

BRIDGES WITHIN THE ARTS: BOB DYLAN AND MARTIN SCORSESE

Doris Hambuch

United Arab Emirates University

Ioannis Galanopoulos Papavasileiou

Zayed University

“An exhibitionist only on stage,” David Yaffe writes about the 1965 Warhol Screen Test, “Dylan knew the camera loved him, but at that moment he did not love it back” (32). A great number of film appearances followed Bob Dylan’s experiment with Andy Warhol, most recently the Netflix original *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese* (2019). Other screen representations include *Festival* (1967), *Dont Look Back* (1967), *The Concert for Bangladesh* (1972), *Eat the Document* (1972), *Renaldo and Clara* (1978), *The Last Waltz* (1978), *The Other Side of the Mirror* (2007), *Bob Dylan: Revealed* (2011), and *Trouble No More* (2017). Arguing that film became the third most important component of Dylan’s work, after writing and music, we claim that his collaboration with Scorsese was best suited to facilitate his dependence on an audience: “I could never sit in a room and just play all by myself” (*Chronicles* 16), Dylan writes early on in his memoir. This suggests that he was, in fact, an “exhibitionist,” and not only on stage: “I needed to play for people and all the time” (*Chronicles* 16). The compatibility between Dylan and Scorsese, we argue, rests in their shared fascination with storytelling, and in their conviction that the bridge between fact and fiction is removable and sometimes redundant.

In “Markin’ up the Score,” the opening chapter of *Chronicles*, Dylan recalls the significance of an encounter with the wrestler Gorgeous George early in his career (*Chronicles* 43). He remembers how he played as a teenager in the lobby of his Minnesota hometown’s main event building, when the celebrity’s wink and brief remark presented an inciting moment. In the next paragraph, he questions not only the fact itself, but also the relevance of its truthfulness: “Whether [Gorgeous George] really said it or not, it didn’t matter,” Dylan writes; “It’s what I thought I heard him say that mattered, and I never forgot it” (44). Scorsese, for his part, reveals in an interview with Raffaele Donato that “you can go back and stage the past. You want

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to record the battle of San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American war? Stage it. It is a natural impulse and so is recording. They go hand in hand. That's why for me there was never ever a difference between fiction and non-fiction" (Donato 200). The compliance between the musician and the filmmaker on their poetic licence with reality culminates in *The Rolling Thunder Revue*, which adds fictitious interviewees to existing documentary footage, while also featuring scenes from Dylan's own *Renaldo and Clara*. *The Rolling Thunder Revue* thus blends a great number of genres, including the mockumentary, and seems best fit to reflect what Yaffe emphasizes throughout his thorough *Bob Dylan: Like a Complete Unknown* (2011), that the singer/poet¹/actor/director/painter² "contains multitudes" (Yaffe xvii), a nod to Walt Whitman, whose influence Dylan himself highlights in his memoir (*Chronicles* 103) as well as in *The Rolling Thunder Revue*.

120 Scorsese's first experience with music documentaries was as a co-editor of Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* (1970); Dylan appears in this film very briefly, although he did not participate in the festival. Scorsese went on to experiment with re-authoring techniques in his own *The Last Waltz* (1978). The team for this film included writer Mardik Martin, editors Jan Roblee and Yeu-Bun Yee, and cinematographer Michael Chapman. Dylan is the last guest in their documentation of The Band's farewell concert at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom, following many other famous musicians such as Eric Clapton, Van Morrison, and Joni Mitchell. At the time Scorsese was working on *The Last Waltz*, Dylan was directing his *Renaldo and Clara* (1978), co-written with Sam Shephard. In contrast to the former, the latter was not received well at all. Yaffe explains that Dylan's "mostly unloved" film "in the spirit of Fassbinder, tried to achieve a collective correlative"³ (34), and failed. Three decades later, it would go on to contribute to the mosaic that is *The Rolling Thunder Revue*. Our analysis of the cooperation between these two New York-focused artists includes three main aspects. The making of music and film mostly depends on collaboration; yet, despite successful work with their various teams and with each other, both Scorsese and Dylan remain the kind of auteurs who are adamant about their own ideas on their respective creativity. Their preference of fictionalized facts leads to considerations of their "romantic" as opposed to "realist" inclination. A connected reliance on emotions and the subconscious as opposed to the rational needs to be discussed, finally, in the context of spirituality.

NO DIRECTION HOME (2005): AUTHORITY THROUGH ALIENATION

After the production and co-direction of the documentary series *The Blues* (2003), Scorsese went on to refine his skills at creating new stories from existing material with *No Direction Home* (*NDH*, 2005), for which he "conducted none of the interviews

and shot none of the footage” (Yaffe 40). *No Direction Home* accompanies Dylan’s print memoir *Chronicles* (2004), whose first part appeared a year before the film’s release. Neither the film nor the book are organized in a chronological way, though the former provides many more dates than the latter. Both jump back and forth in time, reflecting the postmodern aesthetic of a pastiche;⁴ both remind the audience to perceive the main subject as an unreliable narrator. In the *Chronicles*’ first chapter, Dylan emphasizes his impatience with interview questions about his biography. He gives details about his own reinvention in an interview with Billy James, the head of publicity at Columbia Records, concluding that his only accurate answer had to do with his originality: “That part of things was true, I really didn’t see myself like anybody. The rest of it, though, was pure hokum—hophead talk” (*Chronicles* 7-8). The film refers to an interview with Oscar Brand, host of the radio program *Folksong Festival*, during which Dylan claims to have been raised in New Mexico (*NDH*, part 1, 59:15). This reference follows an amiable assessment of Dylan’s imagination by Izzy Young, the owner of the Folklore Center in New York.

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Dylan appears conflicted about Young’s habit of keeping a diary, stating that “his questions were annoying,” but, appreciative of Young’s support, he “tried to be considerate and forthcoming” (*Chronicles* 20). Reading from his notebook in *No Direction Home*, Young laughs about the creativity with which Dylan invented biographical fiction: “I should have figured out right away, he was bullshitting me. I was a set-up, a very easy set-up. But I’m proud of it. Because the guy wrote good songs” (*NDH*, part 1, 57:58). In the interview with Donato, Scorsese weighs the power of words against that of images. In reference to an interview passage in which Dylan states that it did not matter what he said (*NDH*, part 1, 24:23), Scorsese commends the interviewer, Dylan’s manager Jeff Rosen, on capturing compelling facial expressions: “In a way those interviews allowed us to open up the film,” Scorsese explains, “because there was a truth that Jeff Rosen got at with Dylan. A truth, as opposed to the truth. Because like many of us [Dylan] keeps reinventing himself” (Donato 207). As much as Rosen’s friendship with Dylan contributed to the effect Scorsese points out here, it also has to be credited to Michael Borofsky, who filmed the interviews, as well as to some of the no fewer than ten directors of photography employed for this and for the other interview sequences with friends of Dylan.

Dylan is filmed in what looks like a Rembrandt light studio, set up with its necessary black background and harsh right-side shadow. The 180-degree rule is followed until, towards the end of the film, two breaks underline Dylan’s transformation, his symbolic move to the other side. The narrative time ends at the 1966 performance in Newcastle, England. Returning full circle to the opening excerpts from “Like a Rolling Stone,” backed by the group then known as The Hawks, later The Band, the closing scene from this controversial concert follows a title card that informs us about the motorcycle accident that occurred a few months later. The subsequent information that Dylan recovered from this accident to continue his career leads up to an envisioning of audience anticipation. The final scene, poetically executed by

Scorsese, is a tracking shot: an associative, fictional clip showing a close shot of a motorcycle driving away from a theatre in London. After Scorsese cuts to a point-of-view shot, the motorcycle passes a long lineup of people extending for more than four blocks. This closure points out Dylan's tendency to disappear, as suggested in the *Basement Tapes* song that should serve as title for Todd Haynes's experimental fiction film *I'm Not There* (2007). It also foregrounds a conflicted attitude towards audience reception. While Dylan, as established in the introduction, depends on listeners, he does not seem compelled to please them. As he explains in his memoir, he prefers to create, and, if necessary, change, his ideal audience (*Chronicles* 154-55). *No Direction Home* illuminates the alienation of his folk audience.

122 The switch from acoustic to electric performance started in 1965 and is marked in the film by the Newport Folk Festival, in Rhode Island, the event at which Dylan had been introduced by Joan Baez two years before. At the 1965 edition, he is announced as someone with "a limited amount of time" (*NDH*, part 2, 49:57). Dylan's following performance of "Maggie's Farm," backed by a blues band, is intercut with Baez's reflections, as well as the first break with the 180-degree rule, where Dylan suddenly appears on the left side of the screen, questioning the meaning of audience interference (*NDH*, part 2, 53:01). Back on the right, he denies that his music was the actual reason for the audience's hostility (*NDH*, part 2, 53:20).

The chorus line "It's all over now" from his acoustic encore "Baby Blue" underlines the effect of this turning point, which signalled a break with Baez and the folk scene's political activism, as well as a rejection of the responsibility expected from someone considered the voice or spokesperson of a generation. It might further be read as simply a rejection of the confinement associated with a single category. As will be explored later, versatility is another important common ground between Dylan and Scorsese. A number of farcical interview excerpts from 1965-66 highlight Dylan's very personal rebellion, ending with an explicit negation of the wish to "be the leader of singers with a message" (*NDH*, part 2, 1:24:03). *Chronicles* and *No Direction Home* present this transition as unavoidable, but also dwell on the pain involved in it. Maria Muldaur, for example, remembers how she tried to cheer the distressed Dylan up by asking him to dance at Newport. His reply was that he couldn't because his "hands are on fire" (*NDH*, part 2, 1:00:04). Whether this fire relates to the fires of hell is a question for the last section of this study.

The freedom to choose between styles, genres, and categories comes with the risk of alienation. A certain box may impose confinement, but it also offers shelter. The refusal to settle in that box means losing the chance to make a home there. It may mean, as in the lyrics of "Like a Rolling Stone," to be "like a complete unknown" in a new box, as well as in the old. It always means to be "without a home." The remaining part of the chorus, "no direction home," thus makes the perfect title for a collaboration between two artists who both reject "compromise."⁵ Marc Raymond reminds us in his discussion of Scorsese as cultural historian that "tales of his previous days as a tortured rebel genius allowed the myth of his 'outsider' status to continue unabated"

(Raymond 187). As the preceding discussion has shown, both “tortured rebel genius”—as much as he may reject this term, just like that of the “spokesman”—and “outsider” are fitting labels for Dylan as well. They are also the conditions that allow for his extreme versatility, which is at the centre of the next section.

METAMORPHOSIS: FROM STONE TO THUNDER

Dylan uses the word “metamorphosis” to describe a profound experience during what in the literary context is referred to as “writer’s block” or what in the world of sports is called “choking.” In Dylan’s memory, this experience took place at a concert in Switzerland, while on tour with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, when he “fell into a black hole” (*Chronicles* 152). We will return, in the context of spirituality, to the words he used to describe his way out of this hole: “I just did it automatically out of thin air, cast my own spell to drive out the devil” (153). At this point, we wish to foreground the subsequent reflections that relate more to the realm of theatre and cinema:

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Nobody would have noticed that a *metamorphosis* had taken place. Now the energy was coming from a hundred different angels, completely unpredictable ones. I had a new faculty and it seemed to surpass all the other human requirements. If I ever wanted a different purpose, I had one. It was like I’d become a new *performer*, an unknown one in *the true sense* of the word. In more than thirty years of performing, I had never seen this place before, never been here. If I didn’t exist, someone would have to have *invented me*. (*Chronicles* 153; emphasis ours)

There are theories that everyone is a performer of different roles throughout life: “All the world’s a stage,” as Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*, “and all the men and women merely players” (II.vii. 139-40). It is to be expected, however, that the differences between individual roles are more striking for those who make acting a profession.

Dylan had little success as an actor in fiction films, not only in his own *Renaldo and Clara*, already mentioned in the preceding section, but also in Richard Marquand’s *Hearts of Fire* (1987) or in *Masked and Anonymous* (2003) by Larry Charles, the latter of which he co-wrote under the penname Sergei Petrov. These projects nevertheless testify to his fascination with the art form. In a study of Dylan’s place within American culture, Noel King names numerous local and foreign directors as contributors to Dylan’s cinephilia: Tod Browning and Sam Peckinpah are listed next to Fellini, Buñuel, Godard, and Kurosawa (King 42), and we have already mentioned his admiration for Fassbinder in the context of *Renaldo and Clara*. Working on the script for this film, Shephard documents a special interest in the French New Wave, along with an admiration for *Children of Paradise* (1945),⁶ as responsible for Dylan’s directorial vision (King 43). Arguably, Dylan’s foray into film has its roots in music, in the observational documentaries *Festival* (1967) by Murray Lerner and *Dont Look*

Back (1967) by D.A. Pennebaker, both of which are credited several times as sources in *No Direction Home*. Dylan's first performance of a fictional film character, in Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), relates to his writing of the film score.⁷ How do these performances connect to audience reception on the one hand, and to the fact/fiction division on the other?

Filmmaking facilitates the idea of a continued, more rounded interaction with audiences beyond a performer's death. Records and albums preserve the lyrics and music, but only moving images can add the visuals of a performance. Dylan's work, as stated here repeatedly, depends on audience interaction. *The Rolling Thunder Revue* (RTR) reveals this fact in a conversation with violinist Scarlet Rivera's fictional driver. The anonymous driver, maybe a nod towards Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1978), indulges in his personal observations on the bond between stage performers and their audience based on his attendance of the previous evening's concert. Almost halfway into the film, Dylan participates in a Roma holiday celebration that coincided with his birthday, and therefore was "like going home" (RTR 55:30), a creative response to the earlier film. This scene cuts to Rivera's driver musing about the vibes between musicians and their listeners at live concerts. Calling that interaction "a show all by itself," he remembers the vibes as so strong that they were almost visible, and goes as far as to define the spectacle as "love affair" (RTR 1:00:00). Although cinema audiences may also react to a show, they rarely reach any of the respective artists directly; such interaction remains exclusive to stage performance.

The Rolling Thunder Revue dwells on many different forms of theatre, and its connection to cinema, while *No Direction Home* only briefly mentions travelling circuses via archival photographs in the recreation of Midwestern culture during Dylan's childhood. *The Rolling Thunder Revue*, in contrast, opens with a silent, black-and-white film clip that shows the disappearance and reappearance of a woman under the cover of a chair. The scene is reminiscent of George Méliès's vaudeville work, which Scorsese represented in *Hugo* (2011).⁸ When the first half of the film title, *The Rolling Thunder Revue*, appears, the word "conjuring" is used above, and *revue* turns into "Re-Vue" (RTR 00:45) within seconds. After the subtitle appears on a subsequent title card, Dylan's performance of "Mr. Tambourine Man" is intercut with archival Bicentennial footage, which includes a marching band.

During the *Rolling Thunder* tour (1975-76), Dylan sported his most colourful stage presence, wearing a hat with flowers and feathers, whiteface that often thins due to sweat as a show progresses, and a flying scarf. Rivera's outfits, also in the stage foreground, likewise support an atmosphere of fantasy, a certain carnival context. Scorsese elaborates on Dylan's interest in the theatrical with images from old films involving masks, as well as with scripted references to Japanese Kabuki and Italian Commedia dell'arte. At one point, it is implied that actual masks were used during the concerts, and Dylan complains that they "didn't have enough masks on that tour" (RTR 32:16), a complaint topped with wisdom on the fact/fiction division: "When someone is wearing a mask, he's gonna tell you the truth" (RTR 32:24). To

the initiated, this is one of the many tongue-in-cheek remarks that turn the entire extravaganza into a comedic, often satiric reply to the tragic *No Direction Home*. While the latter ends by exposing a vulnerable, disoriented artist about to suffer a major accident, the new film picks up a decade later and highlights the artist's ongoing live performances with precise tour dates during the end credits.⁹

The corpus of texts for *No Direction Home*, featured in the PBS *American Masters* series, includes biography, American history, cultural heritage, history of folk music, and literature. *The Rolling Thunder Revue* adds to this fictional interviewees and digitally invented footage, thus erasing any claim to historicity. Michael Meneghetti writes that even in Scorsese's early work with documentaries,

the traditional problems of historiography (weighing evidence, examining traces, determining the truth of events, etc.) [...] have in effect been replaced by an ethnographic experiment: 'the emotions', closely observed by the filmmaker and camera, function in this account as intermediaries to the historical past. (204)

This statement supports Scorsese's remarks about Dylan's facial expressions discussed in the preceding section. The reliance on expressed emotions is based, in the spirit of romanticism, on the belief that it is impossible to represent reality without bias. Documentary theory has long debated to what extent it is ethical to make certain scenes or individuals subjects of films (Nichols 157). This debate reveals manipulation on the director's part; furthermore, there is the question of authenticity altered by the presence of the film crew on the subject's part. Scorsese refers to this dilemma in the interview with Donato:

You can be easily deceived when you're making a documentary, because many people find it very easy to "play" reality, or realism, for the camera. They adopt a kind of documentary personality. This happens more and more, because people are much more comfortable in front of cameras now than they were 40 years ago, and it's easier for them to develop tricks, defenses. But it's those moments where the defenses are down, where they get so comfortable that they really let themselves show, that are so precious. (Donato 203)

The choice of the word "defenses" exposes the filming process as intrusive. Yet, as Scorsese observes, the embrace of such intrusion has increased steadily, and more so with the rise of social media. Another keyword here is "comfortable." While social media aficionados tend to be comfortable with themselves—or, at least, with their altered selves—as both subject and director, Scorsese speaks of comfort between a subject and a professional crew. One might speculate that this latter relationship corresponds more to that between an audience and live performers.

Expectations on both sides of the creative process would then play a crucial role for the outcome of a collaboration. As Meneghetti ventures, "the possibility of imposition" is more of a threat to someone working in "direct cinema," often compared to the tradition of Rouchian *cinéma vérité*.¹⁰ Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* (1967), as it were, with "Dylan's notorious evasiveness and dissembling" (Meneghetti 207)

would support Yaffe's claim that at this time, Dylan did not love the camera back. Pennebaker's comment for *No Direction Home*, however, explains the discomfort as genre-related: "He saw that he had re-invented himself as the actor within this movie. And then it was ok" (*NDH*, part 2, 37:37). The title of Dylan's directorial debut (1972), in collaboration with Pennebaker and Howard Alk, further cements the former's skepticism towards the documentation of facts. Pennebaker laments the development of this project in an interview with Frank Verano, in which he speculates that *Eat the Document* was "sort of making a joke out of the idea of 'the document'—that 'the document' was not really as important as I had tried to make it in the first film" (Verano 254).

126 A documentation that follows the mandate of realism and that attempts to take things seriously would get in the way of the spontaneous and playful kind of creativity that turns an interaction between stage performers and their audience into a "love affair." Such rigid approaches to realism also run counter to a certain freedom of interpretation: "A folk song might vary in meaning," Dylan writes in *Chronicles*, "and it might not appear the same from one moment to the next. It depends on who's playing and who's listening" (*Chronicles* 71). We argue that it is this attitude that enables and provokes the fascination with film. While the magic of the live spectacle depends on the stage performance, film is the best possible way to preserve at least some of this magic and allow future audiences their own interpretations. It is also the best medium to capture the transformations of a "shape changer"¹¹ such as Dylan. Scorsese, for one, has "liked [Dylan's] presence in all different incarnations he's had over the years" (*Schickel* 6005 Kindle). Incarnations in question might, symbolically speaking, range from a stone that gathers no moss to a cloud that is flying high. Whether the latter's sense of levitation is chemically or spiritually induced is at the centre of the following section.

THE ROLLING THUNDER REVUE (2019): NOT A DOCUMENTARY

In his report on the pre-premiere of *No Direction Home* at the thirty-fourth Telluride Film Festival, Greil Marcus provides a graphic description of Dylan as he performs "Like a Rolling Stone" during the Newcastle concert in 1966. This performance works like a frame for the film, with a few shots at the very beginning and at the end, but it reoccurs throughout in stark contrast to the composed Dylan from the Rosen interview described in the first section of this article. During the Newcastle concert scene, Marcus sees the performer like "a dervish possessed by a god you do not want to meet" (Marcus 50). The Irish musician Liam Clancy, who has the honour of explaining that Dylan's name change was inspired by Dylan Thomas (*NDH*, part 1, 23:12), also uses the word "possessed" at the end of the first part of the film, when he remembers Dylan as "constantly moving" but also as able to express "what the rest of

us wanted to say, but couldn't say" (*NDH*, part 1, 1:50:11). The film sympathizes with an auteur's courage, but also with his arrogance to make or enact decisions at the risk of unpopularity. In *The Rolling Thunder Revue*, the fictitious filmmaker Stefan van Dorp, played by Bette Midler's husband, comedian Martin von Haselberg, exhibits traits ascribed to Dylan himself. Dylan's comment that van Dorp "was trying to make enemies where there weren't any. And he was successful at that" (*RTR* 1:17:18) presents an ability to laugh about oneself, which is important to remember for the discussion of links between ridicule and offence.

Towards the end of the second part of *No Direction Home*, record producer Bob Johnston makes his belief clear that the film's subject could not be held responsible for his actions: "He can't help what he is doing," Johnston says; "I mean, he's got the holy spirit about him. Anybody looking at him can see that" (*NDH*, part 2, 1:04:05). According to this assessment, one would have to assume divination was responsible for Dylan's art, and the transformations could be seen as depending on the nature of respective spirits. Dylan himself supports this view, for example, in the reference to the Locarno concert mentioned in the preceding section. In the sentence quoted above, he claims to have driven out his own "devil"; a bit further, his memory is slightly more abstract: "I'd gotten a cosmic kick in the pants" (*Chronicles* 162). Scorsese selects scenes with two different poets, Allen Ginsberg in *No Direction Home* (*NDH*, part 2, 23:15) and Anne Waldman in *The Rolling Thunder Revue* (*RTR* 1:03:00), that identify Dylan as "shaman," and he expresses his own fascination in the interview with Schickel: "It's interesting how a man like that had such influence, which disturbed him" (Schickel 5962 Kindle).

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Dylan's choice of terminology at times points to the question of mental stability. Regardless of this question, at least during the phases covered by the two films studied here, a reliance on the subconscious needs to be addressed as another aspect that reoccurs in the context of transitions or reincarnations, to stay with Scorsese's term. In *No Direction Home*, Dylan's memory of his arrival in New York is accompanied by a recitation from Jack Kerouac's *Poetry for the Beat Generation*. The musician remembers relating to the idea of the "world being completely mad" (*NDH*, part 1, 19:36); he then explains how he felt as though he fit "right into that bunch" of mad people interesting to Kerouac. Of course, "mad" in this context has a wide range of meanings, including "passionate," "creative," and "determined," but also "insane" to a certain degree. In *Chronicles*, Dylan describes a phase of mental instability prior to the Locarno concert discussed in the preceding section: "There was a missing person inside myself," he writes of the anxiety over his creative slump, "and I needed to find him" (*Chronicles* 147). A few pages further, he gets more explicit about the need to revive his energy, stating "I had closed the door on my own self. I'd have to go someplace for the mentally ill and think about it" (149). As shown in the previous discussion of metamorphoses, the Locarno concert would bring the unexpected turnaround.

As opposed to, or also along with these spiritually induced changes, we need to

draw attention to the effects of drugs: “Everybody wanted to get high with Bobby” (NDH, part 2, 13:25), Peter Yarrow establishes early in the second part of *No Direction Home*. Situating Dylan within a tradition of “American literary acts of self-invention” (King 37) extending from Emerson to Fitzgerald, King emphasizes the significance of drugs for postwar intellectuals and artists by pointing out the cult status of Ed Dorn’s *Gunslinger* (1968). Dylan’s memoir does not delve into any psychedelic experiences, but Raymond reminds readers that Scorsese’s documented fondness for cocaine was “linked particularly to his irrational decision to make *The Last Waltz* before completing his studio project, [*Taxi Driver*]” (Raymond 187). *The Rolling Thunder Revue* recalls the Beat scene’s involvement with drugs via van Dorp’s statement that LSD was his “drug of choice” (RTR 32:50). Like Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan,” one could easily imagine this trickster mosaic of Dylan and Scorsese’s most recent collaboration as a dream-like journey into the subconscious.

128 The use of the word “conjuring” in the introduction of the film title, *The Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese*, turns the entire film into a kind of magic trick, and Dylan supports this claim during interview scenes within the first five minutes of the film’s running time. These scenes are in stark contrast to those representing “the personal voice” (Raymond 192) in *No Direction Home*. *The Rolling Thunder Revue* disregards the line-of-axis right from the start, showing the interviewee either on the right or left side of the screen, rather at random. He often appears in a medium rather than the intimate closeup shots preferred in the older Scorsese collaboration. Made up like a modern vaudeville artist, Dylan speaks haltingly, and confesses that his concept of the “revue” is “all clumsy bullshit” (RTR 04:35). For those still in doubt, because they may have found the film mistakenly in a documentary section, he reveals a few minutes later that “this Rolling Thunder thing” is about “nothing.” Insisting that he does not remember anything about it, he adds that he “wasn’t even born” when it happened (RTR 04:40-05:04).

King also understands Dylan’s music in the context of conjuration. In reference to the musician’s narration in *No Direction Home*, King mentions “his ability to *conjure up* idiosyncratic phrases that make his generic role as ‘documentary testimony’ as distinctive here as are his phrasings when he performs his own songs” (42; emphasis ours). The adjective “Dylanesque,” ascribed to the BBC announcer of *No Direction Home*, appears as an apt neologism in particular because of its relation to “carnavalesque.” Evoking Richard Poirier’s theories about the “dramatization of the ‘self as performer’” (41), King concludes that *No Direction Home* “defly manipulates the received generic conventions of the documentary form, not so startlingly as *Chronicles* reworks the conventions of autobiographical writing, but getting there” (42). *The Rolling Thunder Revue* expands on such manipulation to an extent that it indeed moves itself out of the documentary category altogether. It would require extended research to distinguish facts from fantasy in this film, but the review by Barry Hertz is proof that appreciation of the movie does not depend on such research (Hertz).

The closure of the “Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese” with Ginsberg’s appeal to the viewers to gather their own community of performers to create their own communal story by all means represents the intention of both featured artists. A link back to ancient tradition is created with Ginsberg’s identification as “The Oracle of Delphi” in the end credits. The cast, there, appears as “The Players,” and lists archetypes such as “The Balladeer” (Joan Baez) and “The Minstrel” (Roger McGuinn), as well as “The Punk Poet” (Patti Smith). Rather than with the fictional name van Dorp, von Haselberg is identified as “The Filmmaker.” This technique corresponds to one Dylan describes in *Chronicles*, where he claims not to remember actual names sometimes. The names he then makes up, such as “The Sorceress,” “The Wrong Man,” or “Big Ben,” “more accurately describe” the people in question (*Chronicles* 169). Such names may further prevent anyone from taking offence because they distract from specifics and offer a certain universality. There may be viewers who object to the appearance of Chief Rolling Thunder, for example, but when he is listed as “The Medicine Man” in the end credits, his place in the film receives a different connotation. Likewise, the performance of a contemporary actor as Rubin “Hurricane” Carter may seem objectionable, but it is the actual Carter who appears among “The Players” as “The Boxer,” and in the tradition of carnival, any of the pranks originate from individuals who include themselves in the ridicule. It is this sense of humour that allows to laugh about oneself, which Dylan and Scorsese share as well.

CONCLUSION

In a conversation with Greil Marcus, Don DeLillo remarks on the extraordinary fact that Dylan “has maintained the level of public interest that we’ve given him over forty-some-odd years” (qtd. in King 39). It has been another decade and a half since the conversation in question took place, and the public interest mentioned has arguably increased since the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2016, and again since the release of *The Rolling Thunder Revue* in 2019, even though the “Never Ending Tour” had to be interrupted due to the coronavirus pandemic. Scorsese’s career is comparable in length and impact, except that his achievements are recognized not with literary prizes, but with Academy Award nominations, and his winning in the Best Director category for *The Departed* (2007). Such fame has, of course, to do with the fact that both artists, born in the early 1940s and departing from New York as inspirational centre, have been extremely prolific and versatile.¹² “Everybody has their own idea of who Bob Dylan is” (Schickel 5933 Kindle), as Scorsese points out. Such an idea depends on which albums or writings one looks at; likewise, different films by Scorsese would lead to different impressions of the filmmaker. This is not to deny that there is an underlying kind of symbolic signature. As much as themes and genres may differ, Scorsese’s style remains as unique as the “Dylanesque” way of verbalization, the latter at times “hokum” and “hophead talk” (*Chronicles* 8) in the

artist's own terms.

Another of Scorsese's statements about Dylan may actually apply to the former himself: "he had to be himself wherever it was going to take him" (Schickel 6005 Kindle). Although both artists work in team-based fields of creative expression, their symbolic signatures referred to in the preceding paragraph are the result of their auteur methodologies. The implied control over specific projects is evident in form as well as content. Where dominant themes in Scorsese's work include tribalism, anti-capitalism, music, and reverence for cinema, Dylan's preoccupations range, for example, from bohemianism, to artistic abstraction, to religion in his gospel phase. Both share a fascination with the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction. Following the legacy of romanticism, they foreground emotional and subconscious as opposed to rational realities, based on the belief that an unbiased representation of reality is impossible in the end. The selection and organization of corpus material in *No Direction Home* (2005) is crucial to the picture it paints of Dylan up to the tragic motorcycle accident in the late 1960s that interrupted his live audience interaction for about eight years.

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The Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese (2019) picks up after Dylan's eight-year abstinence from touring, recovers scenes from the largely forgotten *Renaldo and Clara* (1978) directed by Dylan himself based on footage from the *Rolling Thunder* tour of the mid-1970s, and responds to the earlier film in a comic, satiric mode that defies the classification as documentary altogether. Peter Bradshaw opens his enthusiastic review with a quotation from the present-day musician that follows his rambling about the unreliability of memories. This quotation, that "life is about creating yourself, and creating things" (*RTR* 06:24; Bradshaw), seems to underlie the artistic impulse of Dylan and Scorsese alike. Sam Shepard notes in *The Rolling Thunder Logbook* about the former that "he's made himself up from scratch. That is, from the things he had around him and inside him" (qtd. in King 37). Transformations, then, take place according to changes on either or both sides of the self. These changes include the exploration of new sources in past and present, and collaborations with fellow musicians as well as other artists. Scorsese, for his part, called *No Direction Home* "a life-saver" because he felt "creatively satisfied with that picture" (Schickel 6073 Kindle).

While the work of both Dylan and Scorsese is grounded firmly in their time and place, the United States leading up to and around the turn of the millennium, it also has a certain universal character, not least due to the fictionalization techniques. As Izzy Young defines Dylan's music, "it sounds current and old at the same time" (*NDH*, part 1, 1:17:04). Scorsese's representation of this music, in turn, will keep it alive for many future audiences. For someone who depends on having to "play for people and all the time" (*Chronicles* 16), film is the perfect way to preserve at least some of the "love-affair" (*RTR* 1:00:00) between stage performers and their listeners. It further guarantees future possibilities for new interpretations, a concern of both artists in their challenging the concept of a single truth.

NOTES

1. For a careful literary analysis of Dylan's writing, more than a decade before the Nobel recognition, see Ricks.
2. Dylan's first fine art publication is *Drawn Blank* (1994).
3. In the interview with Donato, Scorsese recalls Dylan telling him about his fascination with Fassbinder's collective idea backstage of *The Last Waltz* (Donato 203).
4. It is no surprise that the film gained Don DeLillo's endorsement after the pre-premiere at Telluride (King 35-36).
5. Lyrics and release information of all songs are available from Dylan's website, www.bobdylan.com/songs/rolling-stone/.
6. There is a small homage to this film in *The Rolling Thunder Revue* (see Bradshaw).
7. This score included "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," www.bobdylan.com/songs/knockin-heavens-door/.
8. The clip is, in fact, from *The Vanishing Lady* (1893) by Méliès (see Bradshaw).
9. The popular name for these ongoing live performances is the "Never Ending Tour" (see Gray).
10. Erik Barnouw distinguishes these two types of observational documentary differently. He writes that "the direct cinema artist aspired to invisibility; the Rouch *cinéma vérité* artist was often an avowed participant. The direct cinema artist played the role of uninvolved bystander; the *cinéma vérité* artist espoused that of provocateur" (255).
11. Scorsese uses this term (Schickel 5914 Kindle), in following Clancy (*NDH*).
12. One could also cite a certain compatibility with patriarchal capitalist structures (see e.g. Petridis).

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