

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
CULTURAL STUDIES MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

A NEW BARD FOR A NEW GENERATION:  
BOB DYLAN IN THE EARLY 1960s

Pelin SAVTAK

115611021

Faculty Member, PhD. Rana TEKCAN

ISTANBUL

2018

A New Bard for a New Generation: Bob Dylan in the Early 1960s

Yeni Neslin Ozanı: 1960'larda Bob Dylan

Pelin Savtak

115611021

**Tez Danışmanı** : **Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Rana Tekcan**  
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

**Jüri Üyeleri** : **Prof. Dr. Jale Parla**  
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

**Prof. Dr. Hakan Yılmaz**  
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 28.05.2018

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 82

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Bob Dylan
- 2) 1960lar
- 3) Kültür
- 4) Şiir
- 5) Müzik

Keywords (English)

- 1) Bob Dylan
- 2) 1960s
- 3) Culture
- 4) Poetry
- 5) Music

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is born of an effort made during my studies in the department of Western Languages and Literatures at Boğaziçi University. After doing research for my senior thesis, I came to the conclusion that my master's thesis at İstanbul Bilgi University was going to be a more comprehensive analysis of the former one which focused mainly on the Beat Generation from a literary perspective. It inspired me to go deeper into the post-World War II era and political climate of the United States in that particular time period. Regular undergraduate and graduate classes on American culture have helped me clarify my ideas and I have reached this point where I shall try to reveal why Bob Dylan came to be the singing poet of a generation.

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Rana Tekcan. She consistently steered me in the right direction whenever I had trouble throughout this process. Her guidance into the world of poetry has been an essential part of this study. I'd also like to acknowledge Bülent Somay who shared his valuable comments on this thesis when I first started writing and Hakan Yılmaz who shared his knowledge and collection of poetry and music with me. Besides, I must express my gratitude to Gökalp Baykal for his interest in this thesis and for his precious insights on Bob Dylan's world.

I am also indebted to Tolga Yiğit for all his love and endless patience which have encouraged me at the most difficult times. I also wish to thank Mustafa İlter, Berna Erden, Beste Sağlam, Ladan Hamidi, Aslı Kendirli, Bensu İzgi and Berfin Yapa who have always lent me an ear and never withheld their intellectual and emotional support. Leyla Savsar also deserves a special mention for providing unending literary inspiration.

Last but not least, I cannot express my gratitude to my parents Mükerrerem and Tuncay Savtak for providing me with unfailing support and encouragement through this long process of researching and writing. Their love and guidance are with me in whatever I pursue.

Thank you for being there while I tried to bring this study into reality. This thesis would have been deficient if any of these people were missing in my life.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	vii
Özet.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: POETRY AND MUSIC IN THE ANCIENT AGE .....	4
CHAPTER TWO: TOWARDS THE TUMULTUOUS SIXTIES .....	9
2.1. The Road to the Cold War .....	9
2.2. A Social Perspective into the Cold War Years .....	13
2.3. McCarthyism & The Anti-Communist Propaganda.....	17
2.4. The Vietnam War.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: POLITICAL DISSIDENCE.....	22
3.1. Bob Dylan in the Upheavals of the 1960s.....	23
3.2. Dylan Steps into the Greenwich Village.....	27
3.3. Early Influences.....	29
3.3.1. The Beat Scene.....	30
3.3.2. The Folk Revival in America.....	35
CHAPTER FOUR: BOB DYLAN: SELECTED SONGS .....	40
4.1. Anti-War Songs:	
4.1.1. John Brown.....	42
4.1.2. Let Me Die in My Footsteps.....	44

4.1.3. Masters of War.....	46
<b>4.2. Pro-Civil Rights Songs:</b>	
4.2.1 The Death of Emmett Till.....	47
4.2.2. Blowin' in the Wind.....	48
4.2.3. The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll.....	50
4.2.4. Only a Pawn in Their Game.....	52
<b>4.3. Songs of the Changing Times:</b>	
4.3.1. A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall.....	53
4.3.2. The Times They Are A-Changin'.....	55
4.3.3. Chimes of Freedom.....	56
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>APPENDIX I.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>APPENDIX II .....</b>	<b>71</b>

## **Abstract**

This thesis argues that Bob Dylan, who is primarily known as a musician, is a poet who was able to become the bard of a newly arising generation in the USA in the 1960s. It begins within the historical framework of the poetry tradition and having clarified the connection between poetry and music, it goes on to bring light as regards a turbulent period of time: the late 1950s and early 1960s. Considering these years, especially 1960s, witnessed major upheavals in society and culture, this study addresses how Bob Dylan gained the role of the Village troubadour in Greenwich Village and continued to be called so in the following years by many counterculture and leftist communities of the time. In this discussion, some attempt is made to identify what must be considered the dominating influence on Bob Dylan's early career from historical, social and literary perspectives. By exploring how history, social movements, music and literature were indivisible components of his journey, this study concludes that Dylan's poetry has been influential from many respects when the new generation was waking up to new hopes for a different America.

## Özet

Bu tezde, öncelikle müzisyen olarak bilinen Bob Dylan'ın, Amerika'da 1960'larda yeni ortaya çıkmaya başlayan neslin ozanı olduğu üzerinde durulur. İlk olarak şiir geleneğinin tarihi çerçevesi verilip şiir ve müziğin ilişkisi aydınlatıldıktan sonra tarihte çalkantılı bir dönem olan 1950'lerin sonu ve 1960'ların başına odaklanılır. Özellikle de 1960'ların büyük çapta toplumsal ve kültürel olaylara tanıklık ettiği göz önünde bulundurularak Bob Dylan'ın, neden zamanın karşı kültür ve sol toplulukları tarafından Greenwich Village'in ozanı olarak tanındığı ortaya konur. Bu tartışmada, Dylan'ın erken dönem kariyerini hangi faktörlerin baskın olarak etkilediği tarihsel, toplumsal ve edebi çerçevelerden araştırılır. Tarihin, toplumsal hareketlerin, müzik ve edebiyatın Dylan'ın yolculuğunun ayrılmaz parçaları olduğunu araştıran bu çalışma sonucunda, farklı bir Amerika için yeni umutlar besleyen yeni neslin uyandığı bir zamanda yazdığı şiirlerin pek çok anlamda ilham verici olduğu ortaya konur.

*Before epic tales and poems were ever written down, they migrated on the winds  
of the human voice and no voice is greater than Dylan's.*

Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan

## INTRODUCTION

The Nobel Prize in Literature for 2016 was awarded to Bob Dylan, who is primarily known as a musician, on the grounds of the historical connection of music and poetry. In this thesis, I propose before everything else that Dylan was a singing poet who was able to become a significant cultural symbol of a newly arising generation in the context of the 1960s. To be more precise, he became the voice of a generation that no longer believed the ideals and aspirations of their elders and was in pursuit of creating a better world for themselves away from the wars and discrimination towards gender and race. Here, it is necessary to say that the 60s, as a cultural period rather than a historical one, was a period of great cultural turmoil for a variety of reasons. The author Charles Kaiser gives the reader an account of the time from the perspective of the youth, specifically “six million draft-age students in college, the largest group of undergraduates in American history” who embraced Dylan as their own spokesman:

...An absence of religious conviction; an unwanted intimacy with the nuclear void; an unexpected familiarity with political assassination-Malcolm X's in 1965, as well as John Kennedy's in 1963-and a yearning for the idealism that was the most evocative part of Kennedy's presidency. Together these disparate elements fed two seemingly contradictory but actually complementary impulses: the desire to create our own culture, a world of our own where we could retreat from the world of our parents; and the need to embrace causes larger than ourselves, crusades that would give us the chance to define ourselves as moral people. Neither impulse could have been satisfied without our two most powerful inspirations: the war and the radio.

The disturbing images of the Vietnam War on TV, the politics of the leaders and materialistic lives of their elders brought the youth challenge authority. The unity among people during World War II was shattered in the

subsequent Cold War years. The Civil Rights Movement was to soon accelerate as well and youth movements were to grow rapidly on campuses and streets. Bob Dylan created his first works affected by the spirit of the times and his socially conscious lyrics commenting on the current social politics were influential on the people who opposed the mainstream culture of America. To Kaiser, “Bob Dylan’s combination of culture and politics created more than combustion. This was alchemy: the alchemy that produced the mood, color, and spirit of the sixties.” As Bob Dylan said in his Nobel Acceptance Speech, what he did was to “make it all connect and move with the current of the day.” With his lyrics of literary quality touching upon the current issues, he brought poetry into the public domain and became one of the most noteworthy figures of the time.

In this thesis, I shall present Bob Dylan as a cultural phenomenon who became the poet of a generation with lyrics unveiling the political and social clashes of the ‘50s and ‘60s. I shall first examine from an historical point of view what made him worthy of a Nobel Literature Prize by pointing out the roots of poetry in Ancient Greece in the context of the tradition of poems as songs. I also seek to examine the post-war America and the upheavals in the 1960s in which social changes and their significance were profound both in the American culture and the world, i.e, since the end of the World War II until 1965 when Dylan deliberately stopped writing protest songs. By bringing light to both the ancient traditions and the spirit of the 1960s, I aim to reveal why Dylan was able to create “new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”, as The Nobel committee for Literature suggested, and how he was able to gain the status of the bard of a new generation.

Sociologist Andrea Cossu claims that there are three major frames from which one could interpret Dylan in a cultural pantheon:

First, Dylan is recognised for his perceived political role (highlighting only a period of his career that lasted roughly two years); second, there is a revisionist discourse about Dylan as a distinct American

voice, musically and culturally; finally, there is a recognition of his ability to provide popular culture not only with a civil message that speaks of injustice and inequality, but also to transcend the limitations of politics, and to bridge the gap between popular culture and poetry. (236)

Considering this, I shall close read several examples of his works from the start of his career in Greenwich Village to 1965 when he stopped writing protest songs, with the aim of understanding how Bob Dylan, as a song-writer and a musician, became a significant spokesman of a generation. It is hoped that through such an approach, readers will be able to consider Dylan a poet whose words reflect on a turbulent time period. To be more precise, I shall analyse in depth his most-loved and remarkable songs between 1962 and 1965 with elegantly written lyrics reaching out to a generation who believed in the possibility of a different world.

For this purpose, my thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, *Poetry and Music in the Ancient Age*, reveals the historical connection of music and poetry and aims to position Dylan as a poet who went beyond singing and changed the idea of what poetry could be. The second chapter, *Towards the Tumultuous Sixties* provides extensive information as to what happened in the years following the end of Second World War with an emphasis on Cold War and its effects on society. The third chapter, *Political Dissidence*, focuses on how Dylan's lyrics came to be the embodiment of an opposition towards discrimination and war in the context of the counterculture of the period by pointing out the early influences of the Beats and the Folk Revival in the Greenwich Village on Dylan. The last chapter *Bob Dylan: Selected Songs*, covers a range of his most note-worthy anti-war and pro-black protest songs written between 1962 and 1965.

## CHAPTER ONE

### POETRY AND MUSIC IN THE ANCIENT AGE

That the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2016 was awarded to a man chiefly known as a singer without any apparent connection to literature came as a surprise not only to many admirers of literature but also to many people who were not used to a song-writer's being deemed worthy of a prize in Literature. There have been negative comments from literary critics and authors but the Nobel committee, carefully expressing its reasons for granting him a Literature Prize, reminded the critics of the historical connection between a singer-songwriter and a poet. Therefore, saying that Dylan didn't belong to any of the literary genres would merely be failing to notice that "in a distant past, all poetry was sung or tunefully recited, poets were rhapsodes, bards, troubadours; lyrics comes from lyre", as the Committee put forward. There have also been people who were quick to see this link such as Jennifer Benka, the executive director of the Academy of American Poets, who stated that "Bob Dylan receiving the Nobel Prize in literature acknowledges the importance of literature's oral tradition, and the fact that literature and poetry exists in culture in multiple modes." Likewise, Salman Rushdie, wrote that Dylan was "the brilliant inheritor of the bardic tradition."<sup>1</sup>

Dylan, in short, has been regarded by the Committee as a figure who changed our notions of what poetry is with his songs. Having been influenced by many genres in literature and music, he created his own voice by giving a new shape to the present material to the point of influencing a generation. At this point, one can rightfully ask how his time-defying songs can be considered poetry to grasp the connection between poetry and music.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more comments on Dylan's Nobel Literature, see: Associated Press, "Something is Happening: Bob Dylan Wins Nobel in Literature," 14 October 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-3836147/Bob-Dylan-wins-2016-Nobel-Prize-literature.html>, Web, 26 February 2018.

Although there have been controversial comments from some literary figures, it is not unusual to associate the two different branches of art: music and literature. According to the Norton Anthology of Poetry, “poetry began as song and continues as song; it is usually best appreciated when spoken or sung by a human voice” (lix). When we look at the first poets in ancient ages, we see that they were not only recounting their stories but also carrying a tune with their voices: They were singers. Therefore we must consider Nobel Committee’s award presentation speech for Bob Dylan and especially their justification of awarding the prize for literature to a songwriter in parallel with the oral tradition of poetry from the Classical Antiquity to understand what poetry was and how “Dylan has changed our idea of what poetry can be and how it can work.” The ancient poets were singers who recounted stories in melodies for the society.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, poetry is “literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm”<sup>2</sup>. This definition of poetry is a comprehensive one. Poetry can be said to create a consciousness or experience through its idiocratic way of expressing. However, we should also think of poetry as an ancient form of literature considering the first poets of history who were singers composing verses on various subjects.

One of the most -perhaps the most- important theories on poetry was delivered by Aristotle who lived between 384 B.C.-322 B.C and brought light to the Greek literature. In “Poetics” he spoke of poetry as emerging from man’s instinct to imitate and instinct for harmony and rhythm (15). While he separated poetry into epic poetry, tragedy, comedy and dithyrambic poetry, he put the music of the flute and of the lyre into this exemplification of the modes of imitation.

---

<sup>2</sup>For the dictionary definition and characteristics of poetry in general, see: Nemerov, Howard. “Poetry.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 3 Aug. 2017, [www.britannica.com/art/poetry](http://www.britannica.com/art/poetry).

Though Aristotle also characterized the forms in their own uniqueness, he pointed out to “rhythm, tune and meter” which are mostly common in these art forms (11).

In addition to this, in Plato’s *Ion*, Socrates asserted that poet did not create art but was inspired by some power divine and compared the lyric poet who composed his beautiful strains to the “Corybantian revellers who were not in their right mind when they danced.” To him, both were inspired and possessed when they fell under the power of music and metre. Poets were inspired by Muses and sang by the help of this divine inspiration. When one looks at the roots of the word *music*, one can see that it is derived from Greek *mousikē (tekhnē)* meaning ‘(art) of the Muses’, from “*mousa*” meaning ‘muse.’” In his Nobel Lecture, Dylan points out to the two forms, inextricably tied by their nature, as he returns to Homer, who says, “Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story.” Both Aristotle and Socrates point out to the strong connection between music and poetry in Classical Age. Socrates’ comparison of poets and Corybantian revellers who were dancers and drummers in Greek mythology gives hint to the coming together of poetry and music in certain contexts.

The ancient poets “rhapsodes, bards and troubadours” either sang or tunefully recited their poems. A *rhapsode* was an Ancient Greek singer. Etymologists suggest that the word *rhapsode* either comes from the staff they leaned during performance (*rhabdos*) or more likely from the poetic act of sewing (*rhaptein*) the poem (*oide*). Moreover, it is also explained that *rhapsodes* were thought to be “reciters of the compositions of others, which they consigned to memory.”<sup>3</sup> This especially meant that in an era where stories were transmitted orally, these rhapsodes managed to recount many stories thanks to their ability to memorize and transmit these stories to coming generations.

In Ancient Greece, specifically its Homeric origin, one can see the *aoidoi*, who created poetry with each performance. Although encountered rarely

---

<sup>3</sup> For further information on rhapsodes, see: “Rhapsode.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 3 March. 2016, [www.britannica.com/art/rhapsode](http://www.britannica.com/art/rhapsode).

following the prevalence of the *rhapsode*, the *aoidoi* performed and sang in a pre-literate age. The name given to them suggests the act of singing the poetry as we now know that *oide* means poem and that there wasn't any written material available at the time. The *rhapsode*, on the other hand, were performers of poetry in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, where "memorization of written speeches were also at work among rhapsodes" (González). In the dialogue between the famous *rhapsode* Ion and Socrates, we can find a remarkable description of rhapsodic activity. They not only memorize and recite the poetry as the definition suggests, but they have to understand "the best and most divine" poet Homer and be able to "interpret the mind of the poet to [their] hearers." Here, it is possible to see that performance makes an indispensable part of the necessary skills the *rhapsode* has to have.

The reason the Nobel Committee gives "*bards*" as examples alongside the *rhapsodes* is that, although in a different age and place, the ancient Celts maintained a very similar oral poetry tradition to that of the ancient Greeks. "Bards were originally Celtic composers of eulogy and satire; the word came to mean more generally a tribal poet-singer gifted in composing and reciting verses on heroes and their deeds."<sup>4</sup> The English word bard's origin, therefore, is the Old Celtic word *bardos*, meaning "*poet, singer.*" The bards composed and recited poetry on themes influenced by the epic and chivalric stories of Celtic warriors and the flute and lyre accompanied them. Though the locations, languages, and themes might vary, we understand that both traditions point to the blurred lines between poetry and song.

Just like the *rhapsodes* and *bards*, a troubadour was a performer of lyric poetry. Troubadours composed in the langue d'oc of Provence or L'occitan, a language spoken in the southern France and some parts of Spain and Italy, mostly from the late 11<sup>th</sup> to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Although the word "troubadour" has

---

<sup>4</sup> For further information on the history of bards, see: "Bard." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 April. 2013, [www.britannica.com/art/bard](http://www.britannica.com/art/bard).

become nearly synonymous with *singer*, scholarly opinion varies regarding the etymology of the word itself. Romanists hold that the noun derives from *trobar*, the Occitan verb for “to compose, invent, devise” or from the Vulgar Latin *tropare* “to say with tropes” or *tropatorem*, “composer of tropes” (Topsfield). Arabists, on the other hand, cite the verb *caraba*, “to sing” as the more probable source (Menocal).<sup>5</sup> Troubadours often composed on love, courtly love or chivalry themes.

Bob Dylan should be considered a poet not only because The Nobel Committee pointed to the historical connection between poetry and music but because he masterfully overthrew the stereotypical ideas as regards poetry with his songs “whose beauty are of the highest rank” as the Committee stated. While he drew from many types of music, as he wrote poems and composed them as songs such as blues, gospel, folk and rock, he went beyond just imitating an ancient tradition and found his place beside “the forgotten masters of brilliant standards.” According to the author Guilbert Gates “his true importance is that he was able to internalize these disparate influences, and to transform them, with great courage and sensitivity, into a sound that was uniquely, unmistakably his own.”

---

<sup>5</sup>For a broader perspective into the cultural history of troubadours, see: M. Davis, Judith. "Troubadours". *The Literary Encyclopedia*. First published 25 August 2005. <https://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1310>, accessed 27 February 2018.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **TOWARDS THE TUMULTUOUS SIXTIES**

#### **2.1 The Road to the Cold War**

As the 1960s began, the discontent which was by then slow but solid in its principals, gradually gave way to a far-reaching dissent. These years witnessed some massive upheavals which have changed the flow of history. It is necessary to look back on the political climate of the late '50s and see the reasons behind the dislocations in the 1960s.

It is an undeniable fact that until the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, America had advanced in power. "Between 1860 and 1900 the rank of the United States as an exporting nation rose from fourth place to second in all the world, and manufactures, which formed but one eighth of exports in 1860, constituted one third of the total in 1900" (Schlesinger 408). In addition to this, "[Our] bankers began to talk of the financing of the loans of foreign governments, an industry which had previously been monopolized by London, Paris, and Berlin, and which carried with it a vast influence in world politics (Fish 427). That the economy was expanding during these years should not only be thought in relation to the material well-being of the country, but also in relation to the political advantage it brought. In other words, in the new market research among the powerful countries in Europe, which would soon turn into colonization after the late 1800s, America was to get its own share. As a matter of fact, with this strong political voice, it was about to become the greatest power in the world.

"The United States had gone to the war in 1941 as one among the several of the world's great powers. It emerged in 1945 as clearly the world's number one superpower" (Miller 3). Having been victorious in war; it promised its citizens a good life ahead of them. The war had also contributed to the development of the

economy by offering new fields of work in producing war supplies. The scientific background knowledge to produce such materials was also at their disposal. In fact, the world was aware of this power as briefly put by Truman in 1945 as “a solid structure upon which we can build a better world.” Moreover, fact that they had the “atomic bomb” while the others did not also gave them tremendous power. In fact, before the first atomic bomb killed almost 130,000 people and left many more suffering from the effects, Japan was almost ready to surrender in the summer of 1945 (Calvocoressi 2). Still, by seizing on the opportunity to manifest the outcome of many years’ economical and technological work to solidify its place in the world politics, and despite the many warnings and oppositions from the scientists, Truman decided for the use of the atomic bomb which was soon to transform the world irrevocably.

During the war years, there seemed to be a sense of national unity among American people. According to Miller, “Behind all this national strength stood a united American people. More than any other war in U.S. history, World War II had the overwhelming support of the citizenry” (6). It can be said that the glorious outcome of war in terms of economy and power had given many people an aim upon which they could build their worlds. In addition, the war propaganda aimed to make society reach a consensus on this optimistic aim was further promoted by various kinds of media. The popular magazines such as *Look* and *Life* and newspapers of the time praised the American soldier by emphasizing his courage in many of their articles.

In addition to the sense of unity, a spirit of cooperation and generosity impelled American people to work long hours and when the war ended they had “a renewed faith in themselves as a people, convinced that American wizardry in production, combined with the American commitment to fair play, would bring prosperity to [our] nation and set a shining example for the world” (Gerstle 105). To illustrate, American soldiers who were alive and healthy came back from the traumatic experiences to their homes with new hopes for employment, starting families and living in certain standards. The war economy aided these people in

finding jobs and achieving the pictured standards because it had created employment opportunities and “the government planning that dominated the economy during the war was continuing due to the demands of military preparedness and maximum employment” (Blake 515). Though it happened at the expense of many lives, the government planning was successful to draw America into an optimistic atmosphere where concerns were soon to be centered on the well-being of the individual or nuclear family around suburbia.

Assessed from this angle, then, the aftermath of war did not seem unfavorable to many people: The companies profited from the war, people were optimistic about their future, many people had the opportunity to save for new houses and cars. The joy of victory, combined with domestic economic prosperity helped people at home trust their governments to keep them away from a potential war. However, industrial and military competition was not over for the ruling strata who had estimated the potential role of war on controlling society. After the recovery period following the World War II, the country was being dragged to another war whose weapons and targets were quite different than those of the previous one. This time, the money was going to be spent on a war with -the former ally during the Second World War- Soviet Russia, creating an uneasy atmosphere in society.

The atomic bomb to Japan was in a sense to the Soviet Moscow. The US and Russia -the two great powers of the world- were trying to prove their might to each other. As the US demonstrated that it was capable of creating and using such a destructive force, Russians never stayed behind in terms of scientific advancements. “For four years after the war, the US was the world’s only nuclear power. However, during that time the Soviet Union made an immense effort to manufacture its own atomic bomb, and thereby put itself back on an equal tactical footing with the US” (Sturgeon349). In the path of this purpose, both countries were trying to consolidate their military and bureaucratic structures and therefore national security. Each country considered the other an obstacle along the way

and the wartime alliance gradually turned into hostility which we now refer as The Cold War.

Though this conflict can be discussed from multiple contexts -political, economic, technological etc.- in this analysis I shall emphasize the main outline and demonstrate the effects of such an invisible war on society and individuals. To start with, the main reason for this war was that both the US and Soviet Russia were in pursuit of some certain rights in order to shape the world's future. Victory and prosperity at home after World War II and the power of atomic bomb had given American leaders ample cause to consider the country as a first-rate power all around the world and therefore to not let any other nation decide on the fate of other countries. Therefore, "relations between the US and the Soviet Union deteriorated rapidly after the war, and there were times when open conflict loomed. But instead the war turned 'cold' -that is, it was waged by the bloodless means of subversion, diplomatic wrangling, arms stockpiling, propaganda, and espionage" (Sturgeon 348). As it is possible to grasp from the definition of this war, the bloody fights of the previous years were over, yet people were about to witness new means of fight which had nothing to do with a visible frontier or battlefield but are unfamiliar and constantly besetting.

As time passed, the Cold War was building and Truman administration was determined in Anti-Soviet policy. The possibility of cultivating good relations with their former ally Soviet Union diminished and the further steps that US government took brought things to that irrevocable point. The following government policy was reoriented in such a way that the US had legal and moral grounds to offer political and financial aid that seemed of best interest to the country. In his speech in front of the Congress in 1947, President Truman claimed that it was their duty to come to aid "against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes." Emphasizing the democratic nature of their conduct, he called Russia -whose interventionist foreign policy he harshly criticized- an "armed minority" in his speech known as "The Truman Doctrine". To Truman, Soviet Russia threatened the "free institutions and their

national integrity”, “undermined the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States”. The speech vividly portrayed Communist Russia as an enemy whose oppressive way of life is a danger not only to its satellite states but also to the United States. Moreover, it conveyed the message that the US was responsible for the prevention of the spread of Communism now and that they were going to adopt a containment policy from then on. This was a Cold War foreign policy of the US to contain Soviet influence in Europe for the sake of democracy, according to the US leaders’ claim.

When one analyzes the outline of the US foreign policy towards Soviet Union, one can notice that the US wanted to guarantee its power in Europe as opposed to a Communist Soviet Union influence there and kept a close eye on geopolitically important countries such as Germany, Greece, Iran and Turkey. For example, with an aim to reshape Europe and prevent Communist influence there, Truman administration -together with George Kennan- created the Marshall Plan, also known as European Recovery Program, in 1948 which suggested giving aid to Western European countries. Though it helped the industrialization throughout the region, excluding the Soviet Union and East Europe from the plan brought the rivalry between the two countries to climax. Marshall Plan surely changed the war’s course and brought the already worsened relations to the point of no return.

## **2.2. A Social Perspective into the Cold War Years**

Considering the subsequent Cold War right after a World War that had already altered the political dynamics, one might ask this question: “How did society’s reaction change?” Here, I shall take the society as the ordinary American citizens and examine their life style in detail to unveil how their life aspirations changed in order to understand how Dylan’s lyrics responded to the changing face of the American dream. America witnessed a national unity following the end of the Second World War. The government propaganda had worked well and society

both trusted their government and themselves as a people. However, 1950s came with a decline in this trust and the rivalry between America and Soviet Union that led to an “unseen” war, contributed to a sense of insecurity among people in the end. This insecurity was reinforced by the fact that war weapons were replaced with new nuclear weapons and the realization that the world could have come to an end with just one move.

The Cold War had indeed affected the society to a great extent. The fact that the youngest and first Catholic President of the USA John Kennedy, in Professor John Hellmann’s words, “demanded that the Soviet Union withdraw nuclear-armed missiles that they had secretly installed in Cuba ninety miles off the shore of Florida” (296) brought to the fore the fear of a nuclear war during the thirteen days that the crisis lasted. This crisis resulted in an anxiety among people considering how close the world could come to a point of complete destruction by sheer suspicion and retaliation. It did not take a long time for people to learn that their leaders’ priority might not have been society but themselves to maintain power. Therefore, people soon realized that “the health and welfare of the individual was becoming steadily more dependent on forces that were beyond his direct control” (Blake 658). In light of this background, one can better understand how citizens wanted to keep themselves and their families in their comfortable zones and how some people lost their trust to the government and decided to go in pursuit of their own ideals.

The historical and political outcomes of the afore-mentioned events resulted in a tendency towards conformity, especially in new middle class families. These people who were able to seize on the job opportunities created by the war economy had the purchasing power to buy houses thanks to relatively low prices and this led to a rise in big, luxurious houses in suburbs. "By 1970, for the first time there were more people living in suburbs than in cities" (Halberstam 142). This sense of well-being of families living in big suburban houses can be seen in the neatly dressed, well situated photographs of the time. Moreover, the political and military conflicts and nuclear weapons race of the Cold War

consolidated this politically conservative climate. In a short while, the suburban life style with rich and happy families living in their comfortable communities became a metaphor to demonstrate the American dream in its very existence. To Halberstam,

If a new car was a critical status symbol, a house was something else. More often than not, the people who intended to own one had, in the past, rented apartments, which symbolized not merely a lack of space but also a lack of independence and security. Owning a house came to be the embodiment of the new American dream. As promised by endless Hollywood films, it represented fulfillment, contentment: confident dads, perky moms, and glowing children, attending good schools and, later, college. A house brought the American family together (at precisely the moment, of course, when cars and television began pulling it apart). (132)

Understanding this is important for better understanding how society could be shaped by incentives and promotions of the way people should live as desired by politicians. As the media -newspapers, magazine, television advertisements, Hollywood films and etc.- promoted the idealized life styles in suburban communities, people began to see these lives as necessary to maintain the American ideal. This idealization not only emphasized security and status but also the gender roles defined for citizens and understanding the social roles in 1950s is significant if one intends to identify the oppositions to these values of mainstream society in the following years.

Though the suburbanization of America can be looked in detail from a variety of perspectives, I shall focus on the aspects that are relevant to the later dislocations in society. The increasing number of people who wanted to live outside the city center created a need for transportation which “was led by Henry Ford who produced cars that people could afford to buy” (Halberstam 116). Not only did people buy cars but they also desired to have more to fill in and

decorate their houses thanks to the advertisements on television. Simply put, these advancements triggered the rise of materialistic consumerist culture in suburban communities. According to Nelson M. Blake, the commercialization of television was a "logical step after World War Two" and "the high postwar earnings gave way to larger sales than expected (581). Looking at the statistics of sales, one can easily understand how American citizens approached the rising commercialization and capitalism triggered by their desire to buy more for their families and houses.

Again, it is important to state that the realization that the nation was involved in a new war and seeing the scientific and technological advances in the States and Soviet Union with which the war of powers were made, gave these people who came out of the Second World War ample cause to desire to maintain living in their politically and socially conservative houses. According to historian Halberstam, "this was no small phenomenon in itself – shopping and buying were to become major American pastimes as the ripple effect of the new affluence started to be felt throughout the economy" (144). However, many people were satisfied with what they had and did not question whether the grounds of the conformity was reliable or not. The suburban community life was in fact steady and secure but at the same time there were things that it excluded from their privileged lives. Godfrey Hodgson explains that things were not always as favorable there as it seemed from the outside:

Some of the tensions and frustrations of late twentieth-century America can be put down to the fact that by the end of the century more than half the population had moved on out to the suburbs, where great material comfort and convenience are sometimes purchased at the cost of loneliness, isolation, and even a sense of alienation." (36)

To sum up, the reflection of Cold War on society was multifaceted and it changed the dynamics in social life substantially. Lastly, I need to mention that

although much of the population gathered in the conformity of suburban houses, not all parts of America lived within the same cultural structure. For example, the city life, compared to the suburbs was quite different. The dichotomy between the affluent white suburbs and underprivileged nonwhite central city is explained by Miller who points out that the suburban society in the 1950s as “prosperous, stable, bland, religious, moral, patriotic, conservative, domestic and buttoned down” (103). At the same time, “the black population of the most important metropolitan cities -New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles- grew from under 10 percent to 25 percent, and even higher percentages” (Hodgson 36). Moving to urban life did not, however, mean that it was easy for blacks to settle with their families and find proper accommodation. It was only 1954 that constitution came to realize that separate did not mean equal and the doctrine “separate but equal” was abolished. However, there still were many people who defended *de facto* segregation and supported the separate lives for different social and racial backgrounds as I shall demonstrate in Dylan’s selected songs which dealt with black discrimination.

### **2.3. McCarthyism & The Anti-Communist Propaganda**

Considering the competition with the country, the fact that the Russians seized control over Eastern Europe and some parts of Germany caused distress among the ruling strata in the US. The subsequent rising tension led the two countries into forming alliances with other nations to further strengthen their political authority. To exemplify, the United States, for the first time in its history, decided to look for an international alliance when there wasn’t an ongoing war and therefore signed a pact with the nations of Western Europe as well as Canada, Iceland, and Turkey. Together they created the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO) on April 4, 1949 to which West Germany was later added. However, Soviets was going to respond with the Warsaw Pact in 1955 (Miller 43). When one looks at this division of nations, one quickly notices the historical and political meaning behind it. While West Germany stayed under power of the American forces, East Germany was controlled by the Communist Soviet Russia. The fact that the Soviet Russia gathered socialist countries in its command paved the US government -that was already afraid of losing political authority on account of Russian expansion in Europe- the way for the forthcoming anti-communist propaganda in the following years.

It is known that the counter propaganda continued to be broadcasted during the Cold War years. According to Miller, while Soviet Russia regarded the formation of pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe as crucial to protect their national security, American leaders considered it an illegitimate violation of their rights to self-determination and as a Russian plot to spread Communism (35). In fact, the sudden death of Franklin D. Roosevelt were to make the relations much worse because Harry S Truman who was sworn in as president in 1945 pushed a much more Anti-Soviet line than Roosevelt might have done had he lived.

Truman wasn't the first person in the US to have a suspicion against Soviet intention though. When one looks at the post First World War years, one can notice that the famous Jazz Age and prosperity hides the US fear of Communism, especially growing after the October Socialist Revolution in Russia which overthrew the Royal Family. This fear of Communism went hand in hand with the charges against people who did not fit into mainstream American lives and expectations and caused almost the whole population to look at Communism and even a slightly alternative life with suspicion and fear. As the Cold War caused the US and Soviet relations to deteriorate, a second wave of panic hit the country and led it to take precautions that was going to have profound effect on government and society. In short, late 1950s saw an anti-communism on a wider scale, reaching its peak with the efforts of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. Many investigations were held among the executive positions of the government

as well as among the intellectuals to filter people with communist affiliations which resulted in the escalation of tension and fear in the country.

One way of adjusting the society who admired and loved Russians during the Second World War to this new crisis was to manage their perceptions through mass media. To illustrate, the cartoons of the time included pictures of the Soviet leader as a dictator while subtly criticizing the Communist expansion in Europe, Russians as agents that want to spy on them together with the columns suggesting ways to tell whether a person was a communist or not. Truman administration was quick to realize the widespread use of TVs at homes and people were made to watch the Anti-Communist propaganda on TVs. In addition, McCarthy's charges against people in executive roles in government were broadcasted on TVs for weeks. It should be emphasized that the more the nation became obsessed with the danger that might be rooted in Communism or agents that might disturb the integrity of the great American nation, the more the fear and hysteria grew among people. The result of this dilemma revealed itself in the thoughts and life styles of the average American as the society were made to believe that the nation must be cleaned from Communist agents and spies.

This rising fear was soon to result in a major distrust among people living within the borders of the same country and the suspicion fed by the government into hostility. Although the investigations and dismissals on a large scale after Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy's Communist Hunt -also known as Red Hunt- later proved to be ungrounded, it did affect many years of politics and therefore the respect that society had for the leaders of the country. While Rexroth points out to the shattering and demoralizing years of McCarthyism in academic and intellectual fields, he reveals that "McCarthyism more than any other thing revealed to the young the moral bankruptcy of their elders." This distrust of the new generation, along with the traumas of war and the fear atmosphere in the country was going to lead to many upheavals among people in the following 1960s.

## 2.4. The Vietnam War

In 1954, the US was involved in yet another war in Vietnam whose roots went back to several decades before its interference in this Asian country's politics. The conflict had long been started by then with political leader Ho Chi Minh who formed Viet Minh wishing a unified communist Vietnam as opposed to Emperor Bao who was supported by France so as not to lose its control upon the country. However, neither a country under the influence of France nor another communist state after China and Korea was for the benefit of the United States.

After the Viet Minh defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu, the latter agreed as part of the International Geneva Accords to give up their colony and for Vietnam to be temporarily divided into North Vietnam, held by the communists, and South Vietnam, where the nationalist but French-educated and Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem was installed with American support.” (Hellmann 298)

However, as I have pointed out, America was an anti-communist state and subscribing to Eisenhower's “Domino Theory” which suggested that communism could spread just like the domino from a communist state in the Asia to its neighbors. Kennedy increased American aid in the Southern part of the country. Compared to the 1950s when there were just several hundred Americans in the land, the number reached to 16,000 (Hellmann299). What followed was quite the opposite of the leaders' expectations as South Vietnamese president Diem was shot, following the assassination of Kennedy three weeks later.

Meanwhile, TVs brought the horrible imagery from the war scene to the American people who were convinced of a legitimate war. The ongoing war brought many casualties from both sides and the images of dead soldiers' bodies, children running from the napalm bomb of the US triggered the distrust in the American officials who claimed that the war was being won. While soldiers were physically and psychologically down, people at home came to question the representation of their country by their leaders and why so many people had to die

over the years. As this war escalated, the Civil Rights Movement was also gaining speed and this gave courage and dare to speak up to many people who were discontented with America's involvement in such a war where eventually over 58,000 American soldiers would die (Miller 200). For many black people, America's involvement in the war was a racial issue as well.

People who had seen the new president Johnson as a possible facilitator of the peace in Vietnam and in country thanks to his speeches on "the great society" were not satisfied with his actions towards the war. The 1960s, therefore, witnessed many people, starting from the college "teach-ins" which brought the crisis into attention, to anti-war panels and demonstrations, turn away from the belief of the promised good life ahead. Opposition to the Vietnam War was both a reaction to innocent people dying there and a symbol for the long-forgotten American dream. The dream had changed forms since the post-war consensus, with the change of dynamics to such a degree that the current dream of the youth was going to be to bring peace and love to the world and to discover themselves. At the demonstrations, sit-ins, college campus gatherings appeared the new folk songs with lyrics opposing racial discrimination and war and pointing to the breakdown of trust among the new generation and the now apparent generation gap. Together with folk artists such as Joan Baez and Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan was soon to find his significant place among the dissenter folk audience and in fact stand out among them as the voice of this new generation.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### POLITICAL DISSIDENCE

From the first English settlements in North America starting in 1492 with the arrival of Columbus, to the latest political climate in 2017, the meaning of “American Dream” has been controversial. In fact, the term was coined in 20th century, but the set of ideas behind it seems to date as far back as the first settlements on the land.<sup>6</sup> The idea that America has an exceptional aspect has long been emphasized since then. It can be said that with each new president of the U.S., there came an emphasis on another key word some of which have been “hope”, “future” and “great”. The speeches of the presidential candidates almost every time focused on the “American frontier”, “unleashing the American dream” and “new possibilities”. Amid this confusion of abstract concepts, though, the “dream” remained appealing to many people. This was mainly because it suggested a new perspective to these people who were ready to find solace in possibilities. In other words, it brought the minds of people the opportunities in free American land to realize their dreams and to belong to a prosperous society.

However, the idealization of the country and the political relevance of it is, to some extent, an image created in the hands of certain politicians. In this respect, examining another facet of the “dream” remains a tough task to undertake. Since I aim to discuss Dylan’s early lyrics in the context of the tumultuous 1960s, I must consider the dynamics of the time which deeply affected the works of Dylan. “The tumultuous mid-sixties through the early seventies [...] saw millions of Americans, especially young people, turn away from the overconfident consensus of the postwar years. Black-power advocates, feminists, antiwar activists, and numerous other militants not only pointed out specific problems in society, but also

---

<sup>6</sup>For a broader explanation of the term, see Lawrence *The American Dream: A Cultural History* (Syracuse University Press; 2012) 241 pages; identifies six distinct eras since the phrase was coined in 1931.

questioned the very meaning of America” (Miller Xi) In other words, the other facet of this dream was the disillusionment of the youth and Dylan was able to catch and respond to this mood of the time. As our aim is to focus on Bob Dylan, as the voice of a generation with his songs that have brilliantly captured the audience with their dissenting nature during the 1960s, in this chapter, I shall elaborate on significant countercultural movements that either opposed to and refrained from or was themselves excluded from mainstream American life I mentioned in the *Towards the Tumultuous Sixties* chapter, to be able to determine the influence of the social and political circumstances of the era on Bob Dylan’s lyrics.

### **3.1 Bob Dylan in the Upheavals of the 1960s**

According to Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein, who analyzed the antisystemic movements, by the 1960s, and even more by the 1970s, people wanted to break free from the past and there were student and black people protests and antiwar movements in the United States as well as many other fluctuations in other parts of the world. However, they put forward that the catalyst for the movements of the 1960s was the escalation of the war in Vietnam (35). In addition to this, it is also possible to claim that the Civil Rights Movement triggered the dissatisfaction. The impact of the Vietnam War on society and the fact that Civil Rights Movement was gathering speed were the two main reasons behind the wind of change in America. In short, on the one hand, there was the suburban affluence of white nuclear families with their materialistic life styles, on the other hand, there was the discontent with the current politics and ideologies of the leaders as well as the lifestyles of the majority. As Hodgson rightfully claimed, “The history of the twentieth century of America was a story of constant internal disagreement over such questions as the proper role of government in American society, over the meaning of equality between individuals, races, classes, and sexes, and over America’s responsibilities towards the rest of the world”

(Hodgson 34).

To start with, among groups who could not or did not want to fit into the prosperous, secure, conservative lives of the average American citizen were people with ethnic or racial difference. There was a massive discrepancy between the white suburban life and poor ghetto neighborhoods in big cities as was highlighted in the famous musical and book “West Side Story”. Until the 1960s, the progress in black rights was slow but then a rapid change has been recorded with the advances in civil rights legislations. Perhaps it could be said that Rosa Parks’ refusing to obey giving up her seat to a white passenger on a racially segregated bus triggered the civil disobedience on a larger scale. Through the consumerism of society, TV had become an essential part of houses and according to Hellmann, “Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was particularly adept at using television to expose the violent racism that had been holding down African Americans [...] (296). This, in fact, was an important step in bringing the inequality in front of the eyes of many people in the country.

The 1960s witnessed riots in many northern cities and sit-ins in college campuses. The historic march on freedom to end the social and political injustices in 1963 demonstrated the accumulated energy of 250,000 people in Washington. Protests were held in non-violent, peaceful ways such as civil disobedience and this atmosphere brought about a great change in political and cultural area with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act by which black people in the South achieved legal equality. This, however, did not still mean a rapid change in the status of blacks as society was not at all ready to accept this major change and many riots took form of organizations and many challenges they faced poured out to pages of artistic works such as novels and lyrics to famous songs at the time. McCarthy years of the early 1950s had also affected the lives of many black people in the artistic field such as jazz or bebop musicians. Many black musicians who took the stage with their improvisational music style in nightclubs were arrested with alleged crimes of drugs. Together with Joan Baez and other folk musicians, Bob Dylan was among the musicians who were against the

inequality and discrimination of people.

However, black people were not the only ones to trigger liberation movements in America. As I have mentioned, many groups of people were unable to match the ideal image and representation of society and country as a whole; it was also the time of minorities with “different” cultural and ethnic backgrounds such as Mexican Americans, Indians, or the repressed and left-off homosexuals of McCarthy era who could finally find the freer political and cultural climate to express and assert their rights within the greater society. It was time for the new generation to break free from the old mindset and values in order to move on in this land of people who had lost their unity and trust to their government after a series of wars.

It was obvious, especially in college campuses, that things were changing and the baby boomers were in pursuit of different goals compared to the increasingly conformist and materialistic lives of their parents. Students around the campuses formed the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and protested against the discrimination. The socialist activism of students also helped shaping of a new form of Leftist thought which was called “The New Left”. Many students were opposing to the American involvement in Vietnam protesting in school canteenes and streets or by civil disobedience. One of the most remarkable protests was the Free Speech Movement on the campus of the University of Columbia in Berkeley where students organized sit-ins for political and academic freedom in campuses. According to American journalist Charles Kaiser, it was the year 1968 that the protests, activism, hope and change across the country reached their peak.

In short, many groups that differed in the way of living and thinking from the mainstream or dominant culture came into existence during the 1960s and they were in pursuit of different aims instead of the unreliable promises given to them by their elders. Although in the sociological field there are many add ons or extractions to the term, it is possible to categorize these groups within

“subculture” as defined by Cambridge Dictionary: “the way of life, customs, and ideas of a particular group of people within a society that are different from the rest of that society such as youth subcultures or the gay subculture”. In general, it is possible to say that thanks to American post war subculture of the baby boomers, America gained a new and fresh voice during the 1960s. This voice is best described in American poet and critical essayist Kenneth Rexroth’s words:

The cybernetic, computerized, transistorized society is already here in potential and an ever-increasing number of people are insisting on walking into it and living there. We can afford peace, we can afford creative leisure, we can afford to demonstrate and revolt until we get them. A society in which hard labor is no longer the original source of value can afford to be good. The best and most effective demonstration is simply to start living by the new values. The people who do are going to outlive the people who don’t unless the oldies murder them all in their wars.

Rexroth, who verbalized the then apparent generation gap, is thought to have been a founding figure of the San Francisco Renaissance of the 1950s and is known for his essays and critics on the new generation and revolt in America. This piece is taken from his essay “The Making of the Counterculture” written between 1967 and 1969 for BBC and it emphasizes the new attitude of the youth. His essay centers on how the subsequent wars and the terrorizing McCarthy years became reasons for the breakdown of trust and communication between the youth and their elders.

In his collection of essays, Professor Emeritus of History Theodore Roszak elaborated on the counterculture of the 1960s and according to Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, he popularized the term when it was “on its way to becoming a term referring to all 1960s-era political, social, or cultural dissent,

encompassing any action from smoking pot at a rock concert to offing a cop (5). Emphasizing how this one term counterculture encompasses a broad range of feelings, ways of life and activities in the cultural field is essential in terms of interpreting the later reflections on the artistic field. Namely, I should emphasize that not only Dylan's songs became symbols for the countercultural activity in the campuses, he was also able to give voice to the ongoing change of wind.

### **3.2 Dylan Steps into the Greenwich Village**

Although many reflections of the counterculture appeared in various parts of the world, such as the UK, or within America's Venice Beach and San Francisco, I shall here focus on the Greenwich Village in New York considering the significance it played during Dylan's early career after he arrived in what could be described as the enclave of bohemia. Greenwich Village was important in the way it became a gathering-place for many people who dissented from the mainstream culture, from the Beat writers to the folk singers of the time. For people who had witnessed the social and moral pressure of McCarthy years, the discrimination and humiliation towards certain ethnic, racial or LGBT groups, brought about an alternative lifestyle in which they could channel their creative energies into production in various ways. Significant journalists, novelists and cultural commentators including Norman Mailer founded an alternative newsweek "The Village Voice" where they published works of Ezra Pound, E.E. Cummings, Allen Ginsberg as well as commenting on national politics and art reviews. Although their existence itself was a resistance to the authority and dominant culture, they contributed to a new understanding of what artistic or intellectual production could offer.

Born in 1941 as Robert Allen Zimmerman, Bob Dylan, was only nineteen years old when he came to the Village from Duluth, Minnesota with a guitar and

little money. By then, many artists, writers, the Beats, musicians had gathered there having formed an unorthodox way of living and producing in their own theatres, jazz and folk clubs, coffeehouses and gay communities. According to the journalist of the Guardian Richard Williams, “Bob Dylan had appeared in Greenwich Village ..., a 19-year-old from Minnesota who infused the influences of dust-bowl ballads and delta blues with a restless energy, his urchin charisma buttressed by the beguiling but almost entirely fabricated personal mythology with which he distanced himself from his comfortable, middle-class Jewish family.”<sup>7</sup>

It was the year 1961 when he stepped in the Village and he was lucky to have encountered a scene to be fed by. It was thanks to this atmosphere that he had the opportunity to gain a broader perspective of folk music as well as literature and poetry. One can track his arrival in the Greenwich scene and notice the popularity of folk music there in the song “Talkin’ New York” in his first album:

After a rocking, reeling, rolling ride  
I landed up on the downtown side:  
Greenwich Village.  
I walked down there and ended up  
In one of them coffee-houses on the block  
Got on the stage to sing and play  
Man there said, Come back some other day  
You sound like a hillbilly  
We want folksingers here  
Well, I got a harmonica job begun to play  
Blowing my lungs out for a dolar a day.

As a great observer of his times, he started playing in the Village coffee

---

<sup>7</sup> Richard Williams provides an overall analysis of his early career, see: Williams, Richard. “Bob Dylan and the Subterranean Homesick Blues revolution.” *Guardian*, 13 Jan. 2015, [www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jan/13/bob-dylan-subterranean-homesick-blues-50th-anniversary](http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jan/13/bob-dylan-subterranean-homesick-blues-50th-anniversary).

houses the Gaslight Club and the Cafe Wha? on MacDougal Street which played an important role in bringing the Village's bohemian and artistic fame. Some of the musicians who had inspired him were also there playing such as Dave Van Ronk, who was the king of the street (Dylan, *Chronicles* 16). He was a careful listener and observer of his surroundings and played a lot of Woody Guthrie songs, whom he admired. According to the journalist Guilbert Gates, he "became enamored of Woody Guthrie, even imitating Guthrie's Oklahoma twang." He himself clarifies Guthrie's importance for him in his memoir *Chronicles* contemplating on the time he arrived in the Village: "I was there to find singers, the ones I'd heard on record –Dave Van Ronk, Peggy Seeger, Ed McCurdy, Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, Josh White, The New Lost City Ramblers, Reverend Gary Davis and a bunch of others –most of all to find Woody Guthrie (9). To him, Guthrie was "the true voice of the American spirit" (99). However, he was soon to be noticed with his distinctive and unique way of singing and songwriting.

### 3.3 Early Influences

When we take into consideration the atmosphere in which Bob Dylan stepped in Greenwich Village with Woody Guthrie in his mind, we should know that he felt at home there.<sup>8</sup> There were a lot of places for him to play and it meant a lot to the young boy who had left his home in pursuit of music. He had read the Beat writers and was influenced by their life styles as well as literature. He was soon to find Beat writers focusing their energy that reached its height in the 1950s in the clubs of Greenwich Village. Moreover, just a few hundred metres away from the lively MacDougal Street stood the Washington Square with all its appeal for the

---

<sup>8</sup>"No Direction Home", 2005 documentary film by Martin Scorsese about Bob Dylan provides extensive information with regards to his life and works.

folk musicians. In fact, by the early 1950s, Sundays in Washington Square had become the focus for folk-music enthusiasts from around the city. As the Beat scene gradually was disappearing, the folk musicians started to become more visible (Wilentz). This gatherings included Pete Seeger and his wife, Woody Guthrie's acolyte Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Dave Van Ronk and many more musicians whom Dylan attentively listened to. In order to grasp the significance of his songs which I shall analyse in the last chapter, we should focus on the early influences on his journey.

### **3.3.1. The Beat Scene**

According to Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle the Beats were the “first named set of cultural dissidents to be associated with this critique” of America's postwar triumphalism with their vigorous denunciation of cold war militarism, anticommunist demagoguery, racial segregation, social regimentation, and rampant, near-orgiastic consumerism... that adherents of the 1960s counterculture would echo and amplify (8). Not only was Dylan influenced by their attitude, but also the close relationship between the key figures had an impact on his poetic style in the following years.

The writers of the Beat Generation criticized conformism, consumerism and materialism of the late 1950s and started to explore experimental ways of living by travelling to escape from what they criticized. These anti-establishment figures who mainly gathered in Greenwich Village did not desire anything other people worked to get for their houses or families. They were in pursuit of spirituality which they thought was absent in the States. According to David Halberstam,

They were the first to protest what they considered to be the blandness, conformity, and lack of serious social and cultural purpose in middle-class life in America. If much of the rest of the nation was enthusiastically joining the great migration to the suburbs, they consciously rejected this new life of middle-class affluence and were creating a new, alternative life-style; they were the pioneers of what would eventually become the counterculture. If other young people of their generation gloried in getting married, having children, owning property and cars, socializing with neighbors much like themselves, these young men and women saw suburbia as a prison. They wanted no future of guaranteed pensions but instead sought freedom –freedom to pick up and go across the country at a moment's notice, if they so chose. They saw themselves as poets in a land of philistines, men seeking spiritual destinies than material ones. (Halberstam 295)

The two important and influential figures who were at the core of this generation were Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. These writers who met in Columbia University around 1947 were questioning the ethics of war and the grounds of American society's conformity following the end of the Second World War. To understand better why they were against the social norms that prevailed in America, we should examine the characteristics of the generation closely. Allen Ginsberg defines them, the Beat spirit, as:

Spiritual liberation, sexual "revolution" or "liberation," i.e., gay liberation, somewhat catalyzing women's liberation, black liberation, Gray Panther activism. Liberation of the word from censorship. Demystification and/or decriminalization of some laws against marijuana and other drugs. The evolution of rhythm and blues into rock and roll as a high art form, as evidenced by the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and other popular musicians influenced in the later fifties and sixties by Beat generation poets' and writers' works. The spread of ecological consciousness..., Opposition to the military-industrial machine civilization... Attention to what Kerouac

called... a "second religiousness" developing within an advanced civilization. Return to an appreciation of idiosyncrasy as against state regimentation. Respect for land and indigenous peoples and creatures, as proclaimed by Kerouac in his slogan from *On the Road* "The Earth is an Indian thing."

The Beats took a stand against the social norms of mainstream society by defining their own values which emphasized liberation of mind and body in every possible way. They were not comfortable with their nation because what they saw was a military-industrial machine civilization in America. However, society was not able to accept them as they were and upon careful examination of the era, it is possible to see that the media struggled to infamize their life styles. For example, in a Reader's Digest article condensed from Life in 1960, the author Paul O'Neill claims that they were a terrible example of postwar disillusionment and restlessness and that they were a bunch of outcasts: "There they prance and gesture, living in poverty (in the Age of Supermarkets), rejecting the goodies of the suburbs (in the Age of Togetherness), babbling of marijuana and mescaline (in the Age of Vic Tanny), and howling about their misshapen souls." In many publications and on TV, these writers were blamed to be selfish, irresponsible romantics or even outcasts who denounced other people's values to justify their desire for idleness in the name of freedom. This was in fact due to an underlying suspicion of their own lifestyles because in each case, the underlying fear was the same. They were asking themselves this question: "If the Beats are right, we and all we strive for are nothing at all" (Maynard, 21). Maynard's judgment shows that their attitude made people question their own values and lives.

It is known that Bob Dylan liked *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac, but his early encounter with the Beats starts with him being handed Jack Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues* and his fascination by that poem, as Ginsberg claimed (Wilentz). This was way before he started to sing in Greenwich Village. He recalls in *No Direction Home* that he "felt fitted to that line" by Kerouac: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to

be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing.” According to Guilbert Gates, he was inspired by this accomplished Beat writer to such a degree that he called one of his most poetic songs *Desolation Row* as a reference to Kerouac’s book *Desolation Angels*. He picked some lines in the song from that book and when asked at a press conference in December, 1965 about the location of “Desolation Row,” Dylan replied, “Oh, that’s someplace in Mexico,” where parts of “Desolation Angels” also take place.

However, it was not only Jack Kerouac who inspired Bob Dylan within the bohemian Beat scene in the Greenwich Village. According to historian Sean Wilentz, “Dylan’s involvement with the writings of Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and the rest of the Beat generation is nearly as essential to Dylan’s biography as his immersion in rock and roll, rhythm and blues, and then Woody Guthrie.” Later in 1985, he recalls the time he spent within the Beat figures: “I came out of the wilderness and just naturally fell in with the Beat scene, the bohemian, Be Bop crowd, it was all pretty much connected. It was Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso, Ferlinghetti ... I got in at the tail end of that and it was magic ... it had just as big an impact on me as Elvis Presley” (qtd. in Purdy).

As he points out, we should take into consideration, while considering him the poet and performer of the 1960s, his close relationship with the Beat writers and the influence of Beat literature on his works. Nonetheless, although they were the first to challenge the pre-established opinions to be heard in the mainstream culture, they were a part of a wider change of beliefs/lifestyles in America. However, the disaffiliation of the new generation was not only limited to the Beat writers and we should think of relevant groups as well. As Rexroth stated,

The present revolt of youth, the new radicalism, the democratization of the avant-garde, are all aspects of a worldwide revolution in the very foundations of culture, basic changes in ways of living, the emergence of a fundamentally new civilization.”

Dylan was influenced by the stance the Beat figures took, he also was in the middle of a full scale change of living among the countercultural activity. For instance, he was a regular at The Factory which was then Andy Warhol's New York City studio. The Factory was a significant place for Dylan because it not only criticized mainstream and conservative American values with the artworks of Warhol and other regulars, but it also brought together many people by whom Dylan was inspired including the poet Allen Ginsberg. The place became one of the trendsetters of subculture of its time. Both the Beat writings and his involvement in the Factory were very important in his early songs when Dylan too was a countercultural figure and voice of the new generation.

Moreover, we should not only consider the written works of the Beats, but also the performance of poetry in the Village. Dylan states,

I didn't start writing poetry until I was out of high school. I was 18 or so when I discovered Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Phillip Whalen, Frank O'Hara, and those guys. Then I went back and started reading the French guys, Rimbaud and Francois Villon; I started putting tunes to their poems. There used to be a folk music scene and jazz clubs just about every place. The two scenes were very much connected, where the poets would read to a small combo, so I was close up to that for a while. My songs were influenced not so much by poetry on the page but by poetry being recited by the poets who recited poems with jazz bands. (qtd. in Cohen)

All in all, the Beat writers, their written works, and poetry performances in Greenwich Village are very important in terms of interpreting Dylan's songs. Not only did he think in the same way with them about the crazy materialist society which was run by self-seeking leaders and reflected similar themes such as opposition to war, freedom of individual, shattered dreams, equality for different races and origins, but also he incorporated the stream of consciousness that was seen in their poetry readings into his songs. As seen in his song *Gates of Eden*, he learned the cut-up technique from the Beat writer William Burroughs and pieced

together words that echoed back other meanings in an elevated style which brought a new self-expression into the world of singing. He also leaned towards the tenderness of the Beat Generation writers and reflected it as the eloquent style of his protest lyrics.

### **3.3.2. The Folk Revival in America**

Back in his hometown Duluth, Minnesota, when he was a young boy, Dylan found a mahogany radio and a country record by Hank Williams, who was then a significant singer and songwriter. Later on, as he goes on to a trip down memory lane in *No Direction Home*, he admits to having been taken with the sound of that record insomuch that he had a feeling like he was somebody else, he was not even born to the right parents.” Moreover, he goes on to reflect back on those times by recalling hearing Muddy Waters who is now considered the father of the Chicago blues and as a figure of speech, Dylan says that “it was like the sound of God to me.” During his school years, he listened to rock n roll as well and thought that it was somewhat similar to the country style but rejected by the school administration when he staged a performance of these types of music. He explains in *No Direction Home* that country, rock n roll and folk music was life to him. Although the mainstream audience was not at all ready to be shaken but was used to bland and clean music such as “How Much is That Doggie in the Window?”, as have stated, the times were changing and as fear and paranoia of wars and nuclear experiments spread across the country, the taste of art was soon to change and find its own way of piecing dissenting people together. Folk music, especially during the ‘60s, was one of the most popular music among the youth and played an important role in Dylan’s early career.

With his long remembered motto on his guitar “This machine kills fascists”, his music portraying the ‘30s and ‘40s economical and social injustices in America, and unyielding anti-capitalist attitude, Woody Guthrie was a

significant mentor for Bob Dylan. He thought Guthrie's songs "had the infinite sweep of humanity in them" and he listened to his sound in trance and felt like he had found himself" (Chronicles, 244-245). He was deeply impressed by what he describes as Guthrie's "fierce poetic soul" (245) and admits to Scorsese in *No Direction Home* having identified with Guthrie's biography *Bound for Glory* more than he did with Kerouac's *On the Road*. To have a better understanding of the lyrics to the protest songs in his following albums, it is important to realise Guthrie's connection to the leftist folk movement together with Lead Belly, Pete Seeger and their criticism of mass production of suburbs and the consumerist and monotonous lifestyles. Although written by Malvina Reynolds, the song "Little Boxes" popularised by Pete Seeger is a good example of this line of thought which mocks the affluent but monotonous lives and consumerist culture of the middle class suburbia.<sup>9</sup>

Although folk music had long been a part of American culture, the counterculture movements of the '60s and college activism gave folk songs a new meaning. The Civil Rights Movement, as I have explained, was an important accelerator for the countercultural activity and many folk songs centering on current disappointments such as the corruption of politics with references to Vietnam War, Cuban Missile Crisis or discrimination against certain groups of people captured the attention of the audience. In fact, protest songs had been a part of American music for a long time, at times complementing one another and influencing social and political change. Their coming into the picture usually marks a significant event such as the World War Two, the Cold War and the nuclear arms race, and inequality between people of different origins and backgrounds which was the case during the 1960s. Socially conscious folk songs brought like-minded people together for a common cause and provided both the performer and audience a space where they could express themselves.

---

<sup>9</sup>The song is still relevant and popular with the famous lyrics criticizing the wealthy, monotonous and meaningless lives of people. "Little boxes made of ticky tacky" is used as a metaphor suggesting that this monotony makes their lives unqualified as it is "just the same" for everybody.

During the turbulent early 1960s, there were many students who dropped out of college opting in favor of getting in direct contact with people rather than having a formal education within the boundaries of campuses. Dylan, too, never attended his courses at the university, having been busy with writing songs and singing all night and sleeping during the day as many of his peers did. “The early sixties were a period of optimistic protest and moral witness; folk music was a perfect expression of these years, a time when many youths simplistically expected sincerity and commitment to change the world” (Miller, 239). With the release of his -though not the first- second album in 1963, Bob Dylan became one of the most influential figures in the folk arena. Since the late 1950s, college campuses were playing an important part in social change and many students and other people with dissenting opinions had found new ways of resisting to various political and social issues. Scholar Paul Buhle explains the popularity of Dylan and Joan Baez on campuses, “... meanwhile, came talents like Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, suddenly popular on campuses and in urban clubs for the young and self-consciously hip” (404).

Though experimenting on different musical forms during his teens, as a young person who has carefully examined Alan Lomax’s research on folk songs,<sup>10</sup> Dylan’s first real guide into folk music was Odetta. Odetta was then a civil-rights campaigner who had influenced many of the protesters as well as the musicians and as Martin Luther King called her she was “the queen of folk music”. Since the 1940s, folk music was thriving and during the fifties and sixties, its popularity was significantly on the rise. Paul Buhle claims that the Cold War had a severe effect on the folk revival but he remarks that Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly and Paul Robeson were the significant key figures in the thriving of folk songs (403). Greil Marcus adds Pete Seeger to the list and gives his credit by announcing him “the paragon of the folk revival, the man who represented all of its compassion and

---

<sup>10</sup>Alan Lomax is a well-known American ethnomusicologist known for his research on folk music for its promotion and appreciation.

nobility, who as the son of the revered folk scholar Charles Seeger embodied a whole, people's enactment of an American folk century (11).

Although he started off his expedition as a folk singer and was profoundly influenced by folk singers, he was not a mere folk musician in the traditional sense. He did not really have a political stance like many folk musicians who were also activists during the Civil Rights Movement but succeeded in catching the attention of his audience with comparably more artistic protest songs. As I have mentioned, his songs brought a literary quality to the music. To Ginsberg, "He had declared his independence of politics because he didn't want to be a political puppet or feel obligated to take a stand all the time. He was above and beyond politics in an interesting way." To him, Dylan's songs were "an answering call or response to the kind of American prophecy that Kerouac had continued from Walt Whitman" (Wilentz). He was, in fact, different from other traditional folk singers considering they did not like Dylan's approach at all as "he put it into more exuberant affection than sober respect" (Dave 14).

Though we know that he was not really included in the leftist activism and did not sing like the traditional folk musicians, he loved folk music. He expresses his fascination by what is known as the most widespread folk song of the English language Barbara Allen: "The folk songs showed me the way. They showed me that songs can say somethin' human. Without Barbara Allen, there'd be no Girl From The North Country" (qtd. in Dave 14). To him, folk music was not simple and did not only mean the political/protest concerns of the time but was "weird, full of legend, myth, Bible and ghosts" (14). That he was both influenced by poetry and imagery as well as folk music means his lyrics are fed by many of these influences. To the historian Robert Cantwell, "the folk revival made the romantic claim of folk culture –oral, immediate, traditional, idiomatic, communal, a culture of characters, of rights, obligations, and beliefs, against a centrist, specialist, impersonal, technocratic culture, a culture of types, functions, jobs, and goals" (qtd. in Marcus 20). Moreover, "The folk revival was part of something much bigger, more dangerous, and more important: the civil rights movement"

(Marcus 22).

So, Dylan's songs portrayed American life and were against any type of discrimination or militarism just like the protest folk songs of their time that proliferated after the Second World War and Cold War, but Dylan was able to pour poetic references and imagery into the material as well. It is possible to claim that his interest in life was greater than any political party or organization and with his finger-pointing songs, he was able to show what was happening in America beyond the outwardly apparent. Influenced by both poetry, poetry performances at the Six Gallery Reading by the Beat poets, folk musicians, their protest stance against American political leaders and the way society were during the mentioned years, he was able to write his lyrics that captured the new generation and gain the status of the troubadour of the Village.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BOB DYLAN: SELECTED SONGS

While centering his essay on the generation gap and the newly arising counterculture, Kenneth Rexroth makes a point of the change in literature within the dynamics of the tumultuous late '50s and '60s in *The Making of the Counterculture*:

The most significant, if not the best by older critical standards, literature in America today is to be found, not in books, or even in the established literary magazines, but in poetry readings, in mimeographed broadsides, in lyrics for rock groups, in protest songs - in direct audience relationships of the sort that prevailed at the very beginnings of literature.

Considering Rexroth's approach, I will take his lyrics as poems responding to his time. His lyrics reflected the mood of this era with their political and social stance insomuch that he stood out among other folk singers of his time and soon started to be called "the voice of a generation." Therefore, in this chapter, I aim to examine closely Dylan's songs through his early career, specifically between the years 1962 and 1964, in the context of both his interest in the traditional musical canon, focusing on his anti-war and pro-black songs, as a figure from the counterculture movement and the literary quality he brought to the songs thus changing "our idea of what poetry can be and how it can work," as Nobel Committee suggested.

Here, I shall focus on the songs that carry significance in his career and are also important in his becoming the spokesman of a generation. However, apart from these ones, one can give examples of other important and beautiful songs which Dylan wrote such as *When the Ship Comes in* which appeared in his third album in 1964. "Written in 1963, it was inspired by the times. The lyric however

is a blend of Bible references and childlike imagination, revealing that Dylan, albeit having sympathy for the social issues of the day, was mostly absorbed in the folk music tradition, symbolist literature abounding with imagery, and biblical stories” (Procházková 50). The song, in fact, was embraced by the audience and Dylan, together with Joan Baez, sang it during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 where Martin Luther King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. However, though he didn’t claim himself to be a political figure, we now understand from the lyrics to his songs that he was greatly influenced by the Civil Rights and the effects of ongoing war on individuals and society.

In fact, I chose to analyze certain lyrics by Dylan that dealt with the shifts in society, specifically the ones that pointed the finger at the racial tensions such as *The Death of Emmett Till* and *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*. Though I didn’t focus in the chapter, *Oxford Town* is another example of his interest in the racial segregation and discrimination as it was inspired at a time when a black student was, for the first time in history, admitted to the University of Mississippi in 1962. Dylan doesn’t mention his name but portrays the common circumstances “He come in to the door, he couldn’t get in / All because of the color of his skin.” When one looks at *With God on our Side*, one can see that it confronts the US with what have also happened throughout its history when the leaders were proud of their country. It deals with the war on Native Americans, casualties after the Spanish-American War, Civil War, First and Second World Wars, the hatred towards the Russians, nuclear arms race and questions the rightfulness of many past incidents and ideologies.

In addition, I have looked at *John Brown, Let me Die in My Footsteps*, *Blowin’ in the Wind*, *Masters of War* as important call outs to value human life and end the wars. I’ve included *Only a Pawn in Their Game* to show how he was able to determine that what they criticized was actually directly associated with how the country was governed. Moreover, with songs like *A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall*, *The Times They Are A-Changin’* and *Chimes of Freedom*, I tried to explain Dylan’s awareness of the generation gap and the new attitude of the

generation as opposed to the old values and ways of life of their elders. Many of his songs' patterns are non-repetitive and without a chorus. Often, he repeats only one or two sentence at the end of each verse as we can exemplify in *The Times They Are a-Changing* and *With God on our Side* and often the melody is un-rhythmical, almost like a speech which cannot be accompanied as can be seen in *John Brown* or the *Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*.

Dylan's first album that was released in 1962 was composed of traditional folk songs or old blues compositions. As I have carefully examined until this point, he had greatly absorbed the musical culture of the era; from the country, blues and rock'n roll songs to the great folk music performed in the Village. In fact, Dave Van Ronk, famous musician in the Village, explains in the *No Direction Home* how Bob Dylan asked him for the arrangement of "House of the Risin' Sun" in his first album. There are only two original songs of Dylan one of which tells the story of his arrival in New York "Talkin' New York" and "Song to Woody" which is mostly remembered as his tribute to Woody Guthrie as the song is for him and is also based on his composition "1913 Massacre" although he might have adapted it from an anonymous folk song. However, Dylan had entered into the studio and played a lot of songs some of which weren't included in the record.

#### **4.1. Anti-War Songs:**

##### **4.1.1. John Brown**

Authored and composed by Dylan in 1962, John Brown is an anti-war song which portrays the traumas of war through the story of a mother and son named John Brown who during the course of the song goes to and comes back from the war. As John Brown gets ready to fight in a foreign land for his country, his mother is proud and excited to display the medals he will bring when he returns home. As I have explained in the *Towards the Tumultuous Sixties*, the

government and mass media had worked hand in hand in spreading the war propaganda among the citizens and as people saw the courageous American soldier who fought for the well-being of his country and fellow citizens, they did not need to question more and sent their sons off to the war proudly. However, as I have said, things were changing and the disappointment of the new generation with the politics of their elders was soon to emerge as these young people returned from war to their homes with shattered dreams.

If we divide the twelve-versed song structure into two sections, the second one, starting with the seventh stanza, is the *climactic moment* of the song. It recounts the return of the son to his homeland, blinded, injured, and changed to such a degree that her mother cannot even recognize his face. This plot twist between the two sections brings our minds what the Greek called *peripeteia*, namely, the reversal point of the things. While the mother waits for him proudly after getting the news of his returning, she does not imagine finding her son in that wretched state. However, what she comes to find is an unrecognizable man who has lost both his physical abilities and hopes at war. He tells the horror of the war scene and the absurdity of fighting with other people: “But the thing that scared me most was when my enemy came close / And I saw that his face looked just like mine”. The disillusionment that follows is deeper. He realizes how society is manipulated by the self-interests of the leaders who send them to the war as he feels like “a puppet in a play”. He now has nothing to do with the beliefs of his elders and he drops his medals down into her mother’s hands as she watches in terror.

However much it was written as the story of John Brown and his mother; that it might be one of the most common names in American hints us that the storyline is, in fact, similar to what many young people who were sent off to war experienced. Dylan is very good at catching the spirit of his times and through this specific story, he is able to deliver the breakdown of the communication between the generations and unreliability of politics. To Dylan, the whole scene can be

described as “the good old-fashioned war”. By explicitly portraying the pain left from the war scene, he reflects on the traumas of his era.

Although this song was not included in any official release of Bob Dylan, it appeared in the album *Broadside Ballads vol. 1* in 1963 with the pseudonym of Blind Boy Grunt. Other folk singers, who were known for their songs about equality, human rights and etc. such as Pete Seeger and Phil Ochs were also included in the album. *John Brown* is a significant song not only because of its chronological and in detail narration just like the great poet Homer did in his life-scene narrations, but also the powerful commentary on the collapse of the illusion created by the war propaganda. It seems to foreshadow the massive upheavals that were soon to follow.

#### **4.1.2. Let Me Die in My Footsteps**

Though it did not appear as planned in his second album “The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan,” Dylan wrote another protest song in 1962. He neither was a political figure nor wanted to be one but was splendidly successful at reflecting the traumas of a generation and thus catching the attention. This song, *Let Me Die in My Footsteps* is a great example of his anti-war songs with a profoundly human approach where he instead of shouting out anti-war slogans, delicately touches upon the soul with his beautiful lyrics such as “There’s been rumors of war and wars that have been / The meaning of life has been lost in the wind”.

The song was based on an old Roy Acuff ballad and was inspired by the fallout shelter craze that had blossomed out of the Cold War (Chronicles 270). Moreover, he goes on to explain that this song was both personal and social in that everybody was affected by the fear and paranoia atmosphere, getting suspicious of their neighbors who might have shelters whereas you they not have one and instead of communists, people saw mine owners more of an enemy at the time.

(271) According to Mike Marqusee, “the song is a marvelously determined, fresh-faced refusal to take part in the fraud of civil defense and the larger insanity of the nuclear weapons race” (56). Dylan points out that this craze made people miss the significance of human life: “And some people thinkin’ that the end is close by/ ’Stead of learnin’ to live they are learnin’ to die”. In addition, he thinks that war and fear is used by the leaders to control the society: “There’s always been people that have to cause fear/ They’ve been talking of the war now for many long years.” His most anti-militarist statements are to be seen towards the end of the song: “If I had rubies and riches and crowns/ I’d buy the whole world and change things around/ I’d throw all the guns and the tanks in the sea / For they are mistakes of a past history”.

Although it wasn’t released in his official albums, it appeared in 1963 on *The Broadside Ballads, Vol. 1*, with Dylan’s name “Blind Boy Grunt”. The lyrics, however, were published one year ago in 1962 as “I Will Not Go Down Under the Ground”. The liner notes to this album included commentary on this song:

[This is] Bob Dylan's blunt answer to the yawping of Madison Avenue Pitchmen trying to sell fallout shelters. He shines a light into the murky darkness of our age and shows us in one bright instant what it might have taken a less impatient philosopher a lifetime to discover: namely that instead of learning to live, we are learning to die. What he says was never more evident than in the recent crisis over Cuba, when millions of Americans sought desperately to think of some dignified way to meet death in an obscene atomic holocaust.”

### 4.1.3. Masters of War

Quite different from his naïve songs such as *Blowin' in the Wind*, *Masters of War* openly portrays the brutality of war and its effects on the individual. Written in 1963 and released in “The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan”, the song explains how government controls people: “You play with my world / Like it’s your little toy” and criticizes leaders for being coward themselves who “build the death planes / you that build the big bombs” but “hide behind walls / hide behind desks” and “hide from my eyes / when the fast bullets fly”. The song is fiercely beautiful and poetic as well as political and it has made huge impact on the protesters of the time. It served as a moral manifesto of the anti-war generation to their elders and leaders who “have thrown the worst fear/ that can ever be hurled / fear to bring children / into the world”. He does not specify but the protest is probably directed against the Cold War and mass weapons surrounding the war atmosphere and how little the government pays regard to the number of deaths and the paranoia/fear caused by the war.

Peter Wood links the popularity of *Masters of War* to a new form of self-expression which he called “New Anger”. To him, Bob Dylan sings New Anger in a “creative and powerful” way. He claims that the emergence of this expressive form is connected to the state of affairs after 1945. In his words, “New Anger emerged from the cultural discontents in the United States following World War II. Among its original ingredients were the popularization of Freudian views about the supposed psychic dangers of repressing anger; the beatnik ethos of personal authenticity to be achieved at the expense of violating repressive social convention; the formative stages of the civil rights movement and the women’s rights movement, both of which urged passive sufferers of injustice to defy repressive customs and laws; and the emergence of rock ‘n’ roll as a more direct and uninhibited form of emotional expression” (316).

The song indeed brings into light the indignation of the youth towards the ongoing war and how it affects the society. However, one should also note that the

needful spirit of the '60s was both impressed by the clear anger of the lyrics with death-wish but also by the metaphoric lyricism with references to “Judas of old” who lied just like the current politicians, the title *Masters of War*, being itself a reference to war profiteers and people who earn money out of war business at the expense of many lives. The narrator’s powerful words revealing the traumas of a generation are in a sense the conscious of the youth who are in pursuit of a better and more meaningful future for themselves and their children.

## **4.2. Pro-Civil Rights Songs:**

### **4.2.1. The Death of Emmett Till**

Besides the songs on his eponymous first album, he wrote a folk ballad on Len Chandler’s music and performed it live on a radio show of Cynthia Gooding on March 1962. This song, *The Death of Emmett Till*, can actually be considered his first protest song in which he cries for justice in his own words. The song should be thought in relation to the time where Civil Rights movement was speeding and many people were protesting against discrimination. Moreover, although Dylan was not a political figure, he was influenced by the countercultural activity going on in the Village and around campuses and streets and wrote this pro-black song. Moreover, his early songs should not be thought apart from the protest folk culture which shaped his career to a great extent until 1965. One can notice that his early ballads are protest folk ballad influenced.

The song tells the real story of a fourteen year old boy called Emmett Till who was tortured to death in Mississippi after being abducted by two white men and the acquittal of his murderers by an all-white jury in the court. “Twas down in Mississippi not so long ago / When a young boy from Chicago town stepped through a Southern door / This boy’s dreadful tragedy I can still remember well / The color of his skin was black and his name was Emmett Till,” starts the song, giving the hearers the clue that the racial discrimination is not an issue of bygone

days. It also hints at how south of America was less tolerant of difference and way more biased towards black people. One of the most important parts of this tragic story is that Dylan alludes to the death of justice by claiming that men from the jury helped the brothers commit the crime. He portrays a collective malevolence saying that “this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind”. The song straightly points out to the brutality of Jim Crow laws and racial segregation in America with direct references to “Jim Crow southern sea” and “ghost-robed Ku-Klux-Klan”.

The song stands among others as an open letter to people who prefer to stay put in the face of discrimination encouraging them to change their attitude and speak up in order to “make this great land of ours a greater place to live”. With specific references to politics of segregation and an open portrayal of the injustice, *The Death of Emmett Till* might be considered one of his most explicitly protest songs. The host Cynthia Gooding is left speechless after his performance and says that it was “one of the greatest contemporary ballads” she’s ever heard. Considering Dylan was influenced by folk music and folk ballad verse early his career, one can see how he was able to set to music “one of the greatest contemporary ballads” as the host said.

#### **4.2.2. Blowin’ in The Wind**

When we look at Dylan’s second official album “The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan”, we notice his famous song *Blowing in The Wind*. Rodnitzky describes the song as “pacifist and pro-civil rights” (107). With its release in 1963, the song became the anthem of Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. It is known that Dylan adapted the song from an old African-American spiritual *No More Auction Block*. Perhaps that the song was so deeply embraced by many black and anti-militarist people at the time and later could be explained with its rhetoric, to the

point questions. The song clearly has a political attitude, if not altogether elaborated with specific references, and captures each individual listener with its alluring melody. Having become an anti-war top song during its time, it can be said that it refers to blacks who are not yet free in the eyes of many Americans: “Yes, how many years can some people exist / Before they’re allowed to be free?” and the militaristic approach of the United States: “Yes, how many deaths will it take till he knows/ That too many people have died?”

According to Michael Gray, the lyrics are not only important for their reference to freedom and call to end the war but also for their incorporation of Biblical rhetoric into Dylan’s own words. In the New Testament founded upon a text from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel, “The word of the Lord also came unto me, saying, Son of Man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not...” (64) In Dylan’s mind, the statement is turned into “Yes, how many ears must one man have/ Before he can hear people cry? And “Yes, how many times can a man turn his head/ Pretending he just doesn’t see?” One can also interpret these lines as the anger towards American society who ignore the reality and live in their comfortable houses, consuming more every day but closing their eyes to other people.

Though not confirmed by Dylan later, these lines were taken as a reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis at the time. However, with its elevated style which stretches the boundaries of human imagination, its unanswered questions, it carries a universal meaning. According to Wood, naming the possibilities to the song’s question such as the answer being the socialist revolution or divine intervention would be to limit the song in which “unspecified indignation actually works” (315).

### 4.2.3. The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll

*The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll* is another example of Dylan's pro-black songs in which he portrays the unfair treatment to people of different races. Like the case of Emmett Till, it is a true story of an African-American maid in Baltimore who was killed by William "Billy" Zanzinger in 1963. The man is born to "rich wealthy parents who provide and protect him" and they have "a tobacco farm of six hundred acres". Moreover, they have "high office relations in the politics of Maryland". Thanks to all of these, they slide his deed over and he only gets a six-month sentence. The third verse is important in that it solely dwells upon the life of the fifty-one year old maid Hattie Carroll: "Who carried the dishes and took out the garbage / And never sat once at the head of the table...And she never done nothing to William Zanzinger". So, we learn that there is no way to justify her death and there aren't any words he can defend himself. It is an unjust death of a yet another black person. Dylan, ironically, touches upon the sight in the courtroom where "the judge pounded his gavel / To show that all's equal and that the courts are on the level / And that the strings in the books ain't pulled and persuaded / And that even the nobles get properly handled". Obviously, this is not the situation considering he almost got away with the murder.

Moreover, the poem is a cry for justice and to awaken the conscious of all the people in the country. When the song was released in his third album in 1964, some parts of America were not yet equal in treatment of black people and such was the case in their town Charles Country, Maryland where public facilities were segregated by race. Dylan, touching upon the racial segregation, in fact, desires to awaken people's minds so that the slave mentality ends. It is also the un-rhythmical melody and the use of descriptive narration along with the powerful commentary on the racial tensions and inequality during the time that gives the

song its dramatic effect. Also, through his lines, Hattie Carroll who was among the list of victims of racial violence is not forgotten.

Dylan narrates his writing of these lyrics together with a few of his other important ones in *Chronicles*: Dylan went to the Theatre de Lys where Suze worked behind the scene of a presentation of songs written by poet-playwright Bertold Brecht and musician Kurt Weill and he was deeply influenced by the intensity of the songs he heard there. One of them, *A Ship the Black Freighter*, was so impressive for him that it stuck in his mind throughout the years. The singer was dressed up as a scrubbing lady and sang the story of a maid imagining herself in a situation to avenge the hostility she encountered in her town. Dylan decided to analyze why the song left such a profound effect on him: “I took the song apart and unzipped it –it was the form, the free verse association, the structure and disregard for the known certainty of melodic patterns to make it seriously matter, give it its cutting edge. It also had the ideal chorus for the lyrics” (275-276). He adds to that,

“In a few years’ time, I’d write and sing songs like It’s Alright Ma (I’m Only Bleeding), Mr. Tambourine Man, Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll, Who Killed Davey Moore, Only a Pawn in Their Game, A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” and some others like that. If I hadn’t gone to the Theatre de Lys and heard the ballad Pirate Jenny, it might not have dawned on me to write them, that songs like these could be written” (287)

At the end of each verse, he cries: “Take the rag away from your face / Now ain’t the time for your tears”. These powerful lines reflect his idea that the struggle is not yet over but the shifting sound at the end when William Zanzinger only gets a six month sentence, he harshly criticizes “who philosophize disgrace and criticize all fears” saying that “bury the rag deep in your face / For now’s the time for your tears”. This section which summarizes the injustice and hypocrisy is also a metaphor for the sheer carelessness and impudicity of many people in the country.

#### 4.2.4. Only A Pawn in Their Game

Medgar Evers was the first state field secretary of the NAACP, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in Mississippi. Though he is mostly remembered as a civil rights leader, he also was a World War II veteran, a man who served his country. Thanks to his continuous struggle to advance justice for African-American people, Evers became a well-known civil rights leader in the South. However, having become one of the pioneers in the civil rights activities of his time, he and his relatives were always under threat and he was eventually shot to death in 1963. Evers was one of people in NAACP to investigate Emmett Till's case. As Dylan points in *The Death of Emmett Till*, the segregated government offices were not very eager to find and judge the murderers of black people and therefore the NAACP got down to work in this case. Evers and his team were able to bring several witnesses to the court to testify at the 1955 trial of the two white men where they were declared innocent.

Dylan, referring to the assassination of Medgar Evers, suggests that the shooter, "he can't be blamed / He's only a pawn in their game". This song, therefore, not only addresses the racism in the country but also calls for empathy. The discrimination is not only towards the skin color as he criticizes the leaders' attitude towards the poor white men as well: "A South politician preaches to the poor white man, -You got more than the blacks, don't complain. You're better than them, you been born with white skin, they explain". So, it is the world of white and rich people in the US and the shooter is "just a pawn in their game" because "the poor white man's used in the hands of them all like a tool". The poem straightly points out to the fact that the ideology and leaders are to be blamed in what happens in the country because "He's taught in his school / From the start by the rule / That the laws are with him / To protect his white skin / To keep up his hate / So he never thinks straight". However, Dylan emphasizes the significance of Evers, calling him "king" even as he is lowered to be buried.

Dylan was able to sing *Only a Pawn in Their Game* in Greenwood, Mississippi at a voter registration rally where hundreds of black farmers had gathered without smiling as he had given considerable importance to the matter. Gloria Clark, a member of the Mississippi branch of SNCC in Holly Springs said that “It was very compatible with what we were doing at the time” (qtd. in Sheehy and Swiss 48). Although he was later going to evade that term, his appearance there was indeed political.

### **4.3. Songs of the Changing Times:**

#### **4.3.1. A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall**

Among his most celebrated songs is the magnificent song *A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall* whose poetic lines testify to the protest mood and anger of the new generation. Written in 1962 for his second album, the song was quick to become a hit. The opening lines of the song “Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son? Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?” are a good example of folk influence on Dylan as they resemble the opening of the traditional ballad “Lord Randall” known by many folk musicians: “Oh where ha’e ye been, Lord Randall my son? O where ha’e ye been, my handsome young man?” However, the brutal imagery of the lyrics and references to Biblical stories and myths brings us Dylan as influenced both by poets and folk musicians. The symbolic language and enumeration we encounter throughout the lyrics can be said to come from the effects of French symbolism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century exemplified by Arthur Rimbaud. Moreover, the powerful lines of this song stands complementary to the Beat poet Ginsberg’s *Howl* where he brings into the light the darker aspect of America. In this sense, *A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall* is a powerful poem and song which tells the hearers a lot about collapse of American dream.

First of all, when we consider the time it was written, we must remember that it was a period of crisis with Cuba when people felt much closer to death with a nuclear war coming into question. Though he did not accept that it was written as a response to nuclear crisis, he certainly reflected on fears and disappointment of the period on his dark lines. He points out that the young people are sent overseas to fight and experience what they should not: “I’ve been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard”, “I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves around it” symbolizing the greed and violence and implies the lack of confidence in leaders by portraying them power-hungry murderers: “I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin’” commenting on the brutality of the war scene: “I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin’”, “I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children”. Along with the portrayal of the violence of the war scene during the early 1960s, Dylan implies that humanity has lost its connection with what is divine and beautiful. The stanzas are dark with many examples of death, and even the title brings our minds the Great Flood in the Bible where people are punished because they forgot God. Just like Dante’s Hell, people are stuck in this land full of starvation and death and there seems to be no way out. As he says, “white ladder” which symbolizes peace and hope is also “covered with water” and “the poet”, referring to himself who is looking for a way out of this chaos with his art, “died in the gutter”.

The lyrics follow a descriptive path that is always dark and deserted: The pony of the child is dead, a young woman’s body is burning. Moreover, though it is the time of Civil Rights Movement, there is racism and white dominance over the black people: “I met a white man who walked a black dog.” All in all, the dark atmosphere of the song tells the hearer a lot about the condition America was in during the time and probably the success of this song lies in both its being a poetic masterpiece and well-suited reflection on the traumas of the time.

### 4.3.2. The Times They Are A-Changin'

Probably the most well-known song written by Dylan to make him “the voice of a generation” is *The Times They Are A-Changin'* which was the hit song on his third album *The Times They Are A-Changin'* which was released in 1964. As I have explained in the previous chapters, it was a time of upheaval and cultural change for America. It is both a call for people who are yet to realize the generation gap to “not stand in the doorway” and a warning about the “battle outside” which implies the political and social fluctuations of the time. Dylan openly calls out to “writers and critics who prophesize with their pen” emphasizing the significance of the time period they are living “for the loser now will be later to win”. This second verse probably points out to or at least was influenced by the growing Civil Rights Movement considering its emphasis on the change of power balances between the privileged and patronized people. It tells the writers to not rush as “the wheel’s still in spin”, which seems to mean that at the time when this was written, the greatest change was yet to come and politics was still knotty.

Moreover, in the third verse, he addresses politicians “come senators, congressmen” to hear his call about this ongoing change. He warns that “he that gets hurt / Will be he who has stalled” in this battle and in a way implies the corruption of politics and ill-judged administration by claiming that “it’ll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls” by pointing the fingers at them. The beginning of the fourth verse is an apparent call to mothers and fathers whose “old road is rapidly ragin’” to not “criticize what you can’t understand”. This, in fact, demonstrates the generation gap between the mainstream American citizen and their daughters and sons who were protesting the conformism of them and pointing to the real problems in the society. Dylan suggests that “the order is rapidly fadin’” and people must catch up with the current of the day instead of criticizing others. To him, the youth is in pursuit of their own ideals as the times are changing and they are not in the command of their elders any more.

Together the verses speak to the masses now as well as they did during the tumultuous 1960s. Influenced by Scottish ballads, Dylan was able to harmonize the political approach of the youth and their protest mood with his masterfully written lyrics and melody that captured the attention of the audience.

### 4.3.3. Chimes of Freedom

We should but evaluate this song separately compared to the ones we have tried to analyze until this point. The protest lyrics were mostly straightforward and told chronically the story of what happened at the war or how the US was unable to prevent the African American murders and judge the murderers. Many of the songs were un-rhythmic and repeated at the end of each verse the powerful message of the song. As Dylan turned inward in this album *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, he created more vague poems which further disconnected him from the folk and protest movement. *Chimes of Freedom* describes the thoughts and feelings of the poet and his friend as they wait under a doorway as thunder crashes. Therefore, it doesn't focus on a specific event, rather, it shows the poet's regard and solidarity with people who are "abandoned an' forsaken", "the outcast, burnin' constantly at stake", "the deaf an' blind", "the mistreated" and etc. In a sense, the tolling serves as a metaphor to bring people's minds to think about the others who might be living in more severe and less advantageous conditions. It is at that moment of a thunder where everybody's minds are united which Dylan symbolizes as "chimes of freedom".

To Heylin, *Chimes of Freedom* was, just like *Mr. Tambourine Man*, influenced by the symbolism of Arthur Rimbaud (176). Instead of depicting a social reality or a specific event or the aftermath of war, the poem is highly allusive. Written in free verse, it is like a confused mind, mixed in the drowning thunder and lightning which the poet associates with chimes and freedom: "As majestic bells of bolts struck shadows in the sounds / Seeming to be the chimes of

freedom flashing”. As the sky clears up in the end, it seems to bring hope to the “aching ones whose wounds cannot be nursed”, “for the countless confused, accused, misused, strung-out ones an’ worse, “an’ for every hung-up person in the whole wide universe”. Moreover, Tony Attwood compares his style in this poem to Walt Whitman –which, as I explained in *Political Dissidence*, was first done by Allen Ginsberg as regards to Dylan’s style- who was “a transcendentalist inspired by the regenerative powers of Nature”. He is not only capable of carrying a poetic tradition, but also able to give them a new lease of life by turning them into magnificent melodies.

## CONCLUSION

In the Foreword to Braunstein and Doyle's book *Imagine Nation*, Marilyn B. Young asserts that "the Sixties were centrally about the recognition, on the part of an ever-growing number of Americans, that the country in which they thought they lived –peaceful, generous, honorable- did not exist and never had (3).Therefore, these years witnessed massive protests as a result of the dissatisfaction with the politics of the time. This thesis looks at how Bob Dylan came to be the voice of this generation with his most eloquent lyrics and captivating melodies. In fact, the dissatisfaction and protests were the major elements in the birth of great art works. It was not only Bob Dylan who created masterpieces that are still well-known and relevant today, other artists from the Greenwich Village or Warhol's The Factory were able to leave their marks on cultural history.

However, according to The Nobel Committee, Bob Dylan was able to create a shift in history. With his long, lyrical verses, the importance he gave to free verse in his ballads, he brought back the poetry singing tradition. He was not only compared to musical geniuses but also to great poets such as Walt Whitman or Arthur Rimbaud. The most significant reason for this was that he created literature out of ordinary people's lives and sang these stories well. He was able to describe in detail these people's traumas and their search for justice in his verses. His voice that accompanied these verses was able to reflect the greatest concerns of his time. He also brought new hope to people who were deprived of this human need. Therefore, he became a key force for this new generation who did not believe the ideals and aspirations of their parents and lost their trust in politicians.

In this analysis, I chose to focus on his songs starting from the time he first started writing in the famous Greenwich Village until 1965 when he stopped writing protest lyrics and returned to rock'n'roll and electronic sound. According to Masur, "It is what Dylan sang, said, did, and represented for a few years in the 1960s that continues to draw the public's attention and ignite the imagination of

new generations of listeners” (qtd. in Cossu). Therefore, I looked at his most noteworthy songs written in 1962, 1963 and 1964. Most of these songs were written under the influence of folk ballads, the Beat ideals and they alluded to the Civil Rights struggle of the time and also referred to the Bible and war poetry.

However, the reason I decided to stop in 1964 was that he seemed to abandon protest folk songs with his March 1965 album *Bringing it All Back Home*. In fact, from his fourth album *Another Side of Dylan*, I was only able to analyse *Chimes of Freedom* as a song which referred to human rights and freedom. In the same album, the song *My Back Pages*, gives a poetic reason of his abandoning protest lyrics in the subsequent albums: “Using ideas as my maps [...] Ah, but I was so much older then / I’m younger than that now”. He further distanced himself from political activists and folk musicians who saw him as their idol in the previous year. He went electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival where he caused some raised eyebrows and lost many of his previous fans.<sup>11</sup>

Dylan’s career has been a hybrid of many poetic, musical and literary influences which have helped him throughout his long expedition. Though he lost fans, he never gave up on being his own man and described himself in *No Direction Home* as “a musical expeditionary with nobody to lean on”. Perhaps because of this, his songs in the fifth and sixth albums, *Subterranean Homesick Blues* –which is also the opening song of Pennebaker’s documentary *Don’t Look Back*- and *Like a Rolling Stone* also became hit songs in their own genres. However much they were criticized by the folk audience, many of his later songs were able to find their unique place in the history of music. Though *Like a Rolling Stone* wasn’t a protest song in its actual sense, it questioned the feeling of belonging: “How does it feel? How does it feel? To be without a home? With no direction home? Like a complete unknown? Like a rolling stone” and was therefore, again, successful at catching the audience. Moreover, his going electric instead of acoustic at Newport affected the music of the late 1960s when famous

---

<sup>11</sup>However, this obviously wasn’t an end to his career. Though he lost some of his fans, he gained some others with the new hit songs after abandoning being a folk protest singer to be a rock poet.

groups such as Beatles and Pink Floyd popularized the electric rock sound.

After doing research for this thesis and analyzing carefully the time period and Dylan's political folk songs, I came to see that he has been one of the most significant figures to play a role in shaping a generation. Through his impressive verses, he was able to increase the political influence poetry and music could have on society. To be more specific, he became the voice of the disillusionment after the once appealing concept of the American dream was shattered by a series of wars and by the self-seeking politics of the leaders. He took street language and blended it with eloquent Biblical myths and allegories and recounted the ordinary man's story with great affection and love, just as the bards and troubadours of ancient times. In this sense, he was able to bring poetry back to the public sphere, and therefore was awarded the literature prize by the Nobel Committee.

Dylan considered song lyrics as literary texts instead of mere words and sentences to accompany the music. He approached the material in such a way that through his stories, he was able to become the embodiment of the new ideas and hopes. Though poetry was in the public sphere in the ancient traditions, taking the subject matter from ordinary life and telling what is happening at the moment was something the elitist poetry tradition had avoided since the Renaissance. Therefore, Dylan became one of the most –perhaps the most- influential singing poets of his generation.

While awarding him the literary prize, the Swedish Academy asserted that “from what he discovered in heirloom and scrap, in banal rhyme and quick wit, in curses and pious prayers, sweet nothings and crude jokes, he panned poetry gold, whether on purpose or by accident is irrelevant, all creativity begins in imitation.” In the *Towards the Tumultuous Sixties* and *Political Dissidence* chapters, I explained that 1960s was a time of great change in the social and political fields and then pointed to Dylan's songs written during these years as evidences of this disillusionment and change. As I traced his connection to the leftist groups, folk musicians and Beat writers of the time, I came to realize the motivation behind the

Academy's disregarding the subject of "intentionality". Dylan's life has been changed with the currents of the day through his journey, but whether he aimed at changing what poetry can be as it used to be in the ancient times did not matter. What people saw in his verses was the embodiment of their new dreams and ideals in a world where they did not belong any longer. According to literary critic Christopher Ricks, this made him an even better artist:

Briefly: I believe that an artist is someone more than usually blessed with a cooperative unconscious or subconscious, more than usually able to affect things with the help of instincts and intuitions of which he or she is not necessarily conscious. Like the great athlete, the great artist is at once highly trained and deeply instinctual. So if I am asked whether I believe Dylan is conscious of all the subtle effects of wording and timing that I suggest, I am perfectly happy to say that he probably isn't. And if I am right, then in this he is not less the artist but more. (7)

In short, what he created was a result of his experiences until that point and he explained in his Nobel Acceptance Speech how he had been influenced by various literary works before he grabbed a sheet of paper to write songs and sing them with his guitar and harmonica. He was by no means an academic figure but had attended the grammar school and the readings he encountered there had given him "a way of looking at life, an understanding of human nature, and a standard to measure things by." Moreover, he knew the vernacular and the rhetoric. However, as he claimed, he did not think of "the devices, the techniques, the secrets, the mysteries" while writing. The point is that, as he also indicated, the literary influence was beyond his grasp when he started composing and "the themes from those books worked their way into many of ... [his] songs either knowingly or unintentionally."

Drawing from folk ballads, blues work songs, country music and many more genres in music and classical sources as well as French symbolism, the Beats and the books that influenced him most—*Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *the Odyssey*—, he was able to create his unique voice combined with the protest lyrics either directly opposing to the current politics or emphasizing the significance of the individual and life as opposed of war and discrimination. Until 1966 when he stopped touring after a motorcycle accident, he admitted having written his songs in very short periods of time spontaneously just like magic which reminds us Plato's definition of the lyric poet as inspired by some power divine. Dylan, as a singing poet, became a highly influential figure at the time and still continues to be so. I believe he will continue to draw attention as a distinguished poet and a ground-breaking musician in perpetuity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aristotle. *The Poetics of Aristotle*. 3rd ed., Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902, [www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/Poetics.pdf](http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/Poetics.pdf).

Arrighi, Giovanni, et al. *Anstisystemic Movements*. Verso, 1989.

Blake, Nelson Manfred. *A History of American Life and Thought*. McGraw-Hill. Print.

"Bob Dylan - Nobel Lecture". *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 26 Feb 2018. [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/dylan-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/dylan-lecture.html)

Braunstein, Peter, et al. "Foreword." *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and 70s*, Routledge, 2002.

Buhle, Paul. "Popular Culture." *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*, edited by Christopher Bigsby, Cambridge University Press.

Calvocoressi, Peter. *World Politics since 1945*. 5th ed. London: Longman, 1987. Print.

Cohen, Scott, and Bob Dylan. "Bob Dylan Not Like a Rolling Stone Interview." *Spin*, vol. 1, no. 8, Dec. 1985, [www.interferenza.com/bcs/interw/85-dec.htm](http://www.interferenza.com/bcs/interw/85-dec.htm).

Cossu, Andrea. "Poetry, politics and America: awards and the memorialisation of Bob Dylan." *Celebrity Studies*, vol. 4, no.2, 25 July 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2013.791053>

Dylan, Bob. *Chronicles*. Simon&Schuster UK, 2004.

Ferguson, Margaret, et al. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. 5th ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Fish, Carl Russell. *American Diplomacy*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915. Print.

Gates, Guilbert. "Listen to Bob Dylan's Many Influences." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 15 Oct. 2016, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/14/arts/music/bob-dylan-influences-playlist-spotify.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/14/arts/music/bob-dylan-influences-playlist-spotify.html).

Gerstle, Gary. "The Working Class Goes to War." *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II*. Ed. Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

Ginsberg, Allen A *Definition of theBeatGeneration*, from *Friction, I* (Winter 1982), revisedfor *BeatCultureandthe New America: 1950–1965*.

González, José Miguel. *The Epic Rhapsode and His Craft: Homeric Performance in a Diachronic Perspective*. Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2013, [chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/6127](http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/6127).

Gray, Michael. *The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006.

Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York: Villard Books, 1993. Print.

Harry S. Truman: "Address in San Francisco at the Closing Session of the United Nations Conference.," June 26, 1945. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12188>.

Harry S. Truman: "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846>.

Harvey, *The Formative Dylan: Transmission & Stylistic Influences*, p. 62

Hellmann, John. "Vietnam and the 1960s." *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*, edited by Christopher Bigsby, Cambridge University Press.

Heylin, C. (2009). *Revolution in the Air*. Chicago Review Press, 2009.

Hodgson, Godfrey. "The American Century." *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*, edited by Christopher Bigsby, Cambridge University Press.

Kaiser, Charles. *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, And the Shaping of A Generation*. [www.orlok.com/tribe/insiders/introduction.html](http://www.orlok.com/tribe/insiders/introduction.html).

Marcus, Greil. *The Old, Weird America: The World of Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*. Picador USA.

Marsh, Dave. "Barbara Allen." *The Rose and the Briar: Death, Love and Liberty in the American Ballad*, edited by Sean Wilentz and Greil Marcus, W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Marqusee, Mike. *Wicked Messenger: Bob Dylan and the 1960s*. Seven stories, 2011.

Maynard, John Arthur. "The Beat Generation in Southern California". *Venice West*. Rutgers University Press, 1991.

Miller, Douglas T. *Visions of America: Second World War to the Present*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1988. Print.

O'Neill, Paul . "Life Among the Beatniks." *Reader's Digest*, 1960.

Plato. *Ion*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, 380AD, classics.mit.edu/Plato/ion.html.

Procházková, Mariana . "Bob Dylan in the Context of American Protest Song." *Univerzita Karlova v Praze*, 2015.

Purdy, Herbert . *Their Angry Creed*. Ips Publishing, 2016, books.google.com.tr/books/about/Their\_Angry\_Creed.html?id=hKq5DAAAQBAJ&redir\_esc=y.

Rexroth, Kenneth. "The Making of the Counterculture." *The Making of the Counterculture (Rexroth)*, [www.bopsecrets.org/rexroth/essays/counterculture.htm](http://www.bopsecrets.org/rexroth/essays/counterculture.htm).

Rodnitzky, Jerome L. "Thesixtiesbetweenthemicrogrooves: Using folk and protest musictounderstandAmericanhistory, 1963-1973." *Popular Music and Society*, 24 July 2008, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007769908591755>.

Schlesinger, Arthur Meier. *Political and Social History of the United States 1829-1925*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925. Print.

Scorsese, Martin, director. *No Direction Home : Bob Dylan*. 2005.

Sheehy, Colleen J., and Thomas Swiss. *Highway 61 Revisited: Bob Dylan's Road from Minnesota to the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Sturgeon, Alison. *World War II: The Definitive Visual History: from Blitzkrieg to the Atom Bomb*. DK Pub., 2009. Print.

"The Nobel Prize in Literature 2016 - Presentation Speech". *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 26 Feb 2018. [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/presentation-speech.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/presentation-speech.html)

"The Official Bob Dylan Site." *The Official Bob Dylan Site*, [www.bobdylan.com/](http://www.bobdylan.com/).

Wilentz, Sean. "Bob Dylan, TheBeatGenerationandAllenGinsberg'sAmerica." *The New Yorker*, 3 Aug. 2010, [www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/bob-dylan-the-beat-generation-and-allen-ginsbergs-america](http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/bob-dylan-the-beat-generation-and-allen-ginsbergs-america).

Wood, P. *Acad. Quest.* (2015) 28: 313. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12129-015-9514-z>

## APPENDIX I

### **Presentation Speech by Professor Horace Engdahl, Member of the Swedish Academy, Member of the Nobel Committee for Literature, 10 December 2016.**

*Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

What brings about the great shifts in the world of literature? Often it is when someone seizes upon a simple, overlooked form, discounted as art in the higher sense, and makes it mutate. Thus, at one point, emerged the modern novel from anecdote and letter, thus arose drama in a new age from high jinx on planks placed on barrels in a marketplace, thus songs in the vernacular dethroned learned Latin poetry, thus too did La Fontaine take animal fables and Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales from the nursery to Parnassian heights. Each time this occurs, our idea of literature changes.

In itself, it ought not to be a sensation that a singer/songwriter now stands recipient of the literary Nobel Prize. In a distant past, all poetry was sung or tunefully recited, poets were rhapsodes, bards, troubadours; 'lyrics' comes from 'lyre'. But what Bob Dylan did was not to return to the Greeks or the Provençals. Instead, he dedicated himself body and soul to 20th century American popular music, the kind played on radio stations and gramophone records for ordinary people, white and black: protest songs, country, blues, early rock, gospel, mainstream music. He listened day and night, testing the stuff on his instruments, trying to learn. But when he started to write similar songs, they came out differently. In his hands, the material changed. From what he discovered in heirloom and scrap, in banal rhyme and quick wit, in curses and pious prayers, sweet nothings and crude jokes, he panned poetry gold, whether on purpose or by accident is irrelevant; all creativity begins in imitation.

Even after fifty years of uninterrupted exposure, we are yet to absorb music's equivalent of the fable's Flying Dutchman. He makes good rhymes, said a critic, explaining greatness. And it is true. His rhyming is an alchemical substance that dissolves contexts to create new ones, scarcely containable by the human brain. It was a shock. With the public expecting poppy folk songs, there stood a young man with a guitar, fusing the languages of the street and the bible into a compound that would have made the end of the world seem a superfluous replay. At the same time, he sang of love with a power of conviction everyone wants to own. All of a sudden, much of the bookish poetry in our world felt anaemic, and the routine song lyrics his colleagues continued to write were like old-fashioned gunpowder following the invention of dynamite. Soon, people stopped comparing him to Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams and turned instead to Blake, Rimbaud, Whitman, Shakespeare.

In the most unlikely setting of all - the commercial gramophone record - he gave back to the language of poetry its elevated style, lost since the Romantics. Not to sing of eternities, but to speak of what was happening around us. As if the oracle of Delphi were reading the evening news.

Recognising that revolution by awarding Bob Dylan the Nobel Prize was a decision that seemed daring only beforehand and already seems obvious. But does he get the prize for upsetting the system of literature? Not really. There is a simpler explanation, one that we share with all those who stand with beating hearts in front of the stage at one of the venues on his never-ending tour, waiting for that magical voice. Chamfort made the observation that when a master such as La Fontaine appears, the hierarchy of genres - the estimation of what is great and small, high and low in literature - is nullified. "What matter the rank of a work when its beauty is of the highest rank?" he wrote. That is the straight answer to the question of how Bob Dylan belongs in literature: as the beauty of his songs is of the highest rank.

By means of his oeuvre, Bob Dylan has changed our idea of what poetry can be and how it can work. He is a singer worthy of a place beside the Greeks' ᾠιδόι, beside Ovid, beside the Romantic visionaries, beside the kings and queens of the Blues, beside the forgotten masters of brilliant standards. If people in the literary world groan, one must remind them that the gods don't write, they dance and they sing. The good wishes of the Swedish Academy follow Mr. Dylan on his way to coming bandstands.

Copyright © The Nobel Foundation 2016

## APPENDIX II

### Nobel Lecture

5 June 2017

When I first received this Nobel Prize for Literature, I got to wondering exactly how my songs related to literature. I wanted to reflect on it and see where the connection was. I'm going to try to articulate that to you. And most likely it will go in a roundabout way, but I hope what I say will be worthwhile and purposeful.

If I was to go back to the dawning of it all, I guess I'd have to start with Buddy Holly. Buddy died when I was about eighteen and he was twenty-two. From the moment I first heard him, I felt akin. I felt related, like he was an older brother. I even thought I resembled him. Buddy played the music that I loved – the music I grew up on: country western, rock 'n' roll, and rhythm and blues. Three separate strands of music that he intertwined and infused into one genre. One brand. And Buddy wrote songs – songs that had beautiful melodies and imaginative verses. And he sang great – sang in more than a few voices. He was the archetype. Everything I wasn't and wanted to be. I saw him only but once, and that was a few days before he was gone. I had to travel a hundred miles to get to see him play, and I wasn't disappointed.

He was powerful and electrifying and had a commanding presence. I was only six feet away. He was mesmerizing. I watched his face, his hands, the way he tapped his foot, his big black glasses, the eyes behind the glasses, the way he held his guitar, the way he stood, his neat suit. Everything about him. He looked older than twenty-two. Something about him seemed permanent, and he filled me with conviction. Then, out of the blue, the most uncanny thing happened. He looked me right straight dead in the eye, and he transmitted something. Something I didn't know what. And it gave me the chills.

I think it was a day or two after that that his plane went down. And somebody – somebody I'd never seen before – handed me a Leadbelly record with the song "Cottonfields" on it. And that record changed my life right then and there. Transported me into a world I'd never known. It was like an explosion went off. Like I'd been walking in darkness and all of the sudden the darkness was illuminated. It was like somebody laid hands on me. I must have played that record a hundred times.

It was on a label I'd never heard of with a booklet inside with advertisements for other artists on the label: Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, the New Lost City Ramblers, Jean Ritchie, string bands. I'd never heard of any of them. But I reckoned if they were on this label with Leadbelly, they had to be good, so I needed to hear them. I wanted to know all about it and play that kind of music. I still had a feeling for the music I'd grown up with, but for right now, I forgot about it. Didn't even think about it. For the time being, it was long gone.

I hadn't left home yet, but I couldn't wait to. I wanted to learn this music and meet the people who played it. Eventually, I did leave, and I did learn to play those songs. They were different than the radio songs that I'd been listening to all along. They were more vibrant and truthful to life. With radio songs, a performer might get a hit with a roll of the dice or a fall of the cards, but that didn't matter in the folk world. Everything was a hit. All you had to do was be well versed and be able to play the melody. Some of these songs were easy, some not. I had a natural feeling for the ancient ballads and country blues, but everything else I had to learn from scratch. I was playing for small crowds, sometimes no more than four or five people in a room or on a street corner. You had to have a wide repertoire, and you had to know what to play and when. Some songs were intimate, some you had to shout to be heard.

By listening to all the early folk artists and singing the songs yourself, you pick up the vernacular. You internalize it. You sing it in the ragtime blues, work songs,

Georgia sea shanties, Appalachian ballads and cowboy songs. You hear all the finer points, and you learn the details.

You know what it's all about. Takin' the pistol out and puttin' it back in your pocket. Whippin' your way through traffic, talkin' in the dark. You know that Stagger Lee was a bad man and that Frankie was a good girl. You know that Washington is a bourgeois town and you've heard the deep-pitched voice of John the Revelator and you saw the Titanic sink in a boggy creek. And you're pals with the wild Irish rover and the wild colonial boy. You heard the muffled drums and the fifes that played lowly. You've seen the lusty Lord Donald stick a knife in his wife, and a lot of your comrades have been wrapped in white linen.

I had all the vernacular down. I knew the rhetoric. None of it went over my head – the devices, the techniques, the secrets, the mysteries – and I knew all the deserted roads that it traveled on, too. I could make it all connect and move with the current of the day. When I started writing my own songs, the folk lingo was the only vocabulary that I knew, and I used it.

But I had something else as well. I had principles and sensibilities and an informed view of the world. And I had had that for a while. Learned it all in grammar school. *Don Quixote*, *Ivanhoe*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tale of Two Cities*, all the rest – typical grammar school reading that gave you a way of looking at life, an understanding of human nature, and a standard to measure things by. I took all that with me when I started composing lyrics. And the themes from those books worked their way into many of my songs, either knowingly or unintentionally. I wanted to write songs unlike anything anybody ever heard, and these themes were fundamental.

Specific books that have stuck with me ever since I read them way back in grammar school – I want to tell you about three of them: *Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Odyssey*.

---

*Moby Dick* is a fascinating book, a book that's filled with scenes of high drama and dramatic dialogue. The book makes demands on you. The plot is straightforward. The mysterious Captain Ahab – captain of a ship called the Pequod – an egomaniac with a peg leg pursuing his nemesis, the great white whale Moby Dick who took his leg. And he pursues him all the way from the Atlantic around the tip of Africa and into the Indian Ocean. He pursues the whale around both sides of the earth. It's an abstract goal, nothing concrete or definite. He calls Moby the emperor, sees him as the embodiment of evil. Ahab's got a wife and child back in Nantucket that he reminisces about now and again. You can anticipate what will happen.

The ship's crew is made up of men of different races, and any one of them who sights the whale will be given the reward of a gold coin. A lot of Zodiac symbols, religious allegory, stereotypes. Ahab encounters other whaling vessels, presses the captains for details about Moby. Have they seen him? There's a crazy prophet, Gabriel, on one of the vessels, and he predicts Ahab's doom. Says Moby is the incarnate of a Shaker god, and that any dealings with him will lead to disaster. He says that to Captain Ahab. Another ship's captain – Captain Boomer – he lost an arm to Moby. But he tolerates that, and he's happy to have survived. He can't accept Ahab's lust for vengeance.

This book tells how different men react in different ways to the same experience. A lot of Old Testament, biblical allegory: Gabriel, Rachel, Jeroboam, Bildah, Elijah. Pagan names as well: Tashtego, Flask, Daggoo, Fleece, Starbuck, Stubb, Martha's Vineyard. The Pagans are idol worshippers. Some worship little wax figures, some wooden figures. Some worship fire. The Pequod is the name of an Indian tribe.

*Moby Dick* is a seafaring tale. One of the men, the narrator, says, "Call me Ishmael." Somebody asks him where he's from, and he says, "It's not down on any map. True places never are." Stubb gives no significance to anything, says everything is predestined. Ishmael's been on a sailing ship his entire life. Calls the sailing ships his Harvard and Yale. He keeps his distance from people.

A typhoon hits the *Pequod*. Captain Ahab thinks it's a good omen. Starbuck thinks it's a bad omen, considers killing Ahab. As soon as the storm ends, a crewmember falls from the ship's mast and drowns, foreshadowing what's to come. A Quaker pacifist priest, who is actually a bloodthirsty businessman, tells Flask, "Some men who receive injuries are led to God, others are led to bitterness."

Everything is mixed in. All the myths: the Judeo Christian bible, Hindu myths, British legends, Saint George, Perseus, Hercules – they're all whalers. Greek mythology, the gory business of cutting up a whale. Lots of facts in this book, geographical knowledge, whale oil – good for coronation of royalty – noble families in the whaling industry. Whale oil is used to anoint the kings. History of the whale, phrenology, classical philosophy, pseudo-scientific theories, justification for discrimination – everything thrown in and none of it hardly rational. Highbrow, lowbrow, chasing illusion, chasing death, the great white whale, white as polar bear, white as a white man, the emperor, the nemesis, the embodiment of evil. The demented captain who actually lost his leg years ago trying to attack Moby with a knife.

We see only the surface of things. We can interpret what lies below any way we see fit. Crewmen walk around on deck listening for mermaids, and sharks and vultures follow the ship. Reading skulls and faces like you read a book. Here's a face. I'll put it in front of you. Read it if you can.

Tashtego says that he died and was reborn. His extra days are a gift. He wasn't saved by Christ, though, he says he was saved by a fellow man and a non-Christian at that. He parodies the resurrection.

When Starbuck tells Ahab that he should let bygones be bygones, the angry captain snaps back, "Speak not to me of blasphemy, man, I'd strike the sun if it insulted me." Ahab, too, is a poet of eloquence. He says, "The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails whereon my soul is grooved to run." Or these lines, "All visible objects are but pasteboard masks." Quotable poetic phrases that can't be beat.

Finally, Ahab spots Moby, and the harpoons come out. Boats are lowered. Ahab's harpoon has been baptized in blood. Moby attacks Ahab's boat and destroys it. Next day, he sights Moby again. Boats are lowered again. Moby attacks Ahab's boat again. On the third day, another boat goes in. More religious allegory. He has risen. Moby attacks one more time, ramming the Pequod and sinking it. Ahab gets tangled up in the harpoon lines and is thrown out of his boat into a watery grave.

Ishmael survives. He's in the sea floating on a coffin. And that's about it. That's the whole story. That theme and all that it implies would work its way into more than a few of my songs.

---

*All Quiet on the Western Front* was another book that did. *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a horror story. This is a book where you lose your childhood, your faith in a meaningful world, and your concern for individuals. You're stuck in a nightmare. Sucked up into a mysterious whirlpool of death and pain. You're defending yourself from elimination. You're being wiped off the face of the map. Once upon a time you were an innocent youth with big dreams about being a concert pianist. Once you loved life and the world, and now you're shooting it to pieces.

Day after day, the hornets bite you and worms lap your blood. You're a cornered animal. You don't fit anywhere. The falling rain is monotonous. There's endless assaults, poison gas, nerve gas, morphine, burning streams of gasoline, scavenging and scabbing for food, influenza, typhus, dysentery. Life is breaking down all around you, and the shells are whistling. This is the lower region of hell. Mud, barbed wire, rat-filled trenches, rats eating the intestines of dead men, trenches filled with filth and excrement. Someone shouts, "Hey, you there. Stand and fight."

Who knows how long this mess will go on? Warfare has no limits. You're being annihilated, and that leg of yours is bleeding too much. You killed a man yesterday, and you spoke to his corpse. You told him after this is over, you'll spend the rest of your life looking after his family. Who's profiting here? The leaders and the generals gain fame, and many others profit financially. But you're doing the dirty work. One of your comrades says, "Wait a minute, where are you going?" And you say, "Leave me alone, I'll be back in a minute." Then you walk out into the woods of death hunting for a piece of sausage. You can't see how anybody in civilian life has any kind of purpose at all. All their worries, all their desires – you can't comprehend it.

More machine guns rattle, more parts of bodies hanging from wires, more pieces of arms and legs and skulls where butterflies perch on teeth, more hideous wounds, pus coming out of every pore, lung wounds, wounds too big for the body, gas-blowing cadavers, and dead bodies making retching noises. Death is everywhere. Nothing else is possible. Someone will kill you and use your dead body for target practice. Boots, too. They're your prized possession. But soon they'll be on somebody else's feet.

There's Froggies coming through the trees. Merciless bastards. Your shells are running out. "It's not fair to come at us again so soon," you say. One of your companions is laying in the dirt, and you want to take him to the field hospital.

Someone else says, "You might save yourself a trip." "What do you mean?" "Turn him over, you'll see what I mean."

You wait to hear the news. You don't understand why the war isn't over. The army is so strapped for replacement troops that they're drafting young boys who are of little military use, but they're draftin' 'em anyway because they're running out of men. Sickness and humiliation have broken your heart. You were betrayed by your parents, your schoolmasters, your ministers, and even your own government.

The general with the slowly smoked cigar betrayed you too – turned you into a thug and a murderer. If you could, you'd put a bullet in his face. The commander as well. You fantasize that if you had the money, you'd put up a reward for any man who would take his life by any means necessary. And if he should lose his life by doing that, then let the money go to his heirs. The colonel, too, with his caviar and his coffee – he's another one. Spends all his time in the officers' brothel. You'd like to see him stoned dead too. More Tommies and Johnnies with their whack fo' me daddy-o and their whiskey in the jars. You kill twenty of 'em and twenty more will spring up in their place. It just stinks in your nostrils.

You've come to despise that older generation that sent you out into this madness, into this torture chamber. All around you, your comrades are dying. Dying from abdominal wounds, double amputations, shattered hipbones, and you think, "I'm only twenty years old, but I'm capable of killing anybody. Even my father if he came  
at  
me."

Yesterday, you tried to save a wounded messenger dog, and somebody shouted, "Don't be a fool." One Froggy is laying gurgling at your feet. You stuck him with a dagger in his stomach, but the man still lives. You know you should finish the job, but you can't. You're on the real iron cross, and a Roman soldier's putting a sponge of vinegar to your lips.

Months pass by. You go home on leave. You can't communicate with your father. He said, "You'd be a coward if you don't enlist." Your mother, too, on your way back out the door, she says, "You be careful of those French girls now." More madness. You fight for a week or a month, and you gain ten yards. And then the next month it gets taken back.

All that culture from a thousand years ago, that philosophy, that wisdom – Plato, Aristotle, Socrates – what happened to it? It should have prevented this. Your thoughts turn homeward. And once again you're a schoolboy walking through the tall poplar trees. It's a pleasant memory. More bombs dropping on you from blimps. You got to get it together now. You can't even look at anybody for fear of some miscalculable thing that might happen. The common grave. There are no other possibilities.

Then you notice the cherry blossoms, and you see that nature is unaffected by all this. Poplar trees, the red butterflies, the fragile beauty of flowers, the sun – you see how nature is indifferent to it all. All the violence and suffering of all mankind. Nature doesn't even notice it.

You're so alone. Then a piece of shrapnel hits the side of your head and you're dead.

You've been ruled out, crossed out. You've been exterminated. I put this book down and closed it up. I never wanted to read another war novel again, and I never did.

Charlie Poole from North Carolina had a song that connected to all this. It's called "You Ain't Talkin' to Me," and the lyrics go like this:

I saw a sign in a window walking up town one day.  
Join the army, see the world is what it had to say.  
You'll see exciting places with a jolly crew,  
You'll meet interesting people, and learn to kill them too.  
Oh you ain't talkin' to me, you ain't talking to me.

I may be crazy and all that, but I got good sense you see.  
You ain'ttalkin' to me, you ain'ttalkin' to me.  
Killin' with a gun don't sound like fun.  
You ain'ttalkin' to me.

---

*The Odyssey* is a great book whose themes have worked its way into the ballads of a lot of songwriters: "Homeward Bound, "Green, Green Grass of Home," "Home on the Range," and my songs as well.

*The Odyssey* is a strange, adventurous tale of a grown man trying to get home after fighting in a war. He's on that long journey home, and it's filled with traps and pitfalls. He's cursed to wander. He's always getting carried out to sea, always having close calls. Huge chunks of boulders rock his boat. He angers people he shouldn't. There's troublemakers in his crew. Treachery. His men are turned into pigs and then are turned back into younger, more handsome men. He's always trying to rescue somebody. He's a travelin' man, but he's making a lot of stops.

He's stranded on a desert island. He finds deserted caves, and he hides in them. He meets giants that say, "I'll eat you last." And he escapes from giants. He's trying to get back home, but he's tossed and turned by the winds. Restless winds, chilly winds, unfriendly winds. He travels far, and then he gets blown back.

He's always being warned of things to come. Touching things he's told not to. There's two roads to take, and they're both bad. Both hazardous. On one you could drown and on the other you could starve. He goes into the narrow straits with foaming whirlpools that swallow him. Meets six-headed monsters with sharp fangs. Thunderbolts strike at him. Overhanging branches that he makes a leap to reach for to save himself from a raging river. Goddesses and gods protect him, but some others want to kill him. He changes identities. He's exhausted. He falls asleep, and he's woken up by the sound of laughter. He tells his story to strangers.

He's been gone twenty years. He was carried off somewhere and left there. Drugs have been dropped into his wine. It's been a hard road to travel.

In a lot of ways, some of these same things have happened to you. You too have had drugs dropped into your wine. You too have shared a bed with the wrong woman. You too have been spellbound by magical voices, sweet voices with strange melodies. You too have come so far and have been so far blown back. And you've had close calls as well. You have angered people you should not have. And you too have rambled this country all around. And you've also felt that ill wind, the one that blows you no good. And that's still not all of it.

When he gets back home, things aren't any better. Scoundrels have moved in and are taking advantage of his wife's hospitality. And there's too many of 'em. And though he's greater than them all and the best at everything – best carpenter, best hunter, best expert on animals, best seaman – his courage won't save him, but his trickery will.

All these stragglers will have to pay for desecrating his palace. He'll disguise himself as a filthy beggar, and a lowly servant kicks him down the steps with arrogance and stupidity. The servant's arrogance revolts him, but he controls his anger. He's one against a hundred, but they'll all fall, even the strongest. He was nobody. And when it's all said and done, when he's home at last, he sits with his wife, and he tells her the stories.

---

So what does it all mean? Myself and a lot of other songwriters have been influenced by these very same themes. And they can mean a lot of different things. If a song moves you, that's all that's important. I don't have to know what a song means. I've written all kinds of things into my songs. And I'm not going to

worry about it – what it all means. When Melville put all his old testament, biblical references, scientific theories, Protestant doctrines, and all that knowledge of the sea and sailing ships and whales into one story, I don't think he would have worried about it either – what it all means.

John Donne as well, the poet-priest who lived in the time of Shakespeare, wrote these words, "The Sestos and Abydos of her breasts. Not of two lovers, but two loves, the nests." I don't know what it means, either. But it sounds good. And you want your songs to sound good.

When Odysseus in *The Odyssey* visits the famed warrior Achilles in the underworld – Achilles, who traded a long life full of peace and contentment for a short one full of honor and glory – tells Odysseus it was all a mistake. "I just died, that's all." There was no honor. No immortality. And that if he could, he would choose to go back and be a lowly slave to a tenant farmer on Earth rather than be what he is – a king in the land of the dead – that whatever his struggles of life were, they were preferable to being here in this dead place.

That's what songs are too. Our songs are alive in the land of the living. But songs are unlike literature. They're meant to be sung, not read. The words in Shakespeare's plays were meant to be acted on the stage. Just as lyrics in songs are meant to be sung, not read on a page. And I hope some of you get the chance to listen to these lyrics the way they were intended to be heard: in concert or on record or however people are listening to songs these days. I return once again to Homer, who says, "Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story."