing and further present how much more of this film there is yet to see, as well as how great many of the performances are, especially that of the performance/scene with 'Standing In The Doorway' which is truly magical.

In taking some of Dylan and Larry's advice perhaps it is best to consider with the DVD in mind that 'The path is the

goal' and it is 'the process and not the result' that is important, and that at some point in the near future we will see what Larry and Bob truly envisioned, away from the pressures of marketability, finance and of media scrutiny. In the end Dylan said the film should be viewed in the long-run, so I guess we're in for a long run. Also, talking of finance, if we each drew £500 out of our bank accounts, or just robbed a bank if in desperation, we may be able to help Larry Charles along on his 'path' to releasing the definitive *Masked And Anonymous*. And though 'there's a way to get there',² this will have to be 'good enough for now'.³

1. Gates of Eden

2. Highlands, *Time Out Of Mind*

3. Highlands, *Time Out Of Mind*

Classified

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Huge list of vinyl and CD covers of Bob Dylan songs, plus other Dylan rarities. Please write to Gary Esmonde, 10191C Chardon-Kirtland Road, Chardon, Ohio 44024, USA or e-mail me at gesmonde@mailbag.net for list and prices.

Red, White and Blue Shoe Strings - II

by Andrew Davies

Milan 20/4/2002

The days that followed our arrival in Frankfurt were hectic and eventful to say the very least. It was late at night and only when I was alone in my quiet Italian hotel room after the Milan show, could I even think about writing any of it down. The events of the previous few days had exhausted me, both physically and mentally. Generally, I was by now in a poor state of repair, my joints ached and my head pounded but I sat upright in my bed and hammered the keys of my word processor as Italian news bulletins flickered with painful flashes on the television in the corner of the room.

Our idea of a quiet 'night off' in Frankfurt was, sadly, not to materialise. Instead, it was to be the beginning of a troublesome German roller coaster. I had decided to take advantage of a free afternoon before the Frankfurt gig for the obligatory sightseeing tour, hoping to enjoy a similar day to the one I had in Copenhagen. That meant that the spare evening in Frankfurt had volunteered itself as an opportunity to socialise. At

first, things were quite promising. Norm had heard that there was a small American bar within walking distance on the corner of town, where there were live acoustic bands playing. It sounded perfect and the Canadian even arrived wearing a sensible camel-coloured shirt that I hadn't spied before, although it could have done with having the iron run over it. For the visiting Brit, a trip to the bar in such an establishment is always going to be good news, as the German city centre taverns tend not to expect your week's wages in exchange for three pints of Dunkles with tequila on the side.

I had struck up a necessary friendship with the barman, a massive hunk of a man by the name of Karl. The primary reason for this alliance was that I was concerned that I would not have enough ready Euros to cover the tab which I thought was sure to be the case by the time the end of the night arrived. A good, convincing conversation about the professional superiority of the German national football team seemed to put me in his good books and I was confident that if we were overspent, I would be allowed to settle the bill in the morning. I told him that we were in town for the Dylan show and he thanked us

profusely for choosing his bar and in a well-meant gesture dug out his *Bob Dylan Greatest Hits* CD and put it on the machine, much to the upset of two women sitting opposite who had just put money into the jukebox. At about ten o'clock, a band of four hopelessly old looking veterans lumbered up onto the dark and dusty stage. There were two guitarists; a bass player and a percussion guy with a very sparse drum set up. They were also great. By this time, Norm, the Canadian and self had been there for a couple of hours and were in good, if slightly rowdy form. I am ashamed to say that when the lads on stage got into their second number, 'You Ain't Going Nowhere' of all things, the Canadian and I were up in front of them dancing like a pair of gibbons and being cheered on rampantly by Norm and the bar staff. It was a fine performance but I'm sure that they played loads more verses than were on *The Basement Tapes* just to extend the crowd participation spectacle that was going on in front of them.

A thoroughly entertaining half an hour or so later, the band brought to an end their first-half and took a break. Their first set had included a good run through the Rolling Stones' *Rocks Off*. Again, the Canadian was inspired into action and took to the floor with purpose. At one point, the boy attempted to coax one of the jukebox ladies to join him but she was, to the amusement of all those present including the band, having no part in it and had no qualms about making her feelings on the matter known. I only get my rocks off when I'm dreaming, indeed.

More of this general frivolity ensued as the second half began. We were joined by a very amiable couple from France and a handful of members of the German Dylan fan club. The set was ended by an enjoyable version of 'Rainy Day Women #12 & 35' that was not only played exclusively for our benefit but was the finest rendition of the tune that I had heard on this adventure so far.

Our little merry gang were the last load of punters in the bar and by the time that the bar staff asked us to finish up so they could get to their beds, it was probably later than was sensible. However, appreciating that enough was probably enough and keen to retain some stamina for the tour, we drank the final dregs with little fuss and struggled into our coats. The sight of a dozen or so intoxicated Dylan fans attempting this normally simple manoeuvre must have been something to behold. At one stage, I was adamant that my jacket only had one armhole and demanded what the Canadian thought he was doing stealing the sleeve in question. After some assistance from Karl and the French lady, whose name I sadly cannot recall, I was successfully inside the troublesome garment and, after assisting those who were experiencing similar problems, ambled out into the Frankfurt night. Norm was in a spot of trouble so he was carried through the streets by a German called Jack; the rest of us that could walk were not looking too clever but on the whole, I thought at least we were in a reasonable state and not too unwell.

At that point, however, things took a poor turn. As if from nowhere a minibuses-

type van with flashing lights pulled up next to us. Despite poor general focus, it was fairly easy to ascertain that we had attracted some police attention. I was busy mentally rehearsing my apologies for being out so late, Officer and having too much to drink, Officer, I'm from out of town, Officer and all that sort of game when to everyone's astonishment, three German members of the fan club (including the one that was carrying our Norm) instinctively fled the scene at pace. A load of serious looking German policemen gave chase around the corner and out of sight. Norm got dropped on the floor after a few paces so I went to pick him up. When I got him to his feet, I turned round only to find that yet more cars had arrived and that the rest of our innocent party were seemingly under some sort of arrest. There was almost one policeman per civilian, which meant, I suppose, that whatever those sprinting Germans were wanted for, it must have been fairly serious. Incredibly, Norm and I were not approached or quizzed by any of them and the chaos and shouting went all around us as though we weren't there. I suppose the sight of me struggling to attend to Norm on the floor with his hearing aid and his bruises made us look like some sort of victims. The Canadian was handcuffed and hustled into the bus a few seconds before my hazy eyes caught up with the action. Normally, good sense and a clear head can take over, but when the head is full of drink, the logic gets a tad fuzzy. All I could think of doing from my position in the road was to shout out some sound advice to the Canadian. The gist of it was that as Dylan's next country

stop is Italy then the Canadian should claim to be Italian. That way, if deported, he will be conveniently sent to Italy. At the time, it seemed a first class plan. In fairness to the boy, he gave them a good, if slightly unwise, amount of lip and swearing as they took him away. Within a minute the cars and vans were gone, leaving Norm and self sat in the road not quite believing what had just happened. Actually, Norm was probably oblivious to the whole scene and nodded his head blissfully to whatever music was rattling through his mind. The encounter had a sobering effect on me, however, and as I looked around, I realised that there were things to be done. I had to get Norm back to his hotel although I had no idea where it was, I had to clean myself up and then, I suppose it would be off to the police station with me to see if I could rescue the Vancouver One. This sort of ordeal is not what you need at the end of a big evening but for a few minutes, before I took it all in and formulated some plan of action, all I could do was sit in the road and laugh at the absurdity of it all until my jaws ached.

There was no way that I could get any sense out of Norm so his hotel room was destined to remain unoccupied. So, almost completely sober but chronically tired, I left him to sleep it all off in my bed. There was nobody around the hotel to ask where the police station was and there were no taxi companies contactable, so I set off to find the building armed only with a crumpled map from the front of a telephone directory. The sun had started to come up before I finally arrived at the police station and by the time I'd waited in

line and negotiated my way around the guard on the front desk, it was morning in Frankfurt. All this while the Canadian sat like Buddha in a six-foot cell.

The psychology of dealing with the custody officer is a complex issue, fortunately the prisoner has one advantage: the knowledge that the officer's only objective in life is to cause as much inconvenience as possible. I remember thinking to myself that the Canadian was unlikely to be in any real trouble so he should tell the officer that he has to catch a train at 9am. The logic here being that the officer, thinking himself clever, will release his hostage at two minutes past; causing him to miss his train by a minuscule amount of time.

However, none of this was to matter because the Canadian was being led out into the reception area while I was chattering with the front desk person and although he looked dreadful, he was a free man on the understanding, apparently, that he left Frankfurt immediately and did not return for six months. The Canadian reported that he had experienced the worst night of his life, right up there with watching Dylan at *Live Aid*, even though it had only actually been a few hours. They shouted at him in German, gave him strong coffee and removed his bootlaces before sticking him in a cell to sleep. The Canadian, however, remained defiant and refused to close his eyes, much to the annoyance of the guard who checked on him every half an hour. The only thing, in truth, that the Canadian had really done wrong, was stay in Frankfurt a day too long. Of course, leaving town immediately and not returning for six months was

completely out of the question with tonight's concert in mind. Nevertheless, the Canadian agreed that he shouldn't draw attention to himself and fell for my suggestion that he should attend the gig in disguise.

I went on my guided city tour that afternoon without any sleep and got through that night's show on pure adrenalin. I was glad that there was no second encore because by the time 'Blowin' in the Wind' had come to a close, my legs were complaining about the strain of supporting the rest of me for 48 straight hours. The Canadian seemed to be in an excellent mood, head to toe in black, enjoying his new status as outlaw and Norm, for whom this would be the last gig before the tour reached the UK, had miraculously shaken off last night's excesses and held up his home-made Dignity banner with gusto. The request, however, was sadly not met. The Frankfurt crowd were probably the noisiest of the lot thus far. The show itself, apart from the constant delight of actually being in the same room as Bob, went by without blowing too many minds. Dylan and his band, though, do have the knack of reminding you why you bother with coming at all and tonight that message came to me loud and clear in the form of a sublime version of 'My Back Pages'.

The Canadian and myself got a bus from Frankfurt to Stuttgart immediately after the show; neither of us very sorry to leave although I realised somewhere during the journey that I hadn't actually settled the bar bill with Karl after all. Pleased with this favourable though unin-

tentionally obtained result, I said nothing as we rolled out of the city. The Canadian fell asleep as soon as he sat in his chair; a trick of the touring Dylan fan that I was yet to properly master. By this time, I had been awake so long that no sleeping felt perfectly natural even if I was seeing things in three quarter speed.

The Stuttgart gig the following night saw 'Hallelujah, I'm Ready To Go' back as the opening song; the best of all, for my money. I remember almost nothing more about the show, as I was still exhausted (I had only managed two hours sleep during the day) and running on an empty tank. However, I definitely enjoyed the evening through a hazy blur. At one stage, I was entirely transfixed on Dylan from my position directly in front of him and starred in a sad, blissful happiness for what seemed like hours.

Amongst the crowds in the slow-moving shuffle were two Scottish men whose conversation I could clearly overhear, even with tired ears. They made two points that caught my attention. The first was the inclusion in Dylan's set of 'The Times They Are A-Changin''. Both men were of the opinion that the song was tired and needed to give way to something more spontaneous. This sentiment was to be echoed the following night in Munich as well but I found myself mentally defending its inclusion. 'Times' has always been one of my favourite live tracks of the Greatest Hits set, as it were. To me, it has never sounded tired and the current arrangement is a well-rounded and tight one. 'Tangled Up in Blue', 'All Along the Watchtower', 'Like a Rolling Stone' and

the like have always had their rough patches in concert as far as I'm concerned but 'Times' in its new, effortless guise is breathtaking. The track also representing the one genuine moment of clarity in the otherwise poorly executed *MTV Unplugged* performance. This type of conversation also brings up the ongoing subject of the Dylan set-list. It is common knowledge that Dylan changes the list on a nightly basis but the key question is why does he do this? Do people follow Dylan around because he constantly changes his set-list or does he feel the need to change the set-list because he knows people are following him around? Hopefully, the only reason he changes his set constantly is to keep it fresh for himself and the band. It's difficult to see any other plausible reason to do it. The Dylan faithful have been known to attack the man if he plays two similar shows on the run but we have no real entitlement to do so just because we are used to the great man spoiling us. A touring stage act, by nature and definition, takes a show out on the road. The whole point of touring is that you play to a different set of people each performance. It is not Dylan's fault if the same people trot around the globe behind him and attend every show. The fan attending show fifty wants and expects to hear Blowin' In The Wind just like those present at the opening night. So, my point is, while playing a plethora of different songs is admirable and keeps everyone (myself included) interested in the Never Ending Tour, we have no right to expect it and even less to criticise when it occasionally does not happen.

The second observation made by the Scottish gentlemen was how poignant 'Masters of War' had become in current times, especially with the Middle East situation in mind. According to the two men, it was obvious that when the song was played (with first verse repeated at the end, take from that what you will) the whole audience knew that Dylan was dedicating it to the likes of Mr. Sharon. That may be the case, sure, and it would certainly be excellent ammunition when making the point that Dylan's music and lyrics have timeless value but I was aware of no such goings on. At Dylan shows, my mind is nowhere else but in the auditorium; everything else is unimportant and can wait.

Once again, I got to the bus station directly from the concert. There were two simultaneous coaches running to Munich and the Canadian and I were on separate ones. I would now not be seeing him for a few days. We had tickets in different sections of the arena in Munich so would have to go in through opposite entrances. From Munich, the tour moved on to Italy with shows in Ravenna and Milan. I had no tickets for the Ravenna show so I was going to fly directly to Milan to take a day breather away from the schedule. The Canadian was, in turn, missing out on the Milan show because he had been offered a lift from Ravenna to Zurich. Until that decision of his was made, I didn't have a ticket for the Milan gig either. God bless him!

The show in Munich was the unadulterated Dylan at his best but my judgement was clouded by the loss of my 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' live

virginity, if you'll excuse the phrase. This powerful and humorous performance of the great song was worth the wait and all the Frankfurt problems a million times over. We also got 'Cat's in the Well' and the devastating 'Visions of Johanna'; those three alone were enough to send me to my hotel in heightened new states of Dylan euphoria.

The next morning, refreshed from a deep sleep, my first in too many days, I woke up in Munich and had a head-clearing walk through the town. My only annoyance was that I still had no recordings of the recent shows to listen to on my mini disc player. I was glad that I wasn't going to tonight's Ravenna show, not because I didn't want to go to the concert itself but because I couldn't face the journey. The day was feeling like a day off with pressure to make a plane or bus lifted from my shoulders. I didn't want to feel this way because I wanted these shows to not feel like work as it was, after all, all about entertainment; if seeing Dylan would ever become a chore then it would be time to go home.

However much I had promised myself during the day that I wouldn't, I couldn't resist checking the website for the Ravenna set-list. One of my all-time favourite songs 'I Threw It All Away' was there as was 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' and the unusual early positioning of 'Forever Young' as fourth song. I was learning that on Dylan tours, it's the insatiable amount of envy that you feel towards those who are present at ones that you don't catch that remind you exactly how much you actually care.

I took a late plane and into an expense account assisted hotel that must have been one of the plushiest in the centre of Milan. It felt a little undeserved, in truth, but what the hell. Things were going well when inevitably, things went appallingly wrong. The first thing that happened was that a day earlier a plane flew into an office block in Milan. As it turned out, the incident was a tragic accident but initial reactions were considerably more dramatic and pessimistic. The whole city was thrown into a frenzy of fear and confusion and I found myself caught up in the thick of it on my way to the venue. I was half expecting to be told that the show was off and that Dylan had flown back to the security of home, wherever that may be. No such message was given out, however, and the concert went ahead, although not, I'm sure, as planned.

The line outside the arena was full of conversation about yesterday's news; some far-fetched ideas and conclusions were spoken, as tends to be an inevitable consequence of such events. There was an air of shock in the hall when the lights went out and Dylan walked on to the stage. The atmosphere was probably best described as nervous. I felt that something was going to happen at any moment and I was completely unsettled and uncomfortable. Although, I didn't see it, I was told by those around me that when Bob arrived on the stage, he was hit by something that looked like a lit cigarette. The very idea of this sickened me and piled on more worry onto my already nervous state of mind. I have no concept of understanding why someone would go to the expense of buying tickets

for a show, queue up outside and wait for hours only to throw a glowing cigarette at the main attraction. The house lights came up after a few opening bars and stayed on for the duration of the first twelve numbers, much to everyone's obvious discomfort. I'm sure that the opener was going to be 'Hummingbird' but it became nothing more than a painfully long and sombre instrumental with Charlie and Larry punctuating it with what are usually their backing vocals. Through this, Bob was shuffling about and talking to a stage manager or someone of that status. The same man kept reappearing throughout the night; talking to Dylan during and in between songs. Charlie Sexton looked so nervous during 'Solid Rock' that I thought he was going to cry. As to whether the problem was the plane accident or the cigarette missile, other unknown factors or a combination of everything, nobody seemed to really know. To their immense credit, Dylan and his band seemed to get over it and in an example of immaculate professionalism, pulled off some fine performances. I was certain that there would be no second encore and that the band (especially Sexton) would understandably want to get on their way and safely out of Milan. However, in defiance, they were back with an inspired 'All Along the Watchtower' and the gesture was warmly received and appreciated. Dylan had seemed to put the whole strange evening out of his mind but for some peculiar reason that I still cannot explain, I couldn't do the same. I made no food or alcohol stops but headed straight to my room with a disturbed mind.

Zurich 21/4/2002

I got a flight to Zurich the next morning, via Rome, in another cheeky example of milking the expense account. The Zurich trip was to be the end of my brief period of travelling alone and although I had enjoyed a few days of my own company, I was looking forward to socialising with others again. I was due to travel to Austria with the Canadian and a friend of his that I hadn't yet met called Mel. The airline was pumping out music and chat from a commercial American radio station through the tiny plane speakers that was serving no purpose other than to repulse most of the passengers. Irritating as *DJ Jazzy Jeff Cool-Dawg's Hyperactive Show* was, it featured an interesting segment where people (well, teenage girls and elderly bachelors with questionable intentions) called in and gave their song requests for a concert that Britney Spears was to be playing that night somewhere in the United States. As the reader of these notes has probably gathered by now, the subject of the Dylan's set-list is one that is of great interest to me so the remainder of the flight saw me put pencil to paper and scribble out my own fantasy set-list.

What first began as a bit of light endeavour to amuse myself and pass the time on an airplane soon became a very involved business. No sooner have you got the dream running order written out in front of you when, from nowhere, a dozen

glaring and unforgivable omissions scream right into your face. Then you try to fit them in and this takes reworking and restructuring. Then begrudging, sacrifices have to be made because although this is a fantasy scenario, there are rules that must be adhered to. For example, Bob cannot be expected to play for five hours and 'Like a Rolling Stone' needs to be in there even if you are sick of hearing it because if the gig is recorded and subsequently released as a live album, the marketing people will need to be able to sticker the cover with something like '*featuring the hits: Like a Rolling Stone and Just Like a Woman*'. Such inclusions do, however, give you the freedom to leave out the likes of 'All Along The Watchtower', 'Highway 61 Revisited', 'Tangled Up in Blue' and 'Rainy Day Women #12 & 35'. Another factor to consider is the make up and personnel of Dylan's backing band, if such a commodity is required at all. After much deliberation, I decided that the extra musicians would be required. I thought about having Dylan backed by The Band but then I became interested in the idea of using the band that worked on the *Desire* album and all the wonderful arrangement possibilities that such a situation would provide. It would be an absolute pleasure to hear 'Not Dark Yet' or 'Shooting Star' eloquently tackled by such a line up. Diving deeper into the powers of imagination, I decided that it would also be acceptable, for the sake of this exercise, to mix up members from various incarnations of Dylan's accompaniment. This, however, sounded like an obscene amount

of work and would only serve to complicate matters further and in the end, I settled on limiting myself to the current touring band and that was that dilemma sorted out.

Before you can even begin to think about the tracks, of course, you have to commit to a structure, weigh up the acoustic / electric divide and so on. Some combinations are just not viable and I was beginning to understand how difficult it must be for Bob himself when he comes to sorting out all this sort of thing. The logistics and complexities of the whole tricky matter drove me to a much-needed drink from the trolley.

My excessive demands for notepaper were made to the flight attendant but, in fairness, she obliged pleasantly; obviously aware that I was busy involved in important work. There were about a hundred tunes that were serious candidates for inclusion but decisions had to be made and made they were. The final result, although I was unhappy with it by the time the plane landed and even less happy now, was as follows:

First Half (Dylan alone with acoustic guitar and harp)

The Times They Are A-Changing
Like A Rolling Stone
Motorpsycho Nitemare
I Shall Be Free No. 10
Percy's Song
Bob Dylan's Dream
Po' Boy
Idiot Wind
The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll
Copper Kettle

Blowin' In The Wind
 Second Half

Duncan And Brady (acoustic with band)
John Wesley Harding (acoustic with band)
As I Went Out One Morning (acoustic with band)
Señor (Tales of Yankee Power) (acoustic with band)
To Be Alone With You (acoustic with band)
Lily, Rosemary And The Jack Of Hearts (acoustic with band)
Absolutely Sweet Marie (acoustic with band)
Sara (acoustic with band)
Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window? (electric)
Forever Young (fast version from Planet Waves) (electric)
Solid Rock (electric)
Subterranean Homesick Blues (electric)
Changing Of The Guards (electric)
Odds And Ends (electric)

Encore

Clothes Line Saga (Bob alone)
My Back Pages (acoustic with band)
When I Paint My Masterpiece (acoustic with band)
Summer Days (electric)
Nashville Skyline Rag (electric)

I'm sure that if I ever experienced that show in my lifetime, I wouldn't leave the auditorium with too many complaints. My fantasy set-list would certainly make a fantastic recorded document for the next Bootleg Series, I thought, but seeing and hearing Dylan and his band finishing off a scorching night with an up-tempo 'Nashville Skyline Rag' would probably

have to be something to carry on dreaming about. The best concerts have always happened in my room. Obviously, by unfair comparison, the actual show was always going to come off second best even though we got 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' again. The acoustics in the Hallenstadion were excellent and complemented the rich sound that the band create well, even if the unusually dismal

attempt at 'Forever Young' failed to take advantage of the circumstances. There was also an outing for 'Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You', a welcome reminder of just how much I love *Nashville Skyline*. I was in the countrified mood so much that the next day, impatient to listen to the thing, I had to go to a local store and get myself a copy, even though I've got it many times at home.

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