Chapter 2

Bob Dylan: Newport Folk Festival, July 25, 1965[1]

Lee Marshall

> Bob Dylan: I did this very crazy thing. I didn't know what was going to happen, but they certainly booed, I'll tell you that. You could hear it all over the place (Press Conference, KQED-TV, San Francisco, December 3, 1965).

Newport 1965: preface and main set

On Sunday, July 25, 1965, Bob Dylan gave his first amplified public performance since leaving high school. The performance, alongside five other musicians, lasted just under 16 minutes and featured musicians who had coalesced as a collective less than 24 hours earlier. Musically, it was fairly ordinary. It is, however, one of the most written-about performances in the history of popular music, for the site of this performance was the main stage of the Newport Folk Festival, the bastion of folk authenticity, and it didn't go down too well.

It is not clear whether Dylan arrived at Newport with the intention of playing with a backing band: if he did, he had not told any intended accomplices. It may well have been the case that Dylan's belief in serendipity meant that he arrived with the intention of just bumping into his chosen musicians (Heylin 2000: 207) or it may be that his decision to play with a band was a direct result of events on the Saturday of the festival, July 24 (Sounes 2001: 218). Whatever the case, Dylan's first performance at the 1965 Newport festival was acoustic and unaccompanied, performing 'All I Really Want to Do' in a songwriters' workshop on the Saturday afternoon. Even at this, however, there were signs that Dylan's presence at the festival was causing problems, and his performance had to be curtailed because of the chaos precipitated by his appearance. Fans in the tent shouted for Dylan to be turned up because they could hear the banjos from the neighbouring workshop, which was hardly in keeping with the collective ethos of the event. The most significant performance of the day, however, was that of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band at a blues workshop. Their very presence at the festival had been a source of controversy, with organizing committee member and musicologist Alan Lomax unhappy at their urbanity, their amplification and their whiteness. It fell to Lomax to introduce the band at the workshop and his introduction was

extremely condescending. The band was, however, well-received by listeners and after the set Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman – who had just agreed to manage the Butterfield Band – confronted Lomax, and these two rather portly men were soon rolling around in the dirt. As journalist Robert Shelton notes, 'while the scuffle [was] … personal, it had some theoretical roots' (1986: 301). Lomax was the ultra-purist, scornful of white boys playing the blues, while Grossman was the corrupting commercial influence, managing some of the biggest names at the festival and thus the focus of a great deal of vitriol from the festival organizers.

How these events affected Dylan is unclear: whether he was prompted by Grossman to use the band as foil for his electric plans, whether he always intended to ask the band to support him, or even if he just saw the opportunity to get up the noses of people like Alan Lomax, events now moved at pace. Dylan already had some elements of his intended band: Michael Bloomfield, guitarist with the Butterfield Band, had been playing on the recording sessions for *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965) and was thus a clear choice; Al Kooper (also part of the *Highway 61* sessions) was to play the organ, and Barry Goldberg (a friend of Bloomfield and recruited at a Newport party) the piano. Dylan's need was for a rhythm section and he thus utilized the Butterfield Band's Jerome Arnold on bass and Sam Lay on drums. The hastily assembled group retreated to a Newport mansion and rehearsed until dawn, by which time Dylan was satisfied with the three songs that they had worked up.

Although he was by far the biggest name at the festival, Dylan's performance was scheduled to be the penultimate act of the first half of the evening set. Ironically, the assembled crowd gained a preview of the type of sound they would later hear from Dylan when, because of torrential rain earlier in the afternoon which delayed their set, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band was re-scheduled as the first act of the evening. Dylan received a long, eulogizing introduction from Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul & Mary, and a member of the festival's organizing committee), and he walked on stage in a 'matador-outlaw orange shirt' (Shelton 1986: 302) and a black leather jacket. With a cry of 'Let's go!' the band launched into 'Maggie's Farm'. Dylan shouted rather than sang the words – as if vocal range was irrelevant to his message, as if 'he's just discovered that as a singer he can stomp his foot through the boards' (Marcus 1997: 12). The sound is thin; nothing like the cathedral majesty that would be achieved on the 1966 world tour with The Band. Despite being a fairly straightforward fast blues, musical cracks are evident: Sam Lay turned the beat around on the opening song, so that he was playing on the upbeats (one and three) rather than the downbeats (two and four). The rhythm section finds the second song, 'Like a Rolling Stone', equally difficult to pin down and it quickly regressed to something much like its studio origins as a slow and stately waltz. The third and final song was 'Phantom Engineer' (later to develop into 'It Takes a Lot to Laugh, it Takes a Train to Cry') – a straight-up blues of the type the Butterfield Band played every night – and it is only here that the band finds some fluency, but 'for even the most ardent fan of the new music,

the performance was unpersuasive' (Shelton 1986: 302). As the final notes of 'Phantom Engineer' rang out, Dylan called 'Let's go man, that's it!' and the band left the stage, less than 16 minutes from when they appeared.

The full extent of the audience reaction is, of course, difficult to gauge. No recording made by a member of the audience is circulating and the soundboard recording available barely picks up the audience response (this can be compared to an existent audience recording made at Dylan's next electric performance, at New York's Forest Hills Tennis Stadium on August 28, when the audience anger is astonishing in its intensity). However, as Dylan was to say at a San Francisco press conference later in the year 'they certainly booed!' According to some contemporary observers, the booing grew in intensity during the performance: a general disquiet when Dylan walked on stage grew into a flurry of boos during 'Maggie's Farm' which reached a crescendo by the end of 'Phantom Engineer' (Shelton 1986: 302). In addition to Dylan's use of an electric band, various other reasons have been suggested for the booing (Sounes 2001: 221). The most common story – used by Pete Seeger to later justify his reaction to the performance – is that fans were booing simply because the sound mix was so awful and no one could hear what Dylan was singing. It is certainly true that the most important thing about the performance for Dylan seemed to be volume, but the soundboard recording of the show does not support the argument that the sound was poor. An alternative argument – put forward by Al Kooper – is that the crowd booed because of the shortness of the set. However, while this could explain why the booing intensified at the end of 'Phantom Engineer', Kooper is an unreliable witness (he is the source of the popular myth that 'Like a Rolling Stone' was recorded in one take) and his view has not been endorsed by anyone else at the festival. It has even been suggested that people at the back of the crowd were booing merely to appear hip in response to booing from the front. However, even if these explanations contain an element of truth, none of them can fully explain the nature of the crowd's reaction to Dylan's performance nor, indeed, the reactions of certain of the festival's organizing committee (although, contrary to popular myth, Pete Seeger did not attempt to cut the power cables with an axe).

Dylan, individualism and folk authenticity

To understand the significance of Newport 1965 requires an understanding of how Dylan's performance consciously transgressed key facets of authenticity that were deeply held within the folk movement. Furthermore, the events at Newport can also be seen as a key moment in the transferral of these markers of folk authenticity into the emerging genre of rock. Because of this, the performance has taken on a mythological significance, as though it was this performance, and this performance alone that changed the course of popular music. Marcus, for example, states that 'within a year, Dylan's performance would have changed all the rules of

folk music – or, rather, what had been understood as folk music would as a cultural force have all but ceased to exist' (1997: 13). The Newport performance is thus seen as a decisive act heralding a new musical world. However, while the events there were certainly dramatic, they cannot be understood as an individual act but only as the culmination of a process of estrangement which itself reflected the ever-present tensions in Dylan's relationship with the folk movement. This tension itself is the result of contradictions within the ideology of folk authenticity and, in the rest of this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between Dylan and the folk movement, which should highlight certain aspects of folk authenticity and make clear why the performance of 1965 was seen as an explicit rejection of the folk ideal.

If we take the Newport performance as a public proclamation of divorce it is a little surprising, given that this period accounts for less than 10 per cent of his career, that Dylan is still frequently characterized as a former folkie. It is even more ironic given that he was never fully integrated into the folk movement in the way that, for example, Joan Baez was. In particular, many of the old guard were suspicious of Dylan's motives, suspecting that he was merely using the popularity of the folk revival as a way of becoming famous. Dylan was similarly wary of the folk movement, and in his first recorded original song, he lampooned the response to his arrival on the scene in (the deliberately mispronounced) Green-wich Village:

> I walked down there and ended up
> On one of them coffee-houses on the block
> Got on the stage to sing and play
> Man there said 'Come back some other day,
> You sound like a Hillbilly,
> We want folk singers here'.

Why was this relationship so fraught? The main reasons, it seems to me, stem from notions of authenticity within the movement which emphasized specific formulations of folk music as authentic expressions of collective experience. Coming from this perspective, it is possible to understand how Dylan – the freewheeling, irreverent, genius-star – may be viewed with suspicion and as a threat to the authenticity of the movement and, equally, how Dylan may have been similarly circumspect of the folk movement.

The folksong revivals that occurred in Britain and America during the 1950s and 1960s reproduced the notions of authenticity that emerged during the first English folk song revival 40 years earlier. The father of this first revival was Cecil Sharp, a Cambridge graduate who, concerned at the effects that urbanization was having on English folk culture, set about recording folksong. However, rather than discovering what 'the folk' were singing, Sharp produced established criteria for what could be considered authentic folk songs and then set out to find them: no songs from towns of any size, no songs from factory workers and no songs from music halls were permitted. This carefully selected collection of songs was

then watered down for consumption within polite society (Harker 1980: 147–9). However, the outcome of Sharp's activities, and the most influential flaw of the first revival, was a certain fetishizing of the 'folk song', which became an artefact, cast in stone, to be revered as the true representation of the folk. The folk song ceased to be a living thing – part of an ongoing dynamic culture – and became part of our cultural past – part of what Dylan would later describe as infinity up on trial.

The second English folksong revival, led by Ewan MacColl and Bert Lloyd, was understood as an attempt to take such songs back from the middle classes (Boyes 1993: 223–4) but the rigid definition of the folk song remained. This reached its nadir with the controversial 'policy rule' introduced by MacColl in the Ballads & Blues Club in London (later renamed the Singers Club). The rule basically stated that performers could only perform songs from the country of their origin so that, according to MacColl, 'you didn't have a bloke from Walthamstow pretending to be from China or from the Mississippi' (Denselow 1989: 26; see also Boyes 1993: 237–40). The key characteristic of this revival was thus authenticity (singers could not 'pretend' that they were part of the folk) and this fetishized form of folk music was by its very nature authentic and incorruptible.

It does not take too much imagination to work out why Bob Dylan would not appeal to someone who holds these ideals dear, nor why these ideals would not appeal to Bob Dylan. Dylan has never treated folk songs as too precious to touch, as his hijacking of the stately Scottish ballad 'Pretty Peggy-O' on his first album illustrates: 'I bin round this whole country, but I never yet found Fennario' (Lhamon 1990: 112). He parodied the folk world in 'Talkin' Hava Nageilah Blues', saying 'here's a foreign song I learned in Utah'. Dylan later commented upon the folk world in which he found himself during the lengthy interview which accompanied the release of *Biograph* (1986):

> It was just a clique you know. Folk music was a strict and rigid establishment. If you sang southern mountain blues, you didn't sing southern mountain ballads and you didn't sing city blues. If you sang Texas cowboy songs you didn't play English ballads. It was really pathetic (Crowe 1986: 8).

Dylan travelled to England in late 1962 and the trip had a large impact on his development as he soaked up a lot of traditional British ballads which would provide many of the sources for the songs on *The Times They are A-Changin'* (1964). While he was there, he performed at the Singers Club where Ewan MacColl asserts that Dylan was badly received. Anthea Joseph however, recalls that he was well liked, but that MacColl and his wife Peggy Seeger 'sat there in stony silence' (Heylin 1991: 36).[2]

This fetishization of the folk song reflected a similarly hypostasized conception of 'the folk' that has been embedded in succesive folk revivals. As Boyes claims, 'thanks to folksong collectors' preconceptions and judicious selectivity, artwork and life were found to be identical' (1993: 98). Folk songs were understood as a

distillation of the lives of ordinary people but Marcus believes that what resulted was a breakdown of the relationship between art and life; rather than folk music being a form of popular art, a certain kind of life became art: 'the poor are art because they sing their lives without mediation and without reflection, without the false consciousness of capitalism and the false desires of advertising' (1997: 28). The outcome was a fetishization of all the good, the rural, the working class, creating what Jeff Nuttall has described as 'a patronising idolisation of the lumpen proletariat that only the repressed children of the middle classes could have contrived' (Harker 1980: 151).

Fetishized (authentic) folksong thus represented a fetishized people, and Marcus characterizes this collective ethos of the 1960s folk movement, and its attendant aesthetic and social ideals, thus:

> The country over the city, labour over capital, sincerity over education, the unspoiled nobility of the common man and woman over the businessman and the politician … a yearning for peace and home in the midst of noise and upheaval (1997: 21).

This kind of understanding was exemplified a couple of hours before Dylan took to the stage at Newport in July 1965. At the beginning of the final evening Pete Seeger, the personification of folk earnestness, played the audience a recording of a newborn baby. He said that the final night's programme was a message to this baby and asked the audience to sing to it, to tell it what sort of world it had been born into. According to contemporary Jim Rooney, Seeger already knew what it would be told: 'that it was a world of pollution, bombs, hunger and injustice, but that PEOPLE would OVERCOME' (Marcus 1997: 11).

In his early career, Dylan was certainly buying into at least some of this, and in his early work he locates goodness in the wild west and corruption in the urban east. His first two original recorded lines are 'Rambling outta the wild west/leavin' the towns I love the best' while in 'Let Me Die in My Footsteps' the glory of America is to be found in 'Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho'. Whether Dylan was conscious of the ideological strands on which he was drawing at this time is debatable, but there is a big difference between his treatment of the subject matter at this point and his return to these themes on *John Wesley Harding* (1968). For example, the narrator of the early outlaw song 'Rambling Gambling Willie' maintains no reflexive distance from the outlaw and is carried along by Willie's personality, emphasizing his heart of gold in a manner reminiscent of earlier folk heroes such as Pretty Boy Floyd. This can be directly contrasted with the skilful and distanced manipulation of the narrator in 'John Wesley Harding' who merely tells us how the outlaw has been represented by others ('He was never known to hurt an honest man'), offering a more sceptical view of the Wild West mythology.

Similarly, Dylan's most protesty of protest albums, *The Times They are A-Changin'* contains much that adheres to the collective ethos of the folk movement (the title track, for example, was very consciously created as a folk-anthem); but in

general, Dylan's work sits uneasily with the rest of the folk movement's canon because of the significance of individual experience, of feeling, of subjectivity within it. In the folk movement's fetishized folk and folk songs, by contrast, there is little room for individual subjectivity: 'Whether one hears them ringing true or false, they were pageants of righteousness, and while within these pageants there were armies and generations, heroes and villains, nightmares and dreams, there were almost no individuals' (Marcus 1997: 21). The folk movement was founded upon the importance of the collective – the folk, the 'people' – rather than the individual. If a certain type of life replaced art in the folk movement, the life was understood only structurally, as poverty, as oppression. The individual experiences of those in poverty, or those suffering racial discrimination, seemed not to matter. In Dylan's work, however, they did (and do) matter, and this emphasis upon subjectivity and individualism (both within his work and as an individual within the movement) created the key tension between Dylan and the folk movement that exploded at Newport.

When he was justifying his writing of more politically aware songs in 1963, Dylan wrote an open letter to his old friend Tony Glover. In it, he stated that he could not sing traditional folk songs such as 'Red Apple Juice' or 'Little Maggie' any more, but instead had to sing 'Masters of War' and 'Seven Curses'. He made clear his debt to his folk heritage, for 'the folk songs showed me … that songs can say somethin' human' (Heylin 1991: 74). It is this 'somethin' human' that sets Dylan apart from his folk movement contemporaries, and it is worth noting that the first songs he wrote were not 'pageants of righteousness' but were, rather, stories of individual people caught in the machinery of everyday life – songs such as 'Man on the Street', 'Talking Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues' or 'Ballad of Donald White'. These early considerations of social justice occur through an evocation of individual experience. It was only later that Dylan began to address issues as issues rather than experiences – songs such as 'Masters of War' and 'With God on Our Side' – and this can surely be attributed to his embeddedness in the folk movement.

One example of the kind of subjectivity in Dylan's work I am discussing here is 'Blowin' in the Wind' (which, coincidentally, uses the tune of 'No More Auction Block', an old folk song which considers slavery from the perspective of an escaped slave). 'Blowin' in the Wind' is a list of collective challenges that individuals face (Ricks 2003: 324). Thus, we are asked 'how many roads must *a* man walk down?' or 'how many ears must *one* man have?' Within this context, a significant line is 'how many years must some people exist before they're allowed to be free?' because here Dylan recognizes that 'a people', a collectivity, is merely made up of 'some people', a group of individuals. So while he asks the question 'how long until black Americans [a people] achieve freedom?' he does so in a manner that really asks 'how long until each individual black person is free?'

A song in which Dylan is more explicit about the relationship between causes, collectivities and individuals is 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll'. It tells

the story of the murder of a bartender by William Zanzinger, the son of wealthy tobacco-farmers. The first verse details the murder, the second verse describes Zanzinger. The third verse describes Hattie, not exaggerating but describing her in a dignified and gentle way (Ricks 2003: 222). After each of these verses the same refrain is repeated:

> Ah, but you who philosophise disgrace
> And criticise all fears
> Take the rag away from your face
> Now ain't the time for your tears.

The final verse details the courtroom scene, where Zanzinger is given a six months sentence for murder. The refrain then changes to:

> Ah, but you who philosophise disgrace
> And criticise all fears
> Bury the rag most deep in your face
> Now's the time for your tears.

Here Dylan recognizes that the real tragedy of this song is in the death of an honest and good woman and not in the injustice of the courts. This last refrain chastizes those who cry crocodile tears over the woman when they are really crying over the sentence (Williams 1990: 93–4). Another way in which Dylan focuses upon individuals rather than causes is by the absence of any mention of race: there is no telling from the song whether Hattie Carroll is black or white. To those crying crocodile tears it is the crucial factor but to Dylan it misses the point. Similarly, 'Ballad Of Hollis Brown' is not primarily about poverty: it is about a farmer who, mad with hunger, shoots his wife and five children before turning the gun on himself. Only *then* is it about *poverty.*

It is easy to see how this important thread in Dylan's work would lead to his flirtations with existentialism in 1965 and 1966: the most important question that Dylan ever asked in his work is 'how does it feel?' In an interview in 1971, he said 'My thing has to do with *feeling*, not politics, organised religion or social activity. My thing is a feeling thing. Those other things will blow away. They'll not stand the test of time' (Scaduto 1996: 286). It is also easy to see how this 'thing' within his work would result in his strained relationship with the folk movement and its distrust of individual impulses and failings.

There is one further way in which individualism played a decisive role in the relationship between Dylan and the folk movement, and that is the individuality of Dylan himself. A crucial element of folk authenticity is that performers are understood to be part of the group they represent, part of the folk (this can practically be seen in MacColl's aforementioned policy rule). As such, the folk movement was essentially collective and each singer was merely one representative of the people. In this understanding, it is the song and not the singer (let alone the writer) that

matters. However, particularly among the newer generation of folk singers, it was widely acknowledged that Dylan was far ahead of anyone else as a writer and a performer, and this elevation caused significant distrust towards Dylan by many in the movement. Such distrust was generated by an understanding that the elevation of an individual left the collective vulnerable to the whims and weaknesses of that individual (such an understanding was in a way correct, for Dylan's disavowal of the folk movement certainly diminished the movement's popularity).

One particular vulnerability that individuals had was to the temptations and trappings of fame and commercial success. Dylan's commercialism has often been a cause of criticism, particularly his relationship with Albert Grossman and it is this position of Dylan as an oxymoronic 'folk music star' that finally cracked at Newport in 1965, and signifies the importance of Dylan choosing to play with an electric guitar. Dylan was later to question what people had expected him to play; he had already released *Bringing it All Back Home* (1965) with its electric first side and his new single, 'Like a Rolling Stone', had entered the charts four days before the festival (Heylin 2000: 206). Furthermore, electricity had not been completely exorcised from earlier festivals: Muddy Waters had played amplified instruments the year before without a fuss (Shelton 1986: 301). However, Dylan's use of an electric guitar and his mode of dress were powerful symbolic gestures because they represented the elevation of the individual over the collective, the artificiality of the showbiz lifestyle and the victory of capitalism. As Oscar Brand stated, the electric guitar 'was the antithesis of what the festival was … the electric guitar represented capitalism' (Sounes 2001: 221); and when Robert Shelton offered support for Dylan's new music, the festival's technical director retorted, 'you've been brainwashed by the recording industry!' (1986: 303).

Dylan's split from the folk movement

The story of Dylan's drift away from folk thus signifies an increasing emphasis upon individualism, both in terms of Dylan's own experiences (an increasing interest in individual expressivism through fashion rather than a worker's uniform; increasing use of drugs; increasing criticism from within the folk movement of his adoption of the trappings of a pop star) and through his work (increasing introspection and existentialism; songs dominated less by causes). It reached its climax in July 1965 but two earlier performances are also significant: the Newport performance of 1964 and Dylan's acceptance speech for the Tom Paine Award in December 1963.

Before either of these occurred, however, there were two events that had a major impact upon Dylan and perhaps caused him to re-appraise his relationship with the folk movement. The first of these was the emergence of the Beatles in America in 1964. There is no doubt that, early on in their career, Dylan was blown away by the group: according to Eric Burdon of the Animals, the first time Dylan

heard 'I Want to Hold Your Hand', he stopped the car to listen to it, got out and ran round the car five times shouting 'It's great! It's great!' (Heylin 1991: 92). It seems that this experience enabled Dylan to see the possibilities of transcending the popular music that had been dominating the charts while he was in the folk movement.

The second event that deeply affected Dylan was the assassination of John F. Kennedy which seemingly made Dylan realize two things: first, that he was only a folk singer, a position from which he could not change the world; second, that as long as he tried to write topical songs he would always be behind the times. Dylan later told his biographer Anthony Scaduto that the day after the assassination he played a show in New York and opened, as usual, with 'The Times They are A-Changin'. He admitted, 'that song was just too much for the day after the assassination … I couldn't understand why I wrote that song, even' (Heylin 1991: 83). Even before it had been commercially released, the song was redundant.

The impact that this had on Dylan became public three weeks later; he had been chosen as the recipient of the Tom Paine Award by the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. Dylan, always nervous in public, started drinking too early and, when he came to accept his award, unleashed a 'truth attack', telling the dignitaries in front of him that they should be on the beach, that it was a young person's world, and that he wanted to speak to an audience with hair on their heads. He questioned the validity of their issues and, towards the end of his speech, stated that he could identify with Lee Harvey Oswald. This caused uproar among the audience. As the dinner was a fundraiser for the ECLC, and thus had significant financial repercussions, Dylan was apologetic for his outburst (he did offer to cover any shortfall, but did not follow through on this offer). He wrote an open letter to apologize for his behaviour, but in it he merely revealed his increasingly individualistic direction:

> I am a writer and a singer of the words I write I am no speaker nor any politician/an my songs speak for me because I write them/in the confinement of my own mind an have t cope/with no one except my own self.

The focus on 'no one except my own self' was beginning to play more of a role in Dylan's songwriting. In June 1964, he recorded the songs that would make up his fourth studio album, the bluntly titled *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (1964). Some of these new songs received their public unveiling at that year's Newport Folk Festival the following month. At his first appearance of the weekend – a topical-song workshop on the Friday – Dylan began with a new song, 'It Ain't Me Babe', but no one seemed to recognize its statement of intent. At his main performance on the Sunday, he played three more songs from the album: 'All I Really Want to Do', 'To Ramona', 'Chimes of Freedom', and another new song, 'Mr Tambourine Man'. The latter two both feature an increasingly central individual in Dylan's work – the chimes of freedom were flashing for the 'countless confused, accused,

misused, strung out ones and worse/and for every hung up person in the whole wide universe' while 'Mr Tambourine Man' is a highly introspective song on the nature of songwriting (although its regularly reproduced misinterpretation – that it is a 'drug song' – is equally individualistic). The change from the Newport Festival of 1963 when, as a relative newcomer to the scene, Dylan was invited to sing with both Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, and his 'Blowin' in the Wind' was sung by the final, arm-linking, ensemble, was quite dramatic and many in the folk community voiced their concerns (Allison 1987). Some were critical of Dylan's manner in dealing with his stardom. For example, Irwin Silber (1964) wrote an open letter in *Sing Out!* stating 'I saw at Newport how you had somehow lost contact with people … some of the paraphernalia of fame were getting in the way'. Others were scornful of the new songs: Paul Wolfe in *Broadside* wrote that the performance was the 'renunciation of topical music by its major prophet' and that the new songs 'degenerated into confusion and innocuousness' (Heylin 1991: 100–101). Dylan offered no official response to the criticisms but wrote a scathing riposte called 'Advice for Geraldine on Her Miscellaneous Birthday'. This was published in the programme for his Halloween concert in New York and began:

> do not create anything, it will be
> misinterpreted. it will not change.
> it will follow you the
> rest of your life.

Newport 1965: encore and aftermath

The celebrated events of July 1965 should therefore be seen both as the culmination of a process and as the final implosion of the contradictory relationship between Dylan's world view and that of the folk movement. His decision to perform with an electric guitar and a band may not have been premeditated, but it was made with the knowledge that it would upset a few people. Whether he expected the audience to react as they did is another matter: he may have been intending to incite the wrath of folk's inner core (such as Pete Seeger), but at his 1964 appearance, the audience had been supportive of his new songs and it is plausible that he expected 1965's audience to follow suit. According to many backstage observers, Dylan was visibly shocked by the reaction, with a number of accounts suggesting that there were tears in his eyes. Shelton records that Dylan was stunned by the events for all of the following week (1986: 304).

It also seems that Dylan had given no thought to playing any more than the three songs rehearsed with the band, and the uncertainty and confusion of the aftermath of the performance can clearly be heard on the recording: Peter Yarrow seems to be trying to placate the crowd – telling them that Dylan had gone to get an acoustic guitar – while at the same time coaxing him to return to the stage. Dylan eventually

did so, with a guitar supposedly lent to him by Johnny Cash. He played 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue' as an appropriate adieu and, by the end of the song, he had recovered his performing wits: he began strumming the chords of 'Mr Tambourine Man' before pausing. 'Does anybody have an E harmonica?' he entreated the crowd, 'an E harmonica – anybody? – just throw them all up'. There followed a hail of harmonicas hitting the stage; Dylan picked one up, checked its tuning, and thanked the audience before commencing the song. 'Mr Tambourine Man' contained a two-sided irony: not only was it one of the songs that had caused controversy 12 months earlier, but it had only recently vacated the Number One slot in the Billboard pop charts through the electrified version by the Byrds (Heylin 2000: 213). These ironies were seemingly lost on the crowd who, having taught the recalcitrant singer the error of his ways, were merely glad to have the old Dylan back.

The relationship between Dylan and the folk movement had always been strained and by early 1965 he found its expectations too restrictive (this can quite clearly be seen in D.A. Pennebaker's documentary film *Don't Look Back* (1967) in which Dylan experiences a jump in time, leaving America in 1965-mode and arriving for a UK tour with everyone expecting him to be just like he was in 1963). After the British tour in May he had made the quite serious decision to quit the music scene altogether, a decision seemingly overturned by his excitement at writing 'Like a Rolling Stone'. The performance at Newport that year was thus a deliberate attempt to break free from these restrictions, a statement of artistic self-assertion. It also had far wider implications, however, for the controversy sapped the life from the folk revival: a fact apparent even in the immediate aftermath of Dylan's performance, when there suddenly seemed to have appeared an unbridgeable and irrevocable chasm between the new and the old, as festival organizer Joe Boyd clearly understood:

> After the interval for some reason the scheduling misfired and every washed-up, boring, old, folkie, left-wing fart you could imagine [performed] in a row, leading up to Peter, Paul & Mary in the final thing – Ronnie Gilbert, Oscar Brand, Josh White … Theodore Bikel – they all went on, one after another. It was like an object lesson in what was going on here. Like, all you guys are all washed-up. This is all finished (Heylin 2000: 213–14).

Notes

1. Some of the material here first appeared in Marshall (2000).
2. Still, it's nice to know that Bob wasn't bitter. In 1985, MacColl's daughter Kirsty wrote home, saying 'I was at a party with Bob Dylan last night. He's still one of your great fans in spite of the fact that you don't think much of him' (Denselow 1989: 29).