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Indianism In Bob Dylan's Poetry

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INTRODUCTION:

Dylan is a well-known writer whose inspirations have already spawned a number of studies, the most influential of which is unquestionably Dylan's Visions of Sin by Christopher Ricks (2003). Ricks claims that the Bible and the Anglo-American literary canon, which includes authors like Yeats and Milton as well as writers spanning from Shakespeare to T. S. Eliot, are among Dylan's sources. A French reader who instantly come to mind, like Baudelaire (Dylan is a skilled developer of oxymorons, a significant element in Les Fleurs du Mal), Verlaine, and Lautréamont, especially in his early time, may find such cultural self-centeredness shocking. Furthermore, even if Ricks mentions a certain tradition, Bob Dylan's inspiration is by no means limited to it. In fact, Northerner Robert Zimmerman is enthralled with the Old South. And this exact explains, quite logically, the significant role that he readily accepts and assigns to the Afro-American legacy in his work. My goal in presenting the Indian tradition is to highlight yet another inspiration.

CONTENT:

This strategy might appear unrealistic because, at first glance, Dylan's corpus appears to be blatantly devoid of Indians. They are only stated openly in very rare instances, such as in the title of the instrumental "Wigwam" or the overused phrase "broken treaties" in American culture, which is nearly nondescript. Another allusion appears in a passage from the classic "Shenandoah"—an Indian term in and of itself—that Dylan composed and recorded in the early going. In this hymn, the phrase "Indians camp along her border" refers to the Mississippi River.

However, my perception suggests that Dylan's work has hints of a latent Indianness here and there, suggesting that the early settlers of the New World are not entirely absent. The use of geography will enable us to locate these hidden references. Dylan frequently shows how attached he is to the northern areas of his birth. He acknowledges that he misses the environment of the North, where four seasons exist, among other things, in a song named "California." In fact, the idea of clearly distinct seasons appears frequently in his writing.

Seasonal variations are given clear meaning in these lines: (From "If Not For You," New Morning)

Without you, winter would not have given way to spring.

Dylan also describes wintery scenes, including frozen lakes and blizzards. Of course, summer is mentioned in at least two of his songs, "Summer Days" and "In the Summertime."

Dylan's strong devotion to his home region can be linked to his Indian identity, which is embodied in the idealized image of an Indian woman. The concluding ode to Dylan's native nation, "Girl of the North Country," features a girl whose long hair lends an unmistakably Indian flavour to this fabled beauty. This is made much more apparent by the fact that only one aspect of her strong beauty is described. The singer-songwriter Dylan makes clear this frequent American folklore association between Indianness and long hair in his song "Summer Days," which was composed forty years later and features the line "Got a long-haired woman, she got royal Indian blood." This song features the poet's personal voice is prominent in this song as he explores ambiguity and the incompatibility of "royal" and "Indian." Along with the popular perception of long-haired Native American women as majestic, Dylan's home region's folklore includes the idea of the Indian mistress, if not wife, to the white man, which has long been a reality (White 1991).

These hints compel us to delve deeper into the Dylan corpus to uncover ideas and imagery that the author employs—and which, given my in-depth research on Indian mythology, cultural systems, and structural relationships, may very well have their origins in American folklore. I consider it possible, in strict accordance with application of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, that these elemental occurrences are the result of a logical transformation, above all a matter of reversal, whether total or partial (Désveaux 2001:66), even though these contributions may be hybrid, that is, a synthesis of Native and European elements (Gruzinski 1999). In light of this, I would like to suggest a preliminary list of themes and components that Dylan's Indian tradition and Dylan’s Poetic imagination.So I begin;

Example 1:

Of the two sisters, I loved the young.

(“Ballad in Plain D,” *Another Side of Bob Dylan*)

The concept of the two sisters is usually seen in close association with the proper choice in Native Indian myths.Here, Dylan appears to be taking the easy route—both sexually and narratively—by expressing his affection for the younger sister within the framework of a Western notion. But when we interpret the statement in the context of American marriage conventions, it takes on a very different connotation. It is commonly known that sororal polygyny was always open and lawful for Indians, if not the norm. This is shown in kinship charts (Désveaux 2002) and tales, particularly those of the Ojibwa (De Josselin de Jong 1913:20–23). Thus, love for the younger sister can be seen as either a last attempt to make a decision in the face of strong social pressures, or

For her parasite sister, I had no respect,

Bound by her boredom, her pride to protect.
Countless visions of the other she'd reflect,
As a crutch for her scenes and her society.

as a type of entry pass to feminine sexuality, with its purposeful restrictions, for sentimental reasons.

Through young summer's breeze, I stole her away
From her mother and sister, though close did they stay.
Each one of them suffering from the failures of their day,
With strings of guilt they tried hard to guide us.

Regardless of the result, Dylan makes a clear attempt in this song to explain the lover's motivations in relation to the challenges provided by social conventions. In Indian context it is found among the Naga tribes, the Gond, the Baiga and the Toda. It is also found among the Lushai, Juang and the Kondh.

In Indian families when the elder sister died unfortunately, to look after the bereaved kids, husband can marry younger sister. Recently an incident took place in Westbengal.In the wedding rituals performed at Kalachandpara in Garia on the outskirts of the city, Groom Kaushik tied the knot with Jhuma as per the Hindu Marriage Act and With Soma, he got into the wedlock as per social rituals. When the case went to trail, lawyers feel both marriages cannot be legal, according to the Hindu Marriage Act. But the verdict says "The girl Kaushik married first, is the legal wife. It is not a crime to marry two persons, provided both the girls are in the know about everything. But if anyone raises a legal question, then there may be problems," says Calcutta High Court Bar Association vice president Uttam Majumdar.

Example 2:

Man gave names to all the animals,
In the beginning, long time ago.
("Man Gave Names to All the Animals," *Slow Train Coming*)

We are back in the territory of religious allusion in the lines above. The Old Testament verse "*And Adam gave name to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field"* (Genesis 2:20) is explicitly mentioned in these two sentences. Dylan subtly emphasizes Lévi-Strauss's theory about the human mind's ability to categorize and, thus, give names to all-natural entities by rewording the Biblical passage by using the more generic term "man" for the Hebrew letter. When paired with other components, this generalization moves the naming phenomenon as it is presented in the Dylan text closer to an Indian ontogenesis. Essentially, we have the metamorphosis of a traditional motif in Native Indian myths: the animal parade, whose purpose, as Lévi-Strauss showed, was to identify the various animal species by naming them. The only evidence of human superiority over animals is the fact that people give them names. In the same vein, and bearing in mind the aetiological description of animal traits frequently found in Indian mythologies, it is

possible to quote the following passage, which defines the various animal species according to their characteristics, such as habitat, mode of locomotion, or means of defence.

I can drink like a fish,
I can crawl like a snake,
I can bite like a turkey,
I can slam like a drake.
(“Please, Mrs Henry,” *Basement Tapes*)

Dylan once more offers a synthesis of the two conventional understandings of natural phenomena—the American and the Indian, as expressed in biblical texts—each of which supports and subtexts the other. In fact, Dylan's perspective serves to mutually sustain both worldviews understanding the animal kingdom.

This creative interplay across cultures is most evident on ‘Under the Red Sky’, when Dylan's tendency to take advantage of cosmological patterns for deeper ontological and philosophical meaning reinforces the whole process. Here, two songs stand out for their allusions to the relationship between humans and the sun. The first is called "2 by 2." A parody of the well-known children's song "One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians," which makes a formal

reference to being Indian, the opening line of the song makes a remarkable use of a motif that appears frequently in Indian mythology:

One by one, they followed the sun.
(“2 x 2,” *Under the Red Sky*)

Versions of the fable from Northern Algonquia (Savard 1985; Désveaux 1988:63–65) describe how a trickster stumbles onto a broad trail in the forest. He follows the prints for some time without being able to identify them, but to no avail. So, he makes the decision to place a snare in the way. When daylight fails to appear the following morning, he realizes that the path is that of the Sun—the Sun has become entangled in a snare. The trickster attempts to make things right by sending a series of animals in a kind of procession along the path in the direction of the location of his snare. One by one, all but the last of them are unable to release the sun from its snare because, somewhere along the way, the sun's blaze burns through their fur. The mouse, who can dig a hole and approach the light without getting burned, is the final animal to be called upon. With remarkable speed, he manages to break free from the snare and free the celestial body that grants light. Another song by Dylan has a lot of resonance with this narrative context:

Thus, the final scene in Under the Red Sky depicts a terrible death that alludes to the ghost of Racine's poetry. In fact, this hypothetical cosmic disruption, like in Racine's writings, mirrors the challenging relationships that are formed between men and women by a stronger will.

As we have just seen, Dylan's use of the lunar paradigm in "Under the Red Sky" is the ultimate expression of what it means to be Indian. It does this by connecting the lunar paradigm to a central combination of elements in Indian mythology that unites the concept of menstruation and the couple made up of brothers

and sisters as the source of gender differentiation and the impossibility of achieving anything beyond it, save from death. The moon is nearly invariably red or flaming red in Dylan's songs. We are aware that fertility and the cyclical nature of female sexuality are closely related. It sends the man into an ontological state of confusion over his ancestry, which goes beyond the issue of whether or not a partner is available.

Furthermore, it is evident that Indians' beliefs on sex-based procreation by no means overlap (Désveaux 2001:159-61). Dylan appears to apply this lesson instinctively. With the exception of his biography, the entirety of the writings of the author of "All Along the Watchtower" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" attest to a viewpoint at odds with the female reproductive ideals that are articulated in modern society, while paternity is suspended in his works.

Even though Richard Thomas exaggerated the extent to which Anglo-Saxon written literature influenced Dylan's compositions, there is no denying that Dylan's unique status in the canon of American popular music stems from the fact that he is one of the few, if not the only, performer to have successfully created a long-lasting bridge between popular and academic cultures. We will remember one fact that has generally been shown, without delving into the extensive body of literature on the subject: scholarly culture is founded on the written word, whereas popular culture is based on oral tradition. Using this as a foundation, we can investigate the potential avenues via which Dylan has been exposed to the Indian influences mentioned earlier.

The most personal aspect of the poet's creativity—his dubious conception of biological fertility—may very well have found expression in the Amerindian substratum found in a few lines from the Dylan corpus. Dylan's personal views on the matter may, in the end, be more in line with Native American beliefs than with Western ones; that is, that paternity is not a matter of genetic transmission but rather of a woman taming and adopting a biologically produced being, with whom the child's status is perpetually negotiated.

CONCLUSION:

The song has become a staple there over time. Unless, of course, one was to contend that it is re-appropriation, then the Indians have appropriated it. In fact, bangs on trees— (like the one the bird-nester climbs)—always portend death in Indian legends. The belief of re-incarnation continues to collide and mingle in modern-day India; perhaps this is what makes this continent so beautiful.

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