

BOB DYLAN'S BLOWIN' IN THE WIND: A THEMATIC OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In the 1960's Bob Dylan emerged as a folk singer/songwriter in New York. Counter-Culture, Political, racial, societal issues have been focused in his songs. Many celebrated artists were influenced by Bob Dylan in the 1960's, 70s till date. Bob Dylan persistent creativity is his strength. He is addressed with the title "Voice of a generation" because of his protest songs. His artistic reputation is visible through his lyrics. His lyrics was written as well as performed and listened. Social revolution and changes were the issues in the 1960's United States. People thought music as their outlet and considered protest songs as their support. Protest music became a driving force and influenced the American youth.

Key Words: Bob Dylan- lyric- oral tradition- poetry- folk tradition

Literature is first and foremost humankind's entire body of writing; belonging to a given language or people. This allows learning about different people, cultures, and practices. To use the word "writing" when describing "literature" is itself misleading, for one may speak of "oral tradition" or "the literature of preliterate peoples" The term "literature" has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their deliverance. The 19th century critic Walter Pater referred to "the matter of imaginative or artistic literature" as a transcript, not of mere fact in its infinitely varied forms".

Lyric poetry was often claiming to fame in tribunals. The Chinese Aristocratic circles in East Asia collects notable poems, as a collection called Book of Songs or Shijing. The American poetry in 17th century emerges as efforts by immigrants to make an impact in English poetry. Early colonists work reckoned mostly on newfangled British prototype of diction, poetic form and idea. However, in the 19th century a unique idiom started in America.

During the McCarthy era of 1950 many American notable poetry issued between 1910 and 1945 were destroyed. Revival of British poetry established by the American youth manifested predecessors and contemporaries as models. The foundation of American works into 20th century poetic Modernism of English language was formed by the idiom combined with the study of 19th century French poetry. The epitomes at the time were Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and T.S.Eliot (1888-1965) because of their exclusion of ancestral poetic form, meter and of some Victorian diction. Both manoeuvred American poetry with new approaches such as allusion, ellipsis, fragmentation, shifting personae, sarcastic and juxtaposition towards greater density, opacity and difficulty.

The primitive bardic Oral tradition, which has evolved in various forms, traced the notion of a singer-songwriter throughout the world. Poem could be performed as a song or chant, sometimes accompanied by instruments. Songs would be printed and sung by ballad sellers. The Singer- song writing traditions of folk customs developed gradually.

The American Singer- songwriter and Folk-musician, Woody Guthrie's musical heritage includes hundreds of ballads, traditional and kids' songs, political and improvised works. Guthrie performed usually with the epigram in his guitar, *This Machine kills Fascists*. Library of congress archived many of his audio taped songs. He earned the nick name the "Dust Bowl Balladeer" because he composed many songs about his experience during the Great Depression in the Dust Bowl era. Guthrie made a contribution as a front man in the folk

revival and inspired new folk musicians. He also mentored Ramblin Jack Elliott and Bob Dylan. Many songwriters such as Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Pete Seeger and Joe Strummer acknowledged Guthrie as their influence. “Bob even adopted Guthrie’s Okie accent” (Blanton, 3)

Bob Dylan is one of the most prestigious poets in the 20th century. He is praised as the best songwriter in history by many critics. However, to others, Bob Dylan is not a poet in spite of the fact that he calls himself as a poet first and then as musician. He was born Robert Allan Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota. The immediate connection to poetry is visible in Dylan’s pseudonym and its direct reference to Dylan Thomas. His strong, impact on Welsh poet made him to take that decision. He began his music career at the age of 20, in 1961. The fascination towards music deepened as a teenager and he performed in various blues and folk music bands across America with a particular passion.

He performed folk first, shifting to rock –n-roll in “Bringing it All Back Home” published in 1965. The 1960’s was an era of liberation of music, public outlook, dance, discoveries, and the chains of racism. Bob Dylan is considered to be the eminent heft on popular culture of all time. He is famous for songs such as “Blowing’ In The Wind”, “Like A Rolling Stone” or “Knockin’ On Heaven’s Doors”. In 1961, Dylan moved to Greenwich Village, New York city and started to perform in cafes and clubs. John Hammond, the record producer with whom he legalized a contract for his first album Bob Dylan (1962) was a great success. In subsequent years he taped a number of tracks in his albums which have had an enormous impact on popular music. Bringing It All Back Home, Blood On The Tracks, Blonde On Blonde and Highway 61 Revisited. Supervened in paragons like Oh Mercy (1989), Time Out of Mind (1997) and Modern Times (2006) continued his productivity. Dylan has recorded numerous albums including topics on social circumstances of human beings, religious, politics and love.

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Blowing' in the Wind song is known as the Folk Revival song. It rhetorically questions about war, freedom, rights, peace and this is a protest song. Dylan Lyrics as,

...how many deaths will it take till he knows

That too many people have died?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, (Blowin' in the wind)

The question he poses and the answer is “Blowin' in the wind” implies generality. Dylan stepping aside invites people to define his lyrics without any interpretation or clue. This song plays a major role for the people who long for equal rights, the Black movement and the Vietnam War to end. Dylan rarely gives answers to his songs as he did in “Blowin' in the wind”. The Americans were set upon by social, political and economic ills and they were looking for answers. He simply urges people to discern those issues and to come up with solutions for a peaceful society.

The song “Blowin' in the wind” in three short verses manages to confine the struggles against injustice, war and racism. The lyrics demand us that, we do think without telling us what to think or do. He uses symbol and metaphor to capture vexation of his age. The poet asks us “how many times” these changes would happen, he asks more importantly that how long we can let this happen.

“How many roads must a man walk down

Before you call him a man?” (Blowin' in the wind)

One of the main mystifying lyrics and famous quotes was the opening of this song. Dylan questions about a person's life experience. The whole song is a clear reference to the Civil

Rights parades in the 1960s. The situation was both admonishing and mournful. Bob Dylan was able to perceive the menace of racial tension.

Blowin' in the wind reveals different hermeneutical viewpoints and holds meaningful repetitions. Major rhetorical figure in poetic tradition is "repetition". Repetition makes the impact on the lyrics and the leading idea to be understood. A certain attitude towards uncivil acts of injustice will be visible in the lyrics through repetition. Mara Gonzalez de Ozaeta cites,

"We better find more answers in nature and in the experience of the physical and emotional burst of social and ethical commitments than in rationalism. This aspect put the song in relation to existentialism, a modern philosophy that believed any productive relation with the psyche and the exterior world had to start with the individual collection of experiences. It was also considered much more a literary phenomenon than a philosophical one while the assertion of the individual is prior to the understanding of the world." (33)

It is evident that common people too responsible for the cause. The context of the song is relevant to current political scenario and a kind of call for kinship, humanism and tolerance. Bob Dylan's songs were the outcome of intense bursts and brief inspirations of the society. He tends to write his lyrics quickly and he took ten minutes for Blowin' In The Wind lyrics, next is to mix up with vast repertory of blue songs and traditional folk music or own music. His authenticity between experimentalism and tradition with his interpretations, repetitions and wordplays is visible in this song. Mara Gonzalez de Ozaeta quotes Sean Curnyn that, "through songs like Blowin' in the wind the audience should understand that, as Dylan used to say: "every question if it's a truthful question can be answered by askin' it" ". (38)

The creative lyrics of Bob Dylan's politically oriented song reflect the urgency of Civil Rights movement and antiwar movements. He was continuously reinventing his own true self. Abstract and personal themes were explored in his poetry and music. He has raised funds for many societal causes such as 1971 hunger problems in Bangladesh to raise funds for U.S farmers in Farm Aid concert in 1985. Blowin' In The Wind became celebrating song of justice and peace people for a better world order. The Twentieth Century music especially anti-war songs became anthems for Vietnam War, Civil War and the Cold War.

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