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The construction of the text, the production of multiple personae and the construction of the self on Bob Dylan's album, *Blood on the Tracks*.

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA Language and Literature in the Department of English, University of Cape Town

Faculty of the Humanities

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2012

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

The construction of the text, the making of multiple personae and the construction of the self on Bob Dylan's album, *Blood on the Tracks*.

Using arguments by theorists such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and, more importantly, Mikhail Bakhtin, I examine the plurality of discourses on Bob Dylan's album, *Blood on the Tracks*. This thesis investigates the polyphonic nature of discourses in the form of text, personae and self construction. I argue that the above-mentioned areas of focus are inscribed with a variety of connotations because, ultimately, they rely on intertextual references. This implies that no author can claim sole ownership of a work because all works are made up of a "tissue of quotations". I argue this point in reference; not only to Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*, but also to the personae he created over the course of his 50-year career. Dylan's personae also influenced many of the characters he created in his songs. They often allude to each other and contribute to the plural way in which his work can be read. Dylan's personae and the self he projects, intentionally or unintentionally, prove to be problematic because it can be read in contradictory ways. I argue that the polyphonic nature of his text, his personae as well as the self he projects (through his lyrics) decentralises Dylan's intentions and places the reader at the centre of the text. The aim of this thesis is to highlight how Dylan's text is constructed as well as the plural ways in which his personae and the self can be interpreted. Through this I wish to show how central the reader is to meaning-making.

M.D. Erfort

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Adam Haupt for his patience and amazing insights. He saw the point long before I did. I would also like to thank Paulene for listening, talking and understanding. My appreciation goes out to Trevor (the harshest critic and best friend anyone could ask for). Finally, I thank my parents and family, Patrick and Cat, Bob Dylan, the late Guy Willoughby, Dr Steven Heine and Richard Haslop (who gave me access to all his writing on Dylan).

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INTRODUCTION

Narrative and the self

Narrative is a fundamental aspect in the creation of the self. The question that could be raised is “what is the self and how is it linked to the text?” This thesis will explore how the text and how the self is constructed on Bob Dylan’s *Blood on the Tracks*. I argue that the text is plural and is constructed via many intertextual references. The plurality of the text gives rise to a vast array of interpretations and the intention of the author, in this case Bob Dylan, is decentred in favour of the reader. In terms of the text, I explore how the protagonist is portrayed, how moving from past to present influences understanding and, more fundamentally, what intertextual influences appear in the text and what connotations they evoke. I also look at semiotics and how imagery and common motifs contribute to meaning. In relation to these issues, I will rely on poststructuralist theorists like Roland Barthes (for example, “Death of the Author” and *S/Z*); Jacques Derrida (“Signs and the Blink of an Eye”); Michel Foucault (“What is an Author?”) as well as Julia Kristeva’s views on intertextuality. Essentially, what they argue is that no text is original and authors no longer hold the central position of meaning. The aim of examining the text in this manner is to highlight how a text can give rise to many interpretations, thus giving rise to plurality and rendering the text and, by way of association, the self unstable. In Chapter 2, I argue that the self is a construct of the text and hence if the text is plural so too is the self. This argument is contrary to modernist theorists who hold the viewpoint that the self is centred, stable, unified and autonomous. Generally, they argue that the self is at the centre of its existence, self-determined and constant throughout its lifetime. The converse view, which I will adopt as a theoretical framework, held by the postmodern and poststructuralist school of thought theorises the self as relational, fluid and existing in narrative (Flaskas, 199: 20). Constantine Sedikides and

Marilynn Brewer distinguish between three selves, namely the relational self, the individual self and the collective self (2001: 1). They define the relational self as dyadic. This means that the self is shaped by its relationships to others; for example, family, friends and the general community. They define the individual self as distinguishing itself from others in their community. This is largely based on self-concept that differentiates one person from the other. The final category of the self, the collective self, is defined as being achieved by inclusion in larger social groups. This inclusion is generally based on impersonal bonds and symbolic identification with a group (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001: 1-2). Ultimately, all the aforementioned definitions indicate that the self is dependent on contact with others which make all categories relational. I would like to note that I will use the term “relational” as all encompassing. Aside from defining the self as relational, poststructuralist and postmodern theorists also describe it as fluid. Generally, the fluid self can be seen as ever changing and highly perceptive to relational exposure. William James concurs with this idea. He argues that the self is fluid and is in a continual emotional interaction with the world beyond “I”. James adds that the self “emotionally identifies with aspects of the world, such as family, friends, personal items, virtually anything which symbolised and affirmed sense of self throughout the lifespan hence the self’s inter-changeability” (1890: 16)¹. What this means is that the self is in constant “dialogue” with its environment which in turns plays a vital role in how the self is shaped. K.J. Gergen states that the self should no longer be seen as a concrete entity; rather, it should be seen as continually being reconstructed by its relationships (1991: 40). This relational character of the self contributes to its complex and plural nature. This complexity and plurality is highlighted by Roland Barthes, who I will draw on extensively over the course of this thesis, who argues that the self can be seen as a network of relations

¹ I use this argument by James to imply that the view of the self as interchangeable is not new rather it is an idea that existed in psychology for a long time. My argument is meant to illustrate how James’s argument correlates with more contemporary theorists.

“so complex as to be irreducible” (1975: 10). He adds that the self is not merely a “single, simple essence, but an incredibly rich and layered tapestry of languages we constantly weave and reweave. This “I” which approaches the text is itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost” (1975: 10). The crux here is the idea that the self is a textual construct and represents an unstable rather than stable entity.

I will follow the tact of many theorists who use the terms “fluid”, “unstable” and “ambiguous” interchangeably. The point of view from which I will argue is that the self is created through narrative, which is supported by Craig Werner who argues that “life and the self are primarily textual constructs” which are always fluid and above all relational (1990: 203). This fluidity results in a fragmented self which is decentred and is host to many varying points of view. The fragmented self is in dialogue not only with others, but also with its various selves. Charles Taylor supports this by stating that the general feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character, and that identities are formed in open dialogue. For Taylor the formation of identity crucially depends on one’s dialogical relations (1992: 47). These dialogical relations also occur within a given text and this gives rise to what Bakhtin terms “multi-voicedness” or polyphony. I will explore this issue in great detail in Chapter 2 linking it to Barthes’s notions of how texts rely on intertextual sources to create meaning. This also ties in with Derrida’s assertions that “there are no origins only production and we produce ourselves in language” (in David Lodge, 1988: 22). Here the assumption can be made that if the self is produced via the text then the self can be considered intertextual and therefore polyphonic. R. Porrit captures this notion by stating that “the self is actually a plural phenomenon which uses multiple discourses or ‘voices’ to constitute meaning” (1992: 323). It is for this reason that Chapter 1 provides an extensive narrative analysis of *Blood on the Tracks* in order to explore how the narrative is coded. This will support arguments in Chapter 2, where I explore how Dylan’s various personae are constructed as well as how the self is

constructed in the narrative of *Blood on the Tracks*. I will also link my poststructuralist narrative analysis in Chapter 1 to how the narrative becomes dialogised, especially through the use of intertextuality and binaries.

The fluidity of Dylan's identity

The above issues lend themselves to being used in relation to Bob Dylan's work because of his constant shifts in identity. Bob Dylan was born Robert Zimmerman on 24 May 1941 in Hibbing, Minnesota. He was often quoted as saying that the only option one had in Hibbing was to become a miner or imagine yourself as someone else (Larry David Smith, 2005: 2). Perhaps this environment provided the catalyst for the creation of Bob Dylan. Once Bob Dylan left Hibbing to become a musician, he denied his background either through contradiction or blatant lies. In an interview with Joseph Haas, the singer was asked to talk about his family. He responded by saying "I don't have any family, I am all alone" (Cott, 2006: 59). This highlights what I will discuss in Chapter 2, his self mythologizing and his creation of an imagined biography. In another interview Bob Dylan is asked by interviewer Jonathan Cott whether or not he made the film, *Renaldo and Clara*. Dylan responds to the question as follows: "Bob Dylan didn't make the film. I made it" (Cott, 2006: 173). This statement illuminates the idea that Bob Dylan is a persona of Robert Zimmerman. In this particular excerpt, Bob Dylan clearly distinguishes himself from Robert Zimmerman and vice versa. Robert Zimmerman made the film and not Bob Dylan. This highlights the ambiguities taking place in Bob Dylan's life. He was an invention of Zimmerman and therefore each move Bob Dylan made was puppeteered by its master, Robert Zimmerman. All vital decisions were made by Zimmerman and the Dylan character had to act out these decisions. Wearing masks was crucial in order to harness creativity and break barriers. Joseph Warren

Beach² makes the point that artists are required to wear masks and assume roles and that these masks vary over the various stages of their career (1957: 33). Christophe Lebold acknowledges this by arguing that Dylan “uses songs to write himself” in order to create numerous and competing personae (2007: 57). The personae emerge from the lyrics and interact with his public image, constantly ratifying and parodying it, thus enabling the artist to ceaselessly construct and dismantle a fictional “Bob Dylan” (2007: 57). This statement by Lebold highlights the fragmented nature of Bob Dylan. It is for this reason that part of Chapter 2 looks at Dylan and his identity shifts as a “polyphonic text”³ which could give rise to multiple associations. Another issue which justifies this approach is Tony Fluxman’s comments in literary journal *Theoria*. He argues that Dylan is complex and paradoxical in the sense that he has changed his ideological stance often. He has also changed his persona from a folk star in the early 1960s to a rock star in the mid 1960s. Fluxman argues that Dylan “is at once the incisive critic of the multiplicity of forms of life in modern capitalist America and at the same time the patron of its most naive forms of consciousness” (1991: 91). This description of Dylan echoes a similar notion as to what Bakhtin describes as polyphony. In Chapter 2, I will highlight the various phases of his career and discuss the various personae he adopted. I argue that this venture is important because the multiplicity of personae and characters which he creates in his songs surface in some shape or form in the narrative of *Blood on the Tracks*. These personae and characters are used to act out Dylan’s personal narrative.

The issue of identity shifts also feature prominently in films related to Dylan. The most notable example would be Todd Haynes’ *I’m Not There* (2007) in which Dylan is portrayed by six characters or selves none of which is named Bob Dylan. One character is played a

² Beach made these comments in relation to W.H.Auden in his book *The Making of the Auden Canon* (1957)

³ The idea to do this is inspired by Stephen Scobie who states in his book *Alias Dylan* (1991) that Dylan should be read as a text.

young black male and another by a female. The hybridity and fragmented nature of the self that is portrayed in the film perfectly represents Dylan's career as a *Zelig*⁴- like character. *I'm Not There* also highlights the plural nature of the self and how the binaries, especially white/black and male/female collapse. Much like Dylan's personae shifts, the film also brings into focus the plural and problematic associations that could be made in relation to racial and gender representation. The idea of *I'm Not There* is very similar to the idea of Dylan's self-made film *Renaldo and Clara* (1977). In this film Dylan played Renaldo and his wife Sara⁵ played Clara. Joan Baez plays a variety of characters including the Woman in White (who is also played by Sara Dylan in some scenes). In this film Bob Dylan is played by Ronnie Hawkins. It is obvious to see how Dylan plays around with identity. Another film Dylan played a role in was *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* (1973) directed by Sam Peckinpah. Dylan played the role of Alias (another hint at identity), Billy the Kid's sidekick. C.P. Lee states in Nigel Williamson's *The Rough Guide to Bob Dylan*, "the visual storyteller (Peckinpah) could sense a link with Dylan the oral storyteller-both artists blended a century old tradition with something new" (2004: 330). The final film I would like to mention is *Masked and Anonymous* (2003) directed by Larry Charles. Once again the title has obvious connections to the theme of identity. In the film Dylan plays a musician called Jack Fate. Williamson argues that the "autobiographical content is reinforced by the fact that his real-life touring band appear as a band called Simple Twist Of Fate, a Jack Fate tribute band" (2004: 340). Another issue related to persona shifts is the fact the screenplay was written by Bob Dylan under the alias Sergei Petrov. The theme of identity is enforced by these examples. For every role Dylan performs, he seems to create a new persona.

⁴ A Woody Allen film in which the character absorbs and imitates the personalities of people around him.

⁵ Sara was Dylan's wife. *Blood on the Tracks* focussed on their separation. They briefly reunited after the album and subsequently divorced a few years later.

Theoretical Framework

I will employ poststructuralist and postmodern theory to devise my theoretical framework. In my discussion on narrative, the role of the author and the role of the reader, I will be using Roland Barthes's *Image Music Text* (1984), particularly "The Death of the Author" as well as Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" I also focus on Jacques Derrida, for example, in David Boje's *Postmodern Management and Organisation Theory* (1996) and *Narrative Methods for Organisational and Communication Research* (2001). I also draw on L.A. Rossouw, in reference to his study on Joseph Conrad, for the role of the reader. I use these theorists to support my argument that the text is plural and that the reader becomes a central player in the analysis of the text. For information about Bob Dylan, I rely on Clinton Heylin, Christophe Lebold, Stephen Scobie, Robert Shelton, Larry David Smith, Sean Wilentz, Paul Williams, Nigel Williamson and many others. For the section on characterisation in Chapter 1, I draw heavily on Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida (in Wolfreys, 1998). For the section on intertextuality, I draw again from Barthes and Derrida's as well as Julia Kristeva's ideas. I make the argument that all texts are interlinked or related to other text. In the context of my study on *Blood on the Tracks*, I use these theorists to support my argument that Dylan's work has a multitude of intertextual references and hence these references shape the meaning of the text and result in a plural and unstable text. I stress the importance of the text rather than Dylan's intention, because in many instances the two contradict each other. For the discussion on binaries, I focus solely on Derrida's "Signs and the Blink of an Eye" (1973). Here I argue that, as a result of intertextuality, signifiers have multiple signifieds. I argue that one signifier gives rise to another signifier and no consistent signified is attained. I use this argument to support the view that the text is plural. For Chapter 2, I once again make use of a variety of Roland Barthes works, particularly *S/Z* and *Image Music Text*. I also look at Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" as well as Paul John Eakins's *Fictions in*

Autobiography (1985) especially in relation to the discussion on the fragmented self. For the reading of Dylan as a “polyphonic text”, I refer to Christophe Lebold’s two articles namely; “A Face like a Mask and a Voice that Croaks: An Integrated Poetics of Bob Dylan’s Voice, Personae, and Lyrics” (2007) and “The Traitor and the Stowaway: Persona Construction and the Quest for Cultural Anonymity and Cultural Relevance in the Trajectories of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen” (2010) as well as Stephen Scobie’s *Alias Bob Dylan* (1991). In terms of theory for the discussion on polyphony, I use a variety of works drawn from Bakhtin’s bibliography as well as work related to Bakhtin’s ideas.

The above theories will be used to do an in depth narrative analysis of Bob Dylan’s *Blood on the Tracks* as well as an investigation on how Dylan constructs his identity as an artist and how he constructs the self in the narrative on *Blood on the Tracks*. The reason for doing so is to show how the construction of the text impacts the construction of the self.

Rationale for the study

I have chosen to explore this study, firstly, because a study of this nature has not been undertaken in the literary sense. Generally most of the writings on Bob Dylan focus on biographical details and very little literary analysis. Notable exceptions are Michael Gray’s *Song and Dance Man: The Art Of Bob Dylan* (1981), which provides a critical study of Dylan’s work; Christopher Ricks’ *Dylan’s Visions Of Sin* (2003), which analyses Dylan’s work according to the seven deadly sins; Larry David Smith’s *Writing Dylan* (2005) which argues that “Dylan systematically pursued a series of creative missions”; Vernezze and Porter’s *Bob Dylan And Philosophy* (2006), which looks at the philosophical aspects of Dylan’s songs; Steven Heine’s *Bargaining For Salvation* (2009) which attempts to justify why Dylan could be considered a Zen Master; Neil Corcoran’s “*Do You Mr Jones*”: *Bob Dylan With The Poets and Professors* (2002), which generally aims to justify why Dylan’s

work could be regarded as literary and finally, Greil Marcus's *Invisible Republic* (1997), which investigates the *Basement Tapes* as well as his *Like A Rolling Stone* (2005) which investigates the roots of the Dylan song "Like A Rolling Stone". No literary study has been conducted in relation to *Blood on the Tracks*. Andy Gill and Kevin Odegard dedicated a book, *Simple Twist of Fate* (2004), to it. This book, however, focussed more on the history of the album and the circumstances which surrounded its creation. The second reason why I chose to undertake this study is because of the apparent shift in direction in terms of Dylan's writing on the album under consideration. The argument is that this change manifests itself on the narratives on *Blood on the Tracks*.

Historical context of Blood on the Tracks

Dylan's approach did indeed change dramatically on *Blood on the Tracks* in the sense that the songs were personal and undoubtedly related to his personal circumstances. I argue in this thesis that he continued to adopt some of his old working methods, especially those related to creating characters and identities. The approach differed in terms of the activities that these characters were involved in. Ultimately, they were involved in the pursuit of seeking closure from the effects of a severed relationship. To clarify, these characters were focussed inward rather than outward as was the norm with Dylan's work.

The whole album covered the consistent theme of "love" but, as mentioned previously, it also reflected the personal nature of the circumstances of his life at the time. During this period he and his then wife, separated. The album provided Dylan with an outlet in which to express his feelings. The contents of the lyrics reflected a very different Dylan. This album contained no politics, no surreal lyrics and no country idioms. Instead, the lyrics were simple and, to a large degree, very literal. All ten songs focussed on separation and a need to reconcile. The gamut of feelings ran from tenderness to spite. Even Dylan acknowledges the changes in his

writing style in the following: “Everybody agrees that that was pretty different, and what’s different about it is that there’s a code in the lyrics and also there’s no sense of time. There’s no respect for it: you’ve got yesterday, today and tomorrow all in the same room, and there’s very little you can’t imagine not happening....doing it unconsciously was doing it like a primitive, and it took everything out of me” (Smith, 2005: 194). The next question that should be raised is what the catalyst was for Dylan changing his writing style and approach to song writing so radically. Many argue it was his encounter with Norman Raeben⁶, an artist who became Dylan’s tutor in 1974. Dylan claims that Raeben influenced him to become more conscious about what he was doing. In other words, whatever he was writing about should be conscious in its intents. Dylan states in Heylin that Raeben locked him in the present and that he was constantly mingled with his different selves until he finally got down to one that he was familiar with (2000: 369). This idea of the various selves coming into “contact” with each other is prevalent throughout *Blood on the Tracks*. From the opening song to the closing song, Raeben’s influence is apparent. Another aspect that is fundamental on *Blood on the Tracks*, which is linked to the above quote, is Dylan’s use of time in terms of constructing his narrative. On *Blood on the Tracks*, the narrative is not strictly linear, rather it makes temporal shifts often in the same song. Andy Gill, in *Dylan: Visions Portraits and Back Pages*, comments that Raeben enabled Dylan to view narrative not in strictly linear terms, but to unify past present and future in a single narrative (2005: 147). This resulted in a text that was plural and could be read in many different ways.

The onset of the seventies however was not a favourable time for Dylan. His first release of the decade, *Self Portrait* (1970), was reviled by the public and the critics alike. According to Hinton the public reaction to all this effort could be summed up by the opening to Greil Marcus’s *Rolling Stone* review, “What is this shit?” (2006: 78).

⁶ Norman Raeben (1901-1978) was an artist born in the Ukraine. A former boxer who turned to painting and subsequently became Dylan’s painting tutor and mentor. (Heylin, 2000: 368)

Dylan's output following *Self Portrait*, namely *New Morning* (1970), *Dylan* (1973) and *Planet Waves* (1974), all received lukewarm reviews. Most critics believed he could never attain the success he received in the sixties. Essentially this set the scene for Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (1975). He realised that he had to "consciously" try to create work that would be more appealing to the public. This conscious reflection on his work is perhaps the reason why *Blood on the Tracks* is so different from his previous work.

It was important for Dylan to escape the trappings of the 1960s simply because the political and musical context changed so dramatically. On the political front, the idealism of the 1960s waned and Americans dealt with the government's retreat from Vietnam, the impeachment of Nixon and eventually Gerald Ford's pardoning of Nixon resulted in a nation who was more cynical and suspicious (Bonnie J. Sierlecki, 2010: 75).

On the musical front, the scene was no longer dominated by singers making political statements. The issue of Vietnam had been resolved and the Civil Rights Movement shifted from view. Tom Wolfe views the 1970s as the "Me Decade" where singers looked at the "darkness within" (Gray, 1981: 177). Notable examples of addressing the "darkness within" would be Joni Mitchell's *Blue* (1971), Graham Nash's *Songs for Beginners* (1971) and Jackson Browne's *Late for the Sky* (1974). All three albums deal with the breakdown of their respective relationships. This confessional writing came to dominate this period. Gill and Odergard comment on the music of that era:

In sometime tortuous, intimate songs, these composers would transmute their own relationships, attitudes and addictions, as well as their friends' mishaps and suicides, into anthems sung by thousands at their concerts: an aggressively public catharsis of private affairs (2005: 28).

This was the musical context within which Dylan was now positioned. It would prove to be impossible to avoid these influences. *Blood on the Tracks* contains many of the confessional elements mentioned above and perhaps this contributed to its success because it seemed to fit

the template of the music that was popular at the time. The confessional and personal nature of the songs makes it a ripe study for not only narrative analysis but also for a study of how the self is constructed in personal narratives.

This thesis has two chapters which will be divided as follows:

Chapter 1: The construction of the text on *Blood on the Tracks*

This chapter analyses *Blood on the Tracks* from a poststructuralist's point of view on three levels. Firstly, the analysis looks at how texts are constructed in terms of plot and structure and, secondly, at character construction and the role of the reader and writer. Thirdly, I look at binaries, semiotics and intertextuality and how they contribute to the meaning of the narrative. My main argument is that reality cannot be encapsulated in a text; the narrator becomes decentred and the role of the reader becomes central. Therefore the text takes on plural rather than singular definitive meanings. It should be pointed out that I only analyse Dylan's lyrics and look at it from the perspective of it being a narrative. I do not take the non-verbal issues such as tone of voice and music into account. This obviously would add another dimension to the study.

Chapter 2: The production of multiple personae and the construction of the self on *Blood on the Tracks*.

The argument in this chapter is that the self is constructed via narrative and hence the self and the text are intrinsically linked. This chapter looks firstly at how the identity of Bob Dylan, the artist, was constructed as well as looking at all the personae he created over the course of his career⁷. I argue that the personae that he created as well as all the characters he created in his songs make their appearance in some form on *Blood on the Tracks*. Bearing this in mind I argue that these personae and characters are constructed to act out Dylan's narrative. In my

⁷ In this thesis I focus on the period 1961-1975. I focus on this period because it preceded *Blood on the Tracks* (1961-1974) and 1975 was the year it was released.

penultimate discussion, I look at Dylan's creation of his various identities as a polyphonic and *writerly text*.⁸ I also examine how the self is constructed on the album as well discussing how it can be viewed as a dialogised and polyphonic narrative. I categorise the various selves as firstly, the past and present self; secondly, the marginal/nomadic self; thirdly, the pastoral self and finally, the messianic self. I discuss each category and explain how its essence is captured by the presence of characters or personae which Dylan previously created. I also discuss how these selves can be considered polyphonic or multi-voiced.

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⁸I discuss this term very briefly in Chapter 1 of my thesis however I apply the principle "the goal of literary work is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (Barthes, S/Z, 197 : 4) quite extensively over the course of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE: The construction of the text on *Blood On The Tracks*.

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to undertake a narrative analysis of Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (1975). This analysis will contribute to my central thesis question of how Bob Dylan's text creates the self on the album. I will highlight how the constructions of the various narratives, which are constituted by the lyrics on the album, serve as a vehicle for Dylan to share aspects of the self with the audience. The purpose of this chapter is to explain *how* Dylan's text is constructed to shape the various issues he presents. In my analysis, the text is the source of my interpretation rather than Dylan's intention. My aim is to investigate the plural nature of the text. To elaborate, the text when viewed as polyphonic, goes beyond the scope of what the author intended. Timothy Unwin supports this view by stating that "to look at the text in terms of some putative intention...is in some sense to refuse a reading of what is actually there" (1997: 12). Unwin argues that the reader is at the centre and it is the reader that brings the text to life. Added to this, he compellingly states that "to give a privileged status to the reader in a text is to open it out and to read it as plurality" (1997: 12). My aim is to analyse various songs and highlight their thematic issues. In terms of the scope of this chapter, it will not be possible to focus on all the songs on *Blood on the Tracks* in depth. I will provide a detailed analysis of what I consider the key songs on *Blood on the Tracks* (namely "Tangled up in Blue"; "Simple Twist of Fate"; "You're a Big Girl Now" and "Idiot Wind"). The subsequent songs will be dealt with briefly, focusing mainly on how they form part of the connective tissue of *Blood on the Tracks*. In this chapter, I will look at the way Dylan's text presents the protagonist⁹ with a distinct focus on how he uses first person narration to present a particular point of view. In addition to this, I will discuss the use of analepsis and prolepsis in the construction of the narrative. The second issue I will focus on is

⁹ I refer to Dylan, as well the characters he creates to act out his personal narrative, as the protagonist. The idea of creating these characters is a fundamental part of my discussion in chapter 2.

highlighting the plot of the album and how each song interrelates through the use of a common plot. Thirdly, I will focus on the intertextual references in some of the songs on *Blood on the Tracks*. I will also look at common motifs as well as repetition. I will link the latter items to semiotics and how the signifier has no definite signified. In relation to these issues, I will rely on poststructuralist theorists like Roland Barthes (for example, “Death of the Author” and *S/Z*); Jacques Derrida (“Signs and the Blink of an Eye”); Michel Foucault (“What is an Author?”) as well as Julia Kristeva’s views on intertextuality. Essentially, what they argue is that no text is original and authors no longer hold the central position of meaning. Rather, their view is that the reader now becomes a producer of the text. These theorists also argue that the text is plural in terms of its meaning and that it is created through referencing other texts. I will also briefly focus on connotation and how it impacts the reading or understanding of the signifier. The aim would be to highlight how Dylan brings into focus his main concerns regarding his situation. The fourth issue I wish to raise is Dylan’s use of binaries and how it impacts on, not only on the self, but also on the female subject¹⁰. Finally, I will focus on how Dylan borrows from the conventions of other genres, specifically from novels. This, once again, is not meant to focus on Dylan’s intentions, rather to look at how these references to other genres has impact on meaning. This borrowing can be viewed from varying perspectives such as consumerism, appropriation, parody and even tribute. It is not my intention to discuss all of these facets, but rather to highlight the many ways in which Dylan’s work can be viewed. My focus in this chapter remains on the text, rather than the author, and what meaning it generates. I also illustrate that the text provides a plurality of meanings because of its dependence on its cultural context. This will link directly to Chapter 2 where I argue that the self is textual and hence is constructed by drawing from many

¹⁰ In this thesis I will refer to Dylan’s wife as the female subject. By subject I mean she is the focus of his narrative.

cultural sources. An important argument I make in Chapter 2 is that the self, just like the text, is plural and unstable.

Bob Dylan has become an icon and is viewed as a world renowned songwriter. Over the course of 50 years, his output has had a major influence on popular culture. My interest in Dylan relates to the mechanisms he employs in constructing his lyrics and the sources that he appropriates in this construction. These lyrics are essentially narratives which focus on a wide range of topics from social injustice to spirituality to personal issues. It is not my intention to summarise Dylan's career, but to point out some issues relating to his methods as far as narratives are concerned. The first notable issue which I would like to highlight is related to that of character construction. What has been consistent in his work from his debut in 1961 to his current album *Tempest* (2012) is the positioning of the narrator on the margins of society. This issue will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2¹¹, where I argue that many of the personae and characters reflected in Dylan's texts are marginal, for example, the hobo and the cowboy. This marginalisation or solitude gives the narrator the opportunity to view circumstances from a particular perspective that is, from the outside. The next issue relates to travel highlighting, not only social issues, but also focussing on the landscape of America. Dylan's texts highlight a fascination with the "west" which is obvious on many of his albums¹². It becomes a metaphor for a pure, untouched society and landscape. In the trajectory of his career, from the issues relating to social injustices to issues relating to religion or personal matters, these two issues have remained a consistent feature of his narrative construction. The album under discussion, *Blood on the Tracks* has been dubbed not only his best but also his most personal album by critics such as Andy Gill (2004), Howard Sounes (2002) and Paul Williams (2004). The album deals with the separation from his wife and Dylan appears to be

¹¹ I discuss this marginality in Chapter 2 in reference to the various selves Dylan creates. I term this self 'the marginal/nomadic self'.

¹² Notable albums include *Bob Dylan*, *Pat Garret and Bill the Kid*, *John Wesley Harding*, *Nashville Skyline* and *Desire*.

the main character¹³ (albeit a fragmented one) who adopts traits of the political and mythical figures he created in his previous work as well as from the personae that he created for himself over the course of his career. For the character construction on *Blood on the Tracks*, Dylan's texts put the main character on the fringes of society and he is portrayed as a nomad. Only for this album, the text indicates a marginalisation which relates to his distance from his wife and the movement is a means to gain perspective and correct the wrongs that he is guilty of. The narratives on *Blood on the Tracks* (1975) trace the journey of someone who is trying to find personal freedom and in that journey develops as a person. It is a modern version of the *Bildungsroman*¹⁴ as well as the road narrative such as *On the Road*¹⁵ by Jack Kerouac and *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. Dylan employs the same narrative techniques of road narratives to a narrative of a more personal nature. In this chapter I will delve deeper into issues relating to Dylan's narrative construction, taking the above discussions into account. As a starting point I would like to offer a clear definition of narrative and highlight some of the theory I will be exploring.

A definition of narrative

A narrative can be described as any means of telling a story. For example poetry, fiction and non-fiction are all rooted in narrative. According to Patrick O'Neill, "the essential point of narrative, as everyone knows, is that it tells a story" (1994: 3). A question that arises from this definition is what actually constitutes a narrative? A narrative should relate an event and it should describe how the narrator responded to that particular event. Not only does a narrative have to describe how the narrator responded to events, but it should also be presented in a logical way. An "objective" news report, however, is one of the few exceptions to this rule where there is no room for personal perspectives. Narrative also depends on a

¹³ It should be noted that the techniques Dylan uses is to create 'fictionalised' versions of himself (for example political or mythical figures) to act out his personal narrative. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁴ Novel of development

¹⁵ In Chapter 2, I will discuss in a bit more detail how Dylan's work is linked to road narratives.

sender (narrator) and a receiver (audience) in order for it to be seen as a form of communication. The premise here is that we tell events to others in order to make sense of them. This process of sharing and the reaction received is what makes a narrative so essential to human beings. The interaction of narratives and the response they receive assists us with the process of making sense of our situation. Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps argue that narrative provides tellers with the opportunity to impose order on disconnected events. It allows for the continuity of past, present and imagined worlds (1996: 19). They also argue that narrative creates a dialogue between the self and society, thereby acting as a socialising agent for the individual. Added to this, Ochs and Capps state that narratives have the ability to “bring multiple, partial selves to life” (1996: 19). Narrative is a way the teller interacts with his or her cultural context. This interaction not only allows for us to connect with others but also is an important part of the socialisation process. This view is also supported by Robin A. Mello who states that narrative is transactional and developmental and contributes to the evolution of social knowledge. Furthermore, this communicative act is also a major means of disseminating information (2002: 233). In other words, the act of writing not only allows the writer to interact with an audience but also allows him/her to reflect on the self and its standing in society. The developmental aspect of writing relates to a writer doubling his role, that is, of creator and observer. Being an observer allows him/her to gain clarity on issues that he/she is addressing. In the context of *Blood on the Tracks*, narratives take the form of song lyrics, personae (which have inscribed meanings) as well as self construction. All three aspects work together to create meaning for the audience.

Plot and story

As mentioned earlier, events need to be logically presented to the audience in any type of narrative. Dividing the narrative into plot and story, respectively, further refines it into a readable entity. Briefly, this entails the author selecting events and, secondly, sequencing the

events. Plot can be described as a series of events providing conflict within a story.

According to David M. Boje, plot can be defined as “the chaining of cause and effect or stimulus and responses into a pattern, structure or network” (2001: 108). Plot could be summarised as the chronological structuring of events in a narrative. Taking this into account, plot could be described as the “spine of the story” (Wyatt and Schnellbach, 2011: 1). David Bordwell defines the *syuzhet* as the actual arrangement and presentation of the *fabula* in the narrative. He argues that the same *syuzhet* pattern could be embodied in any narrative type for example a novel, play or film (Bordwell, 1985: 4). This implies that plots could be recycled across various media thus leaving little room for originality. However, the way narratives are constructed and presented is what sets them apart. The way characters are constructed, the use of time, various repetitions, sequencing of events, description of places, mimesis, flashbacks (*analepsis*) and flash forwards (*prolepsis*) set narratives apart from each other in that either the reader responds to it or not. It is reasonable to assume that narratives are constructed for an audience and, in order to either inform or entertain that audience, the narrative has to be constructed in an appealing way. The story therefore relies on the details or techniques an author wishes to use to support the plot. David Bordwell argues that the *fabula* can be seen as the imaginary construct we create progressively and retroactively. The *fabula* “embodies the action as chronological” and can be seen as the pattern which the audience creates through cross-references and assumptions. The *fabula* can be seen as inter-subjective because the audience builds “the *fabula* on the basis of prototype schemata, template schemata and procedural schemata” (Bordwell, 1985: 3-4).

In other words, the story is what is narrated to the audience and from that telling they perceive meaning based on their subjectivity which results in the plurality of the text. *Fabula* therefore comprises the cues and perceptions the viewer receives from the film or story. K. Borg Gyllenbäck and M. Boman state that a story can be retold, represent a fixed event and

be referred to while the plot refers to the construction of temporal and spatial links (2009: 2). Narrative is what is told and plot is how the material is organised in order to affect the reader. The more effective these constructions are, the more the reader will be engaged in “the process of producing meaning” (Gyllenbäck and Boman, 2009: 2). A text which is conducive for reader co-production is known as a *writerly text*. Roland Barthes argues that the goal of a literary work should be to transform the reader from a consumer to a producer. He states that “the *writerly text* is ourselves writing” (1974: 4-5). As mentioned earlier the author and the reader form a partnership in terms of giving meaning to a narrative. In the next section, I briefly highlight the role of each in relation to narrative. Here I will highlight some of the theories I will be using in my analysis of Bob Dylan’s *Blood on the Tracks*.

The role of the author in narrative construction

As a point of departure, I would like to draw briefly from the theories of Roland Barthes relating to authorship. Barthes argues that the author of a narrative has lost his/her central position in narrative meaning. The author’s intention becomes decentred and the reader performs more of a central role. Barthes dubs this notion as “the birth of the reader” which inevitably results in the “death of the author.” In his article titled “The Death of The Author”, Barthes argues that to give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text (1984: 147). Barthes states that it is erroneous to analyse a text based on the author’s background or intention. The focus should be on the receiver of the text and how he/she responds to that particular text. He argues that it is not the author who speaks but the language (1984:143). In other words, the author stands outside of his/her own creation; he/she is removed from the world of language and thus should have no influence on the way the reader perceives meaning from a text. Barthes clarifies this by stating that as long as the author is outside the text, he/she should have no influence on meaning. Once the author disconnects himself/herself from the narrative, then only does writing begin. (1984: 142). An important

point that could be raised here is the issue of Dylan's status as an auteur¹⁶ which is implied by many biographers (Heylin, 1990:xi; C.P.Lee, 2004:xiv; Larry David Smith, 2005:x). In their assessment, they categorise Dylan as a genius, originator or an innovator who is constantly breaking new ground. The implication of Dylan as autonomous and authentic contributes to the myth of him being an auteur. In my opinion, viewing Dylan as an auteur is misguided based on the fact that he openly acknowledges appropriating ideas from the American cultural context. This context included music from black musicians in the form of the Blues, folksongs from Irish immigrants as well as American literature. The intertextual nature of Dylan's work further supports this view. In my opinion, Dylan can be viewed as a bricoleur. Charles Levi Strauss describes the bricoleur as follows: "The rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say, with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogenous" (1966: 17). The fact that Dylan assembles his text via "whatever is at hand" creates the notion that his intention becomes secondary to the text which is coded with many intertextual references. The text therefore cannot resemble reality on any level because it is a construct that functions within itself and far outside the realms of reality. This implies that the author becomes a representation (created by symbols and codes) in a text and therefore loses his/her authority to dictate meaning. This means that the author cannot be viewed as an originator of any text simply because texts are polysemic and authors can be viewed as bricoleurs. I will expand on this argument in relation to many of the issues I raise in Chapter 2. Gadamer quoted in K.M. Newton states: "The meaning of the text goes beyond its author not just sometimes but always" (1990: 44). Essentially what happens is the binary of author/reader collapses. One does not take precedence over the other; rather they are both important in the production of knowledge and multiple meanings.

¹⁶ The term 'auteur' which initially referred to the film industry is best defined by Andrew Sarris who argues in the book, *Auteurs and Authorship*, that the director who is able to embed his or her personality and style onto the film can be considered an auteur. In other words, the director helps shape the creative intent of the film (Barry Grant, 2008:42-43).

Derrida argues that there is no longer an ultimate signifier (God), but rather a system that is open to the play of deconstruction which gives rise to multiple meanings. In this process the signifier is reduced to signified, resulting in a multiplicity of discourse drawn out from the original text (in Adams and Searle, 1986: 83-93).

It should be noted here that Derrida's ideas overlap with the ideas of Barthes in his article "The Death of the Author". Here "God" refers to the author who is ultimately the centre of the text's meaning. Barthes specifically refers to "Author-God" (1984: 146). In the following Derrida explains how the ultimate authority of the "Author-God" has been decentralised, highlighting the importance of the reader: "We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1984:146). Aside from highlighting the relegation of the author as "God", the above quotation also hints at the intertextual nature of texts. Many poststructuralist theorists such as Derrida, Barthes and Julia Kristeva argue that all texts are intertexts. This means that texts do not mirror reality; rather, they mirror other texts. This position further negates the author's role in creating meaning through text. The text itself becomes paramount in expressing meaning. The author merely "borrows" texts from other texts to create his/her work. I will discuss this issue in relation to Dylan's work on *Blood on the Tracks*. H. Plett confirms this saying that texts are "mosaics of citation" or "echo chambers", wherein the text loses its origin. Textuality controls discourses more so than the subjects (1991: 1-4). It is important to note that even though the above arguments hold relevance, we cannot discredit any author. Although it is acknowledged that writing or texts are dependent on other texts, the importance of the author lies in the selection of various aspects of literature and moulding it into his/her text. This could be an intentional or unintentional move but ultimately the

“compiling” of various texts should be credited to the author. If the author did not “compile” his/her text, then there would be no object for the reader to engage with. Oscar Wilde supports this notion by stating that “it is only the unimaginative who ever invents. The true artist is known by the use he makes of what he annexes, and he annexes everything” (quoted in Ellmann, 1987: 155). I am not refuting the fact that the role of the author has been minimised, rather, I argue that it has shifted from being the centre, that is, a provider of meaning to a provider of text. To some extent, postmodern theory does question the author as the ultimate authority. Paul Teusner supports this by articulating that the postmodern paradigm is one in which the creator or source of a piece of information, or narrative, is no longer the centre of authority behind the information. Postmodernism purports a fleeting of images and information by which meaning is drawn by the reader or viewer or by the medium by which these images are communicated (1998: 2).

What can be deduced from the above is that the author is credited more for his powers of selection rather than for any act of originality. The author is responsible for selecting a plot and story (selecting events and sequencing events) and in that process, he or she will consciously or unconsciously draw from pre-existing texts. Wilde sees this as the height of artistry, the ability to draw from wide ranging sources in order to create a text. T.S. Elliot concurs with this sentiment by highlighting that “immature poets imitate; mature poets steal” (Cowart, 1993: 1). Julia Kristeva argues that the author remains part of the act of production, distribution and consumption of the text thus adopting a multifunctional role (Boje, 2001: 76). David Boje concludes that the author is not dead precisely because he/she selects all the intertextual components which make up the text (2001: 76).

The role of the reader

If one takes the above arguments into consideration, the logical question that would arise is what the role of the reader is. The birth of the reader implies that the reader also adopts a dual role, that is, one of creator and spectator. The reader would have to create through the process of reading the given text by making associations based on their subjectivity. L.A. Rossouw, in reference to his study on Joseph Conrad, defines the role of the reader as a stakeholder in the construction of meaning. He argues that readers accompany narrators on a journey and that these readers have to bring their own interpretive approach in order to construct a “hermeneutic journey that is uniquely his own” (Rossouw, 2007: 137). This implies that every reader who engages in the act of reading will be equipped with their own knowledge and frame of reference which includes their own intertextual connections. In the same way the author constructs a text relying on intertextual references so too does the reader in the act of reading. Meaning will be informed on what intertextual connections he/she makes with a given text. This will inevitably give rise to many subjective interpretations of the text. According to Ukko Hänninen, it does not matter what type of text it is, it will always be up to the reader to decide. There are as many interpretations as there are readers (1997: 63-64).

Background and context

The ten songs on *Blood on the Tracks* are unified by its consistent themes. Many albums conventionally have a set of songs that do not directly relate to each other. Rather, they are separate narratives with their own distinct themes. However, albums which aim to tell a story through their content, with a common thread running through them and with overlapping themes can be defined as concept albums. A concept album is defined as an album with a “unified theme which can be instrumental, compositional, narrative, or lyrical” (Shuker, 2002:5)¹⁷. Notable examples of concept albums are: Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon*;

¹⁷ Shuker, Roy: *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, page 5. 2002.

Simon and Garfunkel's *Bookends*; Beach Boys *Pet Sounds* and more recently Midlake's *Trials of Van Occupanther*. Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* fulfils the definition of a concept album because the lyrics of all ten songs allude to separation in some form or other and reflects upon the dissolution of the relationship between the protagonist and female subject. Larry David Smith supports this by claiming that "the album contains nothing but relational complaints" (2005: 195).

The following analysis of *Blood on the Tracks* will highlight how Dylan's texts contain various devices to ensure a coherent link between each of the songs. The first and most important aspect I would like to focus on is how the protagonist (Dylan) is portrayed. I will refer to the woman the protagonist/Dylan¹⁸ has separated from as the female subject from this point. Through the themes of separation, betrayal, deceit and salvation, the protagonist's introspective mood is revealed and is the source of most of the action on *Blood on the Tracks*. Over the course of the ten songs, the protagonist looks inward and examines the past, present and tries to find resolutions for the future.

In the following discussion I will highlight some of the pertinent narrative strategies Dylan employs in the construction of the album. The first aspect I will focus on is Dylan's construction of the narrator.

Characterisation and narration

The songs on *Blood on the Tracks* are mostly narrated from the perspective of the first person. The immediate implication that this has is that the narrator is examining the self and expressing his point of view. In the first song "Tangled up in Blue", the narrator reflects on the past as well as on the present as a means to give detail to the reader. The device Dylan uses to do this is through *analepsis* and *prolepsis*. It charts the present then moves to the past

¹⁸ In this thesis, Dylan is viewed as creator and protagonist in relation to *Blood on the Tracks*

and then returns to his present situation. The opening lines of Verse 1 reveal a memory of the past: “Early one mornin’ the sun was shinin’ / I was layin’ in bed / Wond’rin’ if she’d changed at all / if her hair was still red” (1-4). This verse, particularly line 3, serves as a marker that the narrator is thinking about the past. Here the protagonist is likely looking at the past and thinking about the other that was once close to him. The second and third lines in the above quotation reveal that they have severed their ties and they no longer have any contact. This flashback or analepsis could be seen as unlocking the memories that occur in all the songs. The phrase ‘early one morning’ implies an unlocking of a sequence of memories and this provides a perfect scene opener for the album. It also highlights that all the memories are based on the subjectivity of the narrator. He is the sole character who codes the narrative. This coded narrative can be seen as self-examination by the narrator. The shifting of temporal spaces complicates narration in the sense that the narrator is moving, not only from past to present, but also from present self to past self. The impact this has on the reader is that we are faced with a double bias from the narrator. Firstly, the narrator gives his point of view from the present perspective as well as from the past perspective. The memory of the narrator is the reader’s only source of gaining insight into the character. The reflection on the past also creates the sense of the narrator’s self-awareness and acceptance. The self-awareness comes about in reflecting on the past and the acceptance comes in through the resolutions he reaches in the present. In this regard there is a sense of Dylan’s text creating a dual narrative. As mentioned, part of the song is based in the present and the other in the past. The coding of the text implies that Dylan’s past has a direct impact on his present. Ultimately, the view of the narrator should not be based on the intention of the author but the text that he provides. In relation to *Blood on the Tracks*, Dylan is the author and the narrator, however, the text which he provides is the main source of interpretation. The text signifies emotion, time, resolution and conflict. What makes the first-person narration dubious is not only that it comes from a

single perspective and that it claims to be factual events but also because narratives do not represent “real” life. Rather, it organises life into a “tellable” narrative. The job of the narrator (through the author) is to construct a narrative to make it interesting. That would mean details will be omitted or included based on the subjectivity of the author. This notion is supported by David Carr who argues that narrative and real events do not “hang together” and that, inevitably, narrative will always present a distorted picture of events (1986:117). It is important to note that the deduction which can be made from this statement is that if narrative presents a distorted view of the events then likewise it also presents a distorted view of the characters. Many poststructuralists argue that in no way does narrative offer us reality, rather, it offers us language and it is on the language that we base our interpretations. Barthes supports this notion by arguing that narrative does not imitate reality. Language alone is the primary source of meaning (1984:124). Taking this statement into account, the narrative could be understood in multiple ways and may even contradict the intended meaning. Likewise this sole character can be viewed either favourably or unfavourably depending on the perception of the audience and what conclusions they draw from the text.

The second song on the album, “Simple Twist of Fate”, uses a similar example of analepsis. However, what is different is the shift from first to third person. In relation to the analepsis in “Simple Twist of Fate” the protagonist appears to be observing two people (hence the use of pronouns “they”, “he” and “she”) in the first five verses and in the final verse he relates his observation to his own situation. To state more clearly, the analepsis is related to his memory of the two people he might have observed in the past and he relates this memory to his present situation. This is substantiated by Paul Williams who reasons that “Simple Twist of Fate” is consciously projecting the narrator’s own experience into a story told by the third person. This is illustrated in verse 2: “They walked along by the old canal / A little confused, I remember well”; and then is dealt with at the end of the song: “People tell me it’s a sin /

To know and feel too much within.” Williams argues that he’s a created character who is telling a story about himself, like say Ishmael in *Moby Dick*¹⁹ (2004b: 29). This shifting from first person narrator to third person observer is effective in the sense that it reiterates the introspective mood of the protagonist. He is preoccupied by his loss. Any observation or contact with other people forces him to reflect or project those events to his own situation. When the protagonist observes any situation that mirrors his, either in the past or present, he becomes absorbed in that observation. This also contributes to the issue of distorted time which is prevalent throughout *Blood on the Tracks*. Marcus Foley states that the songs on *Blood on the Tracks* “meander through time and characters at will, never truly identifying its subjects or storyteller. Bob is everywhere and nowhere across this album; raconteur, protagonist and casual observer” (Foley, 2010: 2).

Another possible explanation could be that the protagonist who is located in the present is looking at his former self and evaluating, or rather, drawing conclusions from his past behaviour. This idea is elaborated on by Philippe Lejeune, Annette Tomarken and Edward Tomarken, who argue that autobiographies shift from first person narration to third person narration when the “author pretends to speak about himself as someone else might, by using the third person, or by inventing a fictive narrator to present the author's point of view or tell his life story” (1977: 1). Jacques Derrida argues that the writing of identity is a profoundly textual affair (in Wolfreys, 1998: 75). This puts the narrator in a position where he/she are both observer and participant. The implication here is that through the text the narrator might write as though they are observing himself/herself as a third person. This idea ties in with Lejeune, Tomarken and Tomarken as stated above. Derrida supports this statement:

As such a double narrator interprets, analyses, translates, she crosses the boundary between positions in order to narrate her role in the narrative. She participates in the

¹⁹ In the novel *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, Ishmael is the narrator but it is unclear whether he is telling the reader his own story or someone else’s.

rituals she analyses. She always observes herself as never quite herself and yet as a supplement of her own identity always refigured in writing. Such positions are multiple, textual. In such positions one writes oneself as someone other than the self which writes; one thinks of oneself as another person, divided from one's writing self, yet somehow connected. (in Wolfreys, 1998: 75)

In the aforementioned song, Dylan is connected to the 'third person' description because the circumstances mirror his. In the act of self-observation, he sees himself as a separate entity from the one who is in the act of writing. It could be seen as the present self looks at the past self from the perspective of the third person and hence the fragmentation of subjectivities.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality, in the context of Bob Dylan's career, plays a very important role in his work. In the early stages of Dylan's career it was common for folk musicians to adapt existing songs and reinvent them. Many artists would take songs that were in the public domain and either perform them in their entirety or use various aspects of them for example melody, phrases, themes or imagery. Other artists would write new verses, leading to songs being developed over a period of time. This was common practice for an artist like Bob Dylan who continues to follow this tact of adapting folk songs in the contemporary era. Intertextual references, whether the artist is conscious of its origins or not, is present in all works of art. The term intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva and was adopted by many poststructuralist theorists most notably Roland Barthes. He believed that all texts were based on other texts. An original idea was not possible because anything textual was reliant on other texts to make meaning of it. Barthes clarifies this by arguing the "text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture" (1984: 146). Here he argues that no text is original rather it is a composite of other works of art. The impact this has on the author is simply that he cannot claim originality rather the only power he/she has is to "mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them"

(Derrida, 1984: 146). The role of the author therefore is to organize these intertextual references in such a way that it creates something new. The operative word is “new” rather than “original” because the originality of any text is non-existent according to poststructuralist views. In terms of the folk tradition, many of the folk artists did not write their own material. People like Joan Baez and Pete Seeger “re-invented” songs²⁰ which were in the public domain. Bob Dylan’s debut album contained many public domain songs apart from two “original compositions.” According to Larry David Smith (commenting on Dylan): “he assimilated what he liked, dismissed what he did not, and transformed what he absorbed into a new Bob Dylan” (2005: 75). Dylan never denied the fact that he sometimes ‘stole’ ideas. He states the following in Paul Williams:

There’s no rule that claims that anyone can write their own songs. And I do. I write a lot of songs. You could take another song somebody else has written and make it yours.....Every so often you’ve got to sing songs that are out there. (2004a: 32)

At this point I would like to highlight some of the intertextual references Bob Dylan uses on *Blood on the Tracks*. As a starting point I would like to highlight very briefly some of Bob Dylan’s musical influences. From the onset of his career, he was very influenced by blues musicians, particularly Robert Johnson. One of the motifs of many blues songs is the significance of ‘morning’. Many blues songs open with the lines ‘early in the morning’ or a derivative thereof. This phrase generally signifies an occurrence of something catastrophic. Examples of songs which start in this manner are Memphis Minnie’s “Butcher Man”: “Butcher man in the morning won’t you please stop by my house”; Robert Johnson’s “Dead Shrimp Blues” and “Walking Blues”: “I woke up this morning” and John Lee Hooker’s “Me and The Devil Blues” which open with the line “early this morning”. In all of the aforementioned songs the “morning” signifies impending doom. This phrase is echoed in

²⁰ Examples of such songs: ‘John Hardy’, ‘Froggie Went a’Courtin’ and ‘We Shall Overcome’.

Dylan's "Tangled up in Blue": "Early one morning the sun was shining." The doom that follows is his reflection on a broken relationship and the impact it has on him. Another intertextual reference which relates more to stylistics of the blues rather than actual content is the repetition found in "Meet Me in the Morning". This is a common device used in the blues to emphasize a particular point. The repetition is highlighted in the following: "Meet me in the morning, 56th and Wabasha, 'Meet me in the morning, 56th and Wabasha.'" Another intertextual reference to blues songs is the presence of the "little rooster". The rooster appears in many blues songs and normally signals the occurrence of something negative. The song references "Back Door Man" performed by Willie Dixon whose lyrics contain the following: "When everybody trying to sleep, I'm somewhere making my midnight creep / Every morning the rooster crow, something tell me I got to go" (W.Dixon & C.Burnett, 1953). This song too, like Dylan's song, refers to marital discord. The rooster is a theme in several blues songs from the 1920s and 1930s, with Charlie Patton's "Banty Rooster Blues" being identified as 'obviously inspiring' "Little Red Rooster". Although musically the songs are different, there are some similarities in the lyrics. Patton's song includes "What you want with a rooster, he won't crow 'fore day" and "I know my dog anywhere I hear him bark." This is analogous to Willie Dixon's "I have a little red rooster, too lazy to crow 'fore day" and "Oh the dogs begin to bark" and to Memphis Minnie's "If You See My Rooster (Please Run Him Home)"²¹ which contain the lyrics "If you see my rooster, please run 'im on back home."²² According to Miriam Burstein: "literary history consists of authors reading, rewriting, alluding to, parodying, and saluting each other" (2006: 12). The allusion used by Dylan has connotations for the reader as far as their interpretation is concerned. The use of intertextuality therefore relies on knowledge beyond the actual text for it to have meaning.

²¹ Composed by Memphis Minnie and released in 1933 on Columbia Records.

²² *The Blues*. Hal Leonard Corporation. 1995. p. 117.

Another intertextual reference Dylan draws from is the Bible. This was common practice on his album *John Wesley Harding* (1969). On *Blood on the Tracks* biblical allusion is used overtly on “Shelter from the Storm”. The title of this song is based, firstly, on a verse which appears in Luke 55: 8 which reads: “I would haste to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest.” Dylan’s song focuses on a character that is in the midst of travelling and seeks solace from a woman who offers him protection from the storm: “Come in she says I’ll give you shelter from the storm.” Intertextually, this links to another parable in the Bible where Jesus tires from travelling and asks a Samaritan woman to give him a drink of water. This reference can be found in John 4:7. A further reference to the Bible in “Shelter from The Storm” is linked to Isaiah 4:6 where it is stated: “It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.” In this passage God offers the daughters of Zion protection from the elements. Further intertextual references in “Shelter from The Storm” relates specifically to the crucifixion of Christ. In this song Dylan makes reference to ‘crown of thorns’. This relates to John 19:2 in which the Roman soldiers make a crown of thorns for Jesus to place on his head. The following lines from “Shelter from the Storm”: “In a little hilltop village, they gambled for my clothes”, relates to Psalm 22:18 where the soldiers gambled for Jesus’s clothes.

This intertextuality related to the crucifixion is alluded to in “Idiot Wind” where the protagonist is betrayed by those close to him in the same way that Judas betrayed Jesus. Pertinent lines relating to the afore-mentioned can be found in verse 3 of the song: “There’s a lone soldier on the cross, smoke pourin’ out of a boxcar door/ you didn’t know it, you didn’t think it could be done, in the final end he won the wars after losing every battle.” Aside from drawing from Biblical texts, “Idiot Wind” bears a resemblance to Baudelaire’s “The Carcass”. In verse 5, the protagonist describes a scene at the roadside where he was ‘daydreaming’: “You hurt the ones that I love best and cover up the truth with lies/One day

you'll be in the ditch, flies buzzin' around your eyes/Blood on your saddle" (Lines 3-5). The tone and imagery of these lines can be compared to Baudelaire's poem. If one looks at the following lines one is able to see the similarities: "The flies buzzed and hissed on these filthy guts/From which came forth black battalions of maggots, /which oozed out like heavy liquid" (Lines 1-3). Michael Gray in the *Bob Dylan Encyclopedia* confirms this comparison: "Wissolik & McGrath's *Bob Dylan's Words*, 1994, suggests a direct parallel between lines in 'Idiot Wind': 'One day you'll be in the ditch, flies buzzin' around your eyes / Blood on your saddle. . . blowing through the flowers on your tomb'—and a passage from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* poem "The Carcass" (2006: 59). This intertextuality gives the protagonist an opportunity, to say something vaguely and on a superficial level leaving the reader to fill the gaps which could be clarified in the source of the intertextual references. The above are examples of double-coding where the text refers to another text as well as focussing on the message it hopes to convey. According to Barthes:

The practice of double-coding plays with the concepts of signifier and signified to evoke a response from an audience already located in a media and message-saturated world. It is almost as if everything and anything that can be said, has been said. The only remaining creative option is to rejig and manipulate existing narratives, images and texts (Share, 2004: 4).

This means that the signs become more complicated. Due to the intertextual nature of texts, it becomes difficult for a signifier to have only one signified. What happens is one signifier gives rise to another signifier and based on the knowledge of the reader no consistent signified can be attained. The double-coding takes one story and relates it to another. In relation to Dylan, the intertextual references refer to existing texts, and then relate those texts to his situation and his text. To complicate matters even further, Dylan often serves as his own intertextual reference, either through borrowing phrases from songs in his canon or using similar themes. The double-coding then relates one song to another. For example, the motif of 'rain' is used throughout *Blood on the Tracks*. An example which I extract from the second

song on the album, “You’re a Big Girl Now”, reads as follows: “And I’m back in the rain.” Here “rain” becomes a symbol of being marginalized. This symbol appears on many songs from other albums namely “Just like a Woman”²³ (“Tonight as I stand inside the rain”), “If not for you”²⁴ (“If not for you the sky would fall, rain would gather too/Without your love I’d be nothing at all”). Here the signifier “rain” is coded figuratively rather than literally. In the context of the above examples, “rain” is placed in binary opposition to love. If you are without love you are in the “rain”. Meaning is complicated in the sense that if you are not familiar with the intertextual references, you might not make the connection. “Rain” only signifies being without love because Dylan repetitively and consistently codes it that way across a variety of songs. To make that connection, you would have to be familiar with his body of work and their connection to each other. Failing that the signified is destabilized. The point I am trying to make here is that intertextuality complicates the structuralist idea that signifier and signified can be easily connected. Terry Eagleton argues that the sign can take on a new meaning when the context changes (1996:129). In the above examples Dylan recodes ‘rain’ to a more figurative meaning. By consistently doing so across various songs, the sign ‘rain’ assumes symbolic meaning. Dylan’s consistent intratextual references to his own songs results in the sign “rain” being consistently associated with pain and isolation.

A final example of how Dylan uses intertextual references drawn from his own songs can be found in ‘If You See Her Say Hello’. This song bears a resemblance to ‘Girl from the North Country’ from his album *Nashville Skyline* (1969). In both songs Dylan passes a message on to his former lover through a third person. Thematically the songs are identical except that in “Girl from the North Country” he offers the assurance that he has not forgotten her in the lines: “She might think that I’ve forgotten her, don’t tell her it isn’t so.” In “If You see Her

²³ The song is about two people drifting apart.

²⁴ A song about dependence on another person. The narrator believes that if this person leaves him, he will be lost.

Say Hello” the roles are reversed as stated in the following: “I’m a-wonderin’ if she remembers me at all.” These phrases are identical in meaning except that it uses different words. The two songs could be seen as synonymous. When connected to each other the immediate connection is that the “her” in “If You See Her Say Hello” is in fact the “Girl from the North Country”. It is not necessarily a conscious effort on the part of the author to make this connection, however, the text and its signs reveal this connection. “If You See Her Say Hello” becomes double-coded where the reader focuses on its text as well as on the text related to “Girl from the North Country”. This enforces the message of the protagonist whose anguish is understood in relation to both songs. Because *Blood on the Tracks* is written in the first person, the reader is focussed on aspects related to that individual character. However, just as intertextuality complicates the signifier/signified, so too does Dylan’s use of binaries. I will highlight a few of these examples and elaborate on the effect it creates.

The major binary which is set up in *Blood on the Tracks* is the temporal distance between the protagonist and the female subject. This distance not only creates her as the “other” but also creates a “present/past” binary. Because Dylan’s narrative is narrated from the perspective of the first person, the impression created is that he is situated in the present because the text is read from the perspective of the present, as well as being narrated from the present. His point of view is expressed while the female subject has no voice. Her past, present, and to some extent her future, is created by Dylan who obtains authority through his narration. She is subjugated to a secondary role because of her physical absence from narration. This gives rise to a second binary, namely that of present/absent. However, this binary is superficial in the sense that the text creates her just as Dylan is created through the text. Whatever he describes has some connotation to her thus making her present in some form. She is described by default because when Dylan comments on himself she is always a reference point. Dylan cannot speak about himself without the text referring to her. He cannot exist textually without

her existence. The text creates a general binary on the level that whatever he is, she is not. Many poststructuralists such as Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva and Michel Foucault argue that narratives are created through opposition. For example, *man* cannot exist in texts without *woman* which serves as a counterpart and makes sense of the signified which relates to *man*. However, Derrida argued against the neat compartmentalisation of these binaries believing that at any point these binaries could collapse and fold in to each other. He describes this notion in the following: *Différance* can be understood as signifying inequality and distinction, as well as identity and non-identity. At the same time, it is neither word nor concept, thought nor image, active nor passive. According to Derrida, *Différance* indicates the middle voice. “It precedes and sets up the opposition between passivity and activity” (1973: 130). On *Blood on the Tracks*, Dylan naturalises the binaries between himself and the female subject by repetitiously referring to their differences. These come about in overt binary descriptions which will be highlighted briefly. The first example I wish to highlight is extracted from “You’re a Big Girl Now”. The binary highlights the differing circumstances of the protagonist and his former lover: “And I’m back in the rain and you are on dry land” (Line 3). As discussed earlier the signifier ‘rain’ signifies being in a negative situation while ‘dry land’ signifies the converse. Another less obvious binary is constructed in “Shelter from the Storm”. In the refrain of the song the protagonist is offered shelter by a woman, “Come in she said I’ll give you shelter from the storm”, thus repeating the binary of rain/dry land. A third example highlights the wisdom/ignorance binary. This example can also be found in “You’re a Big Girl Now”: “Love is so simple to quote a phrase / You’ve known it all the time I’m learning it these days” (Lines 19-20). In all three instances, in terms of the hierarchy of binaries, Dylan attributes the negative aspect to his situation. When examining the text, however, there are instances where the binaries collapse through various textual references. The first appears in “Tangled up in Blue” where Dylan describes himself on a similar level to

his former lover: “We always did feel the same” (Line 89). This phrase on some level contradicts the initial binaries he sets up. The second example appears in ‘Simple Twist of Fate’: “I still believe she was my twin” (Line 28). This implies a similarity or a ‘sameness’ which again contradicts the binaries that are set up throughout the album. This image of a ‘twin’ alludes to Dylan’s astrological sign, Gemini²⁵ which is symbolised by twins who are separate entities, namely Castor and Polydeuces, but could also become a united entity, Dioscuri. Brian Clark expands on this idea in the following:

The pain of Gemini is borne from a severed connection to an ancient memory of being whole..... Twin stories depict the range of feeling in the sibling relationship from enmeshment through to estrangement, and consistently reveal the themes of duality, sacrifice, separation, loss and a searching for the other. (2000: 1)

This ties in with the general theme of *Blood on the Tracks* where Dylan is separated from the female subject with whom he longs to reunite. By reuniting with her they/he will become complete. Through this need he recreates the self through his narrative to enable a possible reunion.

Finally, in “Idiot Wind”, which deals with the theme of betrayal, all oppositions are questioned. Dylan implies that it is difficult to discern differences because they could change based on the context. To exemplify, in verse 5, the protagonist states in relation to the female subject: “cover up the truth with lies” (Line 3). Although there is a clear cut distinction between the binaries, the sense is created that the one could become the other thus resulting in the collapse of the binaries. Likewise in verse 7: “What’s good is bad and what’s bad is good.” This highlights the confusion and the inability to make any clear judgements about the situation at hand. In a sense the protagonist takes the binaries and merges them. They become equals instead of conflicting ideals. Finally, in verse 7, an ironic twist of how these binaries

²⁵ Dylan’s birth date is on the 24 May which makes him a Gemini.

feed off each other: “You’ll find out when you reach the top/you’re on the bottom” (Lines 4-5). Here the binaries which were clearly defined become confusing and the idea that the protagonist and the objects are similar rather than different. Through all the anger and confusion so prevalent in this song, a moment of clarity is reached by the final verse: “I been double-crossed now for the very last time and now I’m finally free/I kissed goodbye the howling beast on the borderline which separated you from me” (Lines 1-2). In this verse, the protagonist acknowledges that the object could also be suffering in the same way that he is. He comes to a moment of clarity, just as he does in the first three songs, expressed in verse 8: “I kissed goodbye the howling beast on the borderline which separated you from me.” Here the protagonist is expressing his attempt to put his anger aside and move on with his life. The outward anger now turns back to introspection and he adopts a more sympathetic tone in the following lines: “You’ll never know the hurt I suffered nor the pain I rise above/And I’ll never know the same about you, your holiness or your kind of love/And it makes me feel so sorry” (Lines 3-5). Here the protagonist acknowledges that the object could be suffering the same way that he is. He expresses obvious empathy which transforms the angry tone of the song into something more sympathetic. In these lines, both the protagonist and the female subject share the same hurt, suffering and, by extension, the responsibility for the unraveling of the relationship. Not one or the other but both are equally at fault. Matt Philips argues that “Dylan imbues the suffering that “I” tells us of with a certain redemptiveness; he has wronged and been wronged, he suffers for it, ultimately his suffering leads to redemption and understanding tempered with regret” (2002: 5).

If there was any doubt of the sentiments stated above, the final chorus of ‘Idiot Wind’ sees the protagonist taking joint responsibility for the failings of the relationship. The accusatory tone of the previous choruses turns into a confession where both protagonist and object are

implicated. The line from the previous choruses changes from: “*You’re* an idiot, babe” to “*We’re* idiots, babe.” The change of pronouns further emphasizes the protagonist’s recognition of the role he played in their separation. The text also reveals how the very distinct binaries become unstable and the self and other becomes a single entity. According to Terry Eagleton; “Man therefore needs this other even as he spurns it, is constrained to give a positive identity to what he regards as no-thing” (1996: 133). This quotation implies that what is “othered” in the text by Dylan and described as different might have more similarities than he first imagined. The differences which are stated are not absolute but are subject to change within a give context. Eagleton argues that “perhaps the outside is also somehow inside, what is alien is also intimate” (1996: 133).

The final issue I wish to raise very briefly is how *Blood on the Tracks* relates to road narratives and the *Bildungsroman*. Both deal with self development through movement. The movement and interaction with the landscape brings about clarity and assists in the catharsis in which Dylan is partaking. These two genres are briefly discussed in Chapter 2 in order to explain how Dylan creates the self on the album. I will explain how Dylan creates various selves which interact on various levels with his situation and how he eventually reaches closure.

The aim of this chapter was to outline the narrative techniques used in the construction of *Blood on the Tracks*. My focus was primarily on the text and what it conveyed in terms of codes or signs, rather, than looking at Dylan’s intention. I looked specifically at intertextual references and binaries to explain how the text reveals issues that may not have been consciously part of Dylan’s intent. This interpretation also revealed that there are no fixed signifieds to the signifiers constructed. This impacted on the meaning of the text in the sense that signifiers had a literal as well as symbolic meaning especially when related to the

intertextual sources it drew from. This chapter also serves as a point of departure for Chapter 2 where I focus in more detail on how the self is created through the text. In the next chapter, I will also look at the fragmented self by drawing on the work of postmodern and poststructuralist theorists most notably, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. I will also look at many of Mikhail Bakhtin's work on polyphony and dialogism to show how Dylan creates polyphonic texts on *Blood on the Tracks*. Chapter 1 will serve as a foundation for the discussion that will take place in Chapter 2.

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CHAPTER 2: The production of multiple personae and the construction of the self on Blood on the Tracks.

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I looked at the narrative construction of *Blood on the Tracks* (1975) from a poststructuralist perspective. The focus was on how the centrality of the writer shifted more towards the centrality of the text and towards the birth of the reader. My focus is not on Dylan's intention but on the text and the devices used to express meaning. Ultimately, the meaning of the text can be understood in multiple ways. I illustrate this by highlighting how signs have more than one signifier. I argue that the context in which the sign is used would determine its signifier. This opens the text to multiple interpretations and Dylan's intentions become secondary. Likewise, I argue that binaries are not fixed into polar opposites; they may collapse and merge in the context of a text. Chapter 1 also focussed on the impact of intertextuality on the text and how it can contribute to a multiplicity of meanings. I also argue that Dylan could be categorised as a bricoleur rather than an auteur, which many critics claim he is, because of the intertextual nature of his work as well as his appropriation of many other artists work. This chapter will focus on what effect the construction of the narrative has in terms of how Bob Dylan constructs the self on the album. Here my focus will be on how the self becomes fragmented, not only over the course of the album, but also within the parameters of individual songs. In terms of theory, I will focus heavily on poststructuralists, such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, who argue that the author in the text becomes decentred. This has implications for the self, which I argue is a textual construct, in the sense that it too becomes decentred and its "voice" fragmented. The logic here is that if the text is made up of a "tissue of quotations" then the same principle would apply to the self. This would then imply that the text, as well as the self, is conceived from an intertextual interplay. This intertextual nature of the self would then imply that each self is inscribed with a myriad

of voices containing a myriad of viewpoints. I argue that, because of this plural nature of the self, the text in which this plurality appears are polyphonic. Both Barthes and Foucault argue that the decentering of the author allows the reader to also be a producer of the text. Again by association, the same principle applies to the self. This focuses on the relational nature of the self which is dependent on a dialogue with others in order to “become”. This dialogue also contributes to the polyphonic nature of the text. For this argument, I rely heavily on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and works which relate to his theories. In order to do justice to a study of this nature, I use poststructuralist theories, predominantly Foucault’s “What is an Author?” and “Death of the Author” by Barthes. I will discuss the relationship between narrative and the self as well as how the self becomes fragmented in autobiography or personal narratives. This will be followed by a discussion of theories related to Bakhtin’s polyphony and dialogism. Thirdly, I will examine some of the personae that Bob Dylan created from 1961-1975. This discussion is important because all these personae appear as characters in some form on the narratives of *Blood on the Tracks*. This opinion is informed by Christophe Lebold, who argues that Dylan’s personae emerge from the lyrics and interact with his public image. He argues that this enables the artist to construct and deconstruct a fictional “Bob Dylan”. The songs eventually come to fictionalise his biography in a “theatre of identities” (2007: 57). This section was inspired by Stephen Scobie who argues in his book *Alias Bob Dylan* that Dylan should be read like a text with “as much care and intelligence as one would devote to the reading of a poem” (1991: 19). He justifies this by stating that the persona is textual and that the public image is constructed and that we should take a semiological approach to persona which involves various postures and masks (Scobie, 1991: 19). My analysis of Dylan’s²⁶ many identity shifts highlights the fact that the Dylan persona is composed of a composite of many other persona and, likewise, the characters he creates in

²⁶ It should be noted that Bob Dylan is “a fictional character” created by Robert Zimmerman (Bob Dylan’s birth name).

his songs are not only composites of other characters, but they also contain some elements of Dylan's personality. Christophe Lebold argues compellingly that Dylan uses his songs to write himself by constructing a series of numerous and competing personae. It is for this reason that I will "read Dylan like a (polyphonic) text"²⁷. In relation to Dylan's creation of these personae, I will trace the origins of some of these personae and discuss the possible impact it had on the cultural context. I will also discuss how the media, record companies and biographers contributed to the construction of the Bob Dylan identity. The final discussion will illustrate how Bob Dylan presents a variety of selves on the album which I categorise as (i) the past and present selves; (ii) the marginal/nomadic self; (iii) the pastoral self and; (iv) the messianic self. Within the context of these categories, I will highlight how Dylan's fragmented selves interact and negotiate with the separation from the female subject²⁸. The point I am trying to make in this section is that Dylan creates these character types to perform his personal narrative. By doing this, he not only fragments the self on many levels, but he also creates a dialogised²⁹ text. In this section I argue that the selves Dylan created *on Blood on the Tracks* and the personae that he created for himself as an artist were inscribed with many connotations and could thus be interpreted in a variety of ways. This argument will be elaborated on briefly in relation to Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and polyphony.

The fragmented self in autobiography

Structuralists hold the view that the self can be regarded as central and that it represents a unified being. This unified being represents rationality and a self conscious view that it is an

²⁷ This is an amalgamation of the Scobie comment ('read Dylan like a text') and a comment made by Hermans, H., Rijks, T, & Kempen, H (1993) who state that they approach 'the self as a polyphonic novel'.

²⁸ I will refer to Dylan's wife as the female subject.

²⁹ This terminology is used by Bula Maddison in the article titled 'Liberation Story or Apocalypse: Reading Biblical Allusion and Bakhtin Theory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*' (2007 :2) This idea will be used to illustrate how the text contains multiple meanings as well as how Dylan and the persona he creates can be read in many ways.

individual and thus distinct from others. In her discussion of Georges Gusdorf, who is recognised as one of the first theorists of autobiography, Susan Friedman states that

[f]or Gusdorf, the consciousness of self upon which autobiography is premised is the sense of 'isolated being,' a belief in the self as a discrete, finite 'unit' of society. Man must be an island unto himself. Then, and only then, is autobiography possible. (Friedman, 1988: 36)

The problem with this definition is simply that it does not accommodate the relational aspects of human nature (e.g. community, interdependence and identification) or the influence environmental factors have on the individual. The individual's relationships with others shape them in the sense that the self is created in relation to others. We look at others as reference points to decipher what we should or should not become. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Jean-François Lyotard argues that "a *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations" (1979: 3). This suggests that the self is developed, not by being autonomous, but by being relational. John Paul Eakin argues that "all identity is relational" and that the self is defined by and lives in relation to others (Eakin, 1999: 43). This relational aspect means that the self develops and changes constantly rather than remaining stable. In other words, through the passage of time the self changes, thereby, abandoning former manifestations of it. In the context of personal narratives, which is my focus, the self is relational in terms of its connection to others, to past selves as well as to the environment and the reader which engages with the text. To elaborate, the present self narrates the past self and establishes grounds for a new creation in a new context (the future). Personal narratives also rely on interaction from an audience who engage with the text through reading. Amy Faulds Sandefur states that "the importance of affiliation is also reflected in the fact that the openness of the form calls for reader involvement, as the novels encourage a connection between the narrator-protagonist and the reader" (2003: 3). This further enforces the relational nature of the self. The relational nature of the self implies that

the self is in a constant state of transformation, the catalyst for this transformation provided by the various relationships the self enters into. Eakin argues that “the self is dynamic, changing, and plural” (1999: 98). This constant change would then give rise to a fragmentation of consciousness. With particular reference to personal narratives it can be argued that narrative and self cannot be separated. In fiction, the writer makes choices which are based on personal experiences; he or she assigns personalities to characters which inevitably are drawn from their frame of reference. This principle applies, to an even greater extent, in personal narratives. The writer writes about his/her life from his/her point of view. All memories are projected in the way they understand it, focusing on the personal significance they draw from it. In other words, narratives are created through the writer’s experience of the world. In this way self and narrative are intertwined. It should be noted that, even though the writer writes from his/her perspective, the text could reveal a level of meaning which was not intended by the writer. As mentioned earlier, the self cannot be seen as autonomous because of its relations to others as well as to the immediate environment. The self transforms as it navigates in specific environments which provide the individual with experience. Lisa Capps and Elinor Ochs argue that we get to know ourselves through the use of narrative, as well as, forming relationships with others (1996: 20). They argue that the self and narrative are inseparable and that entities are given meaning through being experienced and “the notion that narrative is an essential resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness” (Capps and Ochs, 1996: 21). This quote illuminates the inseparability of narrative and self. In line with postmodern and poststructuralist arguments, I would argue that the self is a product of the narrative rather than a vestige of reality. Through negotiating with language, we establish and create an identity or self by recalling our experiences. By recalling experiences, I mean transforming memory into narrative which in turn gives character to the self. The recalling of experiences creates a dialogue between the present self

and the past self. In this way, the self becomes fragmented into a past and present entity. John Updike argues that the need to write down our life stories is a way of coming to terms with the otherwise unbearable knowledge “that we age and leave behind this litter of dead, unrecoverable selves” (Eakin, 1999: 93 citing Updike, 1989: 226). The point raised here by Updike is that in life writing, we are forced to face past selves and by facing these former selves the writer becomes fragmented on one level (narrator, protagonist and subject) while on another level, the narrator is split between present (the person writing the story) and the past self (the person being written about). This textual nature of the self raises an important connection to Roland Barthes who states that “the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture” (1977: 170). This would then mean that through text, the self can also be seen as being made up of “tissue drawn from innumerable centres of culture” (1977: 170). I argue here that this idea relates to why the self is fragmented and can be seen as an amalgamation of many sources and influences drawn from our cultural context. This idea is enforced by Felicity Nussbaum who focuses her comments specifically on autobiography. She states that autobiographical writing “makes use of what has already been thought and said” (1989: 16). Aside from questioning the origin of meaning, Nussbaum implies that the self is a creation of many “authors” rather than just one. A self is created through a myriad of voices rather than being created by a central author. Ultimately, what this means is that the authorial voice becomes decentered because of the polysemic nature of the discourse. This gives rise to what Bakhtin refers to as “multi-voicedness”. These ideas relate directly to Bakhtin’s notion of polyphony which I would like to focus on in some detail especially in relation to personal narratives.

Nation and the self

In this brief section, I argue that the ways of looking back and selecting what is important for inclusion in a narrative is informed by the context in which the writer is based. By this I mean that much of what we deem important is culturally informed. When the writer reflects his/her sense of selfhood they are, generally speaking, also reflecting aspects of selfhood as perceived by their cultural context. The way we tell stories is also largely informed by culture and the content of stories informed by what is important to tell and what is not. The first issue relates to self and culture and how the two feed off each other symbiotically. By this I mean if you construct the self, you also construct an idea of a culture and its norms and values. I say this because the self is always part of culture and in many ways represents that culture, willingly or not. To elaborate, personal narratives give identity to cultures just as cultures give identity to self in its narratives. Philip Bracher argues that strong ties exist between nationality and autobiography. He argues that nations and the self also have strong links and similar objectives in the sense that they are both preoccupied with establishing themselves in their own imaginary space by differentiating themselves from others, the birth of a new self within the boundaries of autobiographical writing has therefore often been linked to the birth of a nation (Bracher, 2009: 171).

Bracher links this to the concept formulated by Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities. Benedict Anderson argues that national identity is a construct of the imagination rather than an essence. Benedict Anderson calls the autobiography the "biography of the nation" (1991: 203). He argues that identity must be narrated because it cannot be remembered. He applies this principle, not only to personal identity, but to national identity as well which, as mentioned earlier, seem to function in tandem (1991: 204). This ties in with Bakhtin's argument that how we write and how we understand a text is influenced by our context (in Lodge, 1990: 78). Anderson supports this argument by stating that

autobiographical narratives, just like newspapers and novels, are set in “homogenous, empty time” (1991: 26). Because of this, their frame is historical and their setting sociological (1991:204). It is for this reason that autobiographies serve as purveyors, not only of personal identity, but for national identity as well. Eakin acknowledges that the reading and writing of an autobiography is not a timeless process, but embedded in ongoing history and the search for identity of both the individual writer and reader, and the community in which they live (1985:25). In the context of this thesis, I argue that the various identities that Dylan adopts have multiple connotations related to American culture.

Bakhtin and the polyphonic voice

Bakhtin defines polyphony literally as “multi-voicedness” (1994: 279). My understanding of this concept is that in a given text, multiple voices interact on the same level as the author. Instead of the author being at the centre, he/she competes with other voices which may either be in agreement or disagreement with their point of view. Ultimately, the polyphonic or dialogic interaction is almost certainly bound to offer the reader varying ideological perspectives. In other words, when an utterance is polyphonic in nature different levels of dialogue will be taking place. These different levels will then determine the meaning of the utterance. In relation to autobiography, all have an intended receiver or listener who observes the utterance. This observation of the utterance by the receiver constitutes a dialogue and thus contributes to the polyphonic nature of the utterance. This ties in with poststructuralist ideologies, particularly the ideas of Roland Barthes, who argues that the reader of the text is also a producer of the text. Barthes states that texts in their multiplicity are drawn from many different sources and belongs solely to the reader in terms of determining meaning behind them (1977: 6). This decentres the author and collapses the binary of author/reader and gives rise to Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism or the polyphonic voice. Michel Foucault supports this by arguing that the author is merely a “function” rather than an origin of discourse. (Lodge,

1990: 157). David Lodge argues that the text is a system capable of generating an infinite number of meanings when activated by the reader (1990: 158). To reiterate, Bakhtin's theory of polyphony is based on the premise that texts hold meaning because of the dialogue between its participants. Bakhtin also argues that the context (the environment and the players existent in the environment) in which the utterance takes place is paramount because ultimately it shapes the meaning of the utterance. Lodge argues that we locate meaning in the dialogic process which is a dialogue between the speaking subjects, between readers and texts and between texts themselves. No utterance stands alone, rather, the utterance is dependent on what provoked it (context). He also argues that the utterance shapes itself in anticipation of future responses (1990: 86). This awareness of context provokes self-consciousness toward what the reader expects in terms of objections and general points of view. Added to this, the context of a narrative provides it with pre-existing ideas and norms. Therefore when a speaker performs an utterance, it draws from the context's pool of ideas and norms to create the utterance. Lodge supports this by stating that words we use come to us already imprinted with meanings, intentions and accents or previous users, and any utterance we make is directed towards some real or hypothetical other (1990: 21). This not only implies that the utterance is intertextual and dialogic but, more significantly, it implies that the performer of the utterance performs with a polyphonic voice. By this I mean the performer could be split into plural identities which speak to each other across time (past, present and future). According to David Danow the performer's discourse has three temporal aspects (1991: 39). What one says is shaped by the past because past usage and context of the words influence their present meaning. The present sense is clear; one speaks in a present context to those currently present. But the utterance also lives on into the future because others may remember what one has said and reference it and continue to dialogue with it (Danow, 1991: 39). These theories will be particularly relevant in my later discussion of *Blood on the Tracks*

because, as Dylan confronts his inner turmoil, he is forced to confront all aspects of himself and this creates a dialogue on multiple levels. Bakhtin confirms that the notion of dialogue opens up the possibility of differentiating the inner world of one and the same individual in the form of an interpersonal relationship (1973: 44). In the context of *Blood on the Tracks*, Dylan's inner thoughts are uttered and hence "dialogical relations spontaneously occur between this utterance and the utterance of the imagined others" (Bakhtin, 1973: 44).

Bob Dylan and his creations

Even though this chapter specifically deals with the construction of the self by Bob Dylan on *Blood on the Tracks*, it is impossible to ignore the importance of Bob Dylan's identity construction over the course of his 50-year career as an artist. Due to the limitations of this thesis, I would restrict my discussions related to Bob Dylan's construction of various personae to the period 1961-1974. I limit it to this period simply because this is the period which preceded the release of *Blood on the Tracks* in 1975. The significance of this period is that, from the onset of his career, Dylan created various personae to impart his message through his songs. My argument is that the personae that he created in this period filtered into the narrative of *Blood on the Tracks*. It was as if these characters were appropriated to act out the very personal narrative constructed on the album. I should point out that I refer to persona on two levels. The first, the actual personae Dylan created for himself and, secondly, the personae given to characters in his songs. Christophe Lebold argues that the study of Dylan's masks will show how he uses archetypal poetic identities (prophet, trickster, man of sorrow) as fictional figurations of himself that he then offers to the audience (2007: 57). These lyrical personae can be approached as texts³⁰ that may become objects of analysis in their own right (Lebold, 2007: 57). In this section I will approach Dylan's many identities as a "text" to highlight how he represents a fragmented self. Dominic Strinati argues that the diffusion of

³⁰ Stephen Scobie first raised this point in his book *Alias Bob Dylan*.

collective identities and the sense of personal identity has also become more fragmented (1995: 238). Douglas Kellner argues that, in contrast to modernist conceptions, identity is no longer fixed and that the subject can be seen as fragmented (1995: 233). It is important for me to undertake this approach because *Blood on the Tracks* contains many of the archetypes or “fictional figurations” of Dylan as mentioned by Lebold. The self present on *Blood on the Tracks* is fragmented, generally, in the same way that Dylan (the person) is fragmented. Hopefully the following discussion will illuminate how the personae that Dylan created over this period filtered into the text on *Blood on the Tracks*. In this section I will focus on three basic periods of Dylan’s career: The Folk Period (1961-1964), The Rock Period (1965-1966), and The Americana Period³¹ (1967-1974).

My name it is nothing

The first significant creation of Bob Dylan was his transformation from Robert Zimmerman to Bob Dylan. Perhaps I should restate and say that Bob Dylan was created by Robert Zimmerman in 1959³². The changing of his name is significant firstly because he abandons his family name which could be seen as an abandoning of his origin and, secondly, he abandons his Jewish surname for a typically Anglo-Saxon name³³. Along with the name change, many biographers report that Dylan created a fictional biography that changed whenever it suited him. Sandra Wynands states that “when Dylan started out.....it seemed essential to appear steeped in tradition and wise beyond one’s years. He often claimed to have spent time with blues musicians in the South. He also claimed to be part of a travelling show after having been orphaned” (1998: 2). This fictional biography served as a template for Dylan’s future identities. The claims of being an orphan and part of a travelling show

³¹ Larry David Smith (2005) categorises the period from 1967-1974 as the Americana Period.

³² Stated by Clinton Heylin, 25

³³ Sandra Wynands argues that this change of name especially the father’s last name signifies a break with tradition and the subversion of the symbolic order (1998: 2).

highlight his representation of himself as rootless³⁴. These are traits he would incorporate in many of his songs characters as well as the future personae which he personally adopted.

Christophe Lebold elaborates on this in the following:

The fundamental gesture behind Dylan's *oeuvre* is indeed the permanent construction and deconstruction of himself. Dylan, ever in search of a new 'mask', has successively been a (non-)protest singer, a beat-like symbolist poet, an absurdist rocker with a touch of the Shakespearian clown, a country-music everyman in a bucolic fiction, a wounded man and lyrical poet in the early seventies, a Christian preacher announcing the apocalypse, and again, an everyman, who carries the fate of mankind and our mortality in the persona of the vagrant blues artist, whose continuous touring, year after year, becomes more and more allegorical of our ontological rootlessness. (2007: 63)

Barry Shank argues that much of American music is caught up for a search in authenticity.

He argues that this search often proceeded through artifice and that American popular music can be seen as a history of illusions and masks (2002: 98). I will use this quote as a contextual marker for the discussion that follows as well as the idea that Bob Dylan "cultivated the instability of identity as a persona"³⁵. I also argue that because Dylan changed his image and his musical styles on a regular basis, he was often described as an auteur by critics.

Biographies and documentaries often depict Dylan as an originator and creator who is autonomous. I contradict this idea by arguing that because Dylan's music always drew influence from other sources in an overt way in the same way that the personae that he adopted were drawn from various contexts to which he was exposed; he cannot be seen as an auteur but rather as a bricoleur. This discussion is important because it highlights the multiplicity of meanings and associations his music and personae could hold because it is drawn from so many different sources. This multiplicity results in Dylan being read in many contradictory ways and, in many instances, contrary to what he intended. It also results in

³⁴My argument here relates to the character Bob Dylan rather than to his creator Robert Zimmerman.

³⁵A phrase used by Sandra Wynands (1998) in her thesis on Sam Shepherd and Bob Dylan.

“the text of his life” being of a polyphonic nature. In the following section, I highlight some of the sources Dylan appropriated in order to create his personae.

Busy being born³⁶

According to Amy Blanton, Dylan’s first idol was Hank Williams. Hank Williams sang about the world of railroads, the pain of loss, and the need to move (Blanton, 2001: 3). This restlessness echoed that of Bob Dylan and these themes featured in many of his work, including *Blood on the Tracks*. Hank Williams also represented a rough, reckless masculinity that appealed to Dylan. This description of Hank Williams is confirmed by Paul Hemphill who describes him as follows: “a wild dandelion in the dank forest of south Alabama, some primordial beast who had been let loose on the land” (2005: 8). Dylan was also influenced by James Dean, Little Richard and Elvis Presley. According to Laure Bouquerel, “The evolution of Dylan as a child of the 1950s is quite telling. His idols were stars and their images inspired rebellion” (2007: 155). Bouquerel argues that Dylan presented himself as a fan of James Dean who embodied teenage angst. The James Dean character seemed to have been acted out by Dylan in his Rock Star Period (1965-1966). More significantly, Bouquerel points out Dylan’s affinity to Elvis who was devoted to the transmission of African American musical culture in a country that was racially segregated (2007: 153-154). This is significant in the sense that Dylan would also be important for transmitting the blues to mainly white audiences. This will be discussed at length under the Folk period. Later on, Woody Guthrie would become one of Dylan’s biggest heroes. Dylan was so obsessed that he emulated Guthrie’s style of talking, walking and even dressing. However, it was the amalgam of many characters which Dylan used to create his persona during his early years.

³⁶ From the Dylan song ‘It’s Alright Ma, I’m Only Bleeding’. The line reads: *He not busy being born is busy dying*.

The folk period

In the course of this period, Dylan was heavily engaged in imitating Woody Guthrie. Dylan adopted the persona of a nomadic hobo which was largely influenced by Woody Guthrie's autobiography called *Bound for Glory*. On Dylan's debut album which contained only two original songs, namely 'Talkin New York' and 'Song to Woody'³⁷ (which glorifies the life of Guthrie and praises his work as a travelling activist). In 'Song to Woody' Dylan writes: "I'm out here a thousand miles from my home/walking a road other men have gone down/I'm seeing your world of people and things/your paupers and peasants and princes and kings." In this song to his hero, Dylan enforces his hobo persona and literally states that he is following Guthrie's path by seeing what he has seen. Larry David Smith focuses on the fact that Dylan was acknowledging Woody Guthrie and his friends and praises the sacrifices they made to sustain their nomadic life that provides them with depth of understanding that underpins a blues man's musical wisdom (2005: 22). This hobo image which Dylan glorifies is inscribed with two contradictory associations. The first association is that of a "harmless n'er-do-well" and the second association is that of a "sinister vagrant" (Beesley, 2012: 1). Beesley elaborates by saying the hobo is seen as a "reckless, perambulating soldier of fortune or as a waste product, a drunken bum littering the sidewalks" (2012: 1). The implication for the Dylan personae is that either of these interpretations may come into play for the reader. Dylan's intention for creating this figure is secondary to the associations that the audience makes. Dylan could be seen as appropriating the life of a hobo to signify his musical messages. In so doing he glamorises the hobo who, in many instances, lived in poverty and was marginalised by broader society. Another association made with the hobo is that of mobility, which is an important symbol of American freedom. Beesley supports this in the following: "the hobo for many people became and continued to be a symbol of freedom and

³⁷It should be noted here that the tune for this song was appropriated from a Woody Guthrie song called '1913 Massacre'(Clinton Heylin, *Revolution in the Air Volume 1*,2010: 44)

escape.....the hobo also stems from their intimate connection to the railroad, which for many Americans embodies abstract ideas of longing, yearning and freedom” (2012: 7). In many of Dylan’s songs, mobility and living on the fringes represented authenticity and self reliance, which are traits of many of his male-dominated characters. The symbol of the road, which also represents mobility, is an important aspect of Dylan’s work and will be explored in the final section of this thesis, not only in terms of Dylan’s creation of persona, but it will also be explored as a metaphor for change particularly relating to *Blood on the Tracks*.

As mentioned earlier, Dylan’s debut album only contained two original compositions, the rest were traditional ballads and blues standards. What should be noted here is how Dylan performed these songs. Not only did Dylan sing blues standards, he also emulated the singing styles of blues singers particularly Blind Willie McTell³⁸. According to Catharine Mason: “It may seem to be stating the obvious when pointing to the fact that Bob Dylan’s songs carry the voices of master blues singers” (2007: 197). To use Bakhtin’s term, Dylan’s songs can be seen as polyphonic or multi-voiced. In other words, the song contains the voice of Bob Dylan, the voice of Dylan’s characters as well as Bob Dylan imitating Blind Willie McTell. On another level all these blues singers were black and were associated with raw, unrefined masculinity. Through imitation of these singers, Dylan perpetuated the stereotypes created by white society. Steve Armour argues that “sometimes blues enthusiasts associated authenticity with their perceptions of blackness, giving way to stereotypes about black life in the South in the process” (2010: 8). Dylan perpetuated these stereotypes by projecting the image of a womanising, rootless drifter. Byrd McDaniel argues that these stereotypes were perpetuated in order for the artist to be perceived as authentic or credible. He argues that this reveals some problematic racist assumptions about black performance during this time (2012: 6). This has definite impact on the way we “read” Bob Dylan in the sense that the

³⁸He was born William Samuel McTier in 1898 and became a renowned blues singer who influenced Bob Dylan. Dylan wrote a song Called ‘Blind Willie McTell about him in 1983.

stereotyping of black people contradicts his image as a spokesperson for the downtrodden.

Dylan was seen as the “voice of a generation” meaning that he represented the marginalised and fought against their oppression. The contradiction lies in the fact that Dylan perpetuated the stereotype of black people that gave rise to the prejudice in the first place.

Another important issue I wish to raise, in connection to Dylan’s performance of black artist’s songs as well as his imitation of their vocal style, is that of blackface minstrelsy. Jesse Nolan states that this relates to the tradition where white artists paint their faces black using burnt cork and water as make-up to perform music that originated with black people (2006: 26). This became commonly known as the first original theatrical form created in America. The tradition started in 1820 and was characterised by the striking image of performers in black face which provided the musical wind that propelled the history of American roots music (Nolan: 2006: 1). Nolan goes on to state that the minstrels often caricaturised black dialogue, dialect, facial expressions in a highly exaggerated imitation (2006: 5). My argument here is that Dylan’s appropriation of black musician’s compositions could be seen as an extension of minstrelsy. Jody Rosen argues that Jews have been particularly successful practitioners of minstrelsy. He cites Irvin Berlin’s blackface ragtime; Al Jolson’s mammy songs; jazz clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow absorption of a black identity; and Bob Dylan’s channelling of the of black blues men’s cadences as fitting examples (2006: 5). This adoption of a “black persona” by Bob Dylan would prove pivotal in the next phase of his career in which he became heavily involved and deeply associated with the Civil Rights Movement. Reebee Garofalo describes Dylan as the “most famous of all the folkies” (1992: 234). He also makes the claim that Dylan was proclaimed the “leader of the Civil Rights Movement” (Garofalo, 1992: 234). It is ironic that Dylan was so highly regarded within the Civil Rights Movement, which sought to stop the exploitation of black people, because he was exploiting

them by appropriating their culture and heritage to make money. This contradiction is enforced in the following section where I discuss Dylan's involvement with folk music.

In 1963 Dylan released his second album which contained mainly self-composed songs.

What is notable is that the songs contain social and political commentary and that his song 'Blowin' in the Wind' became a hit (for Peter, Paul and Mary)³⁹. This song was adopted as an anthem by the Civil Rights Movement and Dylan was hailed as the "voice of a generation".

It should be pointed out that even though Dylan claimed authorship of "Blowin' in the Wind", the tune was appropriated from an anti-slavery song called "No More Auction Block Blues" (Clinton Heylin, 2010: 98). Barry Shank argues that the civil rights movement, dominated by people like Dylan, Joan Baez and Pete Seeger, was a continuation of black minstrelsy (2002: 100). Shank argues that the majority of members in the Civil Rights Movement were white and that the "cross-racial alliances" was an illusion. He makes the point that American culture is itself a "culture of illusions" and that blackface minstrelsy was largely responsible for creating this illusion (2002: 100)⁴⁰. In the context of Dylan's career, this alignment with the so-called folk movement, which was synonymous with the civil rights movement, represented a relational rather than autonomous self. By this I mean Dylan's songs focussed not on the individual but on the collective and, through this, he became part of an "imagined" community. This could be seen as another contradiction in the sense that Dylan was now signed to Sony records. The implication here is that Dylan was making money from the songs that he was writing. This contradicted the folk ethic which David Hadju describes as follows: "Most musicians sang and played for free....The principal measure of success for the majority of folksingers was peer approval. It was a system largely

³⁹ Shank, *Wild Mercury Sound*, 2002: 101

⁴⁰ Shank goes on to argue that the white branch of the New Left believed in the possibility of uniting autonomy and authenticity-individual freedom and social connection. They achieved the linkage of these two opposed values by displacing their union onto black culture and then reabsorbing the possibility of the union through an imaginary identification with culture through blackface (2002: 102-103).

untainted by professionalism” (2001: 48). Added to the fact that Dylan was now making money from his music, he also acquired a manager, Albert Grossman, who encouraged him to have his songs published at Witmark Music, which meant Dylan’s songs were now copyrighted to him (Hadju, 2001: 106). This meant that Dylan would receive royalties if anyone performed his songs. This commercial step also contradicted the so called folk ethic, where songs were shared rather than owned. These contradictions also meant that the personae that Dylan projected could be read in many ways. On one level, he projected the folk purists and “authentic” bluesman and, on another level, an ambitious capitalist. It should be noted that many songs he claimed authorship of were adaptations of traditional songs. According to Zelig Asava, “this exemplifies the appropriation of African-American musical culture by white culture” (2010: 5). Frederick Douglas⁴¹ supports this in his damning indictment of how black people were exploited by whites: “the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens” (in Lott, 1991:223). In this quote Douglas is referring to how whites exploited blacks through minstrelsy. He particularly lashes out at the “sanitising” of black culture to suit the preferences of white people. Lott elaborates that Douglas’s quotation “nicely captures minstrelsy's further commodification of an already enslaved, non-citizen people” (1991:223). The above assessments view Dylan’s assumed persona in a negative light, not only because he is appropriating the work of black artists, but also because he is projecting a persona which have connotations of exploitation. In Dylan’s next identity shift from folk singer to rock star, the communal self which he created for the folk persona was replaced by self indulgent autonomous rock star persona.

⁴¹ Frederick Douglas was an abolitionist, author, editor, diplomat and social reformer. He was born in 1818 and died in 1895 (Werner, 1998: 16).

The rock star period (1965-1966)

There were three significant events which took place during this period of Dylan's career. The first was his appearance at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965 with an electric band, which ultimately severed his ties with the folk movement; secondly, the recording of two rock albums *Blonde On Blonde* and *Highway 61 Revisited* and, thirdly, Dylan's alleged motorcycle accident which resulted in him withdrawing from the spotlight for a few months.

Up until this point, even though Dylan electrified his songs on his albums, his live performances were by and large acoustically performed. This tact was about to change and would lead to one of the most controversial periods of Dylan's career. The controversy initially started at the Newport Folk Festival in July 1965, where Dylan was scheduled to appear. He had appeared previously in 1963 accompanied only by an acoustic guitar and a harmonica strapped around his neck. In 1965 Dylan appeared at the festival with a full band using electrified instruments with the volume turned up. From the opening song, the audience expressed dissatisfaction with Dylan's bombastic performance. The music was loud and abrasive and bore no resemblance to folk music at all, something the audience was expecting. Dylan continued to play without even acknowledging the dissatisfaction of the audience. Once the set was over, Dylan left the stage and the crowd refused to calm down (Lee, 2004: 54-57). Even though Dylan's performance at the Newport Folk festival caused dissatisfaction among fans, Dylan continued this trend and took an even bolder step in his 1966 performances particularly at a concert at the Manchester Free Trade Hall in England on 17 May. He opened this particular concert with an acoustic set but what followed proved to be a landmark in Dylan's career and created an open hostility with his fans. The second set of this concert was completely electric. Dylan and his band played loudly and the response from the crowd was that of complete disgust. They booed and heckled him and one member of the audience, according to Nigel Williamson (2004), called Dylan "Judas" implying that he had

betrayed the folk movement and the expectations of fans. Dylan's response was "you're a liar, I don't believe you" (Williamson, 2004: 54). At this point Dylan turned towards his band and instructed them to "play fuckin' loud" (Williamson: 2004: 54). This period was marked by Dylan's rebellion not only against the folk movement but also against the fans expectations of him. Michael Gray states:

Unprecedentedly, here was this folk singer committing the ultimate sacrilege of singing rock and roll songs with electric guitars behind him. Students -serious minded young people unaware of the social upheavals about to happen -were appalled that Dylan should resort to such triviality (1981: 11).

Not only did he change his musical style, but he also changed his style of dress. His persona could be likened to James Dean or Marlon Brando. This persona could also be viewed in either positive or negative light depending on the personal connotations these two figures hold. In my view, the adoption of the persona which imitated Brando and Dean perpetuated the stereotypical image of "masculinity". This masculinity, specifically white masculinity, as embodied by Dean and Brando who were "portrayed as flawed icons, unresolved amalgams of toughness and sensitivity" (Graham Mc Cann, 1993: 30). Mc Cann argues that these males' openness toward sensitivity was bold and signified a new, enlightened masculinity. He clarifies this in the following:

The rebel males Montgomery Clift, James Dean and Marlon Brando reminded people that they were all responsible for their sexuality. The assumed definitions of the male sex role were challenged as films discovered the male capable of sensitivity and an open expression of tenderness—feelings previously ridiculed as effeminate. (1993: 30)

The fact that Dylan's rock personae had intertextual connections with Brando and Dean's rebel persona meant that he too could be seen as embodying a "new" masculinity where toughness and tenderness co-exist. This is problematic on many levels. Firstly, not everyone agrees with McCann's assessment of Dean and Brando; and secondly, this depiction of Dean

and Brando stands in opposition to how black males were perceived. Ultimately Dylan's intertextual references to Dean and Brando give rise to varying and contradictory associations based on individual insights. With reference to the first level, many critics view Dean and Brando differently from the way Mc Cann views them. Ann Marie Fallon and Gerd Hurm argue that the rebel image, especially as portrayed by James Dean, was contradictory because it represented rebellion against society on one hand and conformed to American social values on the other (2007: 2). Bob Dylan embodies this contradiction in the sense that on one hand he rebels against society and on the other, through his creation of personae, perpetuates American values and stereotypes. A notable example is Dylan's imitation of black blues artists. Through his imitation he perpetuates the stereotype of black people as primitive and unrefined. As discussed above, white masculinity is defined as embodying "toughness and sensitivity" while black people are primitive and raw.⁴²

This era represented Dylan's shift from the personae of folk artist to that of rock star. It represented his move from an "authentic social group, with its own history and its dream of solidarity and progress to that of autonomous, self-indulgent loner who consciously stands apart from everyone" (Shank, 2002: 100). This assessment by Shank implies a self reliance and autonomy which many construed as auteurism, however, the above arguments contradict this because it highlights Dylan's reliance on various cultural sources to build his career. In terms of self construction, intentionally or unintentionally, Dylan's personae often endorsed and promoted American culture even though he tried to portray himself as a rebel. I argue in this section that the personae Dylan created were inscribed with a host of contradictory associations. I argue that, if Dylan and his changing personae are viewed as a text, then it is a text that gives rise to plural interpretations.

⁴² This idea is summarised from (Oliver, 1990: 5) and (Lott, 1993: 7-8). Paul Oliver's quote is in the context of his study on blues music and Eric Lott's comments are in the context of blackface minstrelsy.

At the end of July 1966, at the height of his career, Dylan was involved in a motorcycle accident (Williamson: 2008: 73). The extent of the accident was reported inconsistently by most media however the fact remained that Dylan withdrew from the spotlight. This withdrawal from the spotlight allowed Dylan to rethink his career and create yet another persona.

The Americana period (1967-1974)

After the above-mentioned motorcycle accident, Dylan created the persona of a homebound family man. In *Vision, Portraits and Back Pages*, Stuart Bailie describes how photographer Elliot Landy was allowed to take photos of the “chubby, bespectacled patriarch as he balanced a series of kids, feeding bottles and other signs of domesticity” (2005: 112). This may have explained the pastoral nature of his subsequent albums. What was also apparent during this phase of Dylan’s career was his adoption of the cowboy persona. The song lyrics focused on imagery rooted in the Wild West, particularly the music he made with The Band.

Dylan and The Band spent hours every day recording and writing songs spontaneously. The musicians had no intention of releasing the music. The resultant recordings gave rise to yet another genre of music, namely “Americana”. According to the Americana Music Association (AMA), “Americana” is “American roots music based on the traditions of country but with more anti-establishment views” (americanamusic.org). This period also marked Dylan’s deep interest in roots and country music. The relaxed environment and the rural surroundings of Woodstock resulted in music with an almost ancient sound. Besides writing his own songs, Dylan and the Hawks also recorded a variety of traditional gospel, country and folk songs. On the evidence of these recordings, the cover songs were recorded with a different attitude and this different attitude made the music sound old and new at the same time. According to Greil Marcus:

The music carried an aura of familiarity, of unwritten traditions, and as deep a sense of self-recognition, the recognition of a self—the singer's?; the listener's?—that was both historical and *sui generis*.... Out of some odd displacement of art and time, the music seemed both transparent and inexplicable.... the basement tapes can begin to sound like a map, but if they are a map, what country, what lost mine, is it that they centre and fix? They can begin to sound like an instinctive experiment, or a laboratory: a laboratory where, for a few months, certain bedrock strains of American cultural language were retrieved and reinvented. (1997: xv)

This music recorded in the basement was the antithesis of the music that Dylan made with the Hawks on the 1966 tour and the *Blonde on Blonde* (1966) and *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965) albums. The music sounded like 'rural old timey music' (Sounes, 2001). The content of many of the lyrics had a pastoral feel; it seemed far removed from the urban lifestyle to which Dylan was exposed. He believed that this was the way things should be done. There is purity to the music and spontaneity similar to the jazz improvisation that Bob Dylan so admired. Stylistically it was as far from jazz as you could get, but in temperament there were parallels. In 1969 Dylan commented: "You know that's really the way to do recording— in a peaceful, relaxed setting, in somebody's basement with the windows open and a dog lying on the floor" (Heylin, 2000: 275). The pasteurality of the music was in all likelihood because of the context, Woodstock, New York, a town filled with trees and rivers which lies within the borders of Catskill Park. Many lyrics focussed on images of nature and the tranquillity of country life. This music perpetuated the myth of the frontier and Dylan and the Band were projected as cowboys or pilgrims. Neal Lambert describes the cowboy as

the son of the soil, whose passion and intelligence and character made him able to fight battles almost without the need of captains....that is the fellow....and the plains brought him again to perfections only latent in civilization. Thus it is that the mythical cowboy still rides as the personification of the American dream of self-reliance, individualism and freedom. (1967: 1)

This quotation is illuminating because it connects to the principles that Dylan perpetuates in his formative personae i.e. self reliance, individualism and freedom. His hobo personae and rock persona in particular also embody these ideals. However, the image of the cowboy is embedded with many associations. The cowboy embodies the idea of wanting to live the simple life and escape civilization. This relates to Dylan's withdrawal from the spotlight after his motorcycle accident and his move to rural Woodstock. However, a more negative association of the cowboy is the coloniser of the Native American Indian. This also relates to Dylan's appropriation of black culture. For the observer of Dylan's persona, these contradictory associations are problematic because we are never sure what Dylan's views are.

Bob Dylan's next album, *John Wesley Harding* (1968), was recorded after Dylan's work with The Band (the Hawks now permanently adopted this name) had been completed. This album was recorded in Nashville between 17 October and 21 November 1967 and released in December of the same year. This also marked Dylan's first public release in eighteen months. The album contained elements of some of the music recorded in the basement at 'Big Pink', however it was more refined. The fact that it was recorded in Nashville, the capital city of country music, influenced the sound of the record and Dylan's writing. The session musicians Bob Dylan used were seasoned country music veterans which also contributed to the country sound on the album. This album appeared to be out of sync with what was happening in 1967. This year was marked by the popularity of psychedelic music and free love. Albums like *Are You Experienced?* By Jimi Hendrix, *Fresh Cream* by Cream, *Surrealistic Pillow* by Jefferson Airplane and the *Grateful Dead* by The Grateful Dead were all released in this particular year. *John Wesley Harding* bore no resemblance to these trends. At this point Dylan's persona was that of a frontier pioneer and his music was steeped in religious imagery particularly relating to the apocalypse. According to Williamson, Dylan married the outlaw

mythologies of the Old West to Old Testament allegory and came up with a fearful portrait of human dread in the face of eternity (2004 : 210).

John Landau of *Crawdaddy* magazine refers to this album as a “profoundly egotistical album” with an “essential lack of insecurity” that reveals Dylan to be “a truly independent artist who doesn’t feel responsible to anyone else whether they be fans or contemporaries.” (May 1968: 11) The biggest impact *John Wesley Harding* had was on the invention of ‘country rock’. This genre of music would become part of the mainstream in the 1970s with bands like the Eagles, Poco, New Riders of the Purple Sage and the Grateful Dead adopting the aesthetic as laid down by Dylan. The persona of the “cowboy” that Dylan adopted was likewise adopted by the above-mentioned bands. The Byrds also recorded a landmark country rock album, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. Significantly, this album contained two Bob Dylan compositions.⁴³

Dylan’s next album, *Nashville Skyline* (1969) was overly influenced by traditional Nashville country music and also contained the pastoral imagery of the previous albums. This album too had a massive impact on the country rock scene. The opening track featured a duet with Johnny Cash. Once again Dylan was defying the conventions of the time. It was unheard of for a “rock star” to record music normally associated with redneck America. By featuring Johnny Cash on his album, Dylan symbolically signalled the breaking down of boundaries in music. However, adopting country music as his latest style of music also connoted conservatism which was often associated with country music. This could also be seen as a contradiction to the image of Dylan that was portrayed by many critics as a liberal activist.

The albums following *Nashville Skyline* (1969) were *Self Portrait* (1970), which ironically is an album of Dylan performing other people’s compositions; *New Morning* (1970), which

⁴³ According to the album credits of the 1997 compact disc re-issue of *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, Bob Dylan composed ‘You Ain’t Going Nowhere’ and ‘Nothing Was Delivered’.

continues in the pastoral mode established by this period; *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* (1973), which was the soundtrack to the film of the same name. It should be noted that Dylan starred in this film playing a character called Alias. The persona of the ‘cowboy’ was enforced here and, of course, naming the character Alias was an obvious reference to Dylan’s constant identity shifts. It should also be noted here that the making of this film inspired ‘Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts’ from *Blood on the Tracks*. In 1973, Bob Dylan released the album called *Dylan* which, in the same ironic twist as *Self Portrait*, contained other songwriter’s compositions. *Planet Waves* (1974) still contained the pastoral imagery emblematic of this period; however two songs, “Dirge” and “Wedding Song”,⁴⁴ were thematically very close to the songs that would appear on *Blood on the Tracks*

THE FRAGMENTED SELVES ON BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

The past and present self

In the act of writing a personal narrative, the self is automatically split between past and present self. On this level the self becomes fragmented. The two selves then engage in a dialogue which presents varying points of view. Along with the connections the reader makes and the intertextual elements, there are a field of voices which sketch the past and the present. On *Blood on the Tracks*, the past self is presented as perpetrator as exemplified in the line “I became withdrawn”⁴⁵ while the present self represents wisdom as illustrated in the line “I’m learning it these days”⁴⁶ and remorse as highlighted in the line “I can change I swear.”⁴⁷

John Barresi argues that a distinction can be made between the two aspects of the self, that is, “I” (the subject) and “Me” (the object). The “I” could also be seen as the author (present self)

⁴⁴ Both songs contain themes of marital discord especially ‘Dirge’ where the opening lines are: “I hate myself for loving you and the weakness that it showed.”

⁴⁵ From ‘Tangled Up in Blue’

⁴⁶ From ‘You’re a Big Girl Now’

⁴⁷ Ibid

and the “me” as the actor (past self) (Barresi, 2002: 1). Hubert Hermans, Trix Rijks and Harry Kempen put forward an account of a plural self which they term the dialogical self. (Hermans, Rijks, Kempen, 1993: 210). This notion has its roots, not only in Barresi’s distinction between “I” and “Me”, but also in Bakhtin’s theory of the polyphonic novel. Barresi’s “I” and “Me” relate to their use of Bakhtin’s notion of the multiplicity of voices in a polyphonic novel. Each “me” in Barresi’s definition becomes a character in the polyphonic novel of the self and each of these “mes” (actors) has a speaking voice to represent its point of view (2002: 3). Hubert Hermans states that he approaches “the self as a polyphonic novel”, that is, a novel where different voices, often a markedly different character and representing a multiplicity of relatively different independent worlds, interact to create a self as narrative (2003: 100). I relate this notion to how the “I” (present self) and the “Me” (past self) form a dialogue to create the self. This self according to Hermans is conceived of as socialised, historical and decentralised and is highly dependent on its environment to develop (2003: 1).

On *Blood on the Tracks*, Dylan is creating a platform for the various selves to perform a dialogue. What Dylan does on the album is revive the past self from the perspective of the present self. The past self is in dialogue with the present self by virtue of the fact that the present self is narrating the past. However, the past self is imprinted with a contrasting viewpoint to that of the present self. I argue this because the present self and past self exists as multiple entities on a continuum. Barresi argues that the self and other are always essentially in dialogue. And this applies not only to two distinct individuals, but also to the same individual across time, that is between past, present and future selves. Empathy can only go so far. At some point it breaks down, otherwise self and other would fuse and not have distinct viewpoints. Self and other, or present self versus past or future self, always have distinct and irreducible consciousnesses (Barresi, 2002: 3). In addition, Dylan creates the self using many intertextual references and this creates a narrative which can be seen as

polyphonic in the sense there are a myriad of voices (past, present and intertextual voices) telling their stories in the same text. Essentially what Dylan does on *Blood on the Tracks* is to construct selves which provide readers with different ‘values’ in terms of how to deal with separation. He does not offer overt, definitive answers but the narratives leave the reader with a moral. Generally the various selves engage in a dialogue which overlaps in the way they examine their behaviour and try to assert positive changes. In this sense, the reader’s lesson is embedded in the actions of the various selves. An example of this would be the anger expressed in “Idiot Wind”. At first the writer refers to the object as an “idiot”. Later in the text he also refers to himself as an “idiot” for contributing to the separation. These present two sides of the “actor” who could be viewed as fragmented in this sense that the views that are expressed contradict each other. Here the various “mes” (actors) are given an opportunity to speak for themselves (Hermans, 1993:4).

The Marginal Nomadic Self

The metaphor of the road is common in American literature as representing freedom of choice and the ability to transform oneself by engaging with the landscape. According to Brent Bellamy, many American works represent the road as a symbol of free will as well as acting as sign of determinism (2009: 2). This free will and freedom can be associated with the so-called American dream which is transmitted through various road narratives, for example, Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, Dennis Hopper’s *Easy Rider* and innumerable Bruce Springsteen songs. Ronald Primeau defines the road narrative as “fiction and nonfiction books by Americans who travel by car throughout the country either on a quest or simply to get away” (1996: 1). Primeau notes the genre's debt to various literary traditions, particularly the *Bildungsroman* and the quest. In the context of Dylan and many of the songs on *Blood on the Tracks*, the *Bildungsroman* relates to the narrator’s development over the course of the

album and the *quest* relates to his need to find the female subject (“I’ll look for you in old Honolulu San Francisco, Ashtabula”).⁴⁸

As mentioned earlier in my discussion of the Dylan persona represented in his folk period, the road and travelling was an important aspect of his work. During this period it was his emulation of Woody Guthrie which provoked the symbolism of the road. Dylan represented himself as a travelling musician whose purpose it was to raise political consciousness. This hobo-like character becomes a metaphor on *Blood on the Tracks* representing Dylan’s restlessness resulting from his separation from the female subject. The constant need to move and to find redemption from the situation he is in reads like a road narrative where the character moves from one landscape to another. Dylan uses this hobo-like character to act out the restlessness he is feeling. Instead of just undertaking a physical journey, the hobo character on *Blood on the Tracks* is undertaking an inner journey in the shape of a catharsis. This fragments the self in the sense that this character he creates is imprinted with many intertextual references creating a multidimensionality of views, which relates to Bakhtin’s idea of the polyphonic voice. Added to this the title of the album, *Blood on the Tracks*, can be looked at ambiguously. Firstly, it could mean ‘blood on the songs’ or “blood on the (railway) tracks”, which obviously would symbolise travel. In the context of the album there are many songs that would confirm the latter meaning. The first song on the album, “Tangled Up in Blue”⁴⁹ is littered with references to the road and travel. The song carefully maps every detail of the protagonist’s former relationship. Dylan describes how the relationship was doomed because her parents did not approve. He describes not only movement, but marginality later in that verse: “And I was standin’ on the side of the road/Rain fallin’ on my shoes/Heading out for the East Coast.” This signifies how he decided to leave in order to gain perspective

⁴⁸ From “You’re Gonna Make me Lonesome When you Go”

⁴⁹ It is not my intention to do an analysis of the song as this was done in depth in Chapter One. The purpose here is to focus on the nomadic and marginal aspects stemming from the song.

and clarity in terms of the separation. In this description the landscape seems to mirror his personal feelings. To echo the words of Mark Sutton, “the landscape and the traveler are yoked together” (2009: 19). It implies that he is trying to escape his troubled domesticity and reconnect with himself by interacting with the landscape. In the course of the song, Dylan is found to be “headin’ out for the East Coast” and then “abandoning a car out west” as illustrated in the lines, “drove that car as far as we could abandoned it out West.” He then ends up in the “north woods”, “New Orleans” and “Delacroix”. Through his journey he realises the “past was close behind” which could imply that the past and present selves are now occupying the same temporal space and are reacting to each other’s journey. Essentially, it is a journey that moves from past to present and then to future. The initial reason for the journey was to leave home to find clarity and personal redemption from the trauma of his separation. The journey served as a rebellion against the problems he was having at “home”. Meaghan Morris argues that the construction of travelling as resistance and rebellion depends on the simultaneous establishment of “home” as somewhere to run from, to rebel against and as an idealized site of authentic social relations (1988:12). In the same article, Morris argues that there is a common masculine tradition inscribing “home” as the site for frustrating containment. She argues that home is the site that provokes the voyage and ultimately provides it with an endpoint (1988: 13). Ironically, Dylan’s journey subverts this notion later in the song. Rather than wanting to escape “home” which is embodied by the female subject, he expresses a need to connect with her in the following lines: “So now I’m goin’ back again/I got to get to her somehow.”

At this point I would like to briefly focus on some of the other songs which allude to “nomadism” and the road. It should be noted that I have done a more detailed analysis of the songs in Chapter 1. In this section, I focus more on issues relating to the self and personae construction. In “Simple Twist of Fate”, the protagonist echoes the idea of “going back”, as

explained in reference to 'Tangled Up in Blue', in the following line: "He hears the ticking of the clocks / And walks along with a parrot that talks / Hunts her down by the waterfront docks where the sailors all come in / Maybe she'll pick him out again, how long must he wait / Once more for a simple twist of fate." Here the protagonist hopes that fate would repeat itself so that he could be reunited with the female subject. Another important point here is that the protagonist refers to himself in the third person which creates a polyphonic effect. This relates to Roland Barthes who argues that 'the one who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in real life) and the one who writes is not the one who is (1977: 111-112). Here Barthes argues that the narrator should never be confused with the writer because narrators are characters which exist only in the text as constructions rather than 'real life' but Barthes also highlights the plurality of identities and how they enter into a dialogue to create the meaning of the narrative.

"Shelter From the Storm" contains vivid images of movement and rootlessness and, like the previous examples, highlight the protagonist's need for a reunion with the female subject. Allusions to movement are contained in the following lines: "The road was full of mud" (Line 2); "And if I pass this way again" (Line 5); "Well, I'm livin' in a foreign country but I'm bound to cross the line" (Line 37). Ultimately the nomadic lifestyle creates a longing for stability in the traveler which is encapsulated in the following line "Try imagining a place where it's always safe and warm." This has many dialogical connections related to other songs on *Blood on the Tracks*. In "Tangled Up in Blue", the writer describes his situation by making use of the "rain" metaphor in line 10, "rain falling on my shoes" and in "You're a Big Girl Now" which contains the line "and I'm back in the rain" (Line 3). In "Shelter From the Storm", the repetitive dialogue (represented by direct speech) which appear at the end of each verse, "come in I'll give you shelter from the storm", seems to respond dialogically to the aforementioned two songs. Likewise the phrase "Suddenly I turned around and she was

standin' there" from "Shelter From the Storm" is an intertextual reference to the following line in "Tangled Up in Blue": "She was standing there at the back of my chair." My argument here would be that the intertextual references allow the competing voices to form a dialogue with each other across the various songs on *Blood on the Tracks* as well as creating cohesion thematically for the reader.

The Reflective/Pastoral Self

The persona that Dylan created for the *Basement Tapes* (1975)⁵⁰, *John Wesley Harding* (1967) and *Nashville Skyline* (1969) is a major influence for the creation of this particular self. This self is preoccupied with connecting with nature which is a similar trait to that of some of the Romantic poets. I see the link between Dylan's pastoral self and the Romantics in the sense that they focus on nature as a means to gain enlightenment and spirituality. In many of the works during this era (Americana period), Dylan's imagery focused on idyllic landscapes which serve a metaphor for withdrawal from urban society and its associations with fame.

The first indication of this notion is captured in "Idiot Wind" where the protagonist states: "I haven't known peace and quiet for so long I don't remember what it's like." In subsequent songs, there is a shift away from the setting described in "Idiot Wind" which is largely apocalyptic in the same vein as "All Along The Watchtower" from *John Wesley Harding*. The subsequent songs are contrary in the sense that they described tranquil, pastoral scenes in which the protagonist seeks renewal. A notable example would be "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go" which is steeped in pastoral imagery. In verse 4 the following lines describe how embedded he feels in the landscape and how time seems to be of no consequence: "Flowers on the hillside blooming crazy/cricket talking back and forth in

⁵⁰ Even though this album was only released in 1975, it was actually recorded in 1967 before *John Wesley Harding*

rhyme/blue river running slow and lazy/I could stay with you forever and never realise the time.” This pastoral scene described by the protagonist is also symbolic of his state of mind. This verse also highlights various dialogues between the crickets which could also be a signifier for the dialogue between the protagonists and the female subject. If one focuses on text construction, the metaphor of the lovers (the crickets) and the actual lovers exists in the same temporal space. In Bakhtin’s words, they communicate on the “same plane”.

The final example I wish to discuss in this section is related to the figurative connections Dylan makes with nature. In Chapter 1, I discussed in detail how Dylan figuratively connects with birds, parrots, crickets and roosters in the sense that they allude to singing. On one level they could be seen as “figurations” of Dylan and on another level, they could be seen as having other associations linked to other contexts. Because of intertextual nature of texts, these images could be imprinted with a variety of conflicting meanings depending on who the reader is and thus this gives rise to polyphony. The “little rooster” in “Meet Me in The Morning”, for example is a popular blues symbol associated with sexuality⁵¹ (as well as indicating a negative occurrence) and when viewed in this way has multiple associations and thus creates a dialogised text. The rooster could have multiple signifiers and impact on the creation of plural meanings. The original imagery and the imagery of the text could stand in opposition to each other or be parallel. It was common for Dylan to appropriate blues imagery and use it to signify an opposing meaning. This dialogised text also imprints the protagonist with a multiplicity of identities which are drawn from various sources and associations (for example, hobo, bluesman etc). Ultimately, this pastoral self that Dylan creates is in constant dialogue with the other selves because of the overlapping nature of their quest. For example in “Meet Me in the Morning”, Dylan returns to black faced minstrelsy performing a blues song with imagery appropriated from blues songs. Likewise the lines like

⁵¹ Sheila Whitely, links “my little red rooster”, as it appears in the fourth verse of the song, directly to the penis (1997:70).

“little rooster crowin must be something on his mind” from “Meet Me in The Morning” and “I’m just like that bird/singing just for you” from “You’re a Big Girl Now” mirror each other and hence creates a dialogue between the two songs. In a perhaps unintended overlap minstrels are also associated with medieval bards who embellished the works of others⁵² thus creating another intertextual connection to the Dylan persona.

The final self that I wish to discuss is that of the messianic self. This self is derived from many aspects of Dylan’s career where he makes use of biblical allusion to create his narrative.

Messianic Self

Even though Dylan made use of biblical allusion throughout his career and over a wide range of works, I will focus chiefly on the Americana period with particular attention being paid to *John Wesley Harding* (1968) which drew heavily on imagery from the *King James Bible*. On *Blood on the Tracks*, the imagery I focus on is related mainly to the crucifixion and thus the intertextual references to Jesus suffering are related to the suffering of the narrator.

The first example of “crucifixion imagery” I would like to highlight is contained in the song “Idiot Wind”. To contextualize briefly, the song focuses on the protagonist’s betrayal at the hands of the female subject. By using biblical allusions he creates a dialogue between the biblical text and the song lyrics and this contributes to the associations that the readers make to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. The line which provokes this association is: “There’s a lone soldier on the cross.” In the context of this song, the protagonist is directly associated with Jesus’s suffering because of this intertextual reference to the Bible. One theorist of allusion describes literary allusion as a “marker” in a text pointing to an antecedent text and thereby invoking “intertextual patterning” between the two texts as the reader ponders the meaning(s)

⁵² William Francis, A history of English Literature

implied in the relationship. This notion of intertextual patterning aligns well with Bakhtin's notion of the inherent dialogism in the word itself: the word without fixed semantic boundaries, the word that does not coincide with itself (Maddison, 2007: 21-22).

The final example of crucifixion allusion can be found on the song "Shelter From the Storm". In this song Dylan makes two allusions to Jesus and his crucifixion. The first occurs in verse 5 where Dylan makes reference to Jesus in relation to the crown of thorns which he wore when he was crucified: "She walked up to me so gracefully and took my crown of thorns" (Line 19). The second example occurs in verse 3 where the Roman soldiers gambled for Jesus clothes: "In a little hilltop village, they gambled for my clothes."

Specifically what happens is that the biblical allusions create a dialogic connection with Dylan's texts and the reader is left making many cross references to the suffering of Jesus and to the suffering of the protagonist. In this way the two texts form a dialogue on a polyphonic level which in turn influences the way the narrative is perceived. These biblical references are significant because they enforce the personae of an outsider often portrayed by Dylan. The text reveals connections to Jesus and his suffering and hence the protagonist is associated with persecution and betrayal which influence the way we read *Blood on the Tracks*. We pity the protagonist because of his ordeal however contrary interpretations could see the protagonist as someone with a messiah complex. The opposing view supports my assertion of the text and the self being polyphonic because it can be read in multiple ways.

Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to highlight how Dylan constructed the self on *Blood on the Tracks*. In order to do so I had to build on the poststructuralist analysis I offered in chapter 1. The first issue I connect to Chapter One is that the self is a textual construction and hence, like the text which is plural in terms of meaning, so too then is the self. In addition to this, I argue that, if the self is indeed a textual construct then the self is dependent on many relational aspects in order for it to be constructed. These relational aspects include the environment or context as well as cultural references. By cultural references I mean that no text can be composed and hence no self can be composed without these cultural references which include other people as well as other texts. Because of this relational and dependent nature of the self, I also make the point that the narrative in which the self is created is a transmitter of the cultural context in which that text is created. In this chapter I also make the argument that if text is composed of “various tissues of quotations”, then the same applies to the self. Another argument put forward in this chapter is that the self is composed of a composite of many influences. I take this argument further by putting forward the idea that Bob Dylan, the artist, can be viewed as fragmented as well as polyphonic. Inspired by Stephen Scobie, I attempt to explore Dylan as a “polyphonic text”. This polyphony of the Dylan personae, I argue, is a result of the contradictory associations that could be made in connection with them. For example, when Dylan assumes the personae of a hobo, he is, perhaps unconsciously perpetuating a stereotype. The way the personae are understood is entirely up to the reader and their association. This is the reason why these personae become contradictory and plural in terms of their meaning. In addition, I argue that the self created by Dylan on *Blood on the Tracks* is fragmented and that Dylan relies on his past personae to create the narrative. This gives rise to a dialogised and polyphonic narrative where various points of view are put forward through various characters which are themselves fragmented

and intertextual. The final issue I raise is that Dylan creates various selves to enact his life. By doing so the self is allowed to transform and take on a fluid nature.

CONCLUSION

The argument that the construction of the self and personal narrative are interwoven features prominently throughout this thesis. The link between text and self becomes abundantly clear, especially when examining it from a poststructuralist and postmodern point of view. Roland Barthes's contention that the text is a mosaic of various texts has major implications on the concept of the self. The deduction that can be made is that, if the self is a textual construct, then the self is made up of a mosaic of various influences. By this, I mean that the self is constructed in the parameters of a text and that the text exists in a historical context both culturally and socially. The personal narrative would then be influenced by these factors and would ultimately draw from the various influences to which the writer has been exposed. Likewise, the meaning of any utterance is dependent on the context in which it is uttered. Postmodernists argue that anything that has been said is a derivation of that which preceded it. The implication here is that nothing is original; the words used are "borrowed" from a prior text. However, the context has an effect on the "borrowed text" in the sense that the varying contexts allow it to take on new meaning. This is particularly true of Bob Dylan. From the onset of his career in the early 1960s, he adopted the so-called "folk tradition" where words and music were appropriated from existing sources and turned into something "new". This tact was continued, albeit in different ways, throughout the course of his career. The focus of this thesis is how the text, in the form of song lyrics, on *Blood on the Tracks* relies on other texts to form meaning. In line with the 'folk tradition', this album makes use of a broad range of intertextual references. Aside from appropriating other people's work to create his, Dylan also went through many identity shifts. These identity shifts were created in order for him to deliver his work from a particular platform. To clarify, in his formative years he created the hobo/nomadic figure to deliver his songs about marginalisation and prejudice.

This identity was appropriated chiefly from Woody Guthrie, who was one of Dylan's biggest influences. I argue that many of the identities he created for himself and the characters in his songs appear, in some shape or form, on *Blood on the Tracks*. This cross-referencing between his various identities and the characters in his songs have a dialogue with each other which impacts the meaning of the songs. I use Bakhtin to argue that the work on *Blood on the Tracks*, as well as Dylan in relation to his persona shifts, can be viewed as a "polyphonic text" because of this aforementioned dialogue created by his cross-referencing.

The above arguments indicate that text and self are dependent on external influences as far as its creation is concerned. With particular reference to the self, it can be deduced that the self is relational and above all ever-changing (fluid or unstable). Simply put, the self adapts to its context and the various relations in which it is engaged. This argument holds true for the narratives on *Blood on the Tracks*, where the fluid nature of the narrator is exposed through his contradictory statements or his willingness to reflect and alter his behaviour. I also argue that, because of the above, the self is fragmented. This argument is enhanced, especially in relation to personal narratives, where the present self, the past self and the future self all engage in a dialogue with each other on an equal plane. I argue that this fragmentation gives rise to polyphony.

Ultimately, my aim for this thesis was to highlight the link between the text and the self.

Chapter 1, titled The construction of the text, focuses on how Dylan constructs the text. My narrative analysis is done from a poststructuralist and postmodern perspective, which emphasises the "decentring" of the author and the "centring" of the reader. These arguments encompass Barthes arguments which talk about "the death of the author" and "the birth of the reader". In this chapter, I focus on how issues such as character construction, binaries, intertextuality, symbolism and semiotics contribute to creating a narrative. The impact these issues have on the text is, simply, that the text takes on a multiplicity of meanings and hence

the self, too, takes on a multiplicity of meanings. In Chapter 2, The production of multiple personae and the construction of the self, I focus on how the self is constructed and its link with text construction. In this chapter, I put forward the argument that the self is a textual construct. This justifies why text and self are so intrinsically linked. It also builds on many of the issues raised in Chapter 1. I also argued in favour of the idea that the self is relational and fluid and is dependent on its context to develop and transform. Finally, in this chapter, I looked at the polyphonic nature of Bob Dylan's identity as well as the fluid nature of the self he creates on *Blood on the Tracks*. I argue that in terms of Dylan's personae construction, he often creates personae which are contradictory and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, his appropriation of the blues reflects an often stereotyped version of blackness and black masculinity. The persona of Dylan as a blues man is at odds with his whiteness because the blues represents music that articulates black struggle. These issues result in the polyphonic nature of Dylan's text as well as his personae. Ultimately, the aim of this thesis is to highlight the polysemic nature of discourses and how central the reader is in constructing meaning.

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