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# **BOB DYLAN FANS and FOLLOWERS**

*Expressions of Music, Culture, Fan-Life, Perception and Interpretation*

by

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*Who gave me a Reason to Embark on my Research Journey.*

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## GLOSSARY OF SELECTED TERMINOLOGIES AND CONCEPTS USED IN THESIS

***Affect/Affective:*** This often occurs in the realms of music listening and reciprocation. Affect relates to the emotional affect a fan experiences when something ‘speaks to them’, ‘touches them’ and/or has a deeper emotional effect on their senses – e.g. the words and music of a song ‘speak to the heart a truth’ of how the listener is actually feeling, and what they are, as an individual human being, actually ‘experiencing in their particular life-situation’. In this way, the person (fan) is deeply affected by the mood, spirit and feeling from within the song and the way the song is sung and emotionally delivered. Fans have described such affective feelings as: *political, transcendence, transformation, love, happiness, spirituality, sadness, remorse, resonance, knowing, being.*

***Appropriate/Appropriations:*** The reactions, emotions, affective feelings and behaviours Dylan fans make, take and adopt into their own everyday-life, time and activities, which are often directly linked to Dylan, his music, persona and art-form – e.g. dressing like Dylan, reading books Dylan has read, adopting a perceived Dylan ‘counter-culture’ attitude in their life-world, having a strong independent and ‘non-conformist’ personal-life philosophy, being ‘free’.

***Existential:*** My applied definition and placement of the term ‘existential’ in this thesis is: ‘The belief that the reflexive individual remains at the center of a mediated social and cultural life [and that] individual identity emerges, changes, creates, defines and adapts to the dynamics and emotive meanings attached to the particular social and cultural life’ (Kotarba, 2002). It is also an ‘inner-self experience’ in the context of ‘being [alone] in the world’, ‘with nothing to hold onto but our own being’ (Denzin, 1992). By fans, It has been referred and related to as something that is ‘a happening’ to an individual, in the sense of a core, emotional and primary life-experience—as in a ‘self-affecting’, ‘self-realising’ and ‘self-reflecting’ way (Williams, 2013).

***Expression(s):*** As related to Dylan fans – it reflects the emotions and reactions to Dylan’s music. As related to the music and sound it is a transmission of energy and a communication of feeling, which encapsulates and translates the reverberations felt

within the individual at the moment of contact with the music. I have also used the word 'expression' as a form of communication and interpretation by fans (and non-fans) who are distinctively and emotionally affected by the music they hear, connect with and relate to; and they express such feelings and emotions both corporeally and in words.

**Fan:** A person with a particular, personalised and selective level of like, interest and enthusiasm in some thing (object) or someone (person-subject). This interest/like also includes different levels of focus, participation, passion and interaction with the admired person or thing — e.g. the level of being active in fan-club participation, or the length of time and attention (and money) given to that particular interest, person, pastime, hobby, etc. (See expansion of this definition in chapter one, page 25)

**Lived-fan-experience:** The entire, corporeal fan experience, experienced spontaneously, and often instinctively – from the beginning feelings of simple interest and curiosity to the full-blown exhilaration, happiness and passion felt by body, mind and heart when connected, involved and immersed in the thing/person you're a fan of. It is a pleasurable, good feeling of being, belonging and association with something or somebody that's important to you in your life, and in a very personal, intimate and meaningful way. In this thesis, these are all appropriated, and lived, 'real' feelings of fan experiences by Bob Dylan fans to Bob Dylan's music, song lyrics and art form. – It's subjective, perhaps, but it's *real* to the person experiencing it! 'Lived experience is simply experience-as-we-live-through-it, in our actions, relations and situations' (van Manen, 2007).

**Persona:** Solely in this thesis, as related to Dylan, this term expresses how he is viewed and characterised by others (fans and followers). It is specifically associated with the publicly viewed on and off-stage presentation of Dylan as a musician, performer, songwriter, even celebrity. It also is connected to how Dylan presents himself on and off-stage and how he projects himself and his persona to his fans – e.g., through planned interviews, concerts, managed publicity, public appearances and new album releases.

## CHAPTER ONE

### RESEARCH INTRODUCTIONS

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## Thesis Summary

Bob Dylan has had not only a far-reaching influence, through his music and art, on the music culture landscape since the 1960s, but he has also had a significant personal impact on millions of his fans and followers around the world. My research focuses on and engages with the strong emotional attachments and investments made by many Dylan fans to Dylan's music, art and perceived *persona*, which is often further appropriated again by many of his fans into their own personal ways of thinking, values and feeling, at times, even related to making sense of place, identity and personal life events. My research highlights the distinctive, individual, *lived-fan-experience*, as described by Dylan fans through their self-reflexive perceptions and narrative descriptions of their own everyday, Dylan-fan-life experiences.

Drawing from online Dylan fan narratives, oral-histories, personal interviews and interdisciplinary writings on Dylan, I adopt an 'insider view' of Dylan-fan-culture, showing in what ways these fans *practise* their fandom and how they make sense of, and even relate to the world around them through their *appropriations* of Dylan's music, words and art forms. My research and methodological approach is one that focuses attention on the significance of the corporeal and subjective lived-fan-experience, elucidating the emotional and (sometimes) transcendent affects experienced by many fans and followers of Dylan through his music and often-cryptic song lyrics. The research also addresses a relevant and noticeable 'gap' in the current academic literature on Dylan fans and fandom.

In order to access and understand the everyday life-experiences of the individual fans themselves, their subjective meanings, feelings, values and perspectives, I have employed apposite inter-disciplinary perspectives from sociology, music studies, narrative theory, ethnography and psychosocial studies to exemplify 'frames', or 'perspectives' of meaning, understanding and context, through which many Dylan fans 'connect with' Dylan, as well as with other Dylan fans. I am interested in the fan's own, distinctive, 'Dylan-influenced life-world' and his or her personal practice and appropriations of Dylan fandom, not only as an explicit area of research, but also as a further exploration into the areas of inter-personal, human-lived-experience, meaning-making, and understanding.

Methodologically, I have placed and emphasis on my Dylan fan research as a journey and discovery rather than a rigid undertaking of an applied fan theory, with the intention to illuminate the actual, lived-Dylan-fan-experience. My intention here is to open up discussion to the areas of the individual Dylan fan, as well as the related sensibilities of identity, affect, relationship, belonging, meaning, values and knowledge. I depict fandom in terms of what is important to the fans themselves — “illuminating the experiences of others in their own terms” (Jensen, 1992:26), presenting fans “not as problems, theories or data, but as real people trying to make sense of their lives in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century...” (Cavicchi, 1998:10).

Through elaborating and giving recognition to the expressions of music and fandom and the lived-experiences of the Dylan fans themselves, which are, for them, the core, ‘real-life’ frameworks and ... positions through which their lived-realities can be *spoken...* (see McRobbie 1994:189), I am highlighting the subjectively lived-fan-experience of the Dylan fans and followers that have participated in my research. The Dylan fans and their fan narratives, particularly those that portray the everyday fan-life and include the oral- history of the particular fan, are, in my attempt to connect with the personal and core Dylan fan experience, indispensable and vital components of my research on fans and fandom as I believe they not only intimately display a clear and critical account of the ‘real-life’ experience of being a (Dylan) fan, but they also elucidate the emotional and ‘affective intensity’ (Grossberg, 1992:64) that lies at the heart of what it actually *means* to be a (Dylan) fan. I claim they are authentic descriptions of the lived-fan-experience by the fans themselves.

My research examines and documents the role and affect that Dylan’s music plays in the meaning-making and identification processes that occur in the fan’s everyday-life, through the conduit of Dylan and his music; the thesis also focuses on the areas of Dylan fandom which illustrate the more personal and affective connections that are forged and maintained with ‘Bob’ by his dedicated fans and followers, and which, in my view, are particularly significant to the actual fan practices and ways these Dylan fans live out their *lived-fan-experience*. One research aim here is to gain more insight into the subjective and introspective areas of lived-experience and being such as, emotion, belief, sentiment and perception.

Because of the very human context regarding the subject matter and personalised experience of Dylan fans and their fandom, I have felt compelled to underline that there is a necessary need to illuminate, retrieve and include the subjective, emotional, *lived-fan-experience* of the fans themselves. I have thus searched for and experimented with diverse, open-ended (academic and ‘non-academic’) approaches, methods and ways of writing that could and would fittingly apply, complement and assist in communicating and verbalising the Dylan-fan experiences. This has entailed a concentration and focus on the individual-fan-experience as well as experimenting with methodologies that would connect to the narratives and sensibilities of the Dylan fans who responded to my research enquiries – many of whom are active and participatory in their fandom – and many of these sharing their interests and fandom with the global Dylan fan community via the online networks and web pages dedicated to Dylan and his music.

Explicitly, my research explores Bob Dylan fans who are a particular and current sample of a specific (wider and larger) group of music fans expressing their own, unique fan-life experiences through their own (fan) narratives. The Dylan fans in my research are describing, in their own words, the significance and meaning that Bob Dylan and his music have in their everyday lives, and, in narrative form, the fans are recounting the practices and appropriations of their fandom. For many Dylan fans, their fandom has been continuous for many, many years of their particular lifetime. A majority of the Dylan fans who have contributed to my research are also active and participatory ‘online’ fans. My research ‘data’ of the Dylan fan narrative texts, describing their own personal lived-fan-experiences, very much exemplify a *plurality* of voices – yet also demonstrate an *individuality* of experiences.

One aim of my methodologies and writing is to attempt to disclose the richness and depth of the reflective, Dylan fan narratives (DFNs). My goal is to better understand, comprehend and more fully acknowledge the importance of the emotive and perceptive elements involved in Dylan fans’ fandom.

My intentionality in the study of Dylan fans has not been to overly theorise, explain or try to account for the phenomenon of Dylan fandom, but rather to utilise and share the descriptive Dylan fan narratives of their accounts of the lived-Dylan-fan experiences, to gain a better *understanding* of the Dylan ‘lived-fan-experience’ — i.e., what it means to

the Dylan fan to be a Dylan fan, (as well as what is it that the fans do to live out their fandom).

### **My Research Journey – ‘Discovering the Fan in Fandom’**

This next section introduces some of the background and context of my personal research journey, outlining my particular research focus and how I got there, describing how and why I came to adopt my particular research methodologies. Here, I also locate, connect and identify myself as both researcher and Dylan fan, explaining why I believe this particular research position-perspective is also important and significant to my research focus areas, as well as to the studying of fandom in general.

I had actually started out my research on ‘Dylan’ initially thinking I would predominantly explore and expound upon the cultural aspects and socio-structural issues connected to fandom, using an overall framework of hegemony and discourse analysis to locate and explain the ‘Dylan phenomenon’. This approach would have discussed Dylan’s musical impact on the cultural scene and music business since the 1960s, with Dylan thus being portrayed and represented as a living, ‘counter-culture’ image. My first year of Dylan fan research was, thus, taken up studying and exploring these themes and areas mentioned as well as others such as, ‘fans as consumerism’, ‘fans in popular culture’, ‘the social constructionism of fandom’, themes of power and discourse, and fans as part of this discourse, plus ‘audience theory’.

At the time of my initial research deliberations (2010), knowing there were already scores of books already published on various aspects of ‘Dylan’, I decided to try a different approach, and look at Dylan through a somewhat ‘mirror-image’ reflection of his fan-base — documenting and describing the different ways Dylan fans personally ‘appropriated’ Dylan — here, using Dylan fans as a resource as well as a way of illustrating the ‘Dylan impact’ on the Dylan fan (him/herself).

In the majority of the previous fan studies I reviewed, there seemed to be a need for a more direct connection to the subject matter (i.e., the fans themselves) and with more actual feedback from the research subjects (the fans) themselves, which, I felt, would better describe and incorporate the lived-experiences and perspectives of the fan

themselves. These were some of the elements I felt needed to be included, addressed and aligned in my particular research on ‘Dylan fans and followers’.

In my exploratory readings on fans and fandom, I realised and found most of the academic writing on such topics to predominantly apply a singular, prescribed theory to the subject matter — for instance, looking at fans through the lens of ‘audience theory’ (Abercrombie et al 1998), or fans as ‘consumers’ (Sandvoss, 2005), fans as a form of ‘cultural resistance’ (Hall et al, 1976; Hebdige, 1979), and so on. While these research undertakings produced additional and useful academic knowledge on fans and fandom, nevertheless, I personally felt these predominantly more singular and prescribed theoretical approaches did not interrogate, nor delve too much into the everyday, lived-experiences and practices of the fans themselves; nor did they feature or include much, if any, of the fans’ own narratives on their particular perspectives and fan experiences.

One thing I soon discovered through my research with Dylan fans was the deep extent, breadth and depth of *affect* and *emotion* within the Dylan fan’s individually appropriated fan experience and the strong identifications and meanings they personally attach to their fandom – they seriously feel very deeply about it! My research focus thus turned towards these more *subjective* and *affective* areas of (Dylan) fans and their fandom.

Angela McRobbie (1994:187) has stated how often the ‘life-experience’ and ‘subject-feeling’ of the research subjects is academically treated *less* as a ‘life-reality’ and more as a mere *representation* of their lived-experiences; as opposed to being actual, true expressions and experiences of their subjectivities and their particular life-discourses. This very much resonated and aligned with my findings and experiences while researching Dylan fans and followers. Reading many of the texts and interpretations on ‘Dylan’ (and fans) from many academic and professional authors left me personally feeling that they had little to say about the fans’ own perspectives on their particular fandom and their actual lived-experiences as a fan.

During my literature review, I had also found that much of the previous research on fans and fan culture had basically, and predominantly, adopted an ‘outsider’ research position to their work, keeping the researcher role and activity distinctly separate and

'objectively distant' from the subject matter. This was in sharp contrast to the more 'insider' research stance I was taking, where the researcher is more involved and immersed in, even considered to be part of the research subject's life-experience — in my research this is the connection with the individual Dylan fan, the Dylan community and the particular Dylan fan culture experience.

Through talking with and interviewing individual Dylan fans, the 'gap' and 'distance' between the self-narrated, lived-fan-experience of the fans themselves and the archived academic research accounts I had referenced, was further corroborated through communicating with the Dylan fans who had participated in my research. Many of these fans (more than 80%) conveyed that their own 'lived-fan-experience' and 'life as a Dylan fan' (e.g. what he represented to them, how they felt about his music, and so on) was "substantially different than the academic/media texts that written on fans and fan culture".

I personally found the fans' own narratives articulated the fan perspectives and their particular lived-experiences clearly and succinctly, for instance, as exemplified in the following email, which was one of the very first fan responses received from a fan in in the USA in April 2011:

*The analytical viewpoint has its place, but it is not everyplace. Its difficult for the academic status quo to accept non quantifying data as valid. The test tube has helped humanity immensely but it is not the answer to everything, but I know you already know that or you wouldn't be attempting this study. You can't leave the heart out of life or it all becomes pointless cardboard. I am glad to see someone approach the study of Dylan fandom.*

*As you probably already know, Bobcats are different than the fans of others. As one reviewer said, "it takes some deeper living from you to be a Bob fan". Bob makes us think, way more than a lot of people want to. I first heard him in '63 and that was it, I never looked back. He's been my lifeline in the midst of personal crises, and he brings me happiness when that's appropriate. He has been/is the ground of my life. I love the sound of his growly, raspier than ever voice. People say Bob's voice is shot, but it still reaches your heart and it can be more tender and more vituperative than ever. And you know, if Bob's there 'everythings gonna be alright'.*

*Wishing you great success with this project.  
Yours in Bob, Ava*

As my research began to address the personal lived-Dylan-fan-experience, and thus took a more subjective turn and focus, I realised that, in order to fully interrogate my subject matter, and describe this lived-experience of being a Dylan fan, I had to research Dylan fans using methods that would enlighten these particular fan experiences and emotions. I turned towards the fans themselves to shed light on their own lived-Dylan-fan experiences. I felt it fundamental and essential to hear 'first-hand' from the Dylan fans themselves, who alone 'inhabit' their own fandom, and who, through their own narratives and biographical stories, I felt, did lucidly communicate why and in what ways they experience, relate and appropriate Dylan's music, lyrical messages and perceived *persona*.

Consequently, then, rather than use a more academically 'distant' or disengaged position of an 'outsider' approach and process to the topics that had emerged from the research process and through the fans themselves, my research path became more of an intellectual voyage to explore the phenomenon of Dylan fans and followers from a more 'insider', 'near-experience' (emic) positioning and perspective (viz: Geertz, 1973; Smith et al., 2007) — an approach that, at the beginning of my research in 2010, had not been explored or employed that much in previous fan research, but one that I believed was needed and absolutely necessarily and fitting to my particular research topics of interest — and employing the fans' own narratives and lived-fan-experiences to help answer the question of "what it means to be a Dylan fan and follower?" — To try to find out from Dylan fans themselves, "How does it feel?" — as Dylan sings in one of his well-known songs.

As a Dylan fan myself, I had felt I 'instinctively' understood the 'lived-Dylan-fan-experience' viewpoint and could quite easily and directly relate to what the Dylan fans who responded to my research questions were saying and describing through their fan narratives. In fact, I believe that my experience of being both a researcher and a fan has, in many ways, and for many reasons which will unfold more throughout the thesis, actually been an asset in helping to connect with and relate to my research subject matter (of Dylan fans and followers). As I related earlier in the chapter, I found that such an *aca-fan*<sup>1</sup> research position actually enhanced my communications with

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<sup>1</sup> An *aca-fan* simply identifies and acknowledges the researcher as both an academic and a fan (see Jenkins, 1992).

the fans, and certainly enriched and contextualised my understanding and analysis of the Dylan fan narratives during the latter stages of my research.

On my particular research journey, and with my intentional research goals and rationale of exploring 'what is it like to be a Bob Dylan fan/follower', I found it to be extremely helpful and appropriate, even desirable, that, as researcher, I locate, connect and identify myself as both an academic and a participator *in* the Dylan fan experience. Many of the daily facets of Dylan fans' lives and their fandom are very personal and inter-personal, lived-fan-experiences, and having a more 'near-experience' (emic) research approach, I believe, has helped me greatly in relating to, and understanding more about these individual fans and their very personal facets of fan-life. I feel it has had the effect of 'honing' my research to a more human, sensitive and nuanced level and has enabled me to better relate to, and understand more, the complex and personally lived-Dylan-fan-experiences.

I reflect here briefly on some practical, parallel examples of the benefits and remunerations of operating on a research level as both academic and fan. There are many operative, everyday-life cases, applications and approaches that efficiently utilise the engaged and emic practice of lived-experience:

For example, if one's car breaks down, the usual recommendation is to find a mechanic with a good many years of experience to work on and fix the broken car or part — as opposed to someone who has never driven a car before or taken the time to learn the mechanical workings of a vehicle. Also, one is more likely to expect and trust a practised and experienced computer technician to be able to clearly understand how a particular hardware or software program functions; and it is an education and a learning experiences to listen attentively to the tenured advice of an experienced and practised *luthier* as they knowledgeably communicate their custom design or repair recommendations on a fine musical instrument.

My point here is that, In everyday-life, living and education, it can often be a good idea and good advice to learn something, relevant to the problem or issue, from an experienced or skilled person, as opposed to someone who has had no applied knowledge or experience at all of that particular skill, area, problem or art form. In other words, having a practised, lived-experience and engagement with, and/or being

immersed and experienced in a particular art, profession, skill, or interest in a specific field or area, can certainly provide something valuable, useful and pragmatic to the understanding, learning and communication of that particular field, area or phenomenon.

There have been, and there are, of course, researchers from various fields and perspectives of study who have also conducted their studies and subsequently written their research from a participatory and even subjective research position, in an attempt to account for and communicate their research experiences and findings to the academic world, and beyond. Some of these researchers I refer to throughout the thesis and some I have mentioned in this introductory chapter (see Geertz 1973; Hebdige 1979; Denzin 1989; Ellis & Flaherty 1992; Cavicchi 1998; Muggleton 2000; Van Manen 1997, 2005).

As both academics and fans themselves, Katherine Larsen and Lynn Zubernis (2012) described their own fan research position and experience as follows:

*...We began the project out of a feeling that academics weren't "doing it right" in the sense that there was a lot of theorizing going on that seemed to have little relation to what fans were feeling and doing in fandom. We were concerned that pleasure had been taken out of the equation and that fans' voices were being lost in the rush to apply theory. While some of that theory definitely applied, and still applies, there are also other reasons people come to fandom that did not always fit neatly into the dominant theoretical models.*

*...The Squeeful Fangirl [...] has no place in an academic text, and yet it is precisely that fan girl who informs everything we write about. How do we go about banishing our subject from our text? We wanted to "confess" the fan side of our identity up front and in detail, instead of in general claims of "I'm a fan myself."<sup>2</sup>*

Similarly, in my own research experience, through interacting with many active and participatory Dylan fans, and by being a Dylan fan myself, I felt I was able to view, experience and understand better the fans' very personal emotions, appropriations and feelings, as they are attached and related to Dylan and his music. This closer,

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<sup>2</sup> From *Fan Studies at the Crossroads: An Interview With Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen (Part One)* Available at: <http://henryjenkins.org/2012/09/fan-studies-at-the-crossroads-an-interview-with-lynn-zuberis-and-katherine-larsen-part-one.html> [Accessed 2013]

*emic* connection, identification and communication with the fans literally opened a door for me, a place and portal to a deeper appreciation, view and understanding of the very private meanings and practices attached and involved in the Dylan lived-fan-experience. Consequently, I have regarded the fact that by being both an academic and a Dylan fan was a definite advantage and positive approach and perspective to my research on Dylan fans and followers.

By using a 'close-ethnographic' approach, engaging directly with Dylan fans themselves and immersing myself personally in Dylan fandom as much as I could (one way was a lot of time 'online'), I felt I became more 'nuanced' and engaged in each research stage. I experienced that this particular methodological approach did truly help engage both myself and my research steps with my subject matter (active, participatory Dylan fans). For me, it was as if I discovered the Dylan *fan* in Dylan fandom! Through a more in-depth engagement, identification and contact with my research subjects, it was like I also found the 'emic' in the 'acad-emic'. This focused research engagement and connection with my research subjects and topics certainly helped add a 'richness' to my research experience and in my readings, writings and analysis of 'Dylan fans and followers'.

### **On Applied Academic Thought in this Thesis**

The research focus I have placed on the individual Dylan fan and their 'relationship' (feeling of 'connection') with Dylan and his music has actually been a very rewarding endeavour right from the outset. For example, it was through reflectively reading and studying the Dylan fan narratives and the fan-life stories sent to me for my research that I was able to identify and acknowledge the more general and prevalent thematics such as, subjectivity, inter-subjectivity, belief and belonging, and the emotional components of the lived-fan-experience, as these were all commonly shared experiences for almost all of the Dylan fans who participated in my research. These emergent thematic areas of interest and Dylan fan 'commonalities' came to the fore through not only close readings of the fan narratives, but also during further personal communications and interviews that transpired with individual Dylan fans, which continued through the research time, and as the fans shared more about their personal lives and Dylan fan experiences with me.

Many Dylan fans I communicated with told me how they have actually ‘made sense of their lives’ and drawn on inspiration and comfort through the music, lyrics and art of Bob Dylan. Conversely, in many of my communications and discussions, and with a large number of Dylan fans that took part in my research, there were fans who had said how they felt that much of the academic literature and prognoses they had read on fans and fandoms, “did *not really* connect with what they had experienced with Dylan and what, to them, his art and music were really all about”. The greatest shortcoming mentioned was that, to these fans, the academic writings and elaborations they had read, known or heard, had little to do with actual lived (fan) life (see Muggleton 2000:2), and were written from an ‘outsider’ point of view. In his book, *Subculture—the Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige, referred to the palpable “distance between the reader and the text” (1979:140).

Duffett (2001) and others (e.g. Cohen and Taylor 1978; McRobbie 1994; Muggleton 2000; Malone 2011) have previously pointed out that problematics with the lack of real-life (fan) representation are important to address, as they otherwise lend interpretation and ‘weight’ to one specific ‘cadre’ of ‘expert’ authority over other academic (and non-academic) accounts. One serious consequence and after-effect here can be that, “interpretation and canon become rooted more firmly than ever in the hands of mainstream ‘professionals’, ‘experts’, acknowledged agents, apologists and, [*perhaps*] certain academics” (see Clarke, 1975).

According to Clarke, this has also meant that many academics and researchers are, “completely absorbed in internal dialogue, gesticulations and attitudes that have resulted in a writing style and end-result that is often *alien* to the subjects of study themselves” (ibid: 1975). This can further lead to a situation where “the [*fan*] experience *stands apart from* the historical and cultural theories...” (Cartledge 1999:143 - *italics mine*). According to Wohlfeil (2011:6), the ‘outsider’ (academic) perspective and stance has produced research on fans from an ensuing ‘distance-perspective’ where the subject matter (i.e. fan) also becomes ‘distanced’, ‘objectified’, ‘labelled’ and ‘stereotyped’, and/or even left out of focus completely<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> For an interesting auto-ethnography on these areas, see Wohlfeil, 2011

These points, concerning the difference and dissonance of 'insider' and 'outsider' texts and research perspectives are further and more recently echoed here by the following Dylan fan narrative, which recounts, from both the academic and the 'lived-fan-experience' points of view, the emotional and visceral affect of the music (in this case Dylan's music). This narrative is from a new Dylan fan who is also an experienced Professor of Music in the United States and a trained professional vocalist, [REDACTED] writes:

*"Dear Barry, It seems we share a commonality in regard to the way "academics" seem to drain the life out of art with analysis, theory and criticism. All my years of study in classes taught me to do this, and I do teach my students these things. However, music (or for that matter, art, literature, etc) is so much more than this to me. It's like understanding the ingredients and process a chef uses for making something utterly delectable and then never tasting it. What's the point? Ultimately, for me, it's about the experience---the visceral, emotional reaction I have when I hear the music. Some music is interesting to analyze and to hear. Some 20th century art music, I find more interesting on paper (the theory & method by which it was created) than the actual hearing. And, some music, I just enjoy hearing. I don't care to analyze it. The experience is enough. I think I may be more the exception than the norm, at least in comparison to my academic colleagues.*

*Your dilemma is one I understand as you, too, are an academic and want to find some way to express your findings in that doesn't literally drain the life from the subject. My opinion is that when commentary turns too "academic" it begins to take away from the music's vitality and the experience. Dylan (and many other musicians) is not an academically-trained musician who understands every minute detail of music theory. He doesn't live in the world of "theory"-- he lives in the world of "practice". Dylan created the music to be heard. It wasn't about creating something masterful for someone to analyze on paper. It's okay if people want to do that, but I don't believe it's in the spirit of the reason Dylan created it.*

*I hope it is acceptable that what I will write about Bob for you will be less "academic speak" and of a more personal/emotional response. I have spent countless hours of my life analyzing, hypothesizing, and summarizing musical works in an academic manner, now ... I choose that which appeals most to me, and **I just listen and feel.**"*

Regarding what are 'true' ethnographic research purposes and aims, Martyn Hammersley (1985) stated:

*... the task is to document the culture—the perspectives and practices—of the people in these settings. The aim is to ‘get inside’ the way each group of people sees the(ir) world. (Hammersley, 1985:152)*

I concur with Hammersley here and my research methodologies have been consequently and specifically applied to further understand and describe this lived, often ineffable, experience, highlighting the fan narratives and the practices of the fans themselves to illustrate and embody the personal, often very intimate feelings of both musical and self-affect experienced by the Dylan fan.

In order to gain a more complete, in-depth knowledge of (a particular) fandom, I argue for the critical role and lived-experience narrative of the fan him/herself to be clearly included and utilised in the research process. My purposed intentionality is, that the fan experience and written narrative be recognised and included as a valid, helpful and essential ‘true-to-life’ experience, which I believe is important as it exemplifies, broadens and deepens the understanding of the lived, fan-experience, and offers a description of their fandom in their own particular cultural settings, including everyday-life appropriations and perceptions.

Hence, much of the reasoning to enunciate my research topic has been an attempt to provide an entrance into the ethnographic experience which allows my subject matter (the Dylan fan) to speak, giving space and privilege to the fans’ own subjective and interpretive meanings. I believe this approach and utilisation has proved useful and fruitful in my own research; for example, through exploring the specific role that (Dylan’s) music plays in the Dylan fan’s everyday-life, the responding fan narratives have been key in discovering and revealing the significant processes of identification and meaning-making that take place and exist within the fan’s particular life-world and in their inter-personal communications and relationships with other Dylan fans<sup>4</sup>.

Although it is impossible to give complete account for the plurality of voices and the lived-experiences of all Dylan fans, or even of all the sampled Dylan fans within this study, it is my hope that this introductory segment gives defined and beginning insights

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<sup>4</sup> For more elaboration and examples of the meanings and interpretations applied by Dylan fans to Dylan’s music and persona, see chapter 4 on “Dylan Fans – Inside the Gates of Eden”.

into some of the reasoning, aims and methods I have applied to my research of the phenomenon of the Dylan fan experience; more specific examples and findings are, of course, highlighted and discussed in more depth and breadth throughout the ensuing chapters of the thesis.

My research focus and approaches highlight the *practices and appropriations* of Dylan fans, as opposed to any prescriptive theoretical framing of fans, or placing Dylan fandom within a specific fan-genre or conceptualisation, such as media, or audience theory, for example. Also, because individual (fan) experiences and affect are frequently private, personal and unique in context and experience.

I am not seeking to merely, or rigidly apply an analysis to the Dylan fans and their narratives, as I believe, in many ways, they do, and should be allowed to, 'speak for themselves'. Daniel Cavicchi (1998) expresses similar feelings in his introduction to his research thesis on Bruce Springsteen fans and their practised fandom:

*... I have made every effort to avoid silencing fans with complex interpreted models but try to explain what they are really saying or what is really happening.  
... I have tried to present the sum of what they do—fandom—in those terms.*  
(Cavicchi 1998:10)

Similarly, my research is an attempt to transmit, as clearly and empathetically as possible, what the Dylan fans in my research feel and believe, and what and how they appropriate their Dylan fandom into their own, individual daily lives— seeing these practices as part of their everyday-life — as 'social activities in a social world' (Geertz, 1993). For these reasons, I have searched and chosen to adopt and apply an open and flexible, emic approach to my methodologies and writing. This more ethnographic approach, utilising a bricolage of perspectives and resources to research the subject matter, is intended to facilitate a more contextual understanding of the many different aspects and nuances of the individual Dylan fan and is one which illustrates actual, practised Dylan fandom in a 'true-to-life' mode, presenting (as much as is possible) 'real-life' illustrations of the lived-fan-experience, from the Dylan fans themselves, as in their 'real-world' of lived-experience.

Through my research methods, and particularly through my reflective writing style, I am also attempting to come to terms with the different ways people construct and maintain their lives, 'in the act of leading them' ... trying to understand understandings [that are] not our own (Geertz, 1993). To address the Dylan fans' experiences and use their own accounts of their lived-fan-experience has occasioned the use of both academic and non-academic texts, as well as engaging in different ways of writing text on such lived-experiences (e.g. 'reflective writing' – see van Manen 1990).

There certainly is a challenge of writing and communicating ethnographic research (that is clear and well understood as experienced by the reader), much of which is 'virtual ethnography' in my research case, and where lived-experiences, interpretations and conclusions are often 'open-ended' and fluid.

As my research is the first PhD full-thesis on Bob Dylan fans, I do believe that there is a place and need to give Dylan fans a 'voice' and 'presence' within the music fan and fandom literature. I have, therefore, intentionally placed the Dylan fan narratives in juxtaposition, and yet as part of the emergent and recognised 'canon' and documentations of 'fan studies'. I consider the Dylan fan narratives as windows on the lives and lived-experiences of Dylan fans and, therefore, treat and use them as a vital, even indispensable and major component of my research enquiry and analysis. I further maintain that the fan narratives and expressed lived-fan-experiences of the fans themselves are essential resources and perspectives in any (and all) fan studies.

My research intentionality, then, is to attempt to present a 'holistic', or perhaps a better term would be, I am making an attempt at a 'realistic', ('real-to-life') description and understanding of my research undertaking on Bob Dylan fans, and to hopefully be able to contribute to the understanding of the varied and particular kinds of fan experiences, accompanied by the everyday-life appropriations of this lived, Dylan-fan-experience.

The principal contexts and perspectives used and applied in throughout the thesis are: Musicality and Fan Affect; Perceptions and the Everyday-Life Setting; Contexts of Self, Identity and Belonging; Subjectivity and the Lived-Experience<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> These concepts and perspectives are evidenced and exemplified throughout the thesis, via the Dylan fan narratives as well as through academically referenced texts.

## Definitions and Perceptions of Fans and Fandom

As with many terminologies, definitions and categorisations, there are often differences and nuances to the actual definition as well as the emphasis placed on applying the word/concept/label. The same applies to the idea of who or what is a “fan” and “fandom”. The following academic authors and quotes represent and reflect some of the diversities and different emphases placed on ‘fans’ and ‘fandom’; these have been commonly quoted and acknowledged as representing scholastic definitions on fans and fandom, within and through the culture of academic thought and language on the subject of fans and their fandom. The first reference is from Henry Jenkins, perhaps the most well-known and cited media *aca-fan* over the past 20 years:

*Readers who appropriate popular texts and reread them in a fashion that serves different interests, as spectators who transform the experience of watching television into a rich and complex participatory culture . . . [These] activities pose important questions about the ability of media producers to constrain the creation and circulation of meanings. Fans construct their cultural and social identity through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images, articulating concerns, which often go unvoiced within the dominant media. (Jenkins, 1992: 23)*

Mark Duffett (2013) seems to concur with Jenkins here, where he states, “The (fan) phenomenon can be seen as a form of participatory culture: a means of social networking around shared pleasures that create on-going bonds of both competition and friendship.” Duffett articulates a definition of a ‘fan’ in the following manner:

*The term “fan” is sometimes used to simply denote a passionate consumer, other times an immersed participant in popular culture. Different kinds of fandom can foreground various expressions of intellectuality and affect; they may primarily focus on text, performer, narrative, genre or even on a practice. Rather like collecting, celebrity following is something common across a wide range of fan experiences and central to some forms of fandom (p.1).*

Karen Helleksen (2009), writing on her blog on fan-fiction and online communities writes her delineations of a fan thus:

*To define fan is a fraught activity, but generally, a fan is taken to be someone who engages within a subculture organized around a specific object of study, be it Star Trek, science fiction literature, Sherlock Holmes, anime, comics, gaming,*

*or sports. Fans engage in a range of activities related to their passion: they write derivative literature called fan fiction, they create artworks, they write what's known as meta (analyses of fandom itself, or analysis of analysis), they play role-playing games, they blog, they make fan vids, and they organize and attend conventions. Not least, they create and pass along a culture, with its attendant rules of behavior and acceptability.*

In their much-referenced book, *Fandom: identities and communities in a mediated world* (2007), editors, Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington have boldly and broadly stated their view on fans (on the back cover) as follows:

*We are all fans! Whether we log on to Web sites to scrutinize the latest plot turns in *Lost*, "stalk" our favourite celebrities on Gawker, attend gaming conventions, or simply wait with bated breath for the newest Harry Potter novel - each of us is a fan. Fandom extends beyond television and film to literature, opera, sports, and pop music, and encompasses both high and low culture.*

Thorne and Bruner (2006: 53) provide some useful definitions to differentiate between fans and those who are sometimes commonly called, 'fanatics'. For these authors, a 'fan' is defined as, "a person with an overwhelming liking or interest in a particular person, group, trend, artwork or idea, whose behaviour is typically viewed by others as unusual or unconventional but does not violate prevailing social norms". In contrast, a 'fanatic' is defined by Thorne and Bruner as, '*a person with an overwhelming liking or interest in a particular person, group, trend, artwork or idea that exhibits extreme behaviour viewed by others as dysfunctional and violating social norms*'.

Undertaking research on soap opera fans, Harrington and Bielby (1995) re-emphasised and included the role of emotion in fans and subcultures, (as opposed to the production of cultural artefacts) by talking about fans playing "the wild zone of pleasure" (ibid: 132), and how soap fans enter the "transitional zone of experience that borders the real and fictional" (ibid: 111). This research approach and application begins to acknowledge and bring more to the fore the deeper emotional elements of the lived-fan-experience that I am highlighting in my study on *Dylan fans and followers* — one which engages more with the subjective, lived-fan-experience, as opposed to a more 'distant, objective, outsider' stance that has been prevalent in many previously published fan studies.

Academically speaking, then, it could be said that fan studies have been basically divided into two major camps; the study of fans themselves and their particular fan culture, and the study of the artefacts or texts that fans create. Others have made a distinction between ‘participating’ and ‘non-participating’ fans, Wohlfeil (2011) goes deeper into this ‘academic divide’ within and discerns that, although there has been an increasing amount of literature as well as proliferated threads of divergence and style applied to research interests on fans and fandom in the last two decades, there are still two somewhat distinct approaches and ‘entrances’ into the academic world of fan studies. He writes:

*Researchers have [...] limited themselves methodologically to an outsider-looking-in perspective (Smith, Fisher and Cole 2007) that has provided them primarily with the opportunity to establish and reinforce an ideological distinction between ‘US’ (the normal, rational, mainstream and socially desirable) and ‘THEM’ (the abnormal, irrational, deviant and socially undesirable) by looking down from some obscure morally superior high ground on the non-conform ‘OTHER’ within culture and/ or society (p.4).*

The definition and understanding of, “what is a fan and what is fandom?” is germane to my thesis too: In my research on Dylan fans, I am not using one particular genre, model or mode of “what is a fan” as that gives a somewhat typecast designation and objectified label to the *person* who is deemed a ‘fan’. To me, and for my research approach and undertaking, a fan is basically a person, another human being, and, therefore, a complex, formed and emotive individual – a unique person in a particular everyday-life environment. As a bespoke working-description and understanding of the word ‘fan’, as employed and applied throughout my thesis on *Dylan Fans and Followers*, I propose and describe a fan thus:

*... a person with a particular, bespoke level of like, interest and enthusiasm in some thing (object) or someone (person-subject) — for example, a person interested in horticulture, antiques, sport, music, art, fashion, celebrity, politician, artist, musician, etc. This interest/like also includes different levels of focus, participation, passion and interaction with the admired person or thing — for example, the level of being active in fan-club participation, or the length of time and attention (and money) given to that particular interest, person, pastime, hobby, etc., — as exemplified by an avid collector of memorabilia from or about that person or object of interest, or attending events around that person or thing of interest.*

The fan-connection with and to the subject or object of admiration can, and often does, grow into an identifiable (sometimes, a somewhat 'obsessive', 'compulsive', maybe even a para-social) 'relationship' and/or sense of identification and 'affiliation' of personal feeling or attachment with/to the subject-person, and/or grows to various levels of desire, even to a fetish in some cases, for the particular object-thing. For instance, the interest process and practice of a music fan regularly attending music concerts and events, maybe becoming a 'member' of a fan-supporters group, club or association, the buying and wearing group-identifying clothing, memorabilia and accessories, etc. — such fan practices and 'immersion' in such activities exhibit an embracing and identifying more and more with the fan's particular, favourite music group, or individual performer in that group.

Through such repetitive (daily) fan practices, and by investing much time and effort in such (fan) participations and activities, a fan/person can, and often does, relate and identify more and more with their favourite person or thing. Over an extended period of time, a fan often develops a stronger sense or feeling of 'belonging', admiration, pride and/or attachment to the particular individual/group/community of which they are a fan.

Because of certain stigmas and labels attached to fans and fandom at times, it is not surprising that some people, Dylan fans included, often feel the need to distance themselves from such a negative-feeling 'fan image' as they face the dilemma of exposing their private fandom in a public context (Cusack et al. 2003), and in an effort to show their own 'normality' in opposition to the 'abnormal fan' (Grossberg, 1992). As one Dylan fan said to me, "I'm having a hard time using the word 'fan'. The relationship for me is the fact/hope that we gather together as like-minded people who share a common love ... for Bob and his music"

I would like to reiterate here that I do regard and acknowledge "fans", first and foremost, to simply be acknowledged as fellow human beings, all of whom are unique and idiosyncratic in their own personal lives, behaviours and circumstances, as well as their feelings, interests and preferences'. And, all are situated and embedded in the context of their own, particular, individual, everyday-life circumstances and conditions, backgrounds and culture. I have applied this basic, working definition and general understanding throughout the thesis to the Dylan fans and followers who participated in my research.

## 'Fans and Fandom' – A Concise Literature Review

The etymology of the word “fan” can be traced back to the (17<sup>th</sup> century) Old English word, *fann*, one interpretation being, “inspired and/or *affected* by someone/something.” Therefore a “fan” is, or can be, an enthusiastic supporter of some person or activity – an ardent follower and admirer of some thing or somebody. A Greek translation of fanatic is ‘*entheos*’, from which the contemporary word ‘*enthusiasm*’ originates (Redden and Steiner 2000). According to the Oxford English dictionary, the word “fan”, meaning ‘a fanatical follower of someone/something’, emerged in the late 19th century describing followers of American baseball teams and the sport of boxing. Wohlfeil (2011) cites, “the origin of the term ‘fan’, seems to be the English word ‘to fancy’, which means ‘to experience an intense liking for someone or something’. In the early 19th century, boxing aficionados among the English and Irish working classes were often called ‘*fancies*’ or ‘*fances*’ – meaning people who ‘fancy’ to watch boxing fights (see Dickson, 1989).

The phrase, ‘fanatic’, has often been linked to the Latin word *fanum*, a temple, and related to people who, in Roman days, attended temples with some attendees falling into strange ‘fits’. The term *fanatic* has been referenced since the 1650s to individuals who subscribe to extreme religious and/or political views, with zealous and intense, uncritical devotion.’ The hypernym, to ‘fan’ is, ‘one way to compound, deepen, heighten, intensify (make stronger)’ – all attributes that can, and have been applied in various degrees to the character of the person, commonly called, a ‘fan’<sup>6</sup> In the popular and common sense of the word, a “fan” is an enthusiast, a follower or devotee of a sport or special interest and/or an ardent admirer of some person(s) or things. And, obviously, there are fans and enthusiasts in many different places and for many different reasons, e.g., nature, sports, business, film, celebrity, and so on.

Writings and accounts of admirers, enthusiasts and fans and followers of well-known people, charismatics and sages date back to Greek and Roman times. And, although there have been famous people and strong characters and examples of human prowess throughout history, all of whom probably had admirers and followers (read:

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<sup>6</sup> Definitions and references on ‘Fans’ are quoted from of the Oxford English Dictionary ([www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fan](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fan)), the Cambridge Online Dictionary (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fan>), and the Online Etymology Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=fan>).

'fans'), for the purpose of my particular literature synopsis on fandom here, I am concurring with Tom Mole's work on 'the rise of celebrity' in his book, *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850* (2009) and so I will also begin, and make reference to, the 18th and 19th century period, where one can clearly see the beginnings of what we today call "fans" — or, "buffs", "aficionados", "celebrity-worshippers", "fanatics", etc.

Mole cites how Samuel Johnson, in 1751, lamented in his periodical, *The Rambler*, that he personally did not seem to attract the 'adored popularity' that his celebrity suggested when he wrote, "I have never been much a favourite to the publick". This Romantic period, then, (*circa* 1750-1850) witnessed the rise and deployment of the word "celebrity" in the precursory way we use the term in our modern language today. Celebrity, therefore, was not just something you may have had in Johnson's day; it eventually became something you were actually considered to be, by the media and the general public of the day (ibid: 2009). Mole also mentions that the rise of celebrity culture in the Romantic period coincided with the emergence of a larger, (anonymous) audience along with the attention and involvement of a fledgling 'culture industry', interested in attracting customers and consumers through subscription, publishing, sales, advertisings, and so on.

According to Christopher Cooke (2011), "There are [...] significant material and discursive surroundings that aid and produce conditions that are recognisable to the modern fan and celebrity culture". Cooke states that the rise of the *virtuosi* and interest in entertainment venues, such as vaudeville shows, certainly promoted celebrity status and fan followings during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sennett (1977) relates how, in the Victorian times, the virtuosi themselves had much power and influence over audiences — the audience was considered *fanned* by the inspiration and strong charisma of the performer.

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century many fans began their fandom as audiences of the new film industry, beginning in the mid-1890s. The first motion pictures depicted new impressions of life on the 'silver screen', affecting consumers to "believe in what they see" — even in their wildest dreams in some cases, states Jane Gaines (2000). These first films were mostly shown as special attractions in the travelling (vaudeville)

entertainment shows and 'nickelodeons'<sup>7</sup>, before moving into more fixed locations (cited in Wohlfeil, 2011).

With the rise and spread of the American Hollywood film industry after World War One, and again during the so-called 'Golden Age' of world cinemas (post-World War Two and through the 1950s), 'stars', 'celebrities' and 'famous people' were further catapulted into society and culture onto the increasingly popular 'silver screens' which eventually grew onto a more global level by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Examples here would include, the adulation of female fans to film star Rudolph Valentino in the 1920s, the popularity of movie star, Gloria Swanson, the American child-star, Shirley Temple also had a huge following of audience and fans in the 1930s, as did famous sports stars, such as baseball legend Babe Ruth in the USA during his height of fame between the two world war years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fan fervour has 'swooned' towards many well-known movie stars and celebrities, such as Clark Gable, Greta Garbo, Mae West, Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando. There have also been millions of 'swooning' music fans (along with the accompanying film music scores) of the celebrated music bands and songsters such as Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, Billie Holiday, Count Basie and Glenn Miller, who enjoyed and followed the music of the post-war eras (up until the rock and roll music changes/revolution that started in the 1950s).

In 1956 sociologists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl wrote about the 'parasocial relationships' that many fans and audiences were developing and appropriating as part of their exposure to, and interest in, the highly popular TV-media-fan-life-world of the 1950s and 1960s:

*Nothing could be more reasonable or natural than that people, who are isolated and lonely, should seek sociability and love wherever they can find it. It is only when the parasocial relationship becomes a substitute for autonomous social participation, when it proceeds in absolute defiance of objective reality, that it can be regarded as pathological (Horton and Wohl 1956: 223).*

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<sup>7</sup> The nickelodeon was the first type of indoor exhibition space dedicated to showing projected motion pictures.

This concept of ‘parasocial interaction’ and ‘fan-celebrity worship’ developed into a research interest by fan and media scholars and social psychologists who were particularly interested in the ‘relationships’, ‘identifications’ and ‘sensibilities’ many of the new and fast-growing TV viewers and audiences were forming and maintaining with popular TV personalities who became the well-known celebrities of their day.

The period from the 1960s up to the 1980s, perhaps reflecting the social and cultural tensions and changes taking place in the western world, saw academic research and analyses locating fans as being part of a ‘sub-cultural’ group — for instance, associating fan behaviours with particular forms of ‘resistance’, ‘difference’ and/or ‘empowerment’ — here, comparing and contrasting fans and fandom to the more ‘normal’, ‘acceptable’ majority mainstream norms and lifestyles of society at that time. In this newly framed representation of fandom, the particular (fan) ‘sub-culture’ was depicted as a group claiming its own political space and rights in the world — for example, in the portrayal of (British) Punk Music in the 1970s, when and where punk music and punk ‘attitude’ was viewed as a rebellion against the viewed conservative and restrictive politics of mainstream social behaviours and practices of the day (see, Hall 1976, Cohen 1972, Hebdige 1979, Muggleton 2000).

Contemporary conjectural shifts in fandom behaviours, methodologies and writing styles were further highlighted in the Vermorels’ (1985) collection of interviews and writings by the fans themselves, giving ethnographic space to the fans’ own narratives, interpretations, articulations, feelings and emotions — in contrast to the more usually and previously prescribed “outsider” (*etic*) applied approaches to fans and fandom.

From the 1980s, we start to see not only more academic studies of fandom, but we also start to see the beginnings of more representations of the fans’ inner feelings and sensibilities, giving more awareness and autonomy to the fans themselves, which developed to basically give ‘voice’ to these fans, followers and audiences. Fan and audience research began illustrating a more sophisticated, participatory and active account of fans, giving them clear autonomy and creativity than before, including a portrayal of the sensibilities that gave a voice to these, previously considered, ‘marginalised’ fans and audience groups and genres.

Henry Jenkins (1992), a major figure and contributor to the 'wave of interest' in fan and media-fan studies at this time, appropriated De Certeau's (1984) notion of 'textual poaching' to inform and to emphasise the fans' cultural production, restating: "Fans construct their cultural and social identity through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images, articulating concerns which often go unvoiced within the dominant media". According to Jenkins, fans establish an aesthetic from their subjective fan experiences and these are then circulated and discussed through fanzines, forums, networks, etc., which has the further effect of recreating an (alternative) social community for the fans. Jenkins claims that fans are, in fact, highly discriminating and knowledgeable and, hence, extremely active and critical in their appropriation of media texts, for instance.

Up until the seminal work by media scholar and aca-fan Henry Jenkins in the 1990s, in many ways, and generally speaking, writings about fans and fandom had previously portrayed a somewhat negative, stereotypical-type profiling of the 'fan' as being a 'fanatic' — 'obsessive', 'dumb', a 'mass-consumer', and so on, and this was especially the case amongst the 'high culture' vs. 'low culture' rhetoric of academic scholarship which took place during the 19th and 20th century, basically continuing up until the 1960s.

Jolie Jensen (1992) wrote how many media portrayals and depictions of fans have had as their origin the idea of the somewhat psychotic and deranged individual fan or group — hence the concept of the 'pathological fan', the 'obsessed loner', someone who has entered into an intense para-social (*viz*; *fan-tasy*) relationship with the desired celebrity/figure. There are many examples of such in film and book form. One example would be Mark Chapman, the self-proclaimed 'Beatles fan' who shot and killed John Lennon in 1980. There are also depictions of the 'over-zealous' or 'hysterical' member(s) of the crowd, shouting at the rock star, or public figure; research work has also been made on the groups of fans displaying aggressive or racist behaviour at the sports match — for example, the football fans ("hooligans") in the UK in the 1970s-1980s (*ibid*: 1992).

The famous celebrity/star image, the media hype and the fan 'hysteria' that went with it all has continued on. There was Elvis Presley in the 1950s (who is still considered by

many as *the* “icon of the twentieth century”<sup>8</sup>), the Beatles in the 1960s and the many Pop/Rock music stars of the 1970s such as David Bowie, followed by the likes of Madonna and Michael Jackson in the 1980s, and so on. All were admired and all were followed in various degrees by a ‘tsunami’ of millions of new teenage fans of their generation, all around the world — and all the fans manifested their reported ‘fanatical’ fan-like behaviours. Through the growth and spread of commercial, conglomerate media and the popular culture of the western world, the star/celebrity ‘archetype’ has consequently and continually been pedestalled to a position of power and spectacle more and more throughout the second-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the spotlight on celebrity status and persona, both on and off stage, seemingly to be constantly ‘switched on’ through these growing, conglomerate and global media and internet channels.

Late 20<sup>th</sup> century concepts of the ‘fan’ and ‘audience’ have been strongly linked to the traits and appendages of commercialism, consumer and commodity (see Redden and Steiner, 2000). These areas of research have attracted attention and analysis from academic and consumer studies. Sandvoss (2005) reported how fandom often ‘mirrors’ the conditions of popular culture and sub-cultural groupings and, as such, is targeted by the modern-day, commercial, consumer society. Participatory fandom and fan activities have become more and more commercially valuable items and commodities in the market-place/culture of the day. For example, on-going fan-consumer activities and interests influence other fan-consumers, and that particular market, as to what is ‘trending’ and available for their fan appetites and desires, and these trended items and activities are subsequently ‘tagged’ and targeted.

From these fan study areas, the ‘commodification’ of fans and fandom can be clearly seen in the society and culture we currently live in, and, like ‘non-fans’, they are actively pursued and fostered by industry marketing tactics and content producers. Bloch’s (1986: 539) definition of ‘*product enthusiasm*’ also seems to apply here, where the ‘product’ ... “plays an important role and source of excitement and pleasure along sensory and aesthetic dimensions in a consumer’s life”. Consequently, fans and fandom have a status and place in the creative media industries, as well as holding a

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<sup>8</sup> See U.S. Congressional Record—Senate, Volume 152, part 3, March 27, 2006.

substantial commercial interest and marketing space within contemporary society and its popular culture (see Geraghty 2000, Giles 2006).

The heightened awareness and visibility of the fans participatory role is evident and heightened in the influential work of Henry Jenkins, in particular (1992, 1997, 2002, 2006), along with others, such as Matt Hills (2001), Cornel Sandvoss (2005) and Jonathan Gray (2007). Additional interests in ethnographic and biographical studies related to fans and fandoms during the 1990s have revealed the more complex, cultural and interpersonal relationships between fans and their object of fandom (e.g. Vermorels 1985, Cavicchi 1998, Lewis 1992, Grossberg1992). Looking at more recent and current topics and settings on fans and fandom (as of 2014), there is still much fan research being done, particularly on sub-cultural groupings and fan-fictions.

The new millennium brought with it an interest and exploration into fans online (Hine, 2000, Baym 2008, Kozinets 2010, Wiatrowski 2011), with media and transcultural fan practises expanding rapidly. Media/TV/Film study areas are still popular fields for the studies of fans and fandom studies, with social media sites, online networking and 'everyday-life' locales becoming regenerated arenas of academic interest. 'The discipline has also grown into an inter-disciplinary one, networking with other disciplines and promoting valuable dialogue between the academic community and the fan community. 'Embracing the technical possibilities of the Web and testing the limits of the genre of academic writing, fan researchers and scholars are looking at the different ways that fan experiences are distributed at both the individual and social levels' (FSN, 2012).

For instance, since 2008 *Transformative Works and Culture* (TWC) (an online, open access, international peer-reviewed journal) has hosted 'academic articles and fan genres of varying scope and provides a publishing outlet that welcomes fan-related topics, promoting dialogue between the academic community and the fan community' (TWC, 2015). Another new online association (started in 2012), *The Fan Studies Network*<sup>9</sup> (FSN) was 'created with the idea of cultivating a friendly space in which scholars of fandom could easily forge connections with other academics in the field,

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<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive list of new contemporary fan study areas of research visit *The Fan Studies Network* website at <http://fanstudies.org/>.

and discuss the latest topics within fan studies'. These new fan scholar associations foster a sense of community through discussing topics within fan studies and collaborating with interdisciplinary researchers at all levels to connect, share resources, and further develop their research ideas (FSN, 2012).

Fan researchers have expanded the topics, approaches and methods of conducting fan research. There have been various "turns" in fan studies as there have been in other disciplines, where new approaches and interests have been applied as researchers explored or rediscovered areas that they felt are relevant and warranted further attention of academic research. I have mentioned some examples of developments and different areas of fan research in this chapter section and some I have referenced and used in the thesis.

For instance, there has been the 'audience turn', where we have seen that there is not a single audience but audiences, plural. A more nuanced understanding of audiences as complex, diverse and active has developed. The 'ethnographic turn', shifted attention towards using, for example, the contextual frameworks of the everyday-life experience of the fan and "fandom as part of the fabric of our everyday lives" (Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 2007). Further studies have incorporated the 'subjective turn' and the 'narrative turn', there has been an emphasis on 'identities'. In *Fan Cultures* (2002), Matt Hills calls for increased attention to individuals' experiences as fans over the course of their lives.

These are all expressions and on-going facets of new interests and approaches to the complexities all researchers face and experience in the study and the writing of fans and fandom, or of other fields of research, e.g. psychology, criminology, social work; for what we are really researching and talking about here is what I discuss in chapter 5 – that fan studies are really studies of 'human behaviour in psychosocial settings' (see page 151).

Consequently, Fan Studies can be seen to be expanding its horizons, studying fans and fandom at multiple levels and functioning in many interesting, innovative and interdisciplinary ways – all of which assist the advancement of the research field and the understanding of fans and their fandoms.

## Locating Fandom in Everyday-Life

As will be evident from my broad working-definition of fans and fandom (see page 25), and in reading to the actual Dylan fan narratives I have presented throughout my thesis, Dylan fans and fandom are clearly situated in their own particular social world setting of everyday-life. (I have personally never come across a ‘professional fan’, in the sense of that’s all they do, is to be a ‘fan’, or they get paid to be a fan; nor have I ever seen or heard of a fan who wasn’t also a fellow human-being, and, usually with a regular “day job” in the everyday-life, socio-cultural context of the word.) Hence, integrated and intrinsically connected to my study of Dylan fans and followers is the ‘real-life’, lived-context and setting of living in the world of the ‘everyday’.

Many of social life’s experiences and constructions, in both the individual and community life, senses of identification and belonging, thoughts of truth, lies and belief emanate from, and are grounded in, the everyday-life frame/context (see Mead 1934; Goffman 1959/1997; Berger and Luckmann 1968; Garfinkel 1978; de Certeau 1984; Cavicchi 1999; de Nora 2000). From these daily-life settings come the experiences and issues of life — the inner feelings, thoughts, sensations, daydreams and fantasies of many individuals (and groups of individuals and of fans), which are all experienced and lived-out in some shape or form in a particular everyday, lived, life-setting.

Importantly then, as the everyday-life framework is the locale where ‘reality’ is transmitted on a daily basis for its members, it is, therefore, highly germane to any discussions and discourses on fans and fandom, as, of course, both exist and inhabit this ‘everyday-life-world’. Fans (read: people) narrate, infuse meaning and interpret their lives via their daily routines and their lived-experiences of everyday-life. I very much like and agree with the way author and academic Daniel Cavicchi (2002:2) has delineated himself as a fan, and has framed his ‘everyday’ fandom:

*...For me, and for millions of other people in the Western world, music is experienced only in everyday life, only as a brief, fleeting part of life’s mundane moments: commuting to work, eating in a public restaurant, going shopping at the mall, playing with children, or watching television. Like many people, I live in a small house in the suburbs, far enough from the rich urban musical culture trumpeted every Sunday in the newspaper to make it seem otherworldly. Like*

*many adults, I music when I can, within the constraints of the culture in which I live.*

According to Henri Lefebvre (1991:97), everyday-life constitutes the ‘common ground’ or ‘connective tissue’ of every human thought and activity. The everyday-life I am speaking of here is the milieu where all creatures, ‘great and small’, experience and existentially learn about themselves and others; of self and society, of being alone or of being part of a community, of living, of dying. To the point, the everyday-life context and ‘reality’ is where life and the ‘lived-experience’ take place, and, as such, is highly relevant and contextual to my thesis, and in all of my discussions, descriptions and ethnography on the lived-fan-experience of (Dylan) fans and followers.

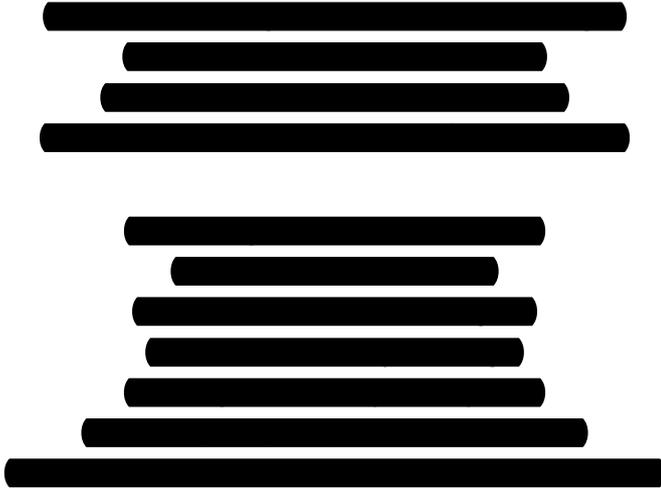
Of course, to many people, the ‘everyday’ is also the place of the mundane and the ‘ordinary’, composed of the ‘hum-drum’ along with the banality of existence (Lefebvre, 1984). Cohen and Taylor (1976) delineate their study of the ‘everyday’ as a place to escape from this banality and boredom of life and show how everyday people also live ‘outside’ of the everyday by participating in daydreams and fantasies, metaphysical transcendences and corporeal transformations. Cohen and Taylor give good examples of these in their book and especially highlight those who feel their personal everyday-life is an ‘iron cage’. These thinkers and writers see the everyday as a springboard to ‘freedom’ and emancipation from the alienations and bondages of the everyday-world.

Lefebvre (1958) also talked about the critique in everyday life of the ‘real’ through the ‘surreal’ and the dialectic intersection of ‘illusion’ and ‘truth’. These are all interesting and relatable areas to many Dylan fans, regarding the interpretation and meaning of the many mystical and surreal Dylan songs and lyrics. For instance, freedom, authenticity and transcendence are major themes and expressions in Dylan’s music, and topics that many Dylan fans resonate with. As an example here of Dylan’s textual surrealism and transcendence in song, the following is two stanzas from an early Dylan recording that has intrigued many with its lyrics and meaning, called, *Gates of Eden*<sup>10</sup>:

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<sup>10</sup> Copyright © 1965 by Warner Bros. Inc.; renewed 1993 by Special Rider Music



In his book on methodology for the social sciences, Paul Willis (2000) presents many concepts and biographical vignettes to illustrate and argue for an “ethnographic imagination” as techniques for ‘connections with real life’ (ibid:x) when it comes to the research and study of real people and the everyday in the social sciences. I found tangency in his phrases with similar experiences and methodological applications I was making in my research on Dylan fans and followers. I, too, was ‘refraining’ (ibid:xi) from overly precise definitions or categorised concepts such as ‘fan’ and ‘fandom’, as these were also applied to describe the sensitive and changing and complex behaviours of real human beings (read: fans).

The location of the fan in the everyday-life context (ibid:xii), is where much personalised and subjective ‘meanings’ are formed, applied and maintained; again, I have also iterated and included the context of the everyday in my study of Dylan fans and followers. And, as Willis found in his ethnographic piece of research, ‘biographical vignettes’ helped to illustrate his textual analysis. It has been the Dylan fan narratives, as illustrative resources throughout the thesis, that have helped me to understand and communicate the way fans symbolically (and practically) inhabit their (fan) worlds and express themselves and their passion for Dylan and his music (ibid:xiii, xv).

In yet another book on Dylan, focusing on Dylan’s spiritual journey and influences, Michael Gilmour (2011:40) describes Dylan’s music and the transcendent affect it often has on his fans, enabling them to ‘escape’ out of their mundane existences and the everyday routines of life:

*Bob Dylan's music moves many listeners out of themselves, out of their 'habitual, common-sense world.' Falling under his dancing spell, we end up chasing the shadow he sees. This escape from the common-sense world leads a few listeners to something approaching religious meaning. Their thoughts might turn, no matter how far removed from organized religion, to the idea of justice, to the idea of a divine being, to the idea of reliable, meaningful, enduring love...*

In the context of the everyday, and to many Dylan fans, Dylan is a touchstone, who is perceived by his many of his fans as someone who understands, has experienced and can articulate, through his music and words, many of life's humanistic and personal lived-experiences that happen in everyday-life. To his fans, Dylan expresses 'how it feels' to experience the subjective and emotional veracities of real-life that everyday people face and/or experience. Many of Dylan's songs and storylines address these life-experiences, which contain deeper human feelings and thoughts (e.g. Dylan songs such as, *Tangled Up In Blue, She Belongs To Me, Isis, Visions of Johanna, It's All Over Now Baby Blue, Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, The Times They are A-Changin'...*)

Sociology has been quoted as the study of (everyday) human experience in the world (Douglas and Johnson, 1977: vii). By acknowledging the context of the 'everyday', my study on Dylan fans and their fandom is intrinsically grounded in the sociological and the ethnographic study of human lived-experience, illustrating the on-going, everyday, 'real-life' situations people (*aka fans*) experience as part of their everyday, lived, social world. The everyday-life context is naturally infused into the framework of the thesis and its subject matter for the everyday-life setting is the locale of the Dylan fans and followers and their narratives. The everyday-life-world as the bedrock of social life also shows how Dylan fans, as everyday people, create, negotiate and inhabit the lived and existential moments of their fandom, expressing their particular and individual 'definition of the (Dylan fan) situation' (Goffman, 1959). And, for many fans, the everyday is how and when they relate and communicate, inter-personally and inter-subjectively, as part of a wider, online global Dylan fan community.

Fandom today can certainly be considered and viewed as being part of the everyday, lived-experience of many in modern-day societies and cultures around the world. Jonathan Gray (2007:10) has stated, 'Fandom is key to understanding modern life in

our increasingly mediated and globalized world ... [and] fandom matters because it matters to those who are fans'. Fans and fandom, then, are embedded in our increasingly mediated, globalized and digital world of today and they can be (and I believe are), fruitful and rewarding research areas to develop further understandings of modern-day life.

### **The Structure of the Thesis**

The overall layout of the thesis very much follows the way my research essentially unfolded and proceeded. The first chapter displays the main foundational research areas and topics of the thesis and lays the ground upon which I add the ensuing layers (and chapters) of my study and enquiry on 'Dylan fans and followers'.

The first chapter and the preliminary sections of the thesis introduce my personal research journey, plus the rationale and intentionality of my research. Chapter One initiates and addresses my research undertaking as an attempt to understand, elucidate and document, *What it means to be a Bob Dylan fan*<sup>11</sup> — principally from the Dylan fan point of view, allowing the fans a space and opportunity to express themselves and their fandom through the narratives of their own, particular lived-fan-experiences. The introductory chapter also includes a concise synopsis of relevant literature of fans and fandom plus I introduce and locate my research on Dylan fans and fandom within the everyday-life context of these fans.

In Chapter 2, I introduce Bob Dylan into the dissertation, locating him and his music within the milieu of the popular music culture of the day, emerging from the historical and cultural environment of the 1950s and the 1960s. Here, I give an overview of Dylan's biopic as he develops into a musical pioneer and distinctive figurehead of the 1960s (and beyond, to many of his fans). Included in this chapter are various writings and perspectives on Dylan from established academics, many of whom are themselves Dylan fans to various degrees, juxtaposed with other narratives and texts from the non-academic sources, albeit, a majority are Dylan fans in some way. There

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<sup>11</sup> See my original research website for more research questions asked to Dylan fans, plus samples of the Dylan fan responses and feedback: [www.mybobbydylanstory.com](http://www.mybobbydylanstory.com)

is also a pertinent perspective and section on Dylan himself as being an avid music 'fan', which is contextually connected to the Dylan fans' experiences in my research.

Chapter 3 describes and delineates the basic, grounded methods I have utilised in my research, taken directly from my Dylan fan data, and upon which I introduce further theoretical underpinnings and discourses related to Dylan fans and their fandom. The steps and processes of my research are outlined in the second chapter and I accent my particular focus on the individual Dylan fan that emerged from the data of the Dylan fan narratives. Sample graphs and data information from the original Facebook Online Survey (2012) I conducted are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 features, in depth, a myriad of examples of the Dylan fans' own particular and personal Dylan lived-fan-experiences and practices and includes specific Dylan songs that have profoundly affected individual Dylan fans on a very personal, and in some cases, even a transcending and transforming level. The Dylan fan narratives presented throughout the thesis are highly transparent in Chapter 4 and clearly illustrate the everyday-life context of the lived-appropriations of the Dylan fans and their fandom. Online fandom is the milieu where much of my research on Dylan fans and followers has taken place and this chapter has many referred examples of such.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the theoretical perspectives used and applied in the research and as related to my subject matter, 'Dylan fans and followers'. There is also enquiry and analysis of the data and findings of my research, which emphasise the personal and emotional fan-experiences from the original data of the fan narratives I received from Dylan fans during an almost three-year period of interaction.

Here I make claims for the need and importance of the subjective and emotive fan experience to be considered further in fan research. Topics of importance here include, perceptions and insights on subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, identity and self, cyber-fandom, and the everyday appropriations many Dylan fans make into the context of their fan-life. This chapter illustrates the concepts of 'frames of meaning and understanding' (Geertz, 1973, Goffman 1974) I have applied as ways of revealing the lived, Dylan-fan-experience, enquiring into the areas of interest and appropriation that the Dylan fans themselves have wrote about regarding their own lived and practised fandom.

The concluding chapter (6) synthesises and reflects on the findings and experiences of my research on *Dylan Fans and Followers*. In this final chapter of the thesis, I recount how my research on Dylan fans has not necessarily been merely a study of fans and fandom, but has also been an enquiry into human behaviour and values such as, meaning, belonging, belief, spirituality and the existential, lived-experience (in today's modern-day world setting). With many of the Dylan fans I encountered during my research also being 'online fans', and spending a good deal of time social networking with other online Dylan fans myself, I reflect on my time and experiences of researching (Dylan) fandom online.

In the section on *Representation and Authenticity in the Fan Narratives*, I argue for the validity, relevance and authenticity found in the Dylan fan narratives and advocate the need for more holistic, inclusive and integrated, cross-disciplinary methods of enquiry that will shed more light and depth on the understanding of fans and their lived-fandom in today's digital world and everyday life. My *Reflections* and *Final Thoughts* sections consider the processes, findings and conclusions of my research on 'Dylan Fans and Followers' as well as the contribution and limitations of my thesis to the literature on music fans and popular culture.

The Appendices (page 200) provide supplementary texts and exhibit more areas of interest of Dylan fans and Dylan fandom. These include graphs, statistics and demographics, Dylan quotes and interviews, online Dylan fan networks, information on Dylan's global touring schedule, Dylan fan websites, and sample raw data from the Facebook Online Survey I conducted in 2012.

[Footnote: The Dylan fan narratives (DFNs) highlighted throughout the thesis are displayed in their original form. I have not edited or 'corrected' their spelling or grammar as I wanted to keep their originality for the reader and to demonstrate that, even though the DFNs may not be 'grammatically correct', they are a wonderful example of reflective communications *with* emotion. In my research findings, *affect* and *emotion* are major components and play a significant role in explaining how and why fans think, behave, say, and do what they do. Reflective writing is also an important element of the research.]

## CHAPTER TWO

### BOB DYLAN and EXPRESSIONS of MUSIC and FANDOM

I. Introduction .....	Page 43
II. Bob Dylan – A Brief Biography .....	Page 44
III. Interpretations of Dylan Through Narratives .....	Page 50
IV. Expressions of Music and Fan Affect .....	Page 58
V. Dylan – The Music Fan! .....	Page 64
VI. Chapter Summations .....	Page 67

## Introduction

This chapter of my research introduces Bob Dylan into my thesis, locating him within the milieu of the popular music culture that emerged from the historical and cultural period of the 1950s and 1960s, and out of which Dylan appears as a musical innovator and a unique figurehead of the 1960s. Because of Dylan's place, influence and significance in the popular music culture domain of recent decades, and for those readers who have no knowledge of Dylan's background and biography, I am presenting a broad overview of Dylan and his music at this point in the thesis to highlight his importance and significance to my thesis, positioning him as a relevant focus and as a principal and significant symbolic context for his fans and followers and their personal appropriations of Dylan and his music into their everyday lives.

Bob Dylan as a musician, performing artist and *persona* of course plays an integral role in the lives and musicality of his fans, and Dylan is also at the core of some of the thesis topics that have been underlined in the Dylan fan narratives (DFNs) and in various thesis chapter sections, such as, identification, interpretation and meaning that many Dylan fans attach directly to Dylan and his musical oeuvre.

In this second chapter, I also introduce and include various writings on and references to Dylan, from both academics and non-academics, most of whom are also Dylan fans to varying degrees. These sundry representations of Dylan via academic texts and fan narratives are intended as key and integral constituents of my research subject matter – these texts, perspectives and representations being important to my thesis inquiry, content, discourse and analysis. The thesis areas of narrative representation, understanding and perspective are exemplified further in chapter 4 on 'Dylan Fans and Followers', and they are examined and discussed in more depth in the final thesis chapters 5 and 6.

Expanding on my working definition of a 'fan' from the introductory first chapter, this chapter also features a pertinent section on Dylan himself as an avid music fan!

## Bob Dylan – A Brief Biography

Bob Dylan is one of America's most influential and important cultural figures. With over 600 songs, 46 albums and an estimated figure of over 100 million record sales to his name<sup>12</sup>. Dylan is in his sixth decade as a worldwide performing artist, has also been voted the most important songwriter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*Rolling Stone*, 2011). My thesis, in varying ways, provides one account for the *significance* that Bob Dylan has had on popular culture over the past five decades — making endeavours to understand how and why he, his music and 'style' has had such an impact and influence, and, indeed, why he is still (2015) one of the biggest names in the modern music industry today. Even though in his seventies, Dylan still performs to huge and loyal audiences (of young and old), all year 'round and all around the world on what has been tagged as his "Never-Ending Tour" (NET) schedule.

Dylan has called himself by a number of names and titles through his career, e.g. "Blind Boy Grunt", "Jack Frost", "Elston Gunn", "Robert Milkwood Thomas", "A Musical Expeditionary", "A Trapeze Artist", and more. He has also been called and headlined by others with many different names and titles during his career — from "The Poet Laureate of Rock" to "Mr Tambourine Man", "A Song & Dance Man", "Jack Fate" and even, "A modern day Messianic Prophet". A folklore theme of his *persona* as being *Masked and Anonymous* has been used many times to portray how Dylan's personal and cultural identities as well as his more mystical song lyrics are often 'hidden' and transitory, which both fans and critics have claimed are surrounded by a veil of mystery and myth, illustrating the nebulous between illusion and reality (*Rolling Stone*, 1978; Marqusee 2005; Dalton 2012). This is succinctly articulated in a quote by Todd Haynes, director of a 2007 film about Dylan called, "I'm Not There":

*The minute you try to grab hold of Dylan, he's no longer where he was. He's like a flame: If you try to hold him in your hand you'll surely get burned. Dylan's life of change and constant disappearances and constant transformations makes you yearn to hold him, and to nail him down. And that's why his fan base is so obsessive, so desirous of finding the truth and the absolutes and the answers to him - things that Dylan will never provide and will only frustrate.... Dylan is difficult and mysterious and evasive and frustrating, and it only makes you identify with him all the more as he skirts identity. (Haynes, 2007)*

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<sup>12</sup> Stats and information courtesy of the Dylan fan site at <http://www.bjorner.com/bob.htm> and Dylan's official, corporately-managed website at <http://www.bobdylan.com>

Since the 1960s, Bob Dylan has also been awarded just about every major accolade the various music industries have had to offer, plus he has received recognition and respect from many of his peers, musicologists and academics, even politicians and the Pope, since his first arrival on the music and cultural scene in New York, back in January 1961. When Bob Dylan was inducted into the U.S. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, the introduction to his bio stated:

*Bob Dylan is the pre-eminent poet/lyricist and songwriter of his time. He re-energized the folk-music genre, brought a new lyrical depth to rock and roll when he went electric, and bridged the worlds of rock and country by recording in Nashville. As much as he's played the role of renegade throughout his career, Dylan has also kept the rock and roll community mindful of its roots by returning often to them. With his songs, Dylan has provided a running commentary on a restless age. His biting, imagistic and often cryptic lyrics served to capture and define the mood of a generation. For this, he's been elevated to the role of spokesmen - and yet the elusive and reclusive Dylan [himself] has wryly said, "I'm a trapeze artist!" (Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 1988)*

For more than fifty years now, Bob Dylan and his music-art have elicited much interest indeed, from a wide array of writers, critics, journalists and, of course, a *gazillion* 'Bob-fans' around the world – all singularly drawn to Dylan, his music and art, with many fans particularly captivated by his graphic, poetic, and often surreal song lyrics as well as his celebrated and enduring live-concert performances. In fact, ever since his arrival on the cultural landscape of New York in 1961, there has followed an uninterrupted, almost fixated interest in Dylan as he travelled on his unique, musical and personal life-journey.

Throughout the past 50 years Dylan has been recognised and honoured for his song-writing, performing and recording as well as his influence on the landscape of modern American popular culture and *Music Americana*. His music and albums have earned him the highest musical and cultural accolades of the *Grammy*, *Golden Globe* and *Academy Awards*<sup>13</sup>. He has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in the US and the UK as well as the US Songwriters Hall of Fame and the prestigious Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. In January 1990, Dylan was made a *Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Minister of Culture, which is the highest cultural award in France that can be bestowed on a foreigner, (this was added to in 2013 when

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<sup>13</sup>References here courtesy of [www.bobdylan.com](http://www.bobdylan.com) (2011)

he was nominated for France's top distinction, the *Legion d'Honneur*, an award previously awarded to Sir Paul McCartney and French singer Charles Aznavour, amongst others).

In 1999, Dylan was included in *TIME* Magazine's 100 most influential people of the 20th century and one of Dylan's most well-known songs, 'Like a Rolling Stone', was named by *Rolling Stone Magazine* as the "Number 1 song of all time". In the year 2000, Dylan was awarded the *Polar Music Prize* by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music and was awarded the Spanish *Prince of Asturias Award in Arts* in 2007. "He's a living legend of popular music," said Jose Llado Fernandez-Urrutia, President of the prize's panel of judges.

In recognition of his contribution to literature and musicology Dylan has received two honorary degrees, one from St. Andrews University in Scotland, and another from the prestigious Princeton University in the United States. At the US ceremony in 1970, his formal citation was, " ... [his/Dylan's] music remains the authentic expression of the disturbed and concerned conscience of Young America". At the UK event in 2004 he was recognised as, "... an extraordinary, important and influential figure in the culture of our time."

On December 7<sup>th</sup> 1997, Bob Dylan was a Kennedy Centre Honouree, considered the America's highest national award for artistic excellence. Writer and music critic Tom Piazza stated on that occasion:

*The central question for an American artist – both as an American and as an artist – is how to remain indivisibly oneself while, in Walt Whitman's phrase, containing multitudes. Few in our time have done both as fully as Bob Dylan. But, beyond his pre-eminence as a songwriter and performer, Bob Dylan has remained a quintessentially American artist in the largest sense, a true American original. By combining African-American blues, white country music, rural folk music, imagist poetry and rock and roll, Dylan created a new musical and literary form, both popular and serious at the same time, which many have emulated but of which Bob Dylan is still not only the prototype but the unchallenged master.*

*(Piazza, 1997)*

A great deal of Dylan's most celebrated work and even reification as a cultural icon dates from the 1960s, when, in many people's eyes, he became the "uncontested

voice and conscience of the youth movements<sup>14</sup> and the politics of the 'counterculture' of the 1960s" (see Heylin, 2009). When Dylan's *The Times They Are A-Changin'* album came out in January 1964, the then 22-year old from Minnesota found himself crowned as the laureate of a social movement, hailed as "the voice of a generation".

To many music pundits and critics, he became the storyteller of America's culture and social troubles with recorded songs such as, *Blowin' In The Wind*, *Hard Rain's Gonna Fall*, *Masters of War*, *With God On Our Side*, amongst many others; songs with lyrics which resonated with a dedicated following of his fans, bringing to Dylan's audience strong feelings of a political identification and empowerment often synonymous with the 1960s social movements and avant-garde 'Beat' literature. Dylan ultimately became identified by many mass media sources and followers as a 'voice' for a disenchanting generation:

*There is no living musician who has been more influential than Bob Dylan. Over a 43-year career, his distinctive twang and poetic lyrics have produced some of the most memorable songs ever written. In the '60s, his songs of protest and turmoil spoke to an entire generation.* (CBS Televised Interview, USA 2004)

Dylan made history on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, when the Pulitzer Prize jury awarded him a special citation for what they called "his profound impact on popular music and American culture, marked by lyrical compositions of extraordinary poetic power." Dylan is the first rock and roll artist to be honoured in such a manner. It was the first time the Pulitzer Prize judges, who have long favoured classical music, and, more recently, jazz, awarded and recognised 'folk-rock' as an art form, which was previously dismissed as 'barbaric and subversive'<sup>15</sup>. Dylan has also been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize in Literature, starting in 1997, which is also 'a-first' and unusual that 'folk-rock artists' of music be recognised and acknowledged for their literary and cultural contributions<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> From recent student demonstrations in the UK (2012) to recurrent global anti-oppression causes and minority movements – many have embraced Dylan songs as a message for their social protests.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/1045926/bob-dylan-wins-honorary-pulitzer-prize>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.expectingrain.com/dok/art/nobel/>

On May 29th 2012, Dylan was awarded the top civilian honour in the United States, the 'Presidential Medal of Freedom'. When presenting Dylan with his nation's highest civilian honour at the White House, President Barack Obama said, "There is not a bigger giant in the history of American music ... A modern-day troubadour, Bob Dylan established himself as one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century. The rich poetry of his lyrics opened up new possibilities for popular song and inspired generations. His melodies have brought ancient traditions into the modern age. More than 50 years after his career began, Bob Dylan remains an eminent voice in our national conversation and around the world."<sup>17</sup>

Dylan has referred to himself as being "a musical expeditionary", a "song and dance man", and, in many ways, he turns out to be the legendary private-artist who's made a career of being "Masked and Anonymous". In an interview commenting on his present and continued popularity, Dylan amusingly replies; "Yeah, I know...it's a mystery to me!" (Dylan, 2008) — And so, the "man and the myth" continues (Dalton, 2012). Dylan has been presented as, 'one of the greatest musical and cultural figures, influences and "voices" of the time' (Marqusee, 2005).<sup>18</sup> With such notoriety and distinction come a sundry of Dylan fans and followers, each with their own multifarious interests, insights, thoughts, expressions and intrigues about Dylan and his music/art.

As a person, Dylan seemingly remains enigmatic and self-mythologizing. While revealing a certain literary willingness to talk about his musical influences and inspirations, and to somewhat revisit parts of his selected past, he does not reveal any real 'personal' parts of his life and thoughts, which many of his ardent fans and followers would, of course, love to know more about. Dylan himself has said that he "would not to give away too easily anything that was dear to him"; so perhaps the expectations of knowing too much about Dylan are somewhat misaligned with the man himself (Scorsese, 2005).

Embarking on what has become known as his *Never Ending Tour*, which started in 1988, Bob Dylan has performed almost 3,000 live-concerts in over 800 different cities

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<sup>17</sup> Reference to Medal of Honor, U.S. President Obama speech, White House (2012)

<sup>18</sup> With such fame, notoriety and global interest in and around Dylan, when starting my research on Dylan fans, I was quite surprised that there had been nothing previously written regarding Dylan's millions of fans, without whom, of course, he may not have been so famous or well known.

and towns all over the world. According to Jaffe and Johnson (2013), “Dylan has travelled over 1,007,416 miles in the last quarter century (entertaining his global fans and followers), which is the equivalent of going to and from the moon, twice, then completely around the Earth, twice more”. It is thus evident that Dylan has a significant and ardent fan-base following and, after a 50-year career, is still an admired and esteemed performer to his fans and in today’s music industry.

During his lifetime, Dylan has also been through many music-genre changes and experiences, which were also often affected and paralleled by the experiences and changes taking place in his own personal life. To his fans, the songs Dylan has written and recorded contain highly personalised and crafted lyrics reflecting real-life experience – and it has been these very particular and personalised songs that many of his fans have strongly identified with and related to. It has been these very distinctive, resonant experiences and expressions in Dylan’s music have inspired and intrigued his fans to follow him and want to know more about him and his influences, leading many fans (and academics) to write about and reflect on Dylan and his music in various personalised styles and formats.

Edward, a fan from Austria for more than fifty years describes the first time he heard Dylan’s music as a teenager, and how immediately affected and ‘connected’ he felt to Dylan’s music and lyrics:

*Right from the beginning I felt a strong attachment to him and that attachment has remained with me until today. His lyrics, his music, his voice - his songs always meant a lot for me throughout my whole life. It’s like soul speaking to soul... somehow I felt very comforted by Bob`s music, I felt understood. It was kind of an inner liberation that he stirred up in me. He articulated something, that stroke a string in me. I felt very much acquainted to him, although I never met him personally, and he seemed closer to me than some other people I have known all my life!*

Perhaps one of the greatest compliments and recognition one can have as an artist or performer is through the practice of imitation by others and by the amount of literature and interest devoted to him. Dylan certainly has many imitators and persons influenced by his art and music. There have been millions of words, thousands of chapters and hundreds of essays and articles analysing (and commenting on) his every song and his known personal life (Williamson, 2006:300). Limited by time and

space and the focus of my thesis, and also because tomes of literature have already been written on 'Dylan' and on 'Music', I have only intended and been able to cover what I feel is more directly relevant and *apropos* to my research in this particular chapter and sections. Ensuing Chapters and Appendices' sections have more examples, references and links on these and other topics and areas of interest on Dylan and his music. (See Chapter 4 and Appendices, page 200.)

The flow of academic and non-academic interest about Bob Dylan, through books, articles, conferences, gatherings, journalistic as well as general, lay-commentary continues. The subsequent chapter section below presents a sundry of Dylan fans and followers (many of whom are academics themselves) who have spent quite a lot of their time discussing and commenting, through a range of narratives, on the many facets, refractions, history and interpreted *meanings* of Dylan, his music and his art, including his significance on the cultural landscape of *modern times*. (The term 'Dylanologists' has been used and attributed to those, perhaps more avid and participatory fans and followers who have a strong belief and commitment to Dylan and his music and who are considered not just fans, but "dedicated followers and students of Dylan" – even "obsessive" [perhaps "Bob-cessive"] fans who feel the need to know every detail about 'everything Dylan' (see Kinney, 2014).

The following section on the interpretation and perception of Dylan through both academic and fan narratives is a preface to the discussion on the juxtaposition, authenticity and validity of both the Dylan fan narratives and the academic texts referenced throughout the thesis chapters.

### **Interpretations of Dylan through both Academic and Fan Narratives<sup>19</sup>**

Dylan's musical style, and his oft-surreal song lyrics in particular, have attracted commentary and critique from many writers and sources. For decades, academics and popular critics have scrutinized Dylan obsessively. There has certainly been no shortage of rejoinder, reaction, reasoning, discussion and debate, analysing,

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<sup>19</sup> This section is an introductory synthesis and sample of commentary and perspectives from Dylan fans, both academic and non-academic. The context of these perspectives are further expounded upon and detailed in the chapter on 'frames of analysis', page 125 of this thesis.

questioning and criticism of the musical talents, the cultural significance, and even the political and religious positioning of Robert Zimmerman, more commonly known as Bob Dylan. Academically, Dylan has been conceptualised in literature and popular culture in many different ways: a musical genius, a cultural icon, a poet, a prophet, even a plagiarist at times. Summarising some of the many different refractions and appropriations of Dylan's work is brought out in Kevin Dettmar's introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan*, where he states some of the broad and complex components in Dylan's work:

*Dylan's work has become more valuable than ever ... his songs provide a wonderful set of texts in which to explore issues of inter-textuality, (borrowing as freely as they do from Dylan's forbearers in the popular music traditions), irony, the rhetoric of political action, the limitations of formalist analysis, modernist textuality, the congruence of modern authorship and celebrity, and auto-ethnography, among others.*

(Dettmar, 2007:3)

In his book, *Down the Highway: The Life Of Bob Dylan*, author, fan, and one of the many (unofficial) biographers of Dylan, Howard Sounes writes:

*.....Bob Dylan changed [popular] music in the 1960s by bringing poetic lyrics to popular songs [and audiences]. He was [is] not afraid to say serious things in a medium that had never been taken particularly seriously...he inspired others to follow. Almost every singer-songwriter of recent times owes him a debt, including John Lennon & Paul McCartney.*

(Sounes, 2001:11)

Sounes also actually places Dylan amongst and within even more exalted and famous company when he says, "There are giant figures in art who are sublimely good—Mozart, Picasso, Frank Lloyd Wright, Shakespeare, Dickens ... Dylan ranks alongside these artists" (ibid:2001).

As previously noted in Chapter One, Dylan has been 'heavily' connected and represented, especially during the 1960s era, with the American Civil Rights Movement and other social and political rights issues that were occurring at the time. In the book, *The Political Art of Bob Dylan* (2004), the authors (Browning and Boucher) discuss the political engagement and observations Dylan made on various social and

political issues during the 1960s. According to Browning, “Dylan was, and still is, very aware of the cultural and mediated contexts in which politics operate and which produce the uneasy interactions between the private and the public, society and the individual...Dylan’s imagery conveys the lifelessness and absurdity of contemporary America, where capitalism has produced a consumerist, militaristic and nationalistic culture that destroys authenticity” (ibid). Browning also states that Dylan “interrogates the meaning of politics by unmasking its appearances and by examining the conditions for individual authenticity” (ibid), thus placing Dylan as a representative and symbol of authenticity and individual freedom through his (political) art, music and persona.

Cultural historians and popular music scholars have already commented on the uncanny synchronicity between Dylan's lyrics and the ideologies of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s (Shank, 2002:99). For example, testifying to the immediacy of Dylan's work, Carl Oglesby, a former president of *Students for a Democratic Society*, stated:

*Dylan's early (1960s) songs appeared so promptly as to seem absolutely contemporary with the civil rights movement. There was no time lag. He wasn't a songwriter who came into an established political mood, he seemed to be a part of it and his songs seemed informative to the Movement as the Movement seemed informative to the songwriter. [Dylan] gave character to the sensibilities of the Movement.*

(Oglesby 1965, quoted in Shank, 2002)

Professor of Music at York University, UK, Wilfred Mellers (1984) penned a study on Dylan where he traces Dylan’s musical roots, heritage and a variety of musical forms, showing how they have had a deep influence on Dylan and his musical direction, and placing Dylan in a clearly defined historical American music lineage, delineating a very identifiable relationship and legacy between Bob Dylan and the roots of *Music Americana*, which, for instance, also influenced many British and worldwide popular music groups of the 1960s, such as the *Beatles*, the *Rolling Stones*, the *Doors*, and others. Mellers locates Dylan in another specific place of representation and culture – that of the traditional American folk-blues music lineage, which helped produce new forms of music and communication for a completely new generation of listeners in the 1960s, up to present-day popular music, such as hip-hop and rap.

Themes of *freedom and authenticity* pervade through Dylan's narrated story, musical repertoire and song lyrics, and his representations in song of these topics have instigated a good amount of commentary and discussion throughout his career. These themes resonate highly, on a personal level of similar belief, with many of Dylan's long-term fan base. Dylan has also been characterised by literary critics as a *Romantic artist* and *counter-culture* figure, typified by the 'outlaw' or 'drifter' – the 'outsider' who has an emotional affinity with the 'underdog' and the marginalised of society.

In *Culture and Society* (1958), Raymond Williams wrote of the *romantic artist*, describing certain characteristics. Williams gives clear examples of writers and poets who were, to some degree, 'politically' involved and active in one way or another in the social events of their time and who were deeply interested and concerned about the society of their day. According to Williams, the romantic artist perceives and represents "essential reality", and he does so by virtue of his "master faculty imagination". Here, the artist/poet is portrayed as a "special" and "gifted" type of person. These characteristics and observations have been readily applied and related to Dylan by others. For example, in late 1950s and early 1960s the 'Beats'<sup>20</sup> influenced Dylan as a poet. During an interview in 1978, Dylan actually placed himself in line with such 'artist influences' by saying:

*I came out of the wilderness and just naturally fell in with the Beat scene, the bohemian, Be-Bop crowd, it was all pretty much connected. It was Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso, Ferlinghetti ... I got in at the tail end of that and it was magic ... it had just as big an impact on me as Elvis Presley. I consider myself a poet first and a musician second.*

(quoted in Wilentz, 2010:50)

In a lecture originally given in 1966 and reprinted in an online academic journal in August 2010, W. J. Richardson expounds on Dylan, referencing Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Richardson places and illustrates Dylan as a philosophical and *existential being*, with Heidegger himself being portrayed by Richardson as someone who, like Dylan, was searching for his own brand of freedom and authenticity. The heart and soul of the singer/artist is portrayed in a ceaseless

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<sup>20</sup> For an interesting and informative reading on the 'Beat Generation', read Simon Warner's book: *Text and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll: The Beats and Rock Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

quest to be free, and, in that quest for existential freedom, achieves *authenticity*.

Richardson writes:

*Writing songs, for Dylan, is one way to be true to himself. And through the songs he tries to let things be seen as they are. [He says,] 'I define nothing. Not beauty, not patriotism. I take each thing as it is, without prior rules about what it should be.' ... For Dylan, as well as Heidegger, the achieving of the truth of one's self is what makes a human being authentically free.*

(Richardson, 1966)

Stephen Jordan (2011) of the faculty of music at Oxford University, said that Dylan's music has provided a soundtrack to everything, from the 1963 Cuban missile crisis to the more recent 2005 New Orleans floods. "There are maybe 60 people sitting around here. Probably there are 60 different visions of every Dylan song and all of them valid. He is part of our lives, our culture", says Jordan.

In his book on Dylan, *The Never Ending Star*, Lee Marshall, a senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bristol, wrote:

*Whatever else he is, Dylan is a star - iconic, charismatic, legendary, enigmatic. No one else in popular music has maintained such star status over so long a period ... Stardom is something more than just the life stories of a bunch of famous people and this means that we need to consider stardom as a system, one with distinctive characteristics and effects. — To do so gives us a much richer understanding of the star in question.*

(Marshall, 2007:5)

Marshall goes on to highlight the importance and usefulness of a sociological framework for understanding Bob Dylan and states that his particular project differs from existing, previous work on Dylan because it is an actual sociological account of Dylan rather than a biography or textual analysis of his lyrics. Marshall highlights 'stardom' and 'star-image' as concepts that help to elucidate Dylan, placing him in socio-cultural contexts to explain his 'rise and fall' as a 'star' over a long-lasting career of over forty years. Interestingly and in contrast, in another 'reading' of Dylan, Alex Ross, a music critic of the *New York Times* newspaper, states, "Dylan may be many things but he is not a star..." (quoted in Hedin, 2004:311).

Clearly then, there have been many diverse and dissimilar representations and writings about 'Bob Dylan', spread across the academic and literary landscape. He has been viewed and analysed from many different positions on the continuum of perspective and representation. Subsequently, there have also been many distinct and miscellaneous readings, interpretations, representations and opinions of Bob Dylan. There is Dylan the “poet”, Dylan the "Judeo-Christian philosopher/prophet”, Dylan the “protest folk-singer”, the “cultural icon”, the “celebrity”, the “star”, the “living legend”, and, as previously mentioned, and often debated by some of his fans, followers and critics, Dylan “the plagiarist” (see Dettmar, 2009).

This chapter section has so far highlighted some of the exclusively academic perspectives, representations and analyses that have been written about Dylan and his music (and, through inference and to a degree, also about his listening audience and fans). The second part of the section now presents and highlights representations and perspectives via written narratives from 'non-academic' sources – predominantly from the commonly deemed, 'everyday', 'ordinary', Dylan fan.<sup>21</sup>

As stated hitherto, related and applied to fan studies and music studies, there is still a noticeable lack of inclusion, privilege and reference to actual music fans, and from the listening-audience points of view — hence, the clear inclusion and fan representation through narrative in this chapter subsection (repeated throughout many sections of the thesis). In my overall research approach, methods, content and analysis, I am purposely incorporating and taking account of the subjectively lived-reality-experience of the Dylan fan, recognising the Dylan-fan-experience and fan narrative as a valuable, valid status resources and, textually, holding authenticity to that of any academically-crafted accounts on fans and fandoms, and which were constructed via the expression and culture of academic thought and language on the subject of fans and their fandom.

Although the Dylan fan narratives are not necessarily grounded in a specific, academically prescribed, theoretically defined or disciplined framework, I reason that they are clearly and emphatically grounded in the existentially lived-experience of 'being in the world' – e.g. being a Dylan fan and thus, the fans and their fan-life narratives are extremely relevant to my (or any) research and discussion about fans

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<sup>21</sup> The majority of the fan 'sources' and citations in this section are from the Dylan fan-site *Expecting Rain* ([www.expectingrain.com](http://www.expectingrain.com))

and fandom. The Dylan fan narratives are very much from written the emic, lived-experience of the Dylan fan, and this is simply because it is (phenomenologically) written from the reflective and subjectively, lived-experience ('real-life-practice') standpoint. The belief and opinions of the majority of Dylan fans I met throughout my research experience, is that Dylan and his music are not located, explained or analysed in, or by, a prescribed, scholastic, theoretical framework, but are rather *experienced* and 'felt', on a subjectively, reciprocated and corporeal level, and on an aesthetic, sometimes transcendent level at times. (See the lucid narrative and insight by Professor of Music, Doctor T. on this existential level of perceptive 'feeling' and understanding music recounted in Chapter 1, page 19.)

The next few paragraphs introduce and highlight some specific examples from the Dylan fan narratives received during my research, which, I present and argue that, as a needed textual contrast to more formally worded and constructed academic or theoretically framed studies and texts, they exemplify and bring a deeper and valuable insight into the phenomenon and lived-fan-experience of Dylan fans and their fandom, and from an alternative, more humanistic perspective. These featured narratives (and all the DFNs included in this thesis) give specific, valuable and unique insights and first-hand, lived-experiences of fans and their fandom.<sup>22</sup>

Fans and followers of Dylan experience and embrace distinctive, inspirational and emotional fan/listener 'connections', and 'identifications' to Dylan. They hold close, intimate, personal representations of personal meaning and 'connection' to Dylan and his music as these next fan narratives describe and denote:

*I love the expressiveness of his voice. In Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, he sings, "And you wouldn't know it would happen like this." Written down, it's dead. When Dylan sings it, it brings tears to my eyes. Typing this now, and hearing it in my head, it brings tears to my eyes. Not everyone can do that. - Pearl, 16yrs, UK*

*my father died 9 years ago and bob in many ways has taken his place. he always tours and stops in cali so i see most every show in my state. he's a very intriguing mysterious artist with so many sides and so many songs. it has been a*

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<sup>22</sup> Dylan fans and their narratives are further exemplified throughout all thesis chapters, particularly in chapter 4 and in the Appendices.

*joy to study and discover his method and artistry. Bob has a way of helping me to see the world from a different perspective. – Anita, 25yrs, USA*

*Explaining why I adore Dylan's music is something too internal and longstanding in me to even begin to extract. So now I'll keep it short: I fell in love with him - his music, his thoughts, his ideas. Dylan's soul drips with this mesmerising bravery, honesty, humour and yearning - humanity in hard rain. This is something I yearn for everyday - in people, media, culture, news, faces, conversation, love; so thank you, Robert Zimmerman, for sharing your honesty, bravery and music with us, and for helping me to take my life in a direction I will always challenge, always enjoy, and so very often trace back to you. – Freda, 28 yrs, Germany*

To many Dylan fans, Dylan and his music have become a talisman and even a type of 'spiritual guide', a standard, certainly a strong affective influence in their lives, as the following brief fan excerpts affirm:

*Bob is sort of the blue-print to my life. I listened outside of my elder brothers bedroom door to him, and got it right away - at the age of 8yrs old! I still feel as though I have come home and have a reason to live when I hear him, and also see him perform; I was at five gigs this year! - John, 53 yrs. USA*

*My relationship with Mr Dylan's music is one that has endured my whole adult life. At the age of 14 his music opened my ears and my eyes and lifted me out of my East London, working-class background, and taught me another way to see the world. He has been my constant companion through good times and bad, never ceasing to inspire and challenge my thinking. - Joe, 55 yrs. UK*

Consequently, as evidenced in these samples of Dylan fan narratives, there are clear identifications and interpretations, meanings and sensibilities made by Dylan fans to Dylan as a significant person, musician and artist. I found the fan narratives to be extremely helpful, and valuable conduits and resources to the overall thesis, for they clearly illustrate and exemplify not just how music is listened to, and how it deeply impacts the serious listener, but also exemplifies and indicates how and why these fans identify with Dylan and respond in the way they do. It can be said that Dylan fans clearly perceive and experience as an inspiring, creative and transformative power and 'truth' in Dylan's music, particularly within and via the context, representation and lyrical imagery they find in his songs.

I therefore maintain that the Dylan fan narratives are a vital resource to the study of fans and fandom for they uniquely describe the highly subjective and affective experiences Dylan fans often experience when listening to Dylan's music and lyrics, in contrast to, for instance, technical musicology formats of analysis, or a portrayal and framework of analysis that looks at 'fans as consumers' — that is, through fan research which is predominantly positioned from a more singular, formal, 'outsider', and 'distant' viewpoint of assessment, and one which does not include the voices and practices of the fans themselves.

To expand both the knowledge and understanding of the subject matter of (Dylan) fans and followers, I am placing both academic and fan narratives together, in juxtaposition, yet 'as equals' in many ways regarding narrative relevance, and as original and authentic texts. I am acknowledging and recognising that both the academic and the fan narratives are from comparable stake-holding positions, and from people (writers and thinkers) with similar interests in Dylan as an artist, musician and persona, albeit, perhaps with slightly differently perceived and acknowledged statuses, meanings, understandings, importance, significance and 'relationship'.

The following section on *Expressions of Music and Fan Affect* explores music and also contains further related examples of the Dylan fan-life experiences expressing, describing and interpreting Dylan fandom and behaviour from the individual Dylan fan's particular viewpoint and lived-fan-experience.

### **Expressions of Music and Fan Affect**

In many ways, as substantiated throughout this thesis, and particularly through the fan testimonials as related to Bob Dylan's music, modern popular music provides a background, often referred to as a 'soundtrack' of emotion, pleasure and meaning for the lives, experiences and memories of millions of fans and listeners the world over. Fans listening to Dylan's music and/or attending live-Dylan concerts corroborate these same feelings. Danielle, from Denmark, a follower of Dylan for the past 10 years shared how she emotionally identified with Dylan's music and received empowerment on a very personal level through a 'dark hour' in her life. She first quotes a verse from Dylan's song, *Shelter from the Storm*, on one of his albums, "Blood on the Tracks":



*... This was my life and feeling after my divorce—it was truly ‘Blood on the Tracks’<sup>23</sup> for me! If it hadn’t been for Bob’s music and the support of a few true friends, I don’t think I would actually be here today—I was so down and depressed ... Bob’s music gave me the strength to ‘keep on keepin’ on’...*

Countless fans in my study similarly attested that, for them, Dylan’s voice, singing and performance has the ability and affect to communicate and ‘say something’ to them, as a listening audience, about their own human condition, and on a very personal and accessible level. In my study, a majority of the Dylan fans who responded to my research questions testified how they really ‘feel’ and believe that Dylan’s voice, music and lyrics ‘speaks’ to them directly, and again, in a very personal, life-relatable and corporeal way. Academics and non-academics have quoted Dylan extensively as an example of *voice embodiment* through the ‘grain’ of his voice, in song and performance (see Negus, 2008; Heylin, 2009; Ricks, 2005).

Ava, a long-term fan from the USA simply describes Dylan’s ‘grain of voice’ in this way; “I love the sound of his growly, raspier-than-ever voice. Some critics have said that Bob’s voice is ‘shot’ but it still reaches your heart and it can be more tender and more vituperative than ever.” Stan, a 16 year-old fan from Canada puts it this way; “His (Dylan’s) voice always sings/speaks in a completely honest tone for me. No matter how weird the lyrics are, no matter how much he tries to conceal himself, his voice always makes it seem as though he is speaking the absolute emotional truth.”

Roland Barthes wrote that even “the ‘grain’ of the voice” signifies, or ‘indexes’ the body from which it emerges during a performance, and is potentially capable of affecting others” (Barthes 1977). Martin (2006) noted this in his dissertation on the rock band *Nirvana* that song lyrics can be highly ‘personalized and/or subjective in their form and content’ and that song lyrics exist ‘in relation to and gain significance from the musical

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Blood on the Tracks’ was the title of Dylan’s 15<sup>th</sup> album and considered by many fans as his best and one which many fans relate to on a very personal level, especially relating to relationships and the determination to ‘keep on keeping on’ in life. Released in 1975 the songs have been interpreted as from the emotions that Dylan was going through at the time of his divorce from his first wife.

and sonorous elements that surround them'. This appears as a major reason why the *voice* seems particularly significant to the embodied listening (music fan) experience; it gives the listener access to it without mediation (ibid 2006:9).

The next two examples from the fan narratives illustrate the Dylan fan 'listening experience' and the 'identifiers' – the frames of reference and meaning, applied by Dylan fans to Dylan's music from their own particular perspective and to identifiable areas of their own personal life:

*Singing really is about communicating - delivering feeling to words via melody and phrasing. This is why people all over the world who don't even speak English as a first language "get" Bob - he is still delivering the song feeling to their hearts, touching souls - regardless of the words. He's intense and burning. At his best its like he is channelling something beyond him! Magic stuff! – Gerry, USA*

*Bob Dylan has a most beautiful voice! In the oral tradition of story telling, he effectively utilizes the multiplicitous, semi-autobiographical masking of reality in role-playing and reinvention. Dylan crosses genres with ease and his voice, for me, is the key. When he is at the top of his game, there is a fire and power in the way Dylan sings that is electrifying and moving beyond words. I think the connectivity of his voice could be why people sometimes feel like they know him ... and that he is singing songs and words that are 'for them' and apply to their own personal life journey and experiences. – Beth, Canada*

Because music holds such power and influence upon its listeners, it also holds a significant and emotional presence, identity and 'voice' to those partaking and sharing in it, and thus has the capability of giving its listeners/audiences a reciprocal, existential voice and identity too; as Martin (2006) noted in his dissertation on the band *Nirvana*, the song lyrics can be highly 'personalized and/or subjective in their form and content' and the song lyrics exist and amplify in a corporeal manner, 'in relation to and gain significance from the musical and sonorous elements that surround them.'

*All music is visceral in the sense that it contains the ability to engage the listener in a corporeal manner...affectively...because of the subjective and experiential relationship between the music and the listener, both occupying space and volume, which thus contain materiality and sonic presence, that correlates with both embodied lyrics and vocals. (Martin, 2006:6)*

Many of the stories and responses I have received from Dylan fans describe how, when & where they first heard, or 'met' Bob—and that 'special', almost emotionally epiphanic musical experience, in time and place, became deeply embedded in their hearts and souls, and amygdalas. Dylan's songs have often inspired, illuminated and meant something very special and personal to the individual fan, sometimes signifying a 'special moment' in their life. Paul, from the UK, describes the effect that Dylan's music had on him for the first time:

*I vividly remember two songs on the juke-box which were totally different than anything else I'd ever heard before and which transfixed me to the spot whenever I heard them: 'Like A Rolling Stone' and 'Lay Lady Lay'. I remember being totally captivated by these extraordinary songs and nothing else ever had this almost hypnotic spell over me. My relationship with Dylan's music is one that has endured my whole adult life.*

Tracy, a life-long fan for more than fifty years describes the first time she heard Dylan's music as a teenager and how immediately 'connected' she felt to Dylan's music and lyrics in this way:

*Minutes into first hearing Bob's voice, I was certain my initial instincts about his music were right on target. Still, something about it stayed with me. Later that night, I crept out of bed to make a date with our den's stereo to hear those songs again...and again...and again. By the end of the week, I knew every word to every track on the record. Never before had anyone presented me with such freedom and vision. That magnificent strength and attitude woven throughout his lyrics gave me hope for an individuality I'd never thought possible in the confines of my tight little box. Finally, finally, I had found a voice to articulate my yearnings, my resentment, and my vulnerability. - Bob has been closer to me than some people I have known all my life.*

Passion, intensity and intrigue are enhanced and embedded in the Dylan fan's experience, and there is a tangible feeling of 'connection' and like-mindedness with Dylan, his lyrics and his music by his fans (which are present and exemplified throughout each chapter of the thesis). To many of Dylan's ardent fan following, how the music is played, sung, recorded and performed 'live' are all highly significant nuances, frames of reference, meaning and affect, on both the personal and the wider 'Dylan community' level. Through their fan-life narratives, these fans communicate

expressively and emotionally how they have been, and still are, compellingly drawn, intrigued, inspired and challenged by the words and music Dylan has produced and performed, as these next brief fan excerpts illustrate:

*...Dylan's voice draws you in, pulls you toward the words — the stories, the fanciful imagery, the calls to arms. And once you're in, you begin to understand...*

*...Dylan performs in the mode, style and message of ancient prophets. He said Dylan is one of the best at channeling the moment into a transcendent experience for the listener. There is no prefabricated formula...*

*...He was asking questions, making statements and spinning tales that are timeless — and once more, we can relate...Bob Dylan is like us!...*

*...Dylan's songs were different. They talked about pain, hardship, confusion and other emotions I had not discovered in music before. I found I could relate to some of his lines and it helped me describe what I was feeling. My fav songs differ from week to week depending on how I feel and my mood...*

Gagnon (1992) has stated that the self is the “voice in us” that speaks our truest and most authentic voice, feelings, thoughts and emotions. I discovered this sensibility of self and identity resonated with many of the fan voices heard in the Dylan fan narratives, like this excerpt from a young (20 year-old) female Dylan fan, Marianne from Poland, whose sense of self worth and feelings of purpose and direction in her life was affected and propelled through listening to Dylan’s music:

*It's not so much that Bob is the meaning in my life; rather, he helped me find my own. Before I found out about Bob, I'd been worrying every second of the day about some pretty heavy, illogical stuff and stopped painting (I don't draw when I'm sad). You might call it depressed. But... I've pretty much stopped worrying since I started finding out about him and listening to his songs. ... So far, he is the first and only that I've ever heard, seen or read that truly embodies pure art....I mean, he's an example of a guy that truly knows his purpose in life. After I found Bob, I started drawing again, and got into poetry for the first time. I felt the best I felt in my entire life and the anxiety just melted away. My art improved in ridiculous leaps and bounds, both in the ideological, compositional and topical senses. It's a wonderful feeling, knowing you're so close to finding out what you're meant to do.*

Dylan's songs, and especially the lyrics that describe very personal, human emotions and life-experiences, often intersect and enter into the Dylan fans' everyday world and emotions. The everyday-life context and setting of the fan narratives illumine a particularly three-dimensional ('true-to-life') human experience when coming out of the nexus of the mundane and the grind that can be a feature of many people's daily-lives.

Dylan fans seem to especially identify with and appreciate his use of language and imagery to describe a particular life-experience, even in the midst of drudgery and difficulty at times. Engraved within many of these more private 'life-story' experiences, the fan narratives describe a longing for a different, (better) way of life, place to be, demonstrating a human passion and desire to live a 'truer', different reality than what is considered by many to be the 'mainstream', the '*status quo*' existence — as the keen emotions and feelings in the following narrative from a very young Dylan fan describe:

*I was 11 (1992) and my mother was driving me to ballet class. I, per usual, was in a shitty mood. I hated school, my mother, ballet, basically everything your dysfunctional 11-year old hates. Needless to say the conversation was minimal at best so I turned up the radio. It was tuned to a classic rock station, which looking back on was odd considering we usually had it tuned to the "pop" music stations. A few minutes after I had turned the volume up "Like a Rolling Stone" came on. I'm sure I had heard it and other Dylan songs unknowingly before, but something about my mood that day had me listening intently. Every time Dylan would shout, "how does it feel? how does it feel? to be on your own? with no direction home? a complete unknown, like a rolling stone!" I felt like he was speaking directly to me. That verse captured all of my pre-pubescent angst (even though the rest of the song had no similarities whatsoever to my life:). After it ended I asked my mom who that was. She replied "Bob Dylan". To which I immediately replied with "How come I never see him on MTV?!" My mother gave me a brief background on him from the little she knew (she is not a Dylan fanatic! I can't believe I came out of her!!), and informed me that Mr. Dylan first came out 20 years before I was even born, and was just a few years older than her. After ballet that night we went to the record store and I bought "Highway 61 Revisited". I must have listened to it for weeks on end, staying up all hours of the night. --I will never forget that day in the car when I heard his song. --Changed my life forever in the best way possible. 14 Dylan albums later, he has remained, and I suspect will remain, my favorite musician of all time. – Sara, USA*

Through locating the fan/person in the context and practise of the everyday life, I have also been able to see more clearly how the fan narratives sent to me by Dylan fans have displayed a clear depiction and personal account of the many daily facets of being a fan as an everyday practice and behaviour. This again, I feel, goes a long way in describing and even explaining more exactly what it is actually like and what it means to be a fan, as well as aiding us to be able to understand more the (Dylan) fan experience and the special emotional bonds that fans have and connect with and to their 'favourite' person.

Each Dylan fan narrative describing their particular personal fan experience ('the lived-fan-experience') particularly exemplifies how the musical frame and identification connection affects the lived-reality of the Dylan fan experience, perception, and values etc. Françoise, a female fan from France wrote succinctly, "Bob Dylan is for me the most important living artist. When I began to really listen to his music, I was amazed to discover that someone seemed to KNOW so much, which is a feeling that all great art should give you. Listening to Dylan's songs, I felt like he expressed everything I had always felt without knowing it. --It was exhilarating to me!"

By providing illustrated evidence via the fan's own narratives on the role of music, emotion, embodiment and the aesthetic, I am proposing that such lived-fan-experienced accounts and fan narrated experiences by (Dylan) fans do positively and clearly contribute to our knowledge and understanding of not just how music and imagery impact us, but also describe how, in what ways, and why, these (Dylan) music fans identify and respond to the creative and transformative power of music in the way they do. (Chapter 4 - 'Dylan Fans and Followers' - contains many more in-depth narrative examples of the transformative and transcendent power experienced by many Dylan fans to Dylan's music and lyrics.)

### **Bob Dylan – “The Music Fan!”**

Although Dylan has been an important, well-known and even influential figure on the global media stage for over 50 years, he has somehow managed to lead a comparatively 'hidden', 'masked' and separated private-life, somewhat distanced from the more usual popular-media glare of tabloid journalism that pursues and encroaches

many well-known people and celebrities. However, over time, and through a variety of occurrences, such as Dylan management changes, discreet public relations, planned interviews, various publications on and about Dylan, new albums to promote, plus the non-stop news and gossip available on the highly accessible information-highway of the Internet, a slightly more accessible and publicly viewable profile has emerged on and from Dylan, giving some different glimpses, insights and information on his background as well as his on-going artistic life/career.

For conciseness here, I will highlight just three main sources of information I have referenced that highlight Dylan as a music fan, and that also relate to my introduction and discussion of “who and what is a Dylan fan, and what do Dylan fans do, feel and appropriate, regarding their fandom” – here, with the intention that these examples will hopefully contribute to our more general understanding of (Dylan) music fans and their fandom. The three sources of reference I denote here are, the published Dylan Interviews (Dylan 2008), Dylan’s first and only (at the time of writing) autobiographical book, *Chronicles Vol 1*, and, thirdly, Dylan’s *Theme Time Radio Shows*, initially broadcast from 2005 to 2008 on XM Radio in the United States, eventually available worldwide via the World Wide Web.

Dylan has held many interviews with media outlets and representatives over his 50-plus year career (see *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 2011). These endorsed interviews and views of Dylan are often lively debated and discussed further by his fans and followers via online Dylan fan-forums (e.g. [www.expectingrain.com/forums](http://www.expectingrain.com/forums)). And, in these published interviews and media meetings Dylan gives assorted answers to the variety of questions posed, giving his fans great joy and interest in his responses, as well as hoping for anything ‘extra’ he might say on other fan-pertinent topics such as, his personal life, interests, his music influences, politics, his art and songs, and so on.

Many questions in these interviews as well as Dylan’s responses and interest are, of course, concerning his music. There have always been questions asked about exactly what musical influences did Dylan himself have during his childhood and teenage years, and what kind of music does he like. It is from these interviewed discussions that Dylan has shown himself to have been (and still is) a serious music fan! Growing up in America, Dylan has affirmed how his music listening and education was mostly

from the radio at that time – especially related to the roots of *Music Americana* (i.e. American popular music, the Blues, and Folk and Country music).

In 2004, Dylan released his first-ever autobiographical book, entitled *Chronicles Volume One*, which quickly became #1 on the *New York Times* bestselling list. *Chronicles* begins and ends with Dylan in New York in the early 1960s and presents flashbacks to his boyhood life in Minnesota, including some of the personal and musical issues he experienced at different times in his life (Dylan 2004). In his autobiography, we again encounter just how much Dylan was influenced by the music of the day and what an avid music-fan he was. For instance, he writes how spent many hours and days in second-hand record stores and friends' houses rooting out obscure and forgotten folksongs, listening to and collecting what to him was the more interesting, often obscure, musical material.

Dylan shows himself to be a big fan of 'old folk and blues music', which, he says, "exceeded all human understanding ... it called out to you, you could disappear and be sucked into it ... those (songs) sang out to me on the radio" (ibid: 32). He also talks about his love for the 'old-timey ballads' he was discovering as well as the songs he learned from other singers he met, telling of their influences on him as a musician. Woody Guthrie also had a big influence on Dylan in the 'folk era' stage of his musical career; his songs had "the infinite sweep of humanity in them", quotes Dylan (ibid: 244).

A final glimpse here of Dylan as a music fan is from 2008 when Dylan surprised many by appearing as a Radio Show DJ on a programme called, *The Theme Time Radio Hour (TTRH)*, which was initially broadcast on XFM radio throughout the United States in 2008. Through these radio broadcasts Dylan again shows his depth of interest and background in popular music history as well as his appreciation and acknowledgment of many of his music predecessors, by playing and announcing many songs from the various genres of music that he likes and was influenced by. Each radio broadcast has had a different theme to it (e.g. Water, The City, Love, Marriage, Christmas, and so on). The "Flowers" episode from 'Season One' had the most poetry readings of all the programmes with Dylan quoting four separate poems by different authors, including Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. Shakespeare was the 'most-quoted'

poet on TTRH<sup>24</sup> ..."The kid, (Shakespeare) is good", Bob Dylan states, wryly in his DJ commentary.

Dylan fans very much enjoyed these radio programs, 'dee-jayed' by Dylan himself, not only for the songs he shared as part of his musical background and enjoyment, but also as a new and different glimpse into Dylan as a person, and as an earnest 'music-fan'. James, a 28 year-old Dylan fan living in Brazil had clearly been directly influenced by the musical influences Dylan had as a music fan as he narrated when he wrote in to my research website in 2011:

*Dylan has also introduced me a wealth of other musicians, such as Willie McTell, John Hurt, Charley Patton, Roosevelt Sykes, and a host of others. He is tapped into the psyche of the music of Americana and relays that to his fans. Being a Bob Dylan fan opens up a world of music, literature, and culture!* (James, Brazil)

From the extracts and examples of Dylan's biographical life in this chapter section, we can view Dylan as an avid music-fan himself, manifesting many everyday 'fan-like' behaviours and practising common music-fan activities, such as, regularly and often listening to the music he enjoys, attending live-concerts of the artists he is interested in, mixing with other fellow musicians and meeting people who are also interested in the same things of music, art and literature; collecting music samples, sharing music with others and studying his topic of interest to learn more about it, and to become more proficient in the knowledge and practice of it – Dylan fans and followers do the very same things in their fan-lives.

### **Chapter Summations**

In the Dylan documentary film, *No Direction Home*, by Martin Scorsese (2005), Dylan is portrayed as someone who has had a tremendous impact and significance on the music and cultural landscape of the 1960s, and who has also made a lasting impact and an on-going influence on other artists and musicians up until the present-day. This is a brief extract from what film director Scorsese narrates in his documentary on Dylan:

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<sup>24</sup> Information courtesy of *Pablo's Page* available at [www.expectingrain.com](http://www.expectingrain.com)

*... He has been instrumental in making popular music an accepted and acceptable venue and forum for not only music as a form of general entertainment and consumption, but also as an arena and public sphere for serious artistic purpose and expression. In many ways, it could be argued that it was really Bob Dylan who originated the infusion of rock and folk music with intellectual energy and quixotic poetry...*

Dylan's music and 'sound' began to revolutionise and impact music and song writing in the 1960's (Ref). To many, and in many ways, Dylan became a new benchmark within the popular music culture of the 1960s. Upon hearing Dylan's music and voice in the early 1960s, Sam Cooke, the well-know American-hit singer of that period commented, ... "From now on, it's not going to be about how pretty the voice is ... it's going to be about *believing* that voice is telling the truth". Dylan has been considered by many of his fans and interested followers to be "that voice", and, as documented in this chapter, ever since he first appeared upon the music scene in the 1960s, Dylan has received global recognition and accolade for his contributions to, and influence on the popular music culture of the 20th century, with particular reference to the 1960s era of social and political movements of social change.

For the past 50-plus years, Bob Dylan has had a marked personal and emotive impact upon his millions of fans and followers around the world. As illustrated in this chapter (and exemplified throughout the thesis), in their own distinctive ways, Dylan fans and followers feel a special 'connection' with Dylan's music/art/persona. The effect and affect of Dylan's music and lyrical art on his fans and followers are illustrated, described and brought-to-life in my study through the Dylan fan-narratives.

The juxtaposition and tangency of both academic and non-academic narratives on Dylan, and on fans and fandom, contribute interesting aspects to the subject matter, and also provide useful and varied positions of entry into the (fan) research process and enquiry. By incorporating these different, yet operational, and, in many cases, complementary narratives and perspectives, I personally experienced a broader and more comprehensive research process, enquiry and understanding of the subject matter — i.e. the fans and followers of Bob Dylan.

In the chapter section on 'Dylan, the Music Fan', we can see many everyday behaviours, habits and appropriations that Dylan himself manifested, and that are

common to all people (fans) who have a special interest and admiration/fascination in something particular, whether that be horticulture, fashion, music or sport, etc., etc. When people (fans) are really interested in something, they tend to study, research and gather as much information as they can on their topic/subject/object of interest and focus.

Fans (of anything) collect items, samples, merchandise and memorabilia that symbolise and reflect in some way the object of their admirations (e.g. CDs/DVDs, collections, books, magazines and branded merchandise). Whenever possible, they also attend exhibits and gatherings with the same interest group (e.g. attending a football match, going to their particular place of worship, visiting a 'shrine' of their idol — as in visiting *Graceland*, the former 'home' of Elvis Presley), and they listen to and/or watch performances, exhibits, videos or DVDs of their favourite person or thing. Fans, no matter what they are a fan *of*, manifest and *do* many of the same things Dylan did as a music fan, i.e. fandom behaviour, activities, customs, interactions, etc., are all a part of the many everyday-life experiences of 'being a fan'.

Dylan's own perceptions and beliefs, through his music, words, thoughts and opinions are of great interest to his fans and followers, as so many of his fans strongly and intimately identify and relate to Dylan and his words, as both a talented musician and as a charismatically gifted person. Consequently, Dylan's comments, language and views on life, politics, music, and so on, are, to his fans, clear 'identifiers' and 'signifiers' that his fans very much relate to, and often appropriate into the own lives.

It is evident, and illustrated through the Dylan fan narratives in this thesis, that by way of the music and syntax (and 'sound') of Bob Dylan, many of his more seriously committed fans and followers experience an 'inner-self' experience on the deeper, more complex truths and 'reflectivities' of life — delving, at times, into ineffable perceptions of truth and reality. His fans treat Dylan's songs and language very respectfully with many songs being acknowledged in an almost reverent and 'religious' manner. These fans testify of the resonance and emotional perception of truth and meaning they experience when they hear and listen to Dylan's songs and performances ... as the following Dylan fan narratives echo:

*For me Bob Dylan is like my Holy book. He guides me through life. He was there when I was sad, he has lifted me up when I was lying in the ditch, he took me down when I flew too high, he made me laugh more when I already laughed, he got me thinking when everyone had the same thought and he took my hand when I got lost. Ivan, Russia*

*I use Dylan's words and music as sort of a doctrine. I don't wake up and recite songs and pray to the man each day. But often when a decision needs to be made, I can scroll Dylan's words in my mind for a reference. For an easy example, I might wonder if i should pursue a love interest, I might say to myself, "She aint a-gonna make a move, I guess it must be up to me." -- That's a very crude example, but I constantly look for Dylan references that I can use and get inspiration from. I make life decisions based on Dylan's lyrics often. I'd be happy to reply in more detail if you wish, I understand that might be a little vague. Jeff, New Zealand.*

*Dylan, to me, is the Shaman of the ages. He is the outlaw's hide-out, while personifying everything that a good God-fearing prophet should be. He is the child's balloon that hovers on his own steam while the establishment burns sideways. He is the anarchist by rumor but a boy from Hibbing by heartbeat. 'As good as he's been to us', the world has still gone wrong'...but not too much while he's in it. It takes a lot to park your car and I've done so many times in the fierce cold and sweltering heat while listening to 'blondes on top of blondes' and 'self portraits' being painted which look like all of us all at once. Claudette, USA.*

The lyrics of Bob Dylan's songs have been academically compared and recognised to poetry and English literature at the highest levels (see Ricks, 2005). Many of Dylan's songs also use textual imagery and what has been considered as an innovative and creative musical sound and voice which translates the deeper human feelings, and addresses intellectual, religious and philosophical topics. For instance, the meaning of human existence (\* [REDACTED]), experiencing 'other worlds' and places to inhabit (\*\* [REDACTED] \*\*\* [REDACTED]), and adopting different frames of mind, thought and perception (\* [REDACTED] [REDACTED]), existentialist thinking (\*\*\*\* [REDACTED]).<sup>25</sup> These are perhaps some reasons why Dylan is so 'academic-ised' and scrutinised by many writers and critics, and there does seem to be a fair amount of Dylan fans who are, or have been, students, teachers, artists and academics.

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<sup>25</sup> Lyrics from the following Dylan songs: (\*) *Visions of Johanna* (\*\*) *Mr Tambourine Man* (\*\*\*) *Desolation Row* (\*\*\*\*) *It's Not Dark Yet* © Special Rider Music 2015.

When Bob Dylan was voted into the prestigious American Academy of Arts in 2013, executive director Virginia Dajani, speaking to the Associated Press, stated; "Bob Dylan is a multi-talented artist whose work so thoroughly crosses several disciplines that it defies categorization". An honour society of 250 architects, composers, artists, and writers, the 115-year-old Academy's honourees include Mark Twain and Henry James. Dylan was selected for both his musical and his lyrical achievements (Billboard, 2013). Here is a small sample of what other artists, musicians and celebrity people have said about Dylan, reflecting his importance, significance and stature on the global stage of music, culture and art and as a 20<sup>th</sup> century icon:

John Lennon: *Hearing Dylan allowed me to make the leap from writing empty pop songs to expressing the actuality of my life and the depths of my own soul ... prior to hearing Dylan it didn't occur to me that songs could contain such direct meaning.*

Sean Wilentz (Professor of History): *He's the most important songwriter of the last 50 years, in a culture in which song writing has always been a major force, a major component.*

U.S. President Obama: *Bob Dylan has a "unique gravelly power" to his voice which helped redefine "not just what music sounded like, but the message it carried and how it made people feel."*

Bruce Springsteen: *Dylan was a revolutionary, man, the way that Elvis freed your body, Bob freed your mind; and he changed the face of rock and roll forever and ever. Without Bob, the Beatles wouldn't have made 'Sergeant Pepper', maybe the Beach Boys wouldn't have made 'Pet Sounds', the Sex Pistols wouldn't have made 'God Save the Queen.'*

Judith Halden-Sullivan (Professor of English): *Bob Dylan's five decades of music and lyrics have influenced all of the other artists of his time. He also broadened the audience for the artists that influenced him.*

John Tebeau (Artist): *He made pop music's lyrics important. Before him, most popular music was fluff. After him, you could use it to make important points to millions of people. Dylan made it meaningful.*

During the past 10-15 years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of published books on Dylan by *aca-fans*, (i.e. academics who are also, to varying degrees, Dylan fans and followers themselves; see Corcoran, 2002; Ricks, 2005; Marshall, 2007; Wilentz, 2009; Dettmar, 2009; Boucher & Browning, 2009; Meisel, 2010). Amongst fans and followers alike, there is a strong claim and recognition

towards Dylan as an important contributor to the arts and culture of the (latter) 20<sup>th</sup> century. Christopher Ricks, a well-known literature critic and new Oxford professor of poetry has linked and placed Dylan in a literary lineage. In his book, *Dylan's Visions of Sin*, Ricks compares and analyses Dylan songs with lines of poetry from T.S. Eliot, Shakespeare, Keats and other notable literary authors, such as Wordsworth. Ricks also compares Dylan's different music, persona and lyrical phrase changes to Picasso's life and art, describing how people never know what to expect from him, or what will come next.

Commentary and discussion thus abound on the many facets and refractions of Dylan's art and music, and proliferation of such can be found on the numerous Internet sites, pages and blogs dedicated to Dylan. (See more Dylan web pages and fan sites in Appendices, page 206.)

On April 6th 2011, Bob Dylan and his Band played their very first ever live-concert appearance in The People's Republic of China. This event evoked interest and feedback from western media sources. There was one particular article from a journalist in the *New York Times (NYT)*<sup>26</sup> that caught the attention of many online Dylan fans and followers around the globe and I mention it here as this was a prompt for me to choose the title heading for my thesis. The *NYT* article put forth rumours that Dylan had changed his set-list and removed songs in response to censorship from the communist Chinese government. Remarkably, for Dylan, he himself responded to this article through a letter published on his website, which he addressed, "*To my fans and followers...*" – I later decided to choose this as the heading title of my thesis: *Dylan Fans and Followers*.

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<sup>26</sup> More on this *NYT* article in Chapter 4, page 99-100

## CHAPTER THREE

### APPLIED FAN RESEARCH METHODS

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## Introduction

Having explained in the introductory chapter why I am researching Dylan fans and why I have adopted particular approaches and methodologies, here in Chapter Two I explain some of the ‘nuts and bolts’ research methods and steps of how I did it. This has entailed much reading and compiling of fan emails, Dylan reviews, blogs and discussions from Internet sources such as, fan websites, fanzines, and chat rooms. Secondary sources have been via books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, reports and other Dylan archival materials, such as the interviews Dylan has given over his fifty-year-plus career. Research data have also been references and material from film, television, electronic databases, Internet websites, fanzines and online fan forums.

As previously mentioned, albeit briefly, apart from resonant research on Bruce Springsteen fans by Daniel Cavicchi (1998) and also a previous study on fans by the Vermorels in 1988, at the beginning of my research undertaking in 2010, I had not found any completed academic research on and from (Dylan) fans that highlighted or addressed the fans’ emotional and *affectual* components of their fandom, which, for me and my research on Dylan fans, turned out to be a major and essential factor in understanding and explaining the behaviour and appropriations made by Dylan fans.

I found the lack of research on the fans’ emotional connections seemed to be further corroborated through communicating with the Dylan fans themselves during my research, many of whom told me that they also felt the same way – that there was a large ‘gap’ and divergence between their own lived-experience as a Dylan fan and the prognosis of much of the academic books and other writings they had seen on the subject. In fact, much of the general fan literature I read at that beginning of my research (in 2010) had little to say about the actual, lived-fan-experience – as experienced and lived by the fans themselves, and from the fan point-of-view. The abundant, different texts and interpretations of “Dylan” from academic, professional and lay authors also had little-to-none inclusion of material on, or from Dylan fans.

Smith and Inglis seemed to have experienced likewise, as they stated in their article in *Popular Music and Society* on the fans of the American group, ‘The Grateful Dead’:

*Despite an increase in ethnographic approaches to fan studies, it still remains true that the authentic voices of fans themselves have not always been heard, or, when they have been, they have been subject to the imposition of meaning by external agencies. We hope that our research represents a small attempt to correct that imbalance. (Smith and Inglis, 2013:307)*

My methodologies are all directly used and prioritised to primarily understand and describe the 'lived-Dylan-fan-experience'. I am also utilising the fan's own narratives as a major tool and resource throughout the whole research undertaking. My intentionality here is that this methodological approach and process will be a constructive and 'fitting' way of connecting with and understanding my subject matter of Dylan fans and their fandom.

As evidenced throughout the thesis, the DFNs vividly illustrate the everyday, applied meanings and practices of what it means to them to be a Dylan fan, and in what ways they 'live-out' and appropriate Dylan's music as part of their everyday lives. These fan narratives and fan feedback elucidate the fans' particular life-experiences and their life-stories that were sent to me via a research website I constructed in 2011 ([www.mybobbydylanstory.com](http://www.mybobbydylanstory.com)) and maintained fulltime for the purpose of gathering information and communicating with Dylan fans over a further two and a half-year period of research time and web presence.

This more 'insider/emic' view of the fan culture and practices of Dylan fans reveals the numerous and diverse expressions and everyday life-experiences, values and beliefs of these 'dedicated' Dylan fans and followers, who, in their own ways, very much make sense of, and even relate to, the world around them through the music, words and art forms of Bob Dylan (see Kortaba, 2009). Through engaging directly with the Dylan fans themselves, I have been able to underline what *they* have communicated and detailed about their own personal fan experiences, beliefs, identities and affective affinities with Dylan's music and art.

### **Background to the Research Topics and Data Collection**

Through conducting my initial literature review on "Dylan" in 2010, I was able to see more clearly, not only the main emphases and most common and accepted

representations of Dylan over his 50-year career on the cultural landscape, but, what also became very apparent to my particular research project is that the literature review I made revealed certain 'gaps' and 'lacks' in the coverage of "Dylan" *per se*, which eventually led me to focus on and choose the specific research topics and questions for my thesis. Thus, my literature review on Dylan fans was extremely useful to hone my research focus as it not only clearly opened up the many different ways Bob Dylan has already been represented but also the many ways, theoretically and textually, he has been approached and 'read'. There has been extensive writing, commentary and research on the representation, biography and influence of Bob Dylan himself ever since the 1960s, and yet, there has been virtually nothing written or researched about his world-wide fans.

The British Library and the electronic databases such as the *Web of Knowledge*, *EBSCO* and *JSTOR* were my main and initial sources of research and access for the literature review, and, like many other PhD research students, I also used the Endnote and NVIVO software programmes to help retrieve and organise my bibliographies, texts and abstracts, including some from various US databases and resources such as the *Library of Congress* and *Yale University*. (I found more sources on "Dylan" in the US library system than any other country.) My first general, broad search through the various databases produced over two thousand relevant references related to "Dylan".

Further filtering showed that 98% of the written academic material (in the *Web of Knowledge*) on Dylan was categorised under "Arts & Humanities", with just a little over 1% entered under the "Social Sciences" column. In general, the majority of the written materials on Dylan have been from "Literary Studies", with English departments taking the bulk of the numbers here, typically making 'close-readings' and critical commentary of Dylan's lyrical contributions through his catalogue of over 500 available song recordings (as of 2010). The more literary and cultural approaches to Dylan's art form reside in the *Arts & Humanities*, with Dylan being oft located as a poet of the *Romantic* traditions.

The two other main areas of research, focus and study on Dylan, besides the literary-critical analyses into Dylan's song lyrics, have been within "Popular Music Studies", plus various writings and studies on the "1960s" as a particular time period of social and cultural change and significance. Many of these music and historical perspectives

place Dylan as an innovator of change and style through his music and song lyrics, especially during his labelled ‘golden-age’ of influence and presence during the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s.

The bar chart below shows category groupings from a total of more than 250 academic book references on Dylan, highlighting seven major groupings of texts on Dylan. These are: *The Arts & Humanities*, *Literature*, *Music*, *Film-Radio-Television*, *History* and *Philosophy and Linguistics*. There were also a number of other categories with significantly less quantities of texts, such as *Theatre/Performing* and *Psychology*.

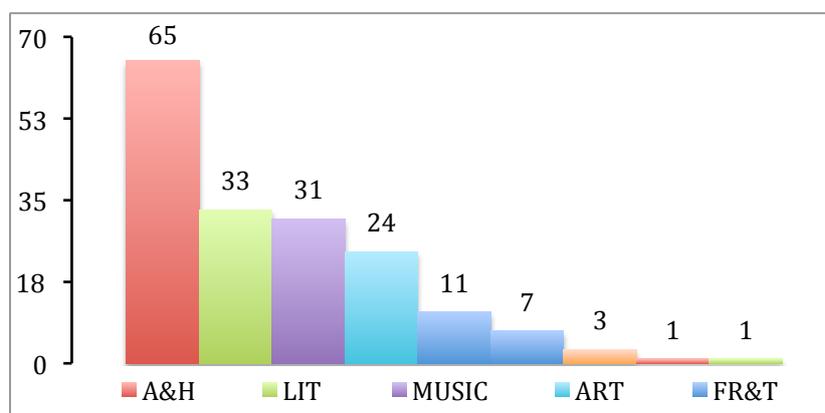


Fig. 1 Source: Web of Knowledge database, accessed September 2010

I used various procedures to filter and focus my research references and resources. One method was to look up the *citation indexes* to find out which (Dylan) authors were most frequently cited by other authors. These citation indexes provided a useful picture of current and past knowledge as well as the ‘most used’ criteria for written works on Dylan.

The identification of key authors and key works on the representations of Dylan was another useful step in the literature review process—to be able to map out the way that Dylan is and has been represented by media and academia, and to ultimately get a good grasp of the different ways that people have posed questions about, and approached the topic of ‘Dylan’, searching, for instance, which frameworks have previously been used and which methods researchers have employed to construct their work on Dylan or fans (e.g. Marshall 2007, Dalton, 2012, Cavicchi 1998).

The organising and categorising of these references, as well as deciding which ones applied to my particular research focus, was further developed by constructing 'reference maps' (i.e. 'concept' or 'mind-maps'). For me personally, I found putting the data into a visual format was a very useful and clarifying way to proceed through the phases of sifting, searching and organising the references and data, and all of these progressive steps and methods helped me more clearly visualise, as well as organise, the various parts of the 'relevance tree' as related to my particular research questions. I was also able to expand and experiment with various *mind-map* layouts to further test out different possible connections between, for instance, topics (e.g. fandom), categories (e.g. fans from different countries) and themes (e.g. online fans) relevant to my research. And, it was through these research filtering processes that I was eventually able to discard those areas/themes which had either already been covered by previous research, or those that I felt were not relevant, or of interest to my particular research focus areas.

By studying what had already been written about Dylan's musical, political, sociological and cultural significance via the various available registers (media, cultural studies, literary studies, musicology, etc.), I began to clearly see specific areas 'missing' from the dominant discourses. For example, as mentioned, it was clear that there had been no systematic, detailed study of Dylan fans, and none at all (at the time of writing) from the subjective perspective, addressing the *affectual* effects of Dylan's music on the fans themselves. Thus, my research began to reveal how Dylan fans *appropriate* Dylan and his music into their daily lives.

The literature reviews and the fan-narrative data literally became my 'guide' to visualise and then plot out my own personal 'thesis-road' ahead, showing me the necessary next steps ahead as I studied through the rich, research content of the Dylan fans' life-stories and narratives. By identifying my priorities and the specific focal ranges of my study, I was finally able to come to some precise decisions on my particular research pathway. Consequently, the fan texts and narratives have proved to be a very essential and dynamic resource, covering a wide variety of interesting subjects and topics, helping me to see what things are important and recurrent to the fans themselves. (See more on Dylan fans and demographics in the Appendices, pages 202, 203.)

## My Applied Fan Research Methods

In order to discover and engage with the lived-experiences of the Dylan fans who had responded to my research and to better understand and grasp their subjective meanings and everyday 'life-world' of being a Dylan fan, I applied a basic 'grounded theory' approach to my methodology by allowing the data (of the Dylan fan narratives along with further interviews and communications with Dylan fans) to 'emerge', without any preconceived plans or 'forcing of the data' (Glaser, 1992).

To contact, gain access to, and procure the cooperation of as many Dylan fans as possible for my research, I decided the most viable means available to me was to use the worldwide web and the online (Dylan) fan networks. The main Dylan official, and unofficial, fan websites around the world are very much dynamic hubs of fan activity and community communications, containing literally tens of thousands of Dylan fans and followers who have written extensively on those sites about Dylan and his music for many years, as well as contributing thousands of reviews, articles and personal stories (on a wide-range of topics) related to their 'idol', 'friend', 'lover' 'favourite singer/song-writer'—"Bob"! These online forums and websites are where fans enthusiastically write and share their feelings, reactions, emotions, life-experiences and more, illustrating how much they love and have been affected by Bob Dylan and his music. (See samples of online Dylan fan web pages in Appendices, page 206)

Wanting to personally communicate and connect with as many of these active and participatory Dylan fans about my research within a workable, efficient time-period for my PhD, I constructed a research website and called it, *My Bob Dylan Story* ([www.mybobdylanstory.com](http://www.mybobdylanstory.com)), which was launched in April, 2011. In order to open up a research portal directly to Dylan fans, my research website was also posted on a well-known (by Dylan fans) and popular Dylan fan website called "Expecting Rain" (ER)<sup>27</sup>. I placed a link to my personalised research email address, which enabled Dylan fans who were interested to participate in my research and to be able to communicate directly with me if they so wished. An ethical commitment of confidentiality was spelled out on the website at that time and upheld through further follow-up correspondence with the participant responders.

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<sup>27</sup> The website name is taken from a line in a Dylan song, called "Desolation Row".

I kept my research question(s)<sup>28</sup> quite open and simple, in everyday language, mainly in order to facilitate responses, plus to give the fans and myself an everyday-language, open-line of communication with each other. I also stated clearly in my web posts on the Dylan fan site that I, too, am a Dylan fan, as I wanted the fans to know this, plus I did not want to be thought of or labelled by the fans as an ‘outsider’, or some ‘distant’ academic, which I was not. (This was also related to my research methodology, which was intended to be a ‘near-experience’, ethnographic approach, as opposed to a ‘distant’ one.)

For the next two and a half years, I joined in and participated as a member and part of the Dylan online fan community on “Expecting Rain”, reading and posting on the online forums with the many other active, online Dylan fans from around the world. I also attended as many ‘live’ Dylan concerts, meetings and conferences as I could, talking directly and personally with Dylan fans as part of my research experience.

The number of responses I received from Dylan fans since the beginning of my research website in April 2011 was much more than I had expected! During the first two months of launching my website, I had more than 2,000 unique visitors on the site and this interest continued over the next three months when the number of visitors had increased to 4,000 and eventually peaking at 5,000. After nine months of web presence I had received more than 500 personally written responses from Dylan fans around the world, adding up to approximately 1200 pages of fan narratives (approx. 250,000 words), containing textually ‘rich’ feedback and personalised responses from Dylan fans, who communicated their personal life-stories and feedback in a variety of unique and different ways about “what Bob Dylan means” to them. They also shared the many diverse and personal ways they have been affected by Dylan’s music and live-performances, including how they incorporate this ‘lived-fan-experience’ into their daily lives.

Although the bulk of the fan responses have always been from the U.S. and the U.K., during the first six-month period of web presence, fan interest expanded my research website visitors to 65 countries around the world, from 54 different language areas. The legend below shows the dark green areas as the ‘most frequented country’

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<sup>28</sup> Research questions and sample response form in Appendices page 204, 205.

sources. This information and data also enabled me to make new posts and communications to the growing number of fan participants and ask different questions to them. For example, 'How do non-English-speaking fans relate to and understand Dylan's music?' (Dylan's music is, of course, originally written and performed in English).

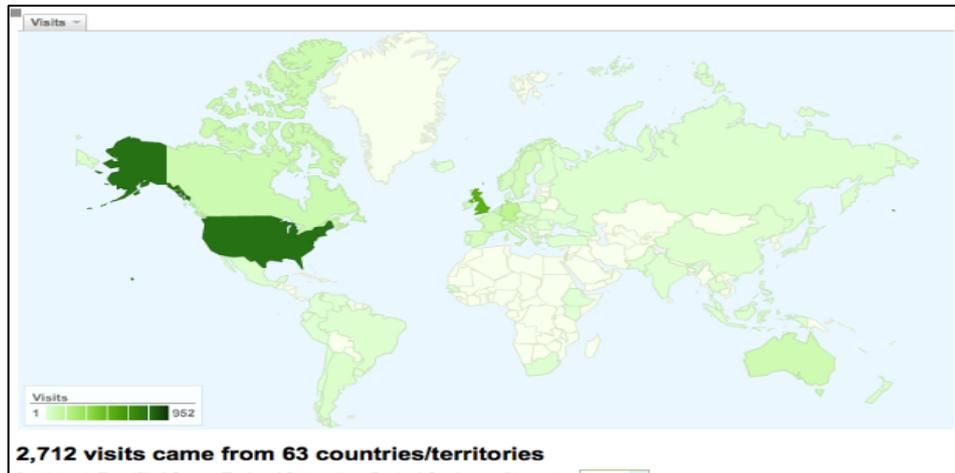


Fig. 2 World Map indicating countries from where most responses came to research questions



Fig. 3 World Map showing cities from where Dylan fans sent most responses to research questions

With the enthusiastic interest I was receiving via my research website, I decided to place an additional web link from the *My Bob Dylan Story* research website to "Facebook" (FB) in June 2011, as there is also a keen interest and high numbers of people on FB who are also affirmed Dylan fans. This new added web presence also brought a swift, sizeable and positive response, adding 150 new fan contacts to my

research database in a short (three months) period of time. In May 2011, I also added “Google Analytics”<sup>29</sup> to my website, which is a web ‘add-on’ programme that monitors, produces and retains a variety of categories and statistics of web traffic on websites and web pages. This has been very useful to me, indeed, and helped me keep track of and monitor the global traffic and visitors to my research website on a monthly basis throughout the full research period of just over two years.

The following graph (figure 4) shows a ‘screen shot’ of “Google analytics” on the total number of page views (14,025) on the *My Bob Dylan Story* research website, from May 2011 up to January 2012. These do not include the fan responses from the Facebook survey I undertook in 2012, nor the responses accrued directly from the Dylan fan-site (*Expecting Rain*), nor the personal correspondence between the fans and myself, (mostly via email). And, these figures and stats do not cover the hundreds of other archived Dylan-related pages on the different online blogs, websites and forums around the world written by Dylan fans, many of which I have personally read and collated as additions to my own original data, and as references to use in my research. My online data-collection efforts continued until the topics and fan responses had mostly ‘saturated’ (by the end of December 2012).

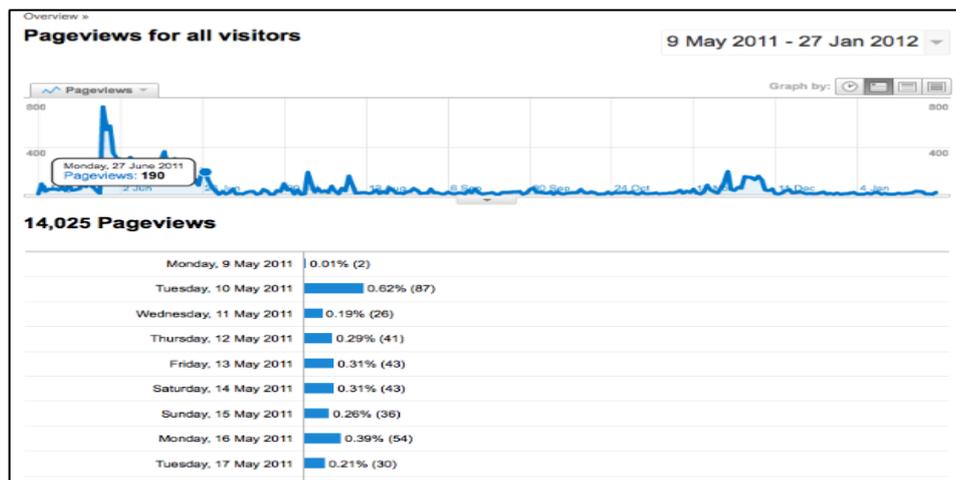


Fig. 4 Screen shot of number of page views to my research websites: [www.mybobdylanstory.com](http://www.mybobdylanstory.com) and <http://mybobdylanstory.weebly.com/>

<sup>29</sup> More samples of these analytical graphs and stats are displayed in the Appendices pages 202, 203 of the thesis.

In order to ascertain what is important to the fans, plus find out more about their personal fandom and why Dylan is so meaningful to them, I communicated more explicitly and personally via follow-up emails (and occasional phone calls) to those I found to be 'key-players' and/or regarded 'insiders' within the Dylan online fan community. I have communicated more frequently and regularly with these 'key persons' and asked further questions to delve deeper into their particular experiences as a Dylan fan. For instance, I asked these key contacts to help me ascertain what appeared to be the main issues and recurrent themes and practices of Dylan fans. The major reason and purpose to my requests to have more in-depth conversations with and about Dylan fans and my research aims, was so that I could truly hear directly from that individual person/fan (him or herself) about their ideas, feelings, emotions, reasons, stories and life-experiences as both a fan/admirer of Dylan and his music and how Dylan and his music have affected them as a 'regular', 'normal' person in the context of their everyday life (Thompson, 1998).

As a final research probe, follow up, and for further validation of my research questions and focus on the personal, emotional bonds and appropriations of Dylan fans, I posted a new mini-online survey<sup>30</sup> on "Facebook" (FB) from November to December 2012. In this short period of one month, I received 220 completed responses to this survey<sup>31</sup>, from active online Dylan fans, who were all extremely willing and interested in sharing their passion and energy for "all things Bob"! Some of these respondees turned out to be from previous research participants (approximately 45%) from my beginning research undertaking on the research website I started in April 2011, others being new people who had just seen my Facebook survey online during the November to December, 2012 period.

After this final (Facebook) data collection venture, I felt confident that I had not only collected sufficient data for my thesis, but that I had also had sufficient available, ample confirmation and validated material of the major and recurrent fan interests, issues, practices and appropriations to support my research questions on the emotional influences and the subsequent fan identifications and connections made in the 'lived-fan-experience', and that had strongly emerged from the Dylan fan narratives I had received and analysed during the collection process of my research data.

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<sup>30</sup> See Appendices, pages 226 to 232 for sample fan feedback from this online survey.

<sup>31</sup> See the *Facebook Online Dylan Fan Survey* in this chapter, page 88.

## Reading, Organising and Analysing the Dylan Fan Narratives

As I have previously stated, the Dylan fan narratives are my main and primary sources of research data. I used various methods and procedures to organise, filter and focus these research references and resources. Firstly, I entered the total number of fan narratives (more than 200,000 words) into the *NVIVO* computer software programme, which entailed basic coding, organising and arranging the texts by themes and topics such as, life-stories, music analyses, fan activities, and different fan categories, such as English and non-English speaking fans, and the divergent ages of fans. Having a large amount of data on hand, this amounted in total to fifteen different categories of texts and narratives.

The next collations came via a thematic arrangement of the narratives into major and minor themes within the categories. For instance, the five major recurring and prevalent themes and groupings that emerged from the fan narratives were; musical framing and emotion, identification and association, transcendent and para-social fan experiences, online fandom and community, everyday fan practises and appropriations. I placed the fan narratives into these five major groupings, which helped me to filter the amount of narratives I was working with to a more reasonable amount of approximately 300 separate fan narratives/scripts. From these fan scripts, I then chose 200 that were basically the more lengthy narratives (from 1 full page to 20+ pages), many being biographical in nature, along with the lengthier fan stories that explicitly referred to Dylan and his music and art form as a major influence and frame of reference in their own personal lives..

At this stage of organising and collating, I conducted a basic linguistic corpus analysis (using *AntConc* software) on the fan narratives to determine 'keywords-in-context' (KWIC), such as word counts, frequencies and concordance, as a way to determine and highlight the words and phrases that were being commonly used in the fan texts (corpus). I then ran a similar procedure to compare and distinguish the words in this main (fan) reference corpus to the smaller 'Facebook Online Survey' (see page 87) corpus I had available, again, to take note of key words and terminologies.

I found these procedures useful to my analysis at this stage as they allowed me to identify and affirm similar and characteristic words in the corpora as well as those most

relevant to my particular research focus and topics. For example, as mentioned previously, it was evident that the emotional connection and bonding by the fans to Dylan and his music was a significant process that took place in the lived-fan-experience, and the KWIC frequency words such as 'emotion', 'feelings', 'transformed', 'believe', 'love' were all highly clustered.

I did not begin with any *a priori* knowledge of any specific literature on fandom. The research foci, topics, issues, themes and insights all emerged predominantly from the introspective and reflexive fan data narratives sent to me by Dylan fans in response to my initial online research questions. My analysis of the fan narratives subsequently evolved and progressed through several stages. After reading and re-reading, many times, each and every sentence and phrase of the individual fan narrative, I organised and further collated the narratives according to specific headings, highlighting key phrases and events such as emotion, identification, belonging, community, and so on. More depth and detail occurred in the final stages of this processing, which I carried out through 'close readings' of the fan narratives, particularly when studying the more lengthy life-story narratives and biographical stories related to Dylan and his music as they, in particular, contained many descriptive details and examples of the lived-fan-experiences that also reciprocated with many of my main research emphases of fan *emotion, music affect, identification, values and belief*.

From my first round of data collation and examination, and throughout the ensuing and subsequent investigations of the research such as, the close readings of the fan narratives, note-takings and consultations with Dylan fans and academic colleagues, the main and recurrent themes and topics contained within the fan narratives became noticeable and prevalent and, finally, after concluding readings through the now thematically formed dataset, the recurring and prevalent themed topics appeared and unfolded from the Dylan fan texts. I ultimately used three major categorised themes from my Dylan fan-texts database, along with a further three minor categories such as, 'Dylan's newer, younger audiences', 'English and non-English speaking Dylan fans' and 'Dylan concert-attending fans'.

Below are the three major themes/topics from my Dylan fan narrative data. (These themes and topics are further expanded and exemplified in Chapter 4 on "Dylan Fans and Followers", page 95 of the thesis).

### Dylan Fan Data Themes:

*#1. The Music:* The clear, number one and major ‘common-denominator’ in Dylan fan culture from all active and participatory fans who have responded to my research, whatever fan ‘type’ or ‘label’ they may be categorised under, state unequivocally that they have all become a Dylan fan, follower, admirer and/or interested in Dylan as a result of listening to, or viewing him and/or his performance of his music via video, and/or attending a live-concert show.

The individual fan reactions, moods, emotions, activities, practices, as well as any psychological, cyber and/or para-social identities and associations the individual fan made, were all lucid, in some precise way, and clearly derived and connected to the listening and corporeal sensations Dylan fans experienced and ‘felt’ through listening to Dylan’s music, *especially* through the conduit and interpretations of his song lyrics and his live-concert performances. Dylan fans were/are all very much affected by, in a multiplicity of idiosyncratic ways, the music and song lyrics of their talisman, Bob Dylan, and, again, in many diverse and individual ways, they expressed themselves, and related to the world around them through their connection and interpretations of the music/art of Dylan.

*#2. Fan Appropriations & Practices:* Most of the discussions and topics on the Dylan internet fan sites are fundamentally about ‘all things Bob’—plain and simple—these include, Dylan’s music, mannerisms, live-performances, tour schedules, photographs and videos, and more; discussion points and online ‘banter’ pertaining to Dylan’s music, performing and art are also popular topics prevailing on most Dylan fan forums and chat rooms available for the fans and members of the site. Some examples of Dylan fan practices online from the most popular and frequented Dylan fan site, *Expecting Rain*, are:<sup>32</sup>

- ‘*Track Talk*’ - where fans discuss the performed Dylan Songs, Set-Lists and Live-Concert Tour venues
- *The unofficial and available Dylan Bootlegs* - recorded by fans at the live concerts.
- *Visions of Bob* - photos of Dylan, again, taken by the fans themselves.

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<sup>32</sup> Taken from examples on Dylan fan forums at [www.expectingrain.com/forums](http://www.expectingrain.com/forums) (2010-2012)

- *Which Dylan Song Are You Listening To Right Now?* - fans share the Dylan song they are listening to at that moment.
- *Making Conversation* - using only Dylan song lyrics to converse/chat with other Dylan fans.

*#3. Identity and community:* Individual fan identities with many (but, of course, not all) Dylan fans are, again, very much and often directly related and connected to the individual fan's favourite images, representations and the personal emotions and feelings gathered from, and often related to, particular songs, concerts, photographs and videos of Dylan. Identifications and resonances with Dylan and his music are also fostered and linked with the Dylan fans' own particular and personal-life circumstances, experiences and interactions that fans have experienced for themselves. As one fan from Greece conveys:

*Being a Dylan-fan means I'm instantly part of a community-- this becomes especially obvious at all of the concerts I've been at. But also I'm amazed at the diversity of people I've met or heard or read who are Dylan-heads like me. Being a Dylan-fan has cemented a number of my friendships for the long term!*

*Love, Daphne*

Based on my research questions and dialogues with Dylan fans via my research website and on the Dylan fan site, *Expecting Rain*, the following topics are also highlighted as of interest to my research on Dylan fans as well as to the fans themselves<sup>33</sup>:

- Dylan's younger fans – highlights inter-generational fandom and fan identification.
- Non English-speaking fans – well represented in the Dylan fan database, showing significance of the emotional and aesthetic in Dylan's music.
- Dylan's artistic and cultural status and legacy – debated by many fans and followers.
- Dylan's personal life and biography – always of interest to the fans themselves.

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<sup>33</sup> These Dylan fan themes, topics and narratives are described and presented in more detail in the ensuing thesis Chapter 4 on *Dylan Fans - 'Inside the Gates of Eden'* (pages 94 to 122).

## The Facebook Online Dylan Fan Survey - November/December 2012

As an added layer of research and for further interest and validation of my research work with Dylan fans, I posted an online survey on “Facebook” in November 2012, for a one-month period. Some of the responses I received turned out to be from previous research participants of my original research questions put forward in April 2011, but many more responses were from new Dylan fans, people who had not responded before to my original research questions placed on the Dylan Fan Website, *Expecting Rain* in 2011.

The total number of responses received was from 218 people, composed of 76% males and 24% females. The ages of the responders ranged from 17yrs to 70yrs. In the (Facebook survey) dataset, age-wise, almost one half of the total responders were over 50 years of age, with 50% of these being over 60 years old. I had originally just wanted to receive a secondary response to my online Dylan fan questionnaire and so, had only asked for very basic information from the fans, such as, some ID name, age, country of residence, how long have they been a Dylan fan and an email contact address. The questions (a) and (b) were open-ended questions and I received much more qualitative data in the form of narratives from these questions, of course<sup>34</sup>.

To the question: “How long have you been a Dylan fan?” (182 responses), 85% of the fans who responded had been a Dylan fan for more than 25 years, with 81 fans out of a total of 182 being a Dylan fan for more than 40 years! So, certainly many responses to this question were from the somewhat older-generation of Dylan fans. 10% of the survey participants were fans for less than 10 years but most responders were long-term Dylan fans.

Countries of origin/residence covered were from 22 different countries in the by the Facebook survey – quite a widespread, varied sample. The majority of the fans were from the U.K. or U.S. but the European countries (Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Scandinavia, Netherlands, Switzerland and Austria) were also well represented. With Dylan’s Global Tour schedule, there are, of course, fans in just

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<sup>34</sup> See sample written responses and graphs from the Facebook Survey in Appendices, page 246

about every country of the world and my Facebook online survey drew responses from Mexico, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Israel and Bangladesh.

The main survey questions posed to Dylan fans were:

- a) *What Bob means to you...*
- b) *“Are Dylan fans different than others, and in what ways?”*
- c) *“Has Dylan's music had any influence on the fundamental, life-values that you believe in?”*
- d) *“How many years have you been a Bob Dylan fan?”*
- e) *“How old are you?”*
- f) *“What fan 'category' or 'level' would you put yourself in?”*
- g) *“Why do you listen to Dylan’s music?” (Choose 3 responses)*

The majority of the Dylan fans [101 fans, 52.3%] who participated in the online Survey classified themselves as, “active, long-term fans” (*e.g. own numerous albums, memorabilia, regular concert-goer, active in online fan networks*). Seventy-one [36.8%] of the Dylan fans in the Facebook survey unequivocally stated they are “100% ‘hard-core’, ‘die-hard’ fans, aka “Dylanites”, “Bobcats” (*i.e. they like everything about Dylan & his music!*). Almost 10% of respondees [18 fans] just called themselves, “appreciative fans/followers” – stating they really like Dylan, but they also have other musical tastes and genres they follow. Two people/fans said they were fans of Dylan at specific periods in his career (*eg: '60s electric, or folk period, or Christian era*). There was just one person/fan who responded as an “Interested, casual fan”, (*likes only some of Dylan's songs*).

In order to probe into my thesis research on the emotional and affectual resonances and influences experienced by Dylan fans, I asked the question; “Has Dylan's music had any influence on the fundamental, life-values that you believe in?” 70% of the database of responding fans answered, “Yes” to this question, which pleased me as it showed again, along with the life-story narratives of the fans, that the emotions, inspiration and passion experienced by Dylan fans to Dylan’s music and lyrics are all very strong reasons and influences as to why they listen to, and are also affected in a corporeal way by Dylan and his music.

The following are a few sample responses to the open-ended question: “What is different/special/great about being a Dylan-fan? Are Dylan fans any different/special than other music fans?--In what way(s)?”

- *I believe that being a Dylan fan is something really special, it can be frustrating a solitary but now I am fortunate to have many 'Dylan Friends' on line, who feel the same way about this man and his work. I often say, you either Get Dylan or you don't and if you do your life will be richer for it.*
- *I love the camaraderie with other Dylan fans who I hardly know. Dylan fans will always have more fun than other fans trying to remember all the lyrics and debating what they mean, but apart from that I don't suppose we're any different and certainly not more special.*
- *There are all kinds of Dylan fans. I've met the silliest groupie and the most distinguished intellectual. You cannot categorize Dylan fans, just like you cannot categorize Dylan.*
- *I don't know if Dylan fans are different from other fans, but I suspect that we are all very much bitten with Bob's unique and particular bug! We feel and hear the songs in similar ways, I think. When you are with a fellow Dylan fan, communication flows. We understand each other.*
- *I generally find Dylan fans to be more discerning and knowledgeable about the traditions of music and the history. They tend to have varied tastes and interests beyond one genre of music, and value the qualities of spontaneity and transformation. There is an interest to explore the influences that affected Dylan and that opens up a whole range of experiences - musical, literary and artistic. Because of the content and character of Dylan's music and creativity, people drawn to his music seem to be more interested in 'deeper' ideas and active participation in the listening process - they are drawn to music with longevity rather than shallow, transient 'passive' pop/rock music. I like the feeling of community with some of the Dylan fans - it is a little like a family with all the associated ups and downs! Sadly, there are some fans who are delusional, ignorant and aggressive - but we meet them in every walk of life, no matter who the artist in question is.*

Below are two sample graphics from the Facebook (2012) survey feedback. (More graphics and examples from my Facebook Survey can be found in the Appendices, page 200.)

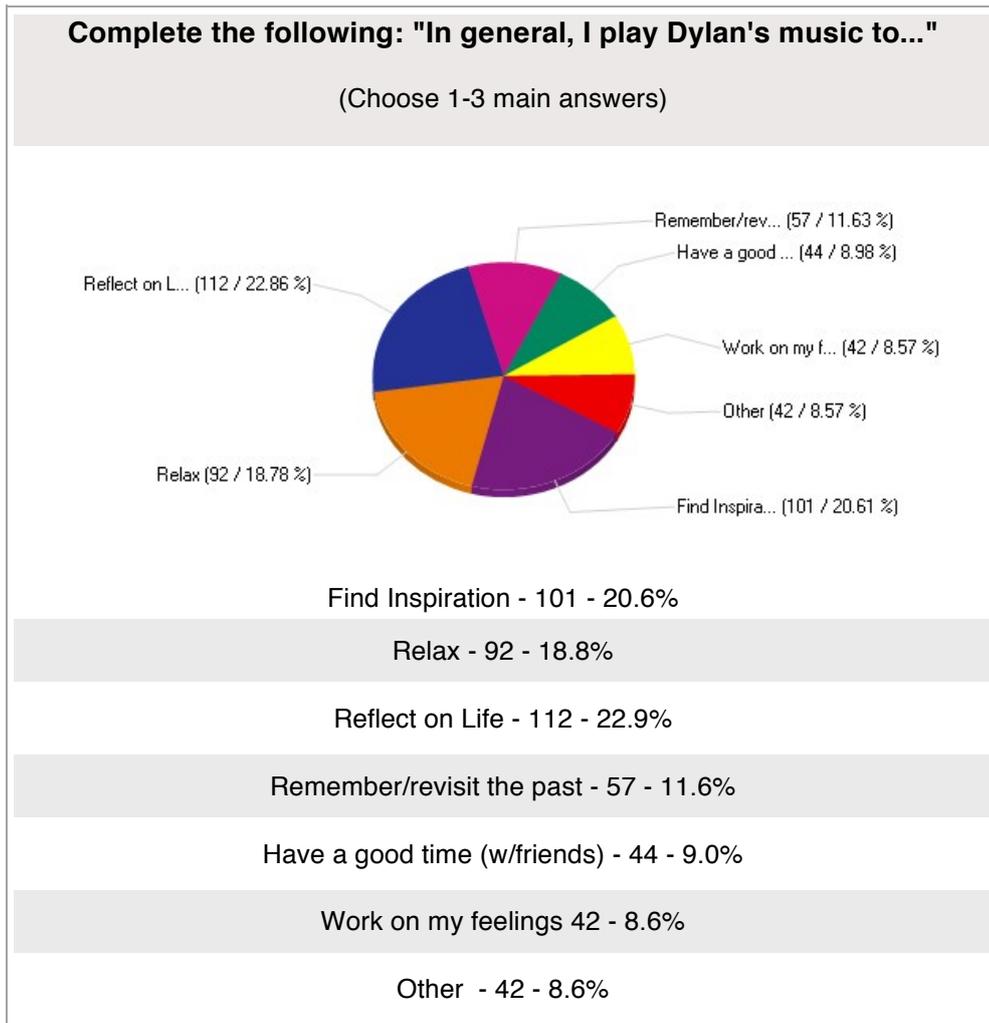


Fig. 5

**“What fan 'category' or 'level' would you put yourself in?” (193 responses)**

Answer option	Total	Percentage
100% Hard-core, die-hard-'Dylanite' (likes everything @ Bob & his music)	71	36.8%
Active, long-term fan (owns numerous albums, concert-goer, memorabilia, etc)	101	52.3%
Specific fan of period(s) of Bob's career (eg: '60s electric or folk period)	2	1.0%
Appreciative fan/follower (Dylan recognition but also have other musical tastes)	18	9.3%
Interested, casual fan (likes some of Dylan's songs)	1	0.5%

Fig. 6

The Facebook Survey (quantitative) data of numbers and figures do not, of course, accurately illustrate, probe or describe the 'lived-Dylan-fan-experience' and the

powerful corporeal, emotional and subjective influence of Dylan's music upon the Dylan fan/listener/audience. Statistically, the information provided by responding fans was somewhat incongruous as not all survey sections were answered in full (e.g. not everyone entered in their ages or gender, so there were some educated 'guesstimates' in these categories). And, for instance, there were 1,289 people who started my online Facebook Survey, but only 218 finished it, with 198 people completing all the questions in full.

Nevertheless, I felt the Facebook survey I conducted did shed some added light to the topic of "what does Dylan mean to his fans and followers", plus it gave some further demographic dimensions to the topic of Dylan fans and followers, with new feedback from new fans. The open-ended answers to the research questions I posed were a useful and auxiliary blend and balance to the more quantitative data methods utilised in this online survey. Hearing from the Dylan fans via Facebook, which I understand were from the more participatory, active and vocal ones, has been very interesting and certainly helpful to my research, which has been honed to retrieve and engage with the individual and subjective, lived-fan-experience of Dylan fans. (I would be most interested in doing more online research through the Facebook conduit, as it seems to be an interesting research field.)

There are, of course, many, many thousands of fans, who are Dylan fans, but do *not* participate in online surveys, nor are they 'active' on the online Dylan networks and forums, etc. There are also many Dylan fans who have never seen Dylan 'live' on stage or collected Dylan memorabilia. I met one man at a Dylan concert in London in 2011 who was going to his first ever 'live' Dylan concert, yet he had been an avid Dylan fan for over 40 years. I was aware of these issues (of the non-participatory Dylan fans) when beginning the research, and this started me thinking about what it could be that would be an almost 'common-denominator' for many, if not all, Dylan fans. I discovered it was the emotional and corporeal affect of Dylan's music on the fans, plus the identification bonds that forged with those fans who 'aesthetically' connected with Dylan and his music/art in a deep way, that seemed to be a very common experience that held true with almost all of the Dylan fans I encountered in my research.

## Chapter Summations

In this chapter I have presented and described the overall gathering and collation of data and the subsequent close readings of the Dylan fan narratives. I have employed these research methods to engage with my subject matter (i.e. Dylan fans and their fandom), and to not only allow the fan narratives to speak and have a voice and presence, but to also be recognised and acknowledged as a valid and essentially 'true-to-life', lived-experience, which contributes to further our understanding of music fans and their fandom.

As my subject matter and 'data' include a very broad array and eclectic sample of Bob Dylan fans and followers, I have employed a 'mixed-methods' approach to my study, drawing from strands of sociology, social psychology, phenomenology, existentialism and narrative approaches. These perspectives have been exclusively employed to methodologically enlighten the experience of Dylan fans and followers. They have allowed me to elucidate the very personal micro-interfaces, connections, relationships and identifications made by the Dylan fan in relation to Dylan's music, particularly his song writings and lyrics.

The Dylan fans themselves are at the heart of my research. Their voices and are included throughout the thesis as it is the fans and their own narrated fan-experiences that provide the 'live-data' for my research. I found the Dylan fan narratives *the* most helpful, relevant and appropriate research resource of all those used in this research, for they most clearly and directly exemplified examples of the everyday life-experience of being a Dylan fan, as well as underscoring the oft-neglected significance of the individual fan, and the intimate and emotional perspective and experience. Issues of *affect*, identification and internal meaning-making thus emerged as key areas through which to explore cultural constructions and behaviours such as, identity, belief, attraction and belonging — all of which are, in varying degrees and ways, core, essential elements of the fan experience. I am, therefore, highlighting these fan texts to be a vital and essential part of my methods and account of the everyday lived-experiences of Dylan fans and followers.

Constructed through their own texts and life-stories, the fans' narratives underscore the *affective intensity* and sense of identity and empowerment that lies at the heart of

what it means to be a ‘fan’, or as defined in this thesis, any person with a strong interest in anything or anyone — *aka*, enthusiast, devotee, aficionado, devotee, supporter, buff, and so on (see Grossberg, 1992:65).

My methods also include a reflective style of writing which I believe most aptly describes and elucidates the lived-Dylan-fan-experience within the Dylan fan narratives. The intent of my writing is to illustrate and “produce textual portrayals that resonate the kinds of meanings” (van Manen, 2005) that shed light on Dylan fans, Dylan narratives and Dylan fandom.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DYLAN FANS and their FANDOM – ‘INSIDE THE GATES OF EDEN’

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## Introduction

The previous chapter sections have presented how Bob Dylan has had not only had a far-reaching and enduring influence through his music and art on the music and cultural landscape of the world since the 1960s, but how he has also had a very significant and personal impact on millions of his fans and followers around the globe. Chapter Four now focuses on the main thesis title of, “Dylan Fans and Followers” and exemplifies, in more breadth and depth, the ‘lived-Dylan-fan-experience’, highlighting the relevance of the emotional and affective relationship(s) forged and maintained by Dylan fans through their practised fandom. This chapter on Dylan fans and Dylan fan culture exhibits more explicit examples of these lived-fan-experiences as well as the numerous and diverse appropriations of fandom that Dylan fans incorporate into their everyday-life context.

For more than 50 years, Bob Dylan and his music have elicited much interest from a wide array of writers, critics, academics, journalists and, of course, his enthusiastic and devoted fans and followers — all singularly drawn to the object of their admiration and interest, their favourite ‘hero’, “Bob” — primarily because of the music he has made, along with the uniquely personal, poetic and thought-provoking lyrics he has written, but also, fans and followers of Dylan are oft-enamoured and intrigued by the image and personally perceived representations and attached meanings, messages and symbolisms in Dylan’s music, *oeuvre* and life. Ever since his career beginnings in New York 1961, Dylan has had the company of his faithful fans following him on his musical journey, which, for the many thousands of ardent fans, is as an on-going relationship that is, *together through life* (the title of one of Dylan’s albums).

As hitherto detailed in Chapter Two, my overall research approach, methods and writing have been, first and foremost, to uncover and discover the lived, subjective meanings, affects, values and appropriations of Dylan by his fans and followers. Through joining the online Dylan fan community, myself, I began engaging with and hearing directly from numerous Dylan fans about their lived-fan-experiences and the ways in which they have personally been affected by “Bob's” music, lyrics and perceived *persona*. I thoroughly enjoyed and learned a lot from what the fans shared with me and I was able to greatly appreciate and benefit as a researcher from such ‘insider’ access and insight into the Dylan fan community — I also enjoyed the online

“banter”, the jokes as well as the camaraderie with other Dylan fans. I valued the experience of the everyday, online-Dylan-fan-life and read through many, many the fan-life stories and narratives on the fan forum postings of when and whereby Dylan’s music and representation have meant something very personal and very special to the Dylan fan.

I soon recognised that the Dylan fans I contacted, and those who contacted me for my research, do hold a special, empowered, even ‘hallowed’ place in their hearts and minds for Dylan’s music, lyrics and artistic creativeness. Reading (many times) through the plethora of fan stories and accounts sent to me via my research website over a two and a half-year period, I could not help but see and ‘feel’ the emotion, passion and focused intensity so many fans have, in their own very personal and meaningful way, with Dylan and his music. Yet, as I have stated, very few academic studies have actually explored the fans’ *emotional* attachments to their ‘idols’ and ‘admired ones’ — even though it is arguably the most important aspect of any fan’s experience towards their ‘passion/interest/favourite one’ and, therefore, is an important and specific area to study.<sup>35</sup>

Many of the Dylan fans I talked to and communicated with during my research had conveyed to me that they had felt that much, if not all, of the academic and theoretical discourses about fans and fandom that they had read were not accurate, relevant or connected to the ‘on-the-ground’, ‘real-life’, everyday, lived-fan-experience.<sup>36</sup> “Most academic elaboration is not true to the actual personal, lived, fan experience”, elaborated Dylan fan, Genevieve, from Switzerland. In talking to me, these fans generally described the academic, intellectual approach as being from ‘a distant, outsider, looking-in’ perspective, rather than from someone who is either a Dylan fan, or, at least someone the fans feel really does understand the significance and resonance of Dylan and his music; according to many of the Dylan fans I engaged with, this would be a person who would probably be a Dylan fan him/herself, and have some insight and experience into how Dylan fans actually feel and practise his or her fandom.

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<sup>35</sup> For an interesting dissertation on these areas see Wohlfeil, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Fan narrative examples on these topics are included from previously published discussions on the Official Bob Dylan Website ([www.bobdylan.com](http://www.bobdylan.com)), and in the ‘Lived-Dylan-Fan-Experience’ section, page 109.

In response to this direct and heartfelt fan feedback, I felt it imperative that I privileged and presented the actual Dylan fan narratives as my primary research 'data'. As I have stated, I am attempting to ethnographically illustrate and describe the appropriations and practises through which the Dylan fan stories, identifications and meanings are composed, and how they conduct their fan-lives and actions as part of their everyday 'social activities in a social world' (Geertz, 1993). I have, therefore, purposely underscored and highlighted the fan's own personal 'life-story' experiences as much as possible throughout the thesis, in order to shed insight on the different ways Dylan fans express, interpret, appropriate and reflect Dylan's music, lyrics and *persona*. I found the fan narratives themselves and the examples shared within of the actual lived, Dylan-fan-experience, presented the most clear, by far, illustrations and descriptions of the appropriated meanings, intimacies, beliefs and connections made by the individual Dylan fan towards the originator and focal point of his/her interest, admiration, attraction and identification — Bob Dylan and his music!

### **Dylan 'Fans and Followers'**

I want to preface here that the word/tag, "fan" itself was quite problematic to many of the Dylan fans I encountered, as the majority of the individuals who participated in and contributed to my research 'self-identified' themselves and professed not to like, or want to be identified with the label of 'fan' to describe themselves. The following narrative from a Dylan fan in Denmark describes this point candidly:

*Before you get to "My Bob Dylan Story" I would like to discuss, briefly, what the word "fan" means to me. I'm NOT suggesting that you use another word, far from it; I'm only trying to clarify to myself why I feel strangely uneasy about the word, and also trying to find out what would be the word I would rather use to describe myself. Well, not my entire self (!) but my huge interest in Bob Dylan.*

*As you will discover from my story, that huge interest was not always there. Dylan was always there, in the air, in the environment, and somewhat important in my younger years, but it took an almost life-transforming experience to become what you would describe as a 'fan'. It was [actually] an 'experience' that was to lead me into an exploration of the whole of Dylan's oeuvre, an enterprise that is still a work in progress and has led me to come under Bob Dylan's 'dancing spell' and keep chasing the shadow he sees. (Charlene)*

As exemplified by the fan narrative above, although these fans and followers do embrace and identify themselves at different times as an individual follower/admirer/aficionado of Dylan and his music, most Dylan fans that I talked to and communicated with in my research did not want to be known by just the commonly used label of a “fan”. For instance, many expounded to me that, to them, the word “fan” related more to the more commercially attracted section of music followers, and they deemed the word “fan” to signify the more shallow, somewhat ‘fickle types’ in their connection and ‘relationship’ with Dylan. By far, the majority of Dylan fans who responded to my research questions considered Dylan and his musical *oeuvre* as a much more serious and significant contribution and legacy to the world of music and culture; and their identification and empathy towards Dylan and his music is, to them, deemed more as a ‘relationship’, ‘connection’, ‘affinity’, ‘a life-long interest/dedication’, and often ‘a unique experience’, which amalgamated through Dylan’s musical and artistic *oeuvre* and performances.

Dylan has been characterised as a ‘colossal’ cultural icon of his time<sup>37</sup>, and he has been a topic of conversation, not only for his fans and followers but also for his critics, the majority of whom have voiced their opinion and criticism within and via various media channels (TV, radio, Internet, magazines). Dylan’s personal and career history have also been somewhat littered with ‘controversy’ and debate in different areas at different times (see *Interviews* section in Appendices, page 217, for more examples). Many such articles have been referenced in the chapter sections of this thesis. Dylan’s image and representation, and especially any events that are publicised through the media on or about Dylan, are as ‘fuel’ for lively discussions and commentary by Dylan fans, followers and critics alike, and these discussions and commentary are especially lucid and plentiful on the more well-known online Dylan websites and fan forums such as, *Expecting Rain* (see [www.expectingrain.com/forums](http://www.expectingrain.com/forums)).

An example of media rhetoric and fan interest surrounding Dylan was when Dylan and his Band played their very first ever live-concert appearance in The People’s Republic of China in April 2011. This tour and visit to China evoked keen interest and feedback from many of his fans and followers, and from western media sources. There was one particular article from a journalist in the *New York Times* (NYT), which caught the

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendices news article on Dylan, page 217.



[REDACTED]

This chapter's ethnography epitomises Dylan fans and followers and their narratives, many of whom, in my research, have come from Dylan's global *online* community. My main dataset consists of approximately five hundred Dylan fans and followers<sup>39</sup> who have personally and voluntarily contributed to my research undertaking and have articulated their feelings about their fandom through their narratives and life-stories and sent to me for my research. The following fan extract was, in its original format, one of the longest, articulated fan responses (30 pages in total) I received for my research fieldwork, from a Dylan fan in South Africa:

*...I'm seven years younger than Bob Dylan...I had heard Dylan when I was young but life took me along another pathway. In 2005, my son-in-law bought the DVD, "No Direction Home", Martin Scorsese's biopic on Bob Dylan, for my husband's birthday.*

*I drew the curtains in the bedroom, found my newly acquired Bose headset, lay down on the bed with my laptop, inserted the disc into the drive – and was gone from the world! At one point the phone rang. I didn't answer – it hadn't rung in the world I was in, had it? My world was inhabited by Woody Guthrie, The Clancy brothers, Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul and Mary – all protagonists from a very early youth – and a bunch of other people I didn't yet know. And it was, for 208 minutes, inhabited by a young Bob Dylan I had never known: neither the young small town guy who made it to New York nor the Carnaby Street hipster who made it to the world. I also had no idea about the older Dylan who was now telling his story. Who was the Dylan then that I had known? A voice, an idea? I knew that he went from Zimmerman to Dylan, and I knew that he wrote "protest" songs and love songs like no one else, but I didn't know what had made a 22 year old from Hibbing write "Lay Down Your Weary Tune".*

*The song accompanied the credits, as I was getting ready to return to the outside world. But all of a sudden that had to wait. What was I hearing? A song I had never heard before, sure, but what was it? My eyes were again glued to the screen as strange, solemn emotions ran through my body. What was this? I'm sure I didn't catch all the words by that first listen yet the song had a very*

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<sup>39</sup> See Google analytics, page 202 in Appendix.

*strong emotional effect that stayed with me for days. Later when I read the lyrics and listened to the song again I was amazed by the similarity to an old Danish hymn by H.A. Brorson from 1734. Not a similarity in tune or lyrics but in concept: the idea of the presence of God in every grain of sand. With every listen tears ran down my cheeks. The same happened every time I dared mention the experience or the song to someone I trusted: my throat started contracting and tears filled my eyes. Even now, years later, writing these lines, my eyes well up.*

*If the movie had made me curious, “Lay Down Your Weary Tune” made it compelling to find out more about this whole new other side of Bob Dylan. The awesome simple beauty of the lyrics, and the young poet’s urge to express these kinds of sentiments, puzzled me. I was mystified as to what would drive a young person to write a song like that. And not just any young person, but one whose persona up until then, for me at least, had been the voice of a generation who cared more about social conditions than he cared about the existence of God.*

*--Who was Bob Dylan, really?*

*I started going deeper into the lyrics instead, an exercise that has proved rewarding.*

*Five years down the line after that literally life transforming experience of “No Direction Home”, I eventually I began to understand that what had so impressed me when I first heard “Lay Down Your Weary Tune” and later “Every Grain Of Sand” was that Bob Dylan had, in the blunt words of Bob Johnston, one of Dylan’s early producers, not been tapped on the shoulder by God - he had been kicked in the ass. A “fact” that explained why Dylan, at the age of 22, had been able to reach across the generations to what the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegård described as the third stage of human life: the religious stage. I now, at this third stage in life, understood as a deep sense of spirituality that had permeated Dylan’s oeuvre since the start of his career. The new encounter with Dylan’s music, thirty years later on, had, in Gilmour’s<sup>40</sup> words, moved me out of myself.*

*--Bob Dylan will keep me occupied for the rest of my life! – Corrina*

This decidedly personal and ‘life-affecting’ lived-fan-experience, as Corrina has described in the excerpt above, displays some of the deep, emotional, personal feelings and connections that many of Bob’s fans have with his music and art. This identification and the emotionally-charged, lived-fan-experience and ‘connections’

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<sup>40</sup> See Gilmour (2011) in Bibliography.

made with Dylan and his music are of core interest to my research on Dylan fans, as I focus and highlight these everyday, lived-fan-experiences and fan narratives to illustrate and describe how the fans themselves have been affected by Dylan's music and lyrics, (particularly the 'live' Dylan concert performances), and how they appropriate and relate 'Dylan' and his music into their everyday lives.

These lived-fan-experiences often have further significance, again, in a very personalised way, to the fans' own particular life-narrative and events. A poignant example of both the effect and affect of Dylan and his music is shared through the following excerpt from a much lengthier biographical narrative sent to me by a couple who had met each other on the way to a Dylan concert on the Isle of Wight, England in 1969:

*...51 years later we are still together, now living in Brighton (UK) ... apart from hospital for births of children, a road accident to myself, and cancer op and spinal surgery for her we are alive and well, 'together through life' because of Bob Dylan and The Band. We have also both been helped by his songs in getting over the death of one son, and all sorts of other ways in which his songs have helped to keep us on the road of life.*

*It is very hard to say which song moved you which way, all i can say is in many ways he (Dylan) uncannily come out with songs that have filled the moments and said things we had been discussing, as if we all lived our lives alongside him at times. It's difficult to express but i hope you understand the things we have been through and how close and important these songs have been for us.*

*- Ray & Connie (UK)*

The majority of Dylan fans and followers who responded to my research project can certainly be considered 'active participants and enthusiasts' in their particular fan milieu/setting. In many ways, they are also an exceptionally 'skilled audience' and extremely knowledgeable about Dylan and his musical oeuvre and, although often a minority, these ardent fans are, nevertheless, "an energetic and serious group of followers to and of their "cause" (see Finnegan, 2007). The following narrative excerpt is from a mature musicologist from the USA who 'found' Dylan just one year ago and, upon request, submitted her 'Dylan story' to me for my research. She writes:

*... In less than three months, I owned Dylan's entire recorded collection on CD, including the mono recordings which recently had been released. In the seven months since, I've acquired virtually the entire catalog on vinyl. I've read books,*

*joined an online forum, made a few online “Dylan friends” and one local friend, a former student, who is a fan. Virtually no one, aside from other “Dylanites”, understands my interest. I’m not wholly certain I can fully explain it either. Music has always been such an important part of my life. However, I felt as though the selection of music I owned, and I have numerous recordings, hadn’t really expanded significantly in years. I needed something new. I was looking for something I’d not heard before that touched me, spoke to me. It seemed that so much of what was “popular” did not appeal to me and hadn’t in a long while. Then, I found Dylan and I realized I’d found that for which I’d been searching...*

*- Tina (Canada)*

For Dylan fans, then, there is a palpable, deep and personal, emotional power invested in Dylan’s music, art and *persona* which is translated and adopted by many of his fans into their own ways of thinking, living and making sense of, place, identity, values, and subjective life-experience. For them, each musical experience is a full, rich and creative one, experienced as *the* most important thing that is ‘happening’ to them in that time and space. It is a reflective, *existential* segment of that particular person’s life-experience and, as such, plays a significant and meaningful role in their individual way of living (see Finnegan 2007). Paul, (57 years of age) from the UK expresses the Dylan fan-life-experience in his ‘Dylan story’:

*In every life, there are moments remembered in a kind of emotional slow motion. A first date. A first heartache. The first battle you lost. The time your glances met for one second too long and you knew the seasons of your life were changing ...*

*Well, the first time I heard Bob Dylan is one of my moments. I don't think I'll ever forget it. I was taken away by his music when I was 15-years-old, with the passion and fervour only teenage love really knows. No singer, no writer, has ever meant more to me than the man with the ‘rain and sandpaper’ voice.*

*He took the music of immigrant America, the ballads, the blues, the songs of Woody Guthrie and The Clancy Brothers and Dominic Behan, the cadences of the bible, the imagery of William Blake and Bessie Smith, and fired them in the kiln of the most extraordinary single imagination ever to work in popular music. He shunned fashion and fad, did his work, refused to follow, rarely gave interviews or even spoke on stage. With Bob Dylan it was the music and nothing much more. If you didn't like it, he didn't try to persuade you.*

*Like the narrator in ‘Isis’, the first Dylan song of his I ever heard sings, “he made up his mind that he had to go on”. Bob Dylan changed my life!*

The online (Dylan) portals<sup>41</sup> of lived-fan-experience allow further access to, and a different viewing of Dylan fandom through the eyes and experiences of his fans, many of whom have been Dylan fans for more than fifty years. I found the online Dylan fans to be highly participatory, virtually going online to the Dylan fan forums and discussion boards, etc., every day. These fans also are very studious and knowledgeable about “all things Bob”. They communicate passionately how they are compellingly drawn, intrigued, inspired and challenged by the words and music Dylan has produced. These online Dylan fan narratives and practices are further described and chronicled in the following chapter section of “Dylan Fans Online”.

### **Dylan Fans Online: *Expecting Rain***<sup>42</sup>

The most well-known and visited Dylan fan sites around the world (*eg: Expecting Rain, The Never Ending Pool, Bob Links, Isis, Edlis, etc.*), exemplify dynamic hubs of Dylan an activity with a global audience<sup>43</sup> of Dylan fans and followers participating in, and contributing to these sites through writing, discussing, sharing music and life-experiences, even playing (Dylan) trivia games, all of which are related to their favourite topic—their ‘idol’, ‘friend’, ‘lover’ ‘favourite singer/song-writer’ — “Bob”. There are voluminous available fan writings and commentary on Dylan related websites, blogs and forums that are archived and available via the online Dylan fan networks.

Through these online portals and networks, literally tens of thousands of Dylan fans interact and share their fandom and personal listening experiences of Dylan’s music and art form, as well as their own personal feelings, reactions, emotions, life-experiences, etc., and, through their narrated life-stories very clearly illustrate just how much Bob Dylan’s music, art and exemplification means to them, and how they further appropriate his music/art into their daily lives. The *Expecting Rain* fan website has over 30,000 separate topics of fan discussion, so there is plenty of discussion and

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<sup>41</sup> See list of main Dylan fan websites in Appendices, page 224.

<sup>42</sup> “Desolation Row” is one of Dylan’s well-known songs, and “Expecting Rain” (ER) is a very popular Dylan fan website. The name “Expecting Rain” comes from a line in Dylan’s song, “Desolation Row” - *Quote: “Everybody’s making love, or else expecting rain”*.

<sup>43</sup> The ER Dylan fan site has registered more than 1 million posts by Dylan fans, showing its wide popularity and usage by the fans.

activity and plenty of participatory online Dylan fans (24,000 registered users on this fan site alone).

Most of the discussions and topics on the Dylan internet fan sites are fundamentally about “all things Dylan” — plain and simple; these include, Dylan’s music, mannerisms, live-performances, tour schedules, dress/fashion, photographs, videos, and more; discussion points and ‘banter’ pertaining to Dylan’s music, performing and art are also popular topics and in focus on most of the fan forums for most of the fans/members.

There is also, of course, much ‘small talk’, highly opinionated views and ‘fan-tastic’ fan conversations and stories ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous that take place in an online forum — with lots of fun and interest to the participating Dylan fans — there are even Dylan games, quizzes and so on — everyday life activities for many fans, yet these are also important and significant to my study and research. Kotarba (2009) writes about these ‘everyday-events’ as constituents and ideas of self-construction, identity and ‘meaning-making’ whereby, as individuals and group members, we make sense of our sense of our selves and others and the world around us.

The Dylan Fan Website, *Expecting Rain* is the most frequented of the Dylan fan websites and the one I used and accessed the most for my research. The *Expecting Rain* (ER) fan-site has logged more than a million posts related to Dylan on its online forum. Dylan may not fit into the mainstream popular culture celebrity profile, but he certainly is an online ‘luminary’ to his online fans, as can be seen by the numerous entries and online discussions and contributions on ER. I view the fan stories and texts shared online as extremely valuable cultural artefacts, textually ‘rich’, archived, available and accessible fan research resources — and these portals of fandom allow contact to an articulation of Dylan through the perceptions of his fans, many of whom (as noted) have been fans for more than fifty years.

As a Dylan fan and researcher, I registered and joined the *Expecting Rain* (ER) site as an online Dylan fan/member in 2010 and regularly (daily) read the fan articles, discussions and topics of interest posted daily on the site. I also posted my own questions, comments and reactions to various fan posts and discussions. As I mention elsewhere in the thesis, I very much enjoyed participating as an online Dylan

fan. Karl Erik Andersen, who was born and lives in Norway, is the founder of the 'Expecting Rain' Dylan fan website. His website is a hub and a meeting place for Dylan appreciators and was among the very first ones about Bob Dylan. He is also the only one to keep it updated daily for the past twenty-plus years. The following information about ER is gleaned from various newspaper and Internet articles, with quotes from Karl Erik himself in italics:

"Expectingrain.com is the world's most visited Dylan site and even Dylan's official home page ([www.bobdylan.com](http://www.bobdylan.com)) recommends the fan site. The visitors to Expecting Rain come from all over the world, although most are North Americans and Europeans. A rough distribution may be 50% US, 25% UK, 15% Germany and then all the rest. The web site is found in all the information books and Dylan 'literature-guides'; music magazines such as, *Rolling Stone* and *Mojo* point to it, and author Nick Hornby writes of it in his book, "31 Songs". Updated daily, the site features all the Dylan news one could need plus other musical articles of note.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

One thankful ER fan wrote appreciably about the ER site:

*“Truly a labor of Love...it is very much appreciated. All of the interesting ‘news’ concerning Mr. Dylan...like the Touring info and set lists are great to view from time to time; But also; all the notices of the great musicians that pass away; Traditional types as well as individuals from the 1960s scene...all those articles are incredibly important to folks like myself who have been into & with the Music History and the Living History with Mr. Dylan still recording heavily and still out there touring so graciously with great effort and masterful presentation. Thank you very, very much Mr. Anderson. Hope you can continue with your Work. Peace to you.”* [REDACTED]

I personally found the online Dylan fan forums<sup>45</sup> (particularly those featured on the *Expecting Rain* fan website) vividly exemplified the many Dylan fan practices and everyday-life appropriations that Dylan fans make, presenting lucid instances of fan discussions and perspectives, interpretations and insights into many aspects of the Dylan fans’ personal lives, emotions, ideas, dreams, beliefs and everyday fan-life-experiences. The fan narratives and oral life-stories also demonstrated the fans’ highly

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<sup>45</sup> Numerous and specific examples of fan discussion themes and topics and usernames at [www.expectingrain.com/forums](http://www.expectingrain.com/forums)

affective connection to Dylan's music and persona, again showing the many ways that Dylan's songs and lyrics evoke and appeal to the emotions, values and beliefs of his fans — and all on a very personal and subjectively-experienced level, with each fan affected and evoked in their own unique and individual way, manner and interpretation.

The global online network of Dylan fans are vibrant hubs of activity whereby Dylan fans can 'meet', exchange and communicate in almost anyway they want to — about their favourite person and musician in the whole wide world — Bob Dylan. In a variety of very individual, diverse and distinct ways, Dylan fans express themselves and their fandom, and even relate to the world around them, through the inspiration of the music and art of Dylan. Dylan fans were (and are) all very much affected by the music and song lyrics of their major talisman, Bob Dylan. And for tens of thousands of Bob Dylan fans, this world of 'Bob' is just a 'click' away, as they enter into their online domains.

### **'The Lived-Dylan-Fan-Experience': *On Desolation Row***

The 'lived-Dylan-fan-experience' is not only a particular, or individual fan experience or practice, or event related to Dylan and his music, but I have intentionally 'hyphenated' the phrase together to symbolise that the fan-experience is also together with, alongside and connected to, other life-experiences and contexts that a fan has or can have, and which are also relevant and germane to 'just being a Dylan fan'. For example, the 'lived-fan-experience' of being a Dylan fan also acknowledges that you are a person as well! One who has a Dylan-fan-experience but one who also has a usually normal, everyday life to live, 'outside of the time of being a Dylan fan' — perhaps you attend a Dylan concert, or go online to a Dylan News Forum, or listen to Dylan through your headphones, and so on. Being a Dylan fan and having some other sort of work to do, also locates the Dylan fan in the milieu of the everyday-life context and describes the Dylan fan who has many things to do but who also enjoys very much Dylan and his music and 'activities' and times to listen to or view Dylan and share Dylan with other like-minded people (fans).

This chapter section also highlights some of the things that Dylan fans actually do as a Dylan fan, with their fandom, and with other Dylan fans. From the mass of narratives I received for my research, as I have summarised in Chapter Two, there were many

themes and topics that emerged from the fan data. And, during the course of my research, there have been many things I heard about and found out about regarding what Dylan fans spend their time on doing as a Dylan fan, and because of their great love, admiration and fascination with Dylan and his music – for “all things Bob”.

The following numbered sections and fan extracts detail samples of the “Top-3” topics and themes that emerged from the online fan narratives I had received from Dylan fans over an almost three years of research. I expand here on the main thematic categories that emerged from my Dylan research fan data, previously mentioned in more condensed form in Chapter Three. Because of the large size of my original dataset, at this time, in this chapter section, I am focusing on and presenting, the fan narratives from the three highest frequency categories of fan interest I found through my research codings. Also included in this section are additional, briefer samples from the two other areas of interest that emerged from the Dylan fans who participated in my research (see #'s 4 and 5 within this section).

### The Top-Three Major Topics of Interest to Dylan Fans in my Research

#### *#1. Dylan’s Music: Recordings and Live Concert Performances:*

The clear, number one, perhaps *the* major ‘common-denominator’ for Dylan fans in their fan culture is, simply, Dylan’s music and performance of that music. From all the information I received from the fans who responded to my research, whatever fan ‘type’ or ‘demographic’ they may be categorised under, these Dylan fans all stated unequivocally that they have become a Dylan fan, follower, admirer and/or interested in Dylan as a result of listening to, or viewing him and/or his performance of his music via video, and/or attending a live-concert show of Dylan and his Band. Consequently, my research attention began with this compelling, overriding *music-connection* and the subsequent admiration and affective fan feelings that began through the heuristic experience and ‘happening’ of listening to (or viewing) Bob Dylan’s music performances.

Dylan’s music and songs ‘speak’ and articulate to his fans in an emotionally-charged way and the musical experience is often linked and appropriated directly into their own everyday life-contexts and personal life-experiences, wishes, needs, desires and so

on. Consequently, of course, the musical experience makes Dylan's words and songs even more powerful, 'personal' and 'true' to the fan, as they are 'grounded' into the fan's emotional and loved-experience, and, therefore, on a very significant and meaningful and personal, subjective level. Marie, a long-time Dylan fan from the USA describes her deep feelings and emotions and the inspiration and empowerment she experiences through the music she personally identifies with, in this way:

*...After all these years, Dylan is still the only one I identify with, the one who makes me feel part of something, who expresses what I cannot. It's like you're allowed to visit his world for a while. You may live in the most pedestrian town, associate with the most non-descript people, have a dull job and no love life to speak of, but when you're driving down the road and listening to his work you're cool, you're empowered and energized!*

To Dylan fans, Dylan's songs have often inspired, illuminated and meant something very special and personal to them, sometimes signifying a 'special moment' in their life. A Dylan fan can and will very much relate a Dylan song to the time that he or she was in such and such a place, or when they were treated a certain way, and often the lyrics in Dylan's songs most 'indignantly' describe a lived-experience. These song 'identifiers', together with the feelings and emotions in Dylan's voice, which very much resonate, 'feel right' and 'make sense' to the individual fan — these all make the places, characters, events and happenings in Dylan's songs to be very 'real' and highly 'identifiable' and 'translatable' to the individual fan/listener. The following two fan texts narrate and describe this personal, 'special moment', often also a transcendent and existential experience to the individual Dylan fan:

*Hearing that song again after all those years, I was instantly back to my bedroom at 17, seeing the way the afternoon light poured in, feeling the fabric of the shirt I always used to wear against my arms, the carpet under my hands, the stress on my chest. It wasn't just the place that it took me back to, but the moment in time. I could feel the (relatively) cool night breeze against my sweat-and-sunscreen crusted forearms, the metal rails pressing against my elbows, the crush of people at my back, as I gazed up at the stage. My chest was light w/ the pure release of it all that being at a show always conjured up. Dylan's music will ALWAYS do that to me, I suspect. It was/is just too big a part of my life at too important a time for the visceral memories and sensations to ever go away.*

*- Marlon, USA*

*Dylan is transformative for me. He takes me places, to other cities, to other minds. I love Blonde on Blonde because each song takes me to a new place, inside a new character. The transitions between Visions of Johanna to One of Us Must Know to I Want You to Memphis Blues Again to Just Like a Woman to – you get the picture. Dylan takes me into the minds of the characters of his songs, and as much as I love the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, The Who, the Velvet Underground, or even Robert Johnson, no one that I have ever heard can do this as well as Bob Dylan.*

- Scott, New Zealand

A longstanding online Dylan fan forum topic, which Dylan fans enjoy, and is on the subject of Dylan's musical oeuvre, is: *'Which Dylan song are you listening to right now?'* – this discussion board question has been on the Dylan fan website *Expecting Rain* since 2005 and has (as of 2015) almost 2 million views from Dylan fans around the world, with 2,700 fan posts and replies submitted to this category. Another popular appropriated fan post on the topic of Dylan's music and song lyrics is: *'Conversation using just Dylan lyrics'*, started in 2006 by a fan user called, *'Mr. Tambourine Man'* – this post has accrued 3,699,015 views, with over 40,000 fan posts (as of September 2015). *'The Dylan lyric that describes your life right now'* has attracted more than a million fan views and has been on the Dylan (ER) fan forum since 2010.

## *#2. Fan Appropriations & Activities:*

So many of the activities and fan behaviours on the Dylan fan websites are basically about – plain and simple – “all things Bob”. These include, Dylan's music, mannerisms, live-performances, personal life, tour schedules, photographs, videos, and more; discussion and online ‘banter’ pertaining to Dylan's music, performing and art are the most popular topics prevailing on most Dylan fan forums and chat rooms available for the registered users, fans and members of the site. The most popular and highest viewed fan forum topic on the *Expecting Rain* fan website is: *'Visions of Bob'* – a topic which requests the fans' favourite photographs of Dylan (many taken by the fans themselves at Dylan concerts). The forum topic was started by a fan with the username of [REDACTED] in 2007 – and, as of September 2015 had totalled 4,838,469 views, containing almost 1500 web pages of contributions, comments and discussions by Dylan fans to this fan forum topic.

Some examples of long-term Dylan fan topics of interest online from the most frequented Dylan fan site, *Expecting Rain*, are<sup>46</sup>:

*'Track Talk'*: In-depth discussion and critique of Dylan's songs by the fans. Resourceful and knowledgeable from Dylan fans who listen to these songs over and over again. Certainly, personal and meaningful as a form of musical analysis. This 'track talk' and music fan review takes place very regularly and covers every Dylan song, recorded and performed live; discussed and debated by fans as related to Dylan's musical oeuvre, greatest performances, new releases, etc., clearly illustrating the passion and the emotional fan affect on the fan through Dylan's music.

*Song Set-Lists and Live Concerts*: Up-to-date, live-coverage from Dylan fans attending his concerts around the world -- almost like a "real-time, live, fan news channel". When Dylan is on tour, fan sites, like "Expecting Rain", are at their busiest as fans energise and participate on what's happening on the current Dylan live-concert, commenting and discussing on tour 'happenings' such as, concert reviews, tickets for sale, bootleg recordings of shows, etc., — all 'unofficial', by the fans, but all very popular with Dylan fans on the grass-roots fan level who claim it was Dylan fans who started this particular live-concert fan activity; nowadays, many artists and groups have the same fan activities and live-tour commentary, the publishing of set lists, performance ratings, etc. Also on the fan forums there are many sub-heading themes and topics related to Dylan's NET concerts, e.g. *'What shows have you been to?'* And, just about every online Dylan fan visits the linked web pages of Bill Pagel at [www.boblins.com](http://www.boblins.com), as when Dylan is touring, Dylan's actual live set-list of songs performed that night is updated within minutes of the curtain closing as attendees call or email Bill — a long-standing tradition of communication that happens amongst Dylan's online fans.

*Dylan Bootlegs*: Unofficial and rare video and audio recordings of live Dylan songs and concerts, both current and from times past. Very, very popular, with active participation from the more seriously-minded Dylan fans who want and appreciate all of Dylan's live-performances, with many fans showing a keen interest in collecting these 'bootlegged shows', dating back to Dylan's early Gaslight Club performances in New York shows in 1961 (and before, in some cases). Prized rarities, indeed, in the eyes, hearts and minds of many Dylan fans! (--I even have quite a few of these bootlegged concerts myself!)

*The Never Ending Pool*: A real fan favourite... A 'team game' and contest to predict what songs Dylan will be performed on a given concert Tour leg. The game began in 2001. And of course there are the joys of the shows and bootlegs themselves — hearing new songs played live for the first time, developing a taste for old tunes

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<sup>46</sup> Taken from examples on Dylan fan forums at [www.expectingrain.com/forums](http://www.expectingrain.com/forums) (2010-2015)

arranged like never before. It's enough to keep fans busy forever, if there is such a thing.

*Other common Dylan fan undertakings include activities such as:* Dylan meetings of local fans in various countries, towns and cities world-wide; Dylan copy tribute bands; social networking and communications (e.g. Facebook Dylan fan clubs); reading the 'Dylan Daily News' on ER; participating in Dylan fan forum questions and topics of interest and debate (e.g. 'When and why did you become a Dylan fan?'); and many, many more examples of online fan activities and discussions on the Expecting Rain (ER) Dylan fan website site.<sup>47</sup>

I found a large majority of Dylan fans to be an exceptionally 'skilled audience' (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998:121) — they seriously study Dylan's musical oeuvre and there are voluminous fan narratives on the ER fan site on this topic of study of Dylan's musical oeuvre. Here is an example of a very knowledgeable Dylan fan and a member of Dylan's 'skilled audience' – a musicologist in his own right and manner:

*In the liner notes to a tribute album to Woody Guthrie I recall Dylan saying that we were all just links in a musical chain. I was raised in a household where country music and Irish folk music and a smattering of the blues could be heard on 78's and later 45's. I was familiar with songs like the 'Patriot Game', which provided a musical framework for 'With God on our Side'. When I first heard Dylan I could detect various musical strands in a sound, which is in many ways his own.*

*He absorbed all kinds of music and developed a sound that spoke to listeners like me who heard and admired a voice which paid a tribute to traditional music while providing a fresh approach. Somehow he was able to take all those musical strands and weave them together and flow from folk to blues, from rock to country, on to gospel and beyond. Some people say he cannot sing but name me another artist that has had hits with all those styles of music.*

*In the final analysis Dylan has never strayed far from his roots and the sincerity he displays in creating new from old is the secret of his success. The music of Stephen Foster and a thousand other voices from times past can be heard in every line. We can only hope there will be other links in the chain. When he goes it might feel the strain but it won't break.*

*– Tony (N. Ireland)*

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<sup>47</sup> See [www.expectingrain.com](http://www.expectingrain.com)

There are, of course, numerous and diverse ways, reflections and refractions linked to the practices and appropriations of Dylan by his fans and followers, some of which I've mentioned in this chapter and others that are scattered throughout the thesis via the presentation of the DFNs. Apart from the recognisable musical influences and imitators of Dylan and his music/art/style – for example, by other musicians, there are also other artistic and creative (Dylan) influences and appropriations, such as those from and by poets, painters, writers, etc. These influences, inspirations and affects are often appropriated a further step again by Dylan fans into their everyday-life, such as in the music they listen to, books they read, memorabilia they collect, (online) social networking, fashion and life-style, even their spiritual and personal beliefs, for some.

### *#3. Identity, Self and Community:*

As evidenced in the previous section, in their own highly personal way, the fans identify strongly with the songs of Bob Dylan, and this emotional musical experience not only 'moves' and affects them but also inspires and leads them to do many things/activities because of, and as part of their fandom and enthusiasm for "all things" Dylan.

A relevant point here is that the fans' feelings and perceptions of who Dylan is, and what he represents to them, also has an affect on their own sense of self and identity (see Kotarba, 2009). As illustrated in the next fan excerpts, individual behaviour, attitude, and even a sense of 'being' in the world around them are often channelled through this personally experienced identification with, and close emotional bond to 'Bob', his music, 'style' and perceived *persona*. This next fan excerpt from a long-time fan in the USA is a *classic* (and fun) example of a Dylan fan 'identification with Dylan':

*I discovered Dylan in a local drugstore hangout where myself and the gang used to go after school to down fifty-cent cheeseburgers and twenty-five cent malts at the store's soda fountain. There amongst the cover shots of the Beach Boys, all of them holding onto a surfboard, there between the covers of the Coasters and Frank Sinatra was a simple album cover of a youthful looking fellow holding onto the neck of an acoustic guitar. The album was quite simply titled "Bob Dylan"... I'm now in my fifties, bald on the top and grey on the sides, but still when no one's looking, when I'm all alone, I sit in front of the bathroom mirror, corduroy cap perched high atop my head, a brown fur-lined jacket (unbuttoned at the top like his) over a yellow T-shirt, a smirk on my face and fingers wrapped tightly*

*around the neck of my Martin as I imitate and pretend that I'm the one who "has his own special gift". --Yesssssss!!!—Memories of that first album cover, 'Dylan', in that silly looking corduroy cap and me with a smirk on my face in front of the mirror.*

– Chris, USA

Distinct identities with many (but, of course, not all) Dylan fans are very much and often directly related and connected to the individual fan's favourite images, representations and the personal emotions and feelings gathered from, and often related to, specific songs, concerts, photographs and videos of Dylan. Identifications and resonances with Dylan and his music are also fostered and linked with the Dylan fans' own particular and personal-life circumstances, experiences and interactions that fans have experienced for themselves. For example, fan identifications and connections are made concerning and related to love-relationships, artistic or personal fulfilment, death, religion, philosophy, politics, and social justice issues — all of which are addressed in many of the well-known songs in Dylan's lexicon and musical oeuvre.

The following fan narrative shows an example of how Dylan and his music resonate into related experiences and appropriated behaviours made by the individual fan, who has, in a very private way, strongly identified and been directly affected by Dylan's music, performance, and/or song lyrics:

*...I think that being a Dylan fan is great because there is always so much more there to find. What I love is being able to discuss his myriad of influences with other Dylan fans who have had their worlds expanded by getting into Bob. Of course he's turned a lot of us onto artists in the genres of blues, country and gospel that we wouldn't have otherwise known but music is really just the start of it! I first became interested in Rimbaud because of Tangled Up in Blue. The first time I really delved into Picasso was because Dylan said that he was his favourite painter at some point. La Dolce Vita? I watched that because of Motorpsycho Nightmare in my mid-teens. It goes on and on. I think that Dylan fans are special - not because of who we are - but because of the dimensions of opportunity that have been opened up to us by Bob Dylan. –*

Juan, Brazil, South America

An example of a Dylan fan who, in their own very personal way, for very personal reasons, strongly identified with 'Bob', showing how clearly and directly one of his particular songs affects his fans, comes from Eunice, a 23 years old female from

Mexico. The following fan narrative excerpt is brief passage of a much lengthier fan testimonial sent to my research website in 2011:

*“What Bob Dylan Means To Me”...*

*“It was a regular day, for my days were identical to another, but in the anointed time I listened to that song. My ‘Joycean’ epiphany occurred to me when I was finally able to exorcise what it was all contained inside of me, listening to Dylan’s song, which says;*

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*“...That was me there, HE [Dylan] was talking about me; I felt at that time. And what is probably more important, for I couldn’t find my voice at all: he was talking for me... If Wordsworth’s ideas of what poetry should do are taken in consideration, Dylan’s poetry hit the target with me. He gave me something that I could not have had at that time, some kind of relief for being able to say out loud what it was, contained inside of me. He made me the present of the words, into which I could pour all my feelings. It was of little importance if the song was about anything else, because it was mine now. And that song, it is important to me not only because it expresses the obscurity that filled my heart but because it gave me some hope, “its life and life only”.*

*Something had changed inside of me ... I felt once again able to DO something for I had found a way to express what it was inside; at least I could speak about it. That was the first step to get out, Dylan’s lyrics seemed to play the part of a friend who does not judge feelings but stands quietly beside you and accompanies your time whenever you need relief.*

*Dylan’s music has been ever-present since then, drove me into English literature (which is what I’m studying right now), and It would be and understatement for me to say that I would not be who I am right now if it wasn’t for Dylan’s music.”*

These musical experiences, some fans say they are experienced and felt as musical ‘epiphanies’, aligned with the emotional connections made through Dylan’s music by

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<sup>48</sup> Words from Dylan song, “It’s Alright Ma—I’m only Bleeding!” © Special Rider Music 1993.

each fan, on a highly personal level, can also nurture a certain commonality of experience, interest and identification on a ‘fan-community’ level. Consequently, many fans identify and connect with other fans in other countries through their common talisman, Dylan, as explained by this Dylan fan from Greece:

*Being a Dylan-fan means I'm instantly part of a community-- this becomes especially obvious at all of the concerts I've been at. But also I'm amazed at the diversity of people I've met or heard or read who are Dylan-heads like me. Being a Dylan-fan has cemented a number of my friendships for the long term!*

– Stamatis, Athens, Greece

Stuart is a young man and Dylan fan who wrote to me a number of times, informing and sharing with me very helpful insights into the more ‘hard-core’ Dylan fan life, which is experienced by those who attend as many of Dylan’s live concerts as they can, some travelling across the country, or continent, for a whole summer-break-adventure, to be ‘part of’ Bob’s performances. Stuart met many Dylan fans on his tour-trek across America, and experienced, first-hand, the sense of community and identification that Dylan many fans feel and enjoy when they attend Dylan’s live concert shows:

*From a month after I turned 18 to a month before I turned 21 (formative years, at least according to American popular culture), I followed the Bob Dylan (NET) tour around the country. Not every show, of course, I'm not rich, but a sizeable chunk of shows in nearly every state, certainly every time zone. I met nearly every type of fan, from some of the absolute nicest people on Earth who'd give you their last penny, straight through to some people I'd rather not mention. I personally put over 100,000 miles on my (new-ish) car. – Stu, USA*

The *Expecting Rain* Dylan fan-site has ‘meeting-up’ posts placed by fans seeking and arranging times and places when and where to meet, before, during or after Dylan’s shows in the various concert locations around the world. This sense of identification and belonging, even camaraderie, is very strong amongst Dylan’s most ardent and long-standing fans.

Mark Duffett (2013) found a similar sense of fan community feelings, activities and meetings in his research on music fans. He mentions how popular music fandom gives individuals an opportunity to define their identities themselves, sharing common

interests, which helps them find a sense of community and belonging. Other fan culture researchers have found similarly, and have written about how the fans' social networking, bonding and camaraderie are common in just about every fan-base (e.g. Hebdige 1979, Jenkins 1992, Jensen, 1992, Cavicchi 1998, Larsen and Zubernis 2012). One can also think of other interests and activities (e.g. sport, art, hobbies, etc.) and how the fans and followers of these various interests often form a group that meets and interacts in some way to share their mutual fan interest and enthusiasm.

The next two topical areas of interest I am highlighting as part of my research are the fan groupings of Dylan's younger-aged fan base (teenagers/early 20's), and Dylan's non-English speaking fans (see nos. 4&5 below).

#### *#4. Dylan's new, younger audience:*

While on his first ever concert tour to China in 2011, Dylan mentioned again that many of his concert-going fans are young in age, part of his newer, younger audience<sup>49</sup>. To confirm this, and as interest to my research, I wrote to some of these newer and younger Dylan fans (16-25 yrs) via a forum post on the *Expecting Rain* Dylan fan website. Here are just a few of the many responses that I received:

*At a recent Dylan concert a sixteen year old kid stood next to me in the queue before the show. He had just discovered Dylan through "Modern Times", which kind of proves Bob's point. It's so refreshing to talk to young fans who do not give a s\*\*t about the 1960s and simply love Bob's current work. At the general admission shows there are usually lots of young (16-18 y.o.) fans down the front -- the younger audience also seemed to respond much better to the shows i was at, which struck me as pretty strange at first. the oldies were complaining about the usual stuff, "his voice is gone", "you couldnt make out the songs" blah blah blah. however the younger vibe was summed up pretty well by something i heard on the way out from a young dude, who said "Man, his voice was a bit croaky, but that was f\*\*\*ing fantastic!" they also responded greatly to songs that are generally regarded as a bit dull among the old Bobcats.*

– Tim, Australia

*I guess I got into Dylan b/c i have always liked history and the whole 60's movement was something of interest to me and it also seems like people had*

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<sup>49</sup> New younger audience: see reference in Dylan letter, page 100.

*something to sing for back then u know?? seems like thats music, something u sing about for just anygiven reason, but today it seems like the only reason most bands make music is money which is pretty sh\*tty u know?? young people always have that fire in the pit of there stomach in changing the world u know who else to look at but dylan even though he might not have meant to have that much effect on peoples views he did unknow? and thats why i like him u know he changed alot of sh\*t changed the world in a sense. I'm 17 years old. I like Bob Dylan cause every song he sings it sounds like he wrote it just for me.*

– Ryan, Canada

*I'm an 18year old lad from north england and have been into bobs music since i was fifteen which was weird because nobody apart from one of my teachers actually listen to him and appreciated what bob does like i do, it was strange to walk around a scum infested run down chav school listening to 'positively 4th street' and 'forever young' id thought id found a peice of truth or an answer to issues and of course i had.*

*bob's voice is amazing.I guess its the bluntness that attracts me to his music i used to get told im too much of a 'say it how it is xxxx' by friends and relatives so its only natural to want similar music.*

*Also im amazed how many young folks listen to bob on here [Expecting Rain Fan site] as i aint met any 'round my way or many old people for that matter. Cheers,*

– John, UK

So, there is certainly evidence of a new generation of active Dylan fans and, again, with these newer and younger fans, there are the same basic elements of 'everyday' fan experiences that happen with other (older) Dylan fans. Many younger aged Dylan fans conveyed their feelings to me about the 'older generation' critiques and commentaries about Dylan from the more, 'expert/academic/professional' literature on fans — that these did not really capture “what it's all about”, or explain exactly what Bob Dylan and his music really meant to his actual, following fans. This next account is a concise 'straight-talk' example of a fan rejoinder to the older generation, 'fan expert view' on Dylan — Jude, a young, teenage Australian Dylan fan wrote:

*"i'm 17 and i've been listening to Bob for the last 3 years or so ... sometimes i get sick of all the more serious 'critical' writing about bob and i wish somebody would write a book of stuff his fans have to say about him...i've always been surprised by the insights regular people have been able to offer about various things, and probably more so than greil marcus, clinton heylin, etc. keep it up! dig it!"*

#### #5. Non-English speaking fans:

During my research and when attending Dylan concerts, I noticed and talked with fans from different countries and language areas. As Dylan's song lyrics are in English and are well known to often have deeper and surreal imagery attached to them, I wondered how non-English-speaking Dylan fans understood, related to, interpreted and felt about Dylan's music from a non-English speaker fan-experience.

Andrea, an Italian Dylan fan who originally couldn't understand any English at all, but still connected with Dylan's music, especially the emotion conveyed in the songs and sounds, describes the affect the music had on him as a non-English speaker in the following way:

*Bob Dylan's music is the soundtrack of my (almost) entire life. Most events in my life were underlined by his voice and his music, since 1976 (except period 1985-96). I am Italian, and in 1976 I was 13; no English at all (at the time I studied German, as foreign language). But, the song, "Hurricane" knocked me out any way! I didn't understand a word, but something in his voice, his way of singing, his music, his passion in singing... still don't know what, knocked me out!.*

*I started studying English with the main scope of understanding his words, and I still spend time in studying his lyrics. I was (am) astonished by the song lyrics that throughout my life had always something useful for each experience, both of joy and sadness. His texts helped me a lot in thinking and finding concrete solutions of each single problem I had, and expressed (and still do) very well the mood and feeling I have or had, making me feel with more power and hope.*

*Dylan's music for me was (is) pure emotion in listening to his special voice, the voice that nobody in my family and among my friends (with very few exceptions) like(ed) but that capture me at a very instinctive level. I rarely like 'covers' of his songs: I find his voice his perfect for his songs. For me, he goes directly to things without hiding or well-looking, directly to the bone and the heart, so it helped me to do the same, and so saving and enriching my entire life. In his songs I feel hope, a good straight line, joy, ability in changing when the wind forces to change, ability to "stand upright and be strong", to be "clear focused all around", that helped me in each hard moment of my life.*

– Andrea, Italy

The following sample text is from a French fan who did not speak any English when first hearing but actually started learning English by translating Dylan's song lyrics from English to French:

*"Dylan's music has been ever-present since then, drove me into English literature (which is what I'm studying right now), and it would be an understatement for me to say that I would not be who I am right now if it wasn't for Dylan's music...."*

I found it extremely informative, interesting and helpful to receive feedback from Dylan's non-English speaking fans, reflecting the global travel and audience of Bob and his Band, and hearing how these non-English speaking fans relate and translate Dylan's music (from the original English) into their particular language, culture and personal life. At a Dylan Conference in the UK I met a couple who were both Dylan fans, one from Spain and one from Italy, and they told me it was the *emotion* of the music, and in Dylan's voice, that they heard and 'felt', and that's what connected with them and inspired them to want to know more about Dylan and his music, and to want to learn English to be able to delve into his lyrics and interpret them into their own understanding of what they meant to them.

From all the accounts I have received from the Dylan fans in my research, there is really no difference or problem with language, location or nationality; a Dylan fan is simply someone who is seriously interested in and 'tuned-in' to Dylan, his message and his music. It is the emotional connect and 'feel' of Dylan's music that resonates into the personal and intimate thoughts of the individual Dylan fan. The core Dylan fan affects are the strong feelings of a personal 'connection' and identification with 'Bob', through hearing his voice, as well as the corporeal and aesthetic impact of his music, lyrics and live-performances — no matter what nationality or language the Dylan fan uses to listen and interpret.

There is a section for Spanish fans of Dylan on the Dylan fan website, *Expecting Rain*<sup>50</sup>. Here is the introduction to that web section from the Spanish site moderator:

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<sup>50</sup> There are web pages and networks available for Dylan fans in many other world languages such as, French, Italian, German, Russian and Danish.

*Hemos decidido empezar esta sección para aquellos/as que deseen hablar, opinar, criticar, intercambiar o lo que deseéis sobre nuestro héroe: Bob Dylan, mediante nuestra lengua materna: el español. Gracias a todos.*

(English Translation: *We decided to start this section for those wishing to speak, comment, critique, or what you will share about our hero: Bob Dylan, through our mother tongue, Spanish. Thanks to all.*)

## Chapter Summations

During the course of my research, much of the rationale, needs and emerging areas of the attention in the research have, in fact, been articulated and led by the Dylan fans themselves. Some of the research topics presented and discussed have, of course, been related directly in response to various questions and issues I had directed to the fans, but there were many more topics and issues coming directly through the lived-experiences and interests of the fans themselves on a variety of topics (e.g. music history, Dylan and religion, Dylan and philosophy), questions about Dylan's music and life, in general, plus views from the fans on the world around them. I found Dylan's online fans were particularly responsive, energetic and passionate about Dylan and they shared many facets, examples and ways they practise and enjoy their fandom.

My research attention, topics and areas of interest and investigation have all predominantly proceeded directly from the Dylan fans themselves and are presented through the fans' own written narratives and stories, without any *a priori* agenda or intent from my original position as researcher. As an example of this effect on my research: Through exploring the specific role that (Dylan's) music plays in the Dylan fan's everyday-life and the corresponding and emerging relationships that are forged between fan and music/musician, the responsive *fan narratives* have been vital inroads and insights into discovering and revealing the identification and meaning-making processes that are created, occur and exist within the fan's (Dylan) 'life-world'.

For many fans, Dylan has been a significant part of their lives, and life-events for the past 50+ years of time. So many fans related to me how Dylan's music has been an inspiration and a personal life-line and touchstone for them in many of life's more difficult circumstances — from relationship problems and personal struggles they had, to the inspiration and inward strength they experienced through listening to Bob's

vocal delivery of his very personal lyrics; many, many fans, as testified in the fan narratives, follow Dylan's concert tours and attend his live-performances whenever they can – being able to see and hear Dylan perform his songs brings a lot of meaning to many of his most faithful followers.

Dylan's musical *oeuvre* is certainly the number-one interest and is the touchstone for much, if not all, of the Dylan-fan passion, discourse and the sense of commonality felt among Dylan's fans and followers. To these most ardent fans, how the music is played, sung, recorded and performed are all highly significant nuances, frames of reference, meaning and affect, on both the personal and 'community' level.

Dylan fans themselves are also a valuable resource to the knowledge base of Dylan's music as well as a strong refraction of his art and creativity, adding further cultural contributions to his significance as an artist and (global) cultural icon. And, Dylan fans themselves are, of course, also an appreciably important 'statistic' that directly relate to, and factor into, the career and popularity of Bob Dylan and his music. Although full official figures have not been released by Dylan's record company, Dylan record album sales are estimated to be more than 100 million, with many fans saying this figure can be doubled if you include the 'bootleg' albums that have been created, sold and distributed around the world over the past 40 to 50 years.

If one takes into account Dylan's global media coverage, including his worldwide web 'fan following', the online fan activity surrounding Dylan, over these past 50-plus years, Dylan and his following fans would certainly be considered as significant, valued and lucrative to commercial media and marketing interests, (for instance, in book deals, merchandise sales, concert ticket sales, memorabilia, and so forth).

The main Dylan fan websites are where Dylan fans communicate and interact on a daily basis, and where fan forums, discussions and chat rooms are very popular and used by the fans. These fan matrices have been identified as creating forms of "public intimacy," personal and communal identification, or "affective alliance" (Grossberg, 1992: 59). And, as I have articulated throughout the thesis, the areas of identity and affect are important matters to my research project because of the emotional investment that Dylan fans make in creating and maintaining their practised fandom, and as expressed through their relationships and communications with other fans too.

As illustrated, and is particularly evident in this fourth chapter, Dylan fans attach high significance to 'their man, Bob'. It has been said that one of the greatest compliments one can have as an artist or performer would be through the practice of imitation, or influence on others<sup>51</sup>. Apart from his (estimated) hundreds of thousands of enthusiastic 'fans and followers', Bob Dylan has influenced countless people through his art, lyrics and music. The fans and followers of Dylan, their perception of who he is, what he represents to them, affects them in a very personal and particular way, and, in a number of cases, many fans and followers have conveyed of how they have been 'transformed' and 'changed' in some way through listening to and being enthralled by Dylan's music.

*I didn't become interested in Dylan until around 2004 when I was well into my 40's. Since then, I've collected anything I can, music, books, movies. I've been to five concerts and to Hibbing [where Dylan was born]. I even taught myself to play guitar and I can play and sing just about anything from the early acoustic years and then some. I've never been a collector of anything and I never gave any other artist more than a cursory glance before. There's just something that seems to be "written in my soul" that connects with Dylan's work. – Kathy, Canada*

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<sup>51</sup> A well-known quote attributed to Charles Caleb Colton (1780–1832), an English cleric, writer and collector: "*Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery*".

## CHAPTER FIVE

### APPLIED PERSPECTIVES OF ENQUIRY and ANALYSIS

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## Introduction – ‘Frames of Analysis and Understanding’

In my research, I have been challenged to find and use concepts, perspectives and a style of research writing that would illumine my subject matter of ‘Dylan fans and followers’, plus highlight and best describe some of the issues and practices involved in their fandom. And so, I have earnestly and purposely searched for methods and communication tools that would/could best apply to illustrate and communicate the lived-Dylan-fan-experiences of the Dylan fans that took part in my research. The main contexts and perspectives I have used and applied in my enquiry and analysis on Dylan fans and followers are: music and meaning, self and identity, subjectivity and belonging, interpretation and belief. I had previously tried and tested singular theories to apply to my analysis on Dylan fans and followers, but without success and without a clear/genuine ‘fit’ and elucidation of the subject matter.

The following chapter sections reference and draw on several strands of sociological thought: social psychology (Mead 1934, Goffman 1959), social-phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962), existential-sociology (Douglas 1967, Kotarba 2009), and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) – applying these inter-disciplinary perspectives and concepts as ‘frames of meaning and understanding’ to the phenomenon of Dylan fans and followers. The principal reason for using and applying these particular frameworks, contexts and perspectives to the Dylan-fan-experience and the Dylan fan narratives is to describe and communicate to the reader of this thesis, as clearly and coherently as possible, my research data, which is drawn from the Dylan fan narratives, and to what I felt would best describe and account for their personalised Dylan lived-fan-experiences. I have viewed these lived-fan-experiences as resonating a *plurality* of voices, yet an *individuality* of experiences.

Chapter Five considers some of the academic perspectives and theoretical underpinnings I have appropriated and applied to the narrative data collected on, and from, Dylan fans and followers. The chapter applies specific theoretical views to the subject matter of Dylan fans and followers, more than in the previous chapters where I have intentionally prioritised spatial discourse and presence to the Dylan fans who participated and were involved in my research, and where I have featured a more open, ethnographic-narrative approach of perspective and writing.

Erving Goffman's (1974) original work on 'Frame Analysis' was 'particularly influential and helpful to the construction of meaning and the phenomenology of lived-experience and reality' (from Fine and Manning, 2007). Goffman's analysis attempted to identify the elements of social and personal situations that convince us, as participatory agents, that these are 'real' and genuine to us. The basic premise here is that people believe and establish perceptual and recognisable 'frames' within which to evaluate the meaning of their personal, everyday-life encounters. Goffman contextualises this framed context in the 'social encounter' as anchored in a primary framework — and from which comes the learned or expected 'definition of the situation'. This was how he approached lived realities. Goffman also states, as does Gerrig (1993), that it is the 'involvement and relevance' to the object/phenomenon that makes the things/situations encountered as 'real', or 'true', or meaningful to us (Goffman, 1997:347):

*Reality...[sic] ...a frame through which people see the world, and the world they see is apprehended as real even though it may be socially constituted.*  
(Goffman, 1997: 231)

I have appropriated Goffman's basic supposition of 'frames' here, applying this concept and use as, 'frames of meaning and understanding', with the intention and purpose of illustrating how and why Dylan fans very much directly relate to and identify with Dylan, subjectively and intersubjectively, from within specific contextually framed settings, plus, to bring into focus the lived Dylan-fan-experience and to facilitate and enhance the analysis of the Dylan fan narratives (DFNs). Examples of these fan contexts and settings are evidenced within the DFNs and are liberally disseminated throughout the thesis. The applied framed perspectives in this chapter refer to the appropriations, actions and interactions of individual fans, within mutually understood social (fan and fandom) settings.

It is relevant to note here that the frames, concepts and perspectives I am presenting and using in my analysis and inquiry, as with many other academic and theoretical concepts, e.g. 'ideal types', 'stereotypes', 'class', 'neo-liberal', 'right/left' [political stances], are not rigid or categorically fixed, neither can they be universally applied to all social or singular phenomena, as in a 'one-size-fits-all' manner. These 'frames and perspectives of meaning and understanding' are ancillary, 'fluid' frames applied to give

insights to the Dylan fans' emotive appropriations as they appropriate and relate to Dylan and his music in their personal and everyday lives. For example, the Dylan fan interest, immersion and enjoyment in Dylan and his music also touches on the fan's own personal senses and feelings of perception, identity, beliefs, values and lived-experience in their own particular lived, 'life-world', as disclosed in many of the Dylan fan narratives in this chapter and throughout the thesis.<sup>52</sup>

These perspectives and contexts of fans and fandom (*aka* here as 'frames') are intended to be open-ended, inter-related and inter-connective to other working, conceptual frames highlighted in this chapter's ensuing sections. For example, perspectives on subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are very much connected to, and in tangency with, the perspectives and interpretations of (fan) identification, perception and sense of belonging, which are clearly evident amongst Dylan fans and exhibited in their narratives. Another example here would be the frame and context of music, or musicality, which is presented as a primary frame of reference in my research and analysis, influencing and appropriated by every Dylan fan who participated in my research. Musicality itself is also a conduit and context (or frame) whereby further fan identifications and expressions such as, affect, interpretation and subjectivity are activated and integrated into the lived-fan-experience.

Kotarba (2009) notes how music fans associate various 'self-experiences' with specific sounds and songs, and particularly relate to the lead singer or band of the music being played. For instance, Kotarba indicates, a fan will "use" a song as a resource to create their own 'self-activities', such as, writing their own life-story, managing self-related problems, tasks and desires, acquiring self-strength and endurance, experiencing self-transformation and appropriating self-enrichment.

Phenomenological approaches and perspectives fundamentally present all human experiences, such as thoughts, feelings, fantasies, memories, perceptions and imaginations, as *intentional* phenomena – that is, these thoughts and feelings, and so on, are directed towards some specific focal point of interest (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In relation to Dylan fans and their everyday lived-fandom, and as clearly illustrated

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<sup>52</sup> My understanding and description of the fan's 'life-world' (*lebenswelt*) as applied and used in this context is: the world of lived-fan-experience, the world that the (Dylan) fan lives, is able to live as a pragmatic lifestyle and existence in their particular life-setting and circumstance.

throughout the thesis through the fan narratives, Dylan fans direct and focus a good amount of their energy and attention on Dylan, the person, and his musical oeuvre, with many of his most ardent fans deeply ‘immersing’ themselves in, and being acutely affected by, the lyrics, imagery and spirit of his songs (see Gerrig, 1993). Richard Gerrig has noted that what makes something seem ‘real’ and meaningful to the person is the ‘engrossment’ and ‘immersion’ in the relationship connection between the subject (read: ‘fans’) and the essence of the experience that occurs within the framed-setting, which in this case is the framing and context of Dylan’s music.

An example of this ‘immersion’ and ‘engrossment’, in the case of a Dylan fan to Dylan’s music, can be seen in the following Dylan fan response. Ray, a 56 year-old Dylan fan, who has immersed himself in Dylan’s music and been engrossed in following Dylan as a fan for many years, when asked, “What was the first Dylan song you heard – that sealed your fate as a Dylan fan?” answered and expressed himself this way:

*Dylan’s songs, “Stuck Inside of Mobile” and “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll”, amazed me! And when I found out that “Hattie Carroll” was based on real people... that was the moment that sealed my fate! That day, I spent hours on Dylan’s website, browsing through his lyrics.*

*“Hmmm..., the song, “Chimes of Freedom”, what’s that about ... \*click\* ... [REDACTED]*

*[REDACTED].. wow, that’s amazing! I should listen to this song...”*

*(Same thing happened with dozens of other songs)*

*Then when the Dylan album. “Infidels” came out, it had such an impact on me that it changed my life in a rather dramatic way. It was like a revelation! I perceived it as if somebody ‘pulled the blinds up’, and it was like somebody was holding the mirror to me, so I could see my life’s reflexion. It was a stunning experience indeed! – Ray (Location: a state of regret.)*

Ray’s narrative demonstrates lucidly his musically referenced framework, which is noticeably connected to his subjective and emotional feelings as well as his activated corporeal feelings of identification and sense of self. It is as though the music and words vibrate and resonate within him, activating his inner-self and his personal and emotional human senses – the fan ‘connection’ and ‘real’ feelings and affect are articulated well in this excerpt from this Dylan fan’s narrative.

Geertz's (1973) metaphor of 'webs of meaning' can also be well applied here to Dylan fans and their 'relationship' with Dylan, as they can be viewed and located as interacting and inter-reacting conduits with other Dylan fans — for example, within the online 'webs' of significance and meaning, where senses of identity, community, belonging, and meaning are shared and reinforced online by Dylan fans on a daily basis through fan forums and discussion groups and in the vastly available and accessible cyber-space environments. For many of the Dylan online fans, and certainly for the more self-confessed, 'hard-core' fans,<sup>53</sup> the 'primary frame' of their reference and narrative *is* Dylan the musician/artist, who, to his fans, embodies Dylan the persona, Dylan the music and Dylan the song lyrics.

Many fans describe in detail how they have been 'transformed' and affected in some way by their particular musical experience with Dylan and the emotional 'connections' made through attending one of his live-concerts and/or listening to his recorded or bootlegged songs (often over and over again). These fans strongly identify with Dylan's songs, and the feeling and emotion of the music clearly 'moves' and affects them. Their perception of who Dylan is and what he means and represents to them also affects their own sense of self and identity. The following fan narrative from a young Dylan fan in Croatia is an illustration of the fluid frame of perception and identification that a Dylan fan can experience with 'Dylan', his music and his image, illustrating a lucid appropriation of a scrupulous 'connection' into the fan's own 'life-world', and also succinctly demonstrating how the music and music 'persona' can influence and affect (fan) self-identification:

*Dylan helps me express myself, as a 17 year old singer songwriter, existential poem writer and wannabe recluse, dylan helps me experience myself, tapping into my own subconscious via his lyrics. my mood often changes due to whatever dylan song comes on, or if i watch a dylan clip or film, or hear an interview, even see a picture. bob means that i can be myself in front of others, by basing my behaviour on his characteristics from certain time periods, and i have down to a very close tee his different mannerisms from certain time periods, if i want to hide myself away from others, its the 1966 interview dylan, if i want to be the centre of attention, its the 1986 stage dylan, not to say i try and be like him, i dont want to be him, but he helps me express myself, my voice, and my opinions; in short, bob, to me, means the ability to be myself, as and when i need to – Bob means whatever you need him to. - Francesca*

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<sup>53</sup> See more on fan 'types' and self-referencing in Chapters 3 and 4, and in Facebook survey, page 87.

The ensuing chapter sections display more specific examples of the perspectives of analysis and inquiry that I have employed as an attempt to illumine the Dylan fan narratives and the lived-fan-experience of Dylan fans. I have used these for what I felt were useful *schema* to contribute to the *understanding* of my subject matter (Dylan fans and their appropriated fandom); and because I found them the most helpful and ‘fitting’ as most relevant and applicable to the specific areas of my Dylan fan research, readings and analysis. I have underscored the areas of music, meaning, self, identity, community and belonging as these were the recurring topics and themes evident throughout the fan data of the written DFNs.

The following sections will not be venturing into exhaustive discussion of the sociological or psychological issues of identity and/or ‘self in society’ as they are profoundly complex disciplines in themselves and beyond the scope and focus of this thesis, but these highlighted areas are rather presented and applied as contextual perspectives (and frames) that place and recognise Dylan fans and followers as human participants in the everyday-life of society, and people with a very particular sense of self, identity and belonging. I extrapolate and highlight examples of self, identity and belonging here as related to the issues concerning my research on Dylan fans and followers.

My intention here is that these perspectives and frames of analysis and interpretation will add to the understanding of the lived-fandom and appropriations of Dylan fans and followers, and will help further illumine the Dylan-fan-experience and the meaning-making processes created by the Dylan fan’s relationship and identification with Dylan’s music and persona.

### **Contexts of Self, Identity and Belonging**

In referencing and referring to the topics of self and identity in this chapter, I am mainly referring here to the basic and usually accepted, western-world perspectives and views of the (social) psychology of the self. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this also includes the postmodern adherence and acknowledgement of ‘multiple, fragmented selves’ and the changeable and fluctuating categories of social roles in contemporary societies (Arditi, 1987).

The concept of self is evident in all humans and senses of community (Morris, 1994). The basic understanding of 'self' I am referring to in my orientations here is that of an inner-self (sometimes multiple-selves, plural) and an outer-self, which is the more viewable, 'public', 'social self'. There is, thus, a distinction of awareness by the individual between an inner self/being and an outer, experienced world that the individual/self must understand, negotiate and manage. I also acknowledge here that most world-cultures maintain a socio-centric and holistic conception of the person, whereby the person defines themselves through their interactions and relationships with others and for the sustenance and betterment, or improvement of, the collective or wider society or culture (Shweder and Bourne, 1984).

The framing and perspectives of self and identity within the everyday-life context of 'being in the world'<sup>54</sup> is of significant relevance and interest to my research and study of Dylan fans and followers as I am examining and writing about the very individual and subjective experience(s) of 'being a Dylan fan', plus analysing the actual Dylan fan narratives themselves — both of which can be seen to evidence constructed forms of self and/or social identity, together with various related senses of identification and belonging; for instance, belonging to the Dylan fan community, belonging to a place/status in society, belonging to a family/workplace, and so on.

Mead's (1934) concept of the self as a social self is, "one has to be a member of a community to be a self", and that self develops and changes through the everyday and recurrent and experiential social situations and interaction that happen during the life-course of the individual. Society, as the organised and arranged set of interactions among diverse individuals is, according to Mead, a cyclical process of routinisation of solutions to and performances of repetitive (everyday) problems; society and life-worlds are created through social interaction processes, each constitutive of the other (see Stryker, 2008).

George Mead writes:

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<sup>54</sup> In this research, I also relate this 'sense of being' to the 'Dylan-fan-experience'. The Dylan fan connects his/her 'sense of being' and even actual life-experiences with specific Dylan songs/lyrics that he/she strongly and personally identify with and believe are true expressions of love, reality and meaning. The fan will appropriate these words, emotions and feelings into their own lives, thoughts and beliefs.

*"...the fact that all selves are constituted by or in terms of the social process... is not in the least incompatible with, or destructive of, the fact that every individual self has its own peculiar individuality, its own unique pattern; because each individual self within that process, while it reflects in its organized structure the behavior patterns of that process as a whole, does so from its own particular standpoint within that process."* (1934:201)

Mead affirms here how each individual is unique on the existential level and that individuals in a society occupy specific and diverse roles with subsequent expected behaviours — these roles being defined and corroborated in relation to the role of others in the particular setting of society, culture, community, etc.<sup>55</sup> For the formation and maintenance of the self, then, interaction with others is crucial — for example, to enable two people (or more) in a conversation to understand one another, to be able to share and understand meanings, and to some extent to put themselves in the place of the 'other' as a way of understanding 'the other'.

Drawing from the classical sociological research of *The Chicago School of Sociology* regarding the 'self in society' and the 'presentation of self' (e.g. Mead 1934, Goffman 1959), Individual and group behaviours and expectations of self and identity occur within fluid and changeable framings and discourses that are simultaneously taking place (see Garfinkel, 1967). This interactionist account of the self and identity is clearly evident throughout the Dylan fan narratives, demonstrating how 'the self is anchored in, and experienced in relation to the everyday experiences and contexts of the routine of social life' (Elliott, 2001:142).

I find these contexts of identity and self particularly useful and relatable when applying them to the online Dylan fans who use and rely a lot on virtual-construction and interaction (a parallel to social-construction-interaction) to communicate, and maintain their connection to their fellow online Dylan fans and to share, promote and enhance their fandom via the Internet. The presentation, maintenance and appropriations of identity and self, (which include the subjectively lived-experiences of the individual fan) are clearly evident in the online Dylan fan-community discussion boards and the daily interactions that take place over the world-wide web Dylan fan networks. (See more examples of these online posts and forums in section, 'The Lived-Dylan-Fan-

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<sup>55</sup> For an interesting discussion of how social and cultural conditions influence and construct new forms of mental life, and thus senses of self, see Gagnon (1992).

Experience', page 109). Dylan fans, particularly those who are members of an online community or website, make a matrix of intersubjective communications with other Dylan fans, via emails and discussion boards online reactions and also when attending Dylan touring concerts.

Dylan fans very much identify and connect, in a highly personal and bespoke manner, to the perceived words and persona of Bob Dylan, despite never actually having met the real person (Dylan) behind the publicly accessible image. Through their narratives and practised fandom, they intimately exemplify and describe their own particular fan-life-experiences and feelings, often in a very analogous manner to the things Dylan has communicated through his songs, writings and interviews. The following fan narratives illustrate these fan feelings of affect, sentiment and identification to Dylan, his voice, words and music:

*Bob Dylan can put into song what i have a hard time speakin' out....his aspect @ everything seems to fall into place with our Creator.....he makes me laugh, cry, love, feel and think about whatever is goin'on in my life or others....just so sweet and smart and funny and a very gracious loving person Bobby is... (Ramona, USA)*

*Dylan enters your ears and lives in your heart and brain. Why, I do not know why and I cannot explain why, but he taught me more in a six-minute record than I ever learned in school. (Jan, Poland)*

*His (Dylan's) voice always sings/speaks in a completely honest tone for me. No matter how weird the lyrics are, no matter how much he tries to conceal himself, his voice always makes it seem as though he is speaking the absolute emotional truth. (Stan, Canada)*

Fan identification, with varying degrees of feelings, relatability, subjectivity and meaning for the particular fan 'object of interest or adoration', creates and establishes a perceived 'relationship', 'connection' or 'bond' between the fan and the object or person of interest or focus (in my research, this is a love and appreciation for Bob Dylan and his music/persona).

To exemplify, the following fan narrative illuminates how this particular Dylan fan was affected by Dylan's music and persona, showing how his concept of self and who he was, what he was interested in, changed as he was affected and inspired by Dylan's

music, career and accomplishments. As the fan relates these to him/herself, and appropriates these perceived 'Dylan-esque traits' into their own interests and individuality, they become, to the fan/follower of Dylan, a 'true-to-life' experience and a 'way of being' and believing.

*I love the certainty that he can express himself with. Chimes of Freedom reminds me of a musical Rimbaud. The poetry of Dylan's lyrics, in songs like Hard Rain, Chimes of Freedom, It's Alright Ma, or As I Went Out One morning got me interested in poetry. It took Dylan's voice and his phrasings and his rhythms to get me to appreciate much more fully the power of words – 'Language, Language!' as Allen Ginsberg might comment. I'm now strongly considering going into English for a career, because of Bob Dylan as much as anything else.*

*Jonathan, Australia*

As most people in life belong to some sort of group or association with others, from birth to death, self and identity matter a great deal when it comes to a human life-experience. Who we think we are, and who we are seen to be, can matter to each of us personally, and in a hugely significant way. Also, how we identify and associate ourselves has another vast influence and impact on our particular sense of well-being as well as personal interests, habits and hobbies. And so, identity, identification and a sense of belonging are very much, in the human-world, experientially and existentially 'real' in the perceptions, senses and feelings of the inner-being of the individual. In identity theory, identification processes are viewed as emotional attachments in relation to someone or something else, and often located within exacting socio-symbolic co-ordinates (e.g. Mead 1934, Vygotsky 1978, Stryker 1980, Turner et al 1987).

Belonging and the sense of identity is what happens, for example, when forming a relationship or joining a group, or becoming a member of some thing or entity. It is this feeling of identification and belonging that attracts and attaches many group members to certain social and group identities (Jenkins, 2008). People (fans) identify with other individuals, social groups, ideologies and 'commonalities' because of promises and expectations of interest, enjoyment, a 'bonding' and 'something in common' with others. This interest, connection and bonding is maintained and often held together by the image of 'us', a sense of identification, affiliation, and rapport with such (significant) others.

There are clear connections between self, identity and a sense of belonging among Dylan fans (as with many identity-related and based groupings). And, as identity is also closely related and connected to meaning-making, belief and the subjective account of lived-Dylan-fan-experience, there is a palpable link and connection between the contexts of self, identity and belonging to the sensibilities of identity and the subjective truthfulness of these lived-fan-experiences. These areas are further discussed in the ensuing section on 'subjectivity and the Dylan-fan-experience.

### **Subjectivity and the Dylan Fan Experience**

Subjectivity has been defined and applied in different ways in different disciplines — some common definitions of subjectivity being, 'complex structures of thought, feelings and emotion' (Geertz 1973) 'reflectivity' (Sennett, 1977), 'the most personal and internal workings and individuality of the person' (Blackman, 2008). A delineation I am aligning my thesis with comes from Ellis and Flaherty (1992:1) who forthrightly frame and relate subjectivity to self and meaning: "human lived experience and the physical, political and historical context of that experience" ... "a subjective sense of self is one of the principle elements in lived-experience" (ibid:9).

Subjectivity is closely attached to the lived experiences and senses of meaning of the individual — and meaning is always meaning to the particular person(s) involved. What's meaningful to me, or you, is a matter of what has significance for you, and/or for me. And what is significant for me will not completely depend on my rational knowledge at the moment by itself, but will also be affected by my own personal past experiences, values, feelings, insights and choices. What has been subjectively important, insightful, and right for me as an individual has affected and will affect the decisions and choices and understanding I have, hold and maintain as an individual. Therefore, it is evident that subjectivity and lived-experience are highly important and significant values, influences and lived-experiences in human behaviour and everyday living.

Existentially speaking, one could say that life is, in many ways, lived only through the subjective, personal, concept of oneself 'being in the world', thus highlighting the dynamics and significance of 'subjectivity' and 'inter-subjectivity' in the life-worlds of

everyday-life. Subjectivity is also important, if not vital in the human and social sciences, as it highlights and illuminates the personal life-view and interpretations of a person as well as gives explanation to how people react to particular life events and lived-experiences. In many, daily, countless ways, every individual person in the world personally dwells in their very own subjective, 'life-world' — that is, in the more private, personal, intimate and inner world of the subjective mind, self and body wherein dwells the thoughts, feelings, emotions, dreams, wishes, fears and anxieties of the lived and experienced individual/personal life. Interaction (and inter-subjectivity) with the 'outside world' - outside of the inner-being of self - is basically interaction and communication between and among other very subjective, singular, and private human beings. (In the context of my research, these aforementioned interactions, communications and relations are amongst and between other Dylan fans and followers).

Some academics have observed a 'subjective turn' in recent years, and it has been claimed that subjectivity is central to intellectual debate on contemporary culture, gender, sexuality, postmodernism and technology (see Blackman et al., 2008). Many researchers suggest making use of subjectivity and drawing on one's inner experience in order to better understand the subject of a study (e.g. Rennie, 1994; Gagnon, 1992; Denzin, 1992). For these researchers, 'distancing' themselves from the subject through the use of standardized or semi-standardized, 'objective' methods and stances only keeps the subject matter of the research at a distance. Subjectivity as meaning is also embodied in language, including its syntax, vocabulary, phonetics, tone and body language (Wierzbicka (1988:14). Again, my goal and usage of subjectivity here is to offer *portals* of the subjectively lived-Dylan-fan-experience (see Ellis and Flaherty, 1992:7).

In this thesis, subjectivity is clearly identified, along with musicality and identity, as a primary frame/perspective, as it is clearly evidenced and exemplified in just about all of the documented fan narratives I received on the lived-experiences of Dylan fans and which, in real-life and time, are all, in fact, very much subjectively-lived and experienced. Through reading (many times over) the Dylan fan narratives, there is a tangible and identifiable 'vein' of subjectivity running through them. As related to my research enquiries into the fan-life of Dylan fans and followers, when asking them what does Bob Dylan 'mean' to them, the subjective/subjectivity frame offered an extremely illuminative insight and understanding to the reactions and meanings that the fans

have and attach to Dylan and his music, and particularly to his more poetic and deeper song lyrics.

A particularly vivid example of applied subjectivity (and the referred subjective frame) was the very first research response I received to my request for Dylan fans to contact me regarding my research. There was one particular Dylan fan in Australia, Ivan, who was writing his own personal memoirs on the past 42 years of his life, aligning and reflecting his own life-journey and experiences with that of Dylan's life and music over the same time period. This fan had basically written a chapter covering each of his past 42 years – so, that makes 42 chapters of writing about Dylan, and subjectively linking his personal/fan life to that of Dylan's life and music – which exhibits a lot of time, commitment and personal feeling of 'connection' and importance, spent by one Dylan fan, to Dylan and musical oeuvre, as a significant entity and influence on his own life. Subjectivity here is mixed with passion and deep emotional feelings for something and someone.

This Australian fan's testimonial to Dylan is just one of the many examples written by individual Dylan fans of how much Dylan and his music can mean to them, subjectively. For conciseness here, I am just displaying a synopsis of the chapter headings and edited excerpts from this fan's very lengthy life-story narrative:

"Bob Dylan and Me" - by Ivan H.

Contents (excerpts)

*...1942 – 1946: Robert Allen Zimmerman (Hebrew name Shabtai Zisel ben Avraham) is born in St. Mary's Hospital 24 May, 1941, Duluth, Minnesota. I born in Fettercairn Private Hospital, Lindsay Street, Hamilton, City of Greater Newcastle, New South Wales 18 November 1941. Pearl Harbour. America at war. US and Aussie troops fighting in the streets of Brisbane. Japanese sub sinks Centaur off Brisbane. Battle of the Coral Sea. Rations and curtailment of freedoms. Memories of the last days of the war. Preparing for school. The music changes.*

*...1960 – 1965: I leave for Mt Isa. Robert Allen Zimmerman becomes 'Bob Dylan', leaves for New York. American politics, race and student unrest. 'I Have a Dream' speech. Painting lessons in Mt Isa. Bob Dylan releases first record. I*

*try writing poetry. Return to Brisbane. My father dies of cancer. Joining a surf club. Dylan releases another record. I move to Sydney. Haight Ashbury.*

*...1966 – 1968: Life drawing classes. Brisbane in the 60's. Bodgies and widgies replaced by rockers, sharpies and surfies. Foco Club and left wing politics. Studying art with American correspondence school, teacher Ben Shahn.. American politics and race. Paris riots. Dylan's music changes my life. Meeting my future wife. Bob Dylan and the expectations of his fans.*

*...1975 – 1985: Dylan's 'Blood on the Tracks' album. Our son born. Finishing art school. Awarded an Australia Council Living Artist's Fellowship. Beginnings of the Experimental Art Foundation. 'Slow Train Coming' album: Dylan and religion. Australian and American politics in the 80s. Dylan Tours.*

*...1995 –2005: 'World Gone Wrong' album. Bob Dylan begins new creative phase. I begin a new urge to produce art. Bob Dylan's show in Adelaide. The John Howard and George Bush years. Iraq. 9/11 and the Bali Bombings. Attacks on Bombay. East Timor. Tsunami. Barak Obama elected president of US. Climate change, terrorism and the crisis of capitalism (Global Financial Crisis). Dylan produces Christmas album, and is still touring. I'm producing my best work since 1970s. Touring my exhibition "Out of the Forest" and continuing with ephemeral work. The impact of American art and culture on Australia. Growing old. Bob Dylan's music continues..*

Senses of identity and self, accompanied by expressions of subjective sentiments and feelings for their fandom, such as the one above by Ivan, are clearly evident and recurrent within the Dylan fan narratives. The fan narrative (language) is the vehicle of expression through which the flow of thought and the feelings of passion can be communicated from the fan towards their 'favourite' person (or thing) – in this case, Bob Dylan, his persona and his music. These feelings of subjective identity, self, and emotions for Dylan's music are further displayed in the following fan texts, taken from the Facebook Online Survey I conducted in 2012:

*I literally don't remember a time in my life when I wasn't a Bob Dylan fan. His songs seemed impossible to comprehend, and yet, I "understood" them. I started "studying" Dylan's albums- starting with the very first one and going in order. Listening carefully to each song- thinking about what it meant when it was recorded, and what it means now (to me).*

*Bob means to me very much! More than anybody else. Something in that voice and that song spoke directly to me....and he has stayed with me ever since. A*

*wonderful, iconic, unique and original man who has given me all those magical, amazing songs that seep into your world and help you to survive within it.....*

*During my life I experienced that music and especially lyrics, mean a lot to me. Some of the Dylan songs always return to me on crossroads in my life. It is hard to explain, but on the funeral of my wife I did choose the music of Bob Dylan. I think this tells is what it meant to me. Bob has influenced my life since my very early teen years. I felt deep meaning & inspiration in his songs & still does. He inspires me & makes me think. His music is beautiful, his lyrics magical*

Interestingly, (and somewhat unexpectedly for me at the time) I found useful and common ground in relatable areas of subjectivity to my research on Dylan fans from some of Søren Kierkegaard's writings. Kierkegaard wrote about subjectivity from a philosophical and religious perspective. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), he pursues inquiry into the concept of 'truth as subjectivity', arguing that subjective truth is the only real, relevant and consequential, discoverable truth in life for the individual. He believed and wrote that the true essence and nature of human individuals can only be grasped through the concept of the 'subject' and the subjective.

Kierkegaard's concepts, examples and applications of subjectivity, here, envisage the individual nature of subjectivity and appropriation, where discovery of 'truth' is achieved and possible — via the subjectively lived-experience of the truth in one's own life. Kierkegaard also stated that the individual is and should be a being of freedom, intellect and choice, by living existentially, and through a subjective, inward awareness of truth within one's own individual existence.

Subjectively experiencing a sense of 'truth' and 'true' meaning is clearly attendant in many of the Dylan fan narratives and directly relates to the subjective meaning-making processes, identifications, commonalities and perceptions that the fans use, appropriate and relate to in their everyday lives — associating these areas of affect to Dylan and his music. For example, the following Dylan fan narrative enunciates this (subjective) discovery of 'truth', as this Dylan fan (a young man of just sixteen years of age) listens to, and hears Dylan's songs and lyrics "speak to him" in this way:

*I don;t look for truth in somebody else, - this is somehow a message that Dylans music carries. Try to find the truth in you, don't look for answers in other people's lifes.! Bob means music, poetry, storytelling, expressing an idea or a feeling. Understanding his lyrics you will learn how to love better, how to hate better, how to fight better etc.*

*I can listen to his music more often than I can listen to the songs of other interpreters. They never get boring and theres always something else to find out, some little detail you have missed the first 100 times when hearing the song. I find Bob amazing and exciting.*

*No matter what my mood, my finances, my state of mind, Dylan's music will take me out of that and give me space and time to re-jig. Essential mental maintenance, if you like?*

*First and foremost it has been the lyrics that have impressed me through life - either the ability to articulate a feeling I share or to be able to give me a fresh perspective on things.*

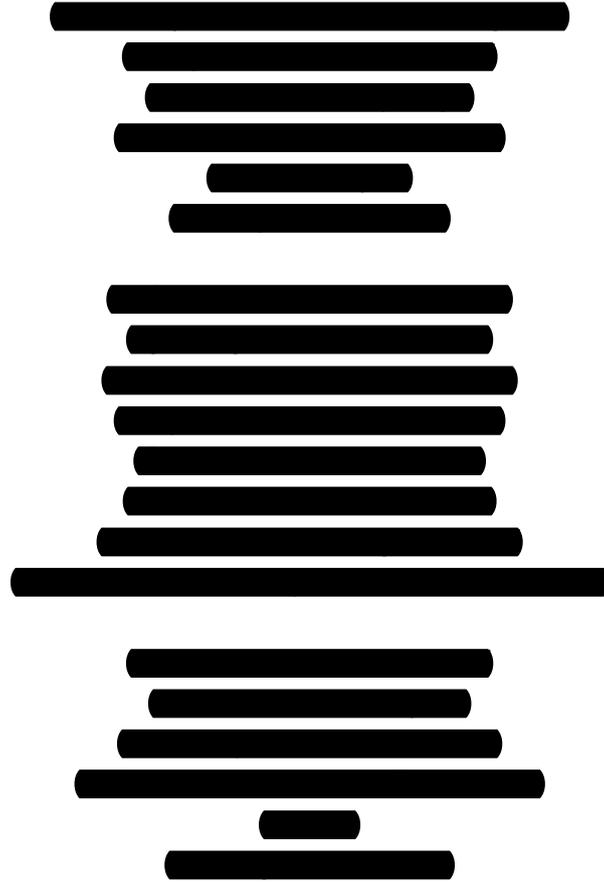
Again, referring to Kierkegaard, a person who experiences such awareness and subjectivity enters into a religious and 'transcendent' stage of life-experience. I observed many Dylan fans iterate similar feelings of 'transcendancy', even spiritual and religious experiences of 'awareness' and 'truth' when listening to certain Dylan songs. Dylan's music, and especially his song lyrics, 'ring true' in the ears, hearts and minds of many of his fans as they listen and relate intently to particular songs, many times over and over again.

Communication and inter-subjective feelings are clearly manifested in the receptors of emotion and language, and Dylan fans reciprocate and identify with the 'truthfulness' and transcendence they find and experience in Dylan's songs and lyrics. For example, the words of the following Dylan song stanza deeply resonate and 'ring true' with many of Dylan's fans and followers. This is one of the fans' favourite Dylan ballads and rhymes called, "Tangled Up In Blue".<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Copyright © 1974 by Ram's Horn Music; renewed 2002 by Ram's Horn Music



The subjective is a universal, human perspective and experience and has, thus, tremendous value and substance as an important subject matter of study and concern in the human sciences. Subjectivity is a fundamental and integral part of every individual human being's life and interests and inter-subjectivities. It is important because it is clearly a major element and perspective of human life, being and perception.

I found the psychosocial frame of subjectivity extremely useful to the understanding, description and analysis of much of the Dylan fan narratives as well as the thoughts, behaviours, feelings, perspectives and values expressed by Dylan fans on their active and lived, (human) fan experience. Employing the concept and perspective of the subjective frame has also kept my research and analysis very much grounded in the contexts and routines of the Dylan fans' everyday (subjective) fan-life-experiences.

## Everyday Life Perspectives of Music and Meaning

Since my research is concomitant to the musical *oeuvre* of Bob Dylan, through the fans and followers of Dylan fans and followers, a framing and account of musicality and culture is very much related and appropriate to my particular research and analysis. I found Dylan fans, even with all of their diversities and subjectivities, are all very much ‘united’ and *in* a ‘musical frame’ — of mind, attitude, relatability and identification with Dylan’s music, art and persona. A majority of the fans who took part in my research are also very well-versed and knowledgeable about Dylan’s musical *oeuvre* and, to these ardent and loyal fans, even how the music is played, sung, recorded and performed are all highly significant frames of reference, communication and meaning, on both the personal and ‘community’ level.

There is already a large body of literature on music and its effect and affect on its listening and attentive audience (e.g. Adorno 2002, Frith 1981, 2007, Middleton 1990, Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, Bennet 2000, DeNora 2001, Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002), and it is evident from a broad array of sources, that music communicates in a manner that can go beyond spoken and written language.

Levitin states, “Music is ... a tool for arousing feelings and emotions, music is better than language” (2006:267). “Language and music define us as human,” writes Patel (2008), citing the Amazon tribe, the Pirahã, whose language apparently differs from other cultures in distinct ways—no numerals, colour descriptions, creation myths or grandiose art forms—yet, “they have music in abundance, in the forms of songs”.

Music, then, is a unique and powerful communicator to human hearts and minds! Music evokes emotions on both the conscious and sub-conscious levels; and emotion evokes behaviour—in different ways for different people, often tailored and related to their own precise circumstances and personally located contexts and situations. From testimonials and research throughout the literature, music is evidenced to have a powerful, autonomous energy that can bring and affect similar feelings of empowerment and autonomy to its fans and listeners (see Cavicchi 1998; Doss 2004; Frith 1998; Hebdige 1979; Stevenson 2006; Whiteley 1992; Williams 2013).

There is strong evidence that humanity is a truly “musical species” and, by all accounts, we are ‘hard-wired’ to sound wherever we go (Levitin, 2006). Thus, music not only fills time and space but, in many ways, can even shape space and time to those that are immersed in it. The visceral and transcendent relationship between music and listener/audience is nothing new. The meanings and experiences people accredit to music and sound are deeply rooted in every human culture – e.g. a country’s ‘national anthem’ being sung by sports fans before a sports game). And there are many expressions and metaphors in the English language that exemplify this transcendent, ethereal experience with music, such as; “lost in the music”, “moved by the music”, “in another world”, “far out”, “groovy”, “sublime”, etc.

According to world-renowned neuroscientist Aniruddh Patel, music is “...sound organized in time, intended for, or perceived as, aesthetic experience” (2007:12).<sup>57</sup> The aesthetic (and spiritual) themes of music have been acclaimed and affirmed by many over the eons of time. John Logan’s<sup>58</sup> quote, “Music is the medicine of the mind” is often recited in music literature (Storr, 1997). Boethius, a philosopher from the 6<sup>th</sup> century stated, “Nothing unites the parts of man, his body and soul, as does music, which is a conjunction of the rational and irrational”; and structural linguist, Claude Levi-Strauss (1970) once wrote, “... since music is the only language with the contradictory attributes of being, at once, intelligible and untranslatable, the musical creator is a being comparable to the gods, and music itself the supreme mystery of the science of man ... a mystery that all the various disciplines come up against”.

Gardiner (2000:3) shares how human affect and emotions, corporeal experience and lived-role experiences are evident and prevalent, especially when framed from the music fan’s own viewpoint and subjective experience<sup>59</sup>. And, in *Making Music Together*, Alfred Schutz (1951) referred to the ‘mutual tuning-in relationship’ and the immediate and present experience between music performers and listeners that allows deep meaning and emotional responses to emerge (quoted in Skarda, 1979:54), which also underlines the emotional and affective intensity that plays a huge role and lies at the heart of what it actually means to be a (music) fan.

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<sup>57</sup> Aniruddh D. Patel is the Esther J. Burnham Senior Fellow at The Neurosciences Institute in San Diego, California

<sup>58</sup> John Logan (1748–1788) was a Scottish minister and poet.

<sup>59</sup> See more on the subjective perspective in the thesis section *on Subjectivity*, page 136.)

As the Dylan fan narratives clearly exemplify, many fans 'connect' in a deep, cerebral way to Dylan's music, many times via the interpreted meanings and ambiances of the lyrics of Dylan's songs, particularly the way Dylan projects his voice, which invokes and appeals to their personal feelings and senses, in a 'reverberating' manner, yet remaining on a very personal and individual level. For example, Julie, a 35 year-old teacher from Liverpool wrote, "I have yet to hear a performer whose voice can more perfectly understand and convey regret and pain, fun and sarcasm, speculation and knowledge, irony and indifference, truth and fiction... the value of a silence and the meaning in a sigh or breath." This deeper, moving experience of being enveloped in a musical aura can even affect/change one's own human perceptions — as another Dylan fan describes thus:

*A key memory I have: that same day, Christmas, riding across the freeway en-route to my grandmother's house in Wilmington, California, watching the high-tension towers and long fields of high grass alongside the road streaming by while taking in the songs, "Bob Dylan's Dream", and "Hard Rain" etc. for the first time. That whole area of land to the side of the freeway is particularly removed from specific significations of modern civilization, and so, through the music, there was a sort of 'enrapturing' sense of timelessness at work -- hearing the songs and seeing that same visionary world (of Dylan) outside the window. — Charlie, USA*

Dylan's music is a primary frame and point of reference to the majority of Dylan fans and followers in my research. The same neurotransmitters seem to 'fire' for fans attending 'live' Dylan concerts as for those experiencing significant, emotional, personal life-experiences or life-changes. Many of Dylan's songs also relate, address and describe the very real and everyday human experiences and contexts of life and lived-experience such as love, relationships, the political world and social justice; and it is evident that a preponderance of Dylan fans in my research can, and do, relate to these songs in a very personal way, often articulating and connecting Dylan's songs and lyrics and to their own personal life-stories and experiences of their own everyday lives, as the following Dylan fans show and talk about on their online fan forums and daily discussion boards:

*...I am not a fanatic. But I love the songs. I have listened to them so many times and find them endlessly rewarding in new ways each time I hear them. They change as I change. I don't so much collect. I do have all the official releases and I listen to them all (well, except for Dylan and the Dead. And the other 80s*

*stuff I probably have really only listened to a few times). I have read most of the books ... and I do keep 75 bob shows on my portable player. And I listen to Bob songs every day, and have for at least 20 years. And I can't stop visiting the Bob Dylan Website (ER) and I vote on 'favorite-live' bob songs — so, yes, I guess I am a fanatic now that I think about it!—Ha! :) - John, USA*

*Bob is just like you and me --He goes through life like we all do -- one day at a time. – Bill, Canada*

*I think the most important thing I have taken away from my involvement with Dylan and his music is the attempt to stay within the moment. He talks about living in the moment....the relationship of the past and the future. One is gone and done...the other is just a dream at best....but living in the moment., immersing yourself and all your attention into life as it is being lived....that is hard to do. It is a lesson that translates to every day living --being in the moment. This is hard to do with all of life's distractions but very rewarding when you can and do achieve it. – Johanna, Germany*

Joli Jensen asserted the need “to explore fandom as a normal, *everyday* or social phenomenon...” (Jensen 1992:9), and, as Daniel Cavicchi wrote in his seminal book on Bruce Springsteen fans; “Fandom (reflects) an extension of the performance-based feelings of connection and community into *daily* life. ... and that is why it is important for fans, and should be of particular interest to scholars” (Cavicchi 1998:118). Cavicchi’s work on fans is a germane (and rare) example of academic attention to the need for a focus on and inclusion of the fan’s voice and perspective, relating and placing these in the everyday in fan studies. In his book, *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans*, he writes:

*I am concerned with the everyday not only as a topic of study but also as a means of understanding... I have been careful to focus on fans’ daily thinking about what is important in fandom, rather than what academics or journalists or critics think is important, and to introduce only those academic interpretations that complement or highlight fans views ... (Cavicchi 1998:10)*

As the everyday-life setting and frame probably accounts for the majority of fans and fandom in the world, plus illustrates tersely just how the everyday appropriations of their fandom take place and are individually incorporated into their everyday lives, I would assert that the everyday perspective is also important because it provides the most ‘true likeness’ fan-image and definition of, “what is a fan” and how fandom is lived and practised. The everyday-life milieu locates and describes the majority of fans

as 'normal, everyday' people, (which most fans are), with regular, everyday lives and work, (as most fans have).

As I have outlined, the Dylan fans in this thesis are also everyday people who are, in their own distinct ways, simply living their everyday lives, whilst daily appropriating and using the music of Bob Dylan as an everyday enjoyment, resource and inspiration — with many sharing their passion of Dylan's music with other Dylan fans. Academic and music fan, Daniel Cavicchi (2002:7) tersely relates his everyday fan experience in this way: "Music is not always the source of marked transcendent experience but a resource for the unmarked, regular, hard work of getting through each day." The following fan narratives share how Dylan's music helps them, as fans, literally "get through their every day":

*Without his music and especially lyrics, my world would be a little bit darker. Without seeing him from time to time, visiting his concerts my life would be much darker. Without the rose he gave me eleven years ago, there would be much lesser joy in my life! He has given me hope through his music!*

*...I still feel as though I have come home when I hear him, and also see him perform, I was at five gigs this year !*

*i find comfort and inspiration in bob's music. his words find their way in my thoughts daily. his humor, both subtle and overt makes me laugh. his insights to love and the human condition sometimes overwhelm me. his melodies and his voice soothe me ... 'most of the time'.*

To some people, the 'everyday' setting can bring out a practical, almost pragmatic side of the mundane, with its homogenous functionality and repetition and everyday mainstream meanings; but, to others, it also brings out the unorthodox, different, resistant, escapist and marginalised, even counter-culture feelings and attitudes (Gardiner 2000:15). With many Dylan's fans, this latter (counter-culture) stance is very noticeable in my research data as the following fan narrative displays:

*Bob is a role model for doing things in life, to please yourself and not to 'kiss ass'. He taught me that it was okay to dance beneath a diamond sky with 'one hand waving free'. He taught me what confidence is. He taught me to live my life the way I wanted. I admire his refusal to "play the game" all these years and I am so proud to be a Minnesotan like him. – Queen Jane, USA*

From the location of the mundane, emanating from everyday-life existence, have come some of the deepest Dylan fan narratives I have received for my research, containing and describing some of the most vivid, transformative experiences, through the fans' own heartfelt texts, relating to topics such as, 'timelessness', the 'ineffable', 'surrealism', with the fans articulating and sharing experiences of their own ideas and ideals, as Dylan's music takes them on a journey away from the mundane alienations and 'objectivities' of the material world.

These fans have certainly been inspired, influenced and brought into a place of the aesthetic and truth through Dylan's music and its transcendent qualities, from where they now feel they have finally found something, met someone, connected with a true-feeling and received an inspired energy that they feel gives them not only a personal freedom and conviction, but also a desire to share this experience with others. As the following Dylan fan from Bosnia effectively communicates in her declaration to the ongoing affect that Dylan's music has had on her, over her many years of being a fan:

*Because of his (Dylan's) lyrical power, bravery and honesty, every word for me oozed with an unmatched seduction right from the very beginning. I was much like a flower leaning towards the sun, wanting more and more of this nourishment of the mind and imagination, the ears and the soul. With every listen, my soul was being washed and my life perspectives renewed.*

*For me, it is Dylan's breadth of material and ideas and images, collated over the past half-century, that have kept me spellbound - learning more with every record, treasuring more with every year gone by. From his folk era to the electric era, the mellowed country era, the mystical Rolling Thunder Revue, the Reborn Christian era, the present era of dirty blues and mature realisation - from love songs to political thrashers, biting folk songs to swooning ballads - it is spellbinding how, as the man himself ages, his music never seems to age in quality or conviction.*

*For me, Dylan isn't the achingly natural, personal, or the beautifully accurate soul-writer who cries for the pains of ordinary people and burns with the power to resume justice that Neil Young is; nor is Dylan the blue-collar American hero, trudging through the mines and holding up the true, everyman baron for freedom and reality, with faith and conscience burning and churning through his blood that Bruce Springsteen is to me. No, Dylan is something much different -- something grander and more political - like the world's poet speaking from the mountain, reeling in rhymes and riddles and melodies, but wording out the truest truths of the world. He speaks directly to me via song very specifically*

*about certain situations and people in my life and thus acts almost as an oracle and guide, too. Pretty cool! – Katerina, Bosnia*

There are times in life when most people, at some time, feel the need to 'get away from it all' and be in a different environment, a different mood, or place (Cohen and Taylor, 1978); escaping the self and the everyday 'grinds of life' are mentioned often in the Dylan narratives – and many Dylan fans 'escape' into Dylan's music and lyrics for inspiration and transcendence and to let the music lead them into a different place. The following narrative from Jeff, a 26 year-old Dylan fan from Canada, describes his transcending Dylan fan experience:

*Dylan's music can provide a doorway out of yourself – "a pathway that leads up to the stars" – but it can also help bring you back to yourself, to what you should be doing with your life: attending to these eternal truths, trying to take that code and carry it forward, pass it along, using whatever materials – musical or otherwise – that your life and history and inclinations have given you. In this case, Dylan brought me back to my own heritage; it was decades after hearing his "Sarah Jane" that I first mentioned Uncle Dave Macon to my father and heard the story of that long-ago visit, and was given the photograph to keep, and pass on.*

*Perhaps the kind of transcendence I've talked about here only works if you're a certain kind of person, with your nerves aligned in a certain way, attuned to a certain signal. Perhaps it's all a happenstance of biochemistry. I don't know. In a world where every understanding, no matter how profound, is provisional, temporary, clouded and corrupted, I wouldn't make universal claims for any particular path. I do think that the experience of the heightened reality offered by Dylan's music – and by all the places he leads us to – holds out the promise of a rough-hewn wisdom, something that can make us feel more alive while we're living, while our brief moment is passing... **Anyway, it works for me!***

For many music fans and listeners, music itself holds a special place and relationship to the inner-existential self that enters into the deeper musical experience. Thus, music itself is highly significant and pregnant with meaning in these very personalised contexts held by (Dylan) music fans, and as appropriated and practised in its various realisations and processes by the active participants and creators. In her book, *The Hidden Musicians*, Ruth Finnegan (2007) describes how, for many music fans and listeners, each musical experience is a full, rich and creative one, experienced as *the* most important thing that is 'happening' to them in that time and space. To such

audiences, music is a reflective, existential piece of one's particular and personal life-experience and, as such, plays a significant and influential role as part of their distinctive way of life.

### **On Researching and Analysing (Fan) Behaviour**

My research task has been to enquire into, engage with, and locate and describe the lived experiences of 'Dylan Fans and Followers' – to discover some of what is involved in 'being a Dylan fan'. But, what I also subsequently discovered and realised, as a latent consequence of my research on Dylan fans and fandom, is that fandom is perhaps best, and more accurately described, as an 'expression of *human* behaviour', and, therefore, study of fans and fandom is also related to the study of human-life sciences. In spite of any categorisation, generalisation and/or thematic that can be made as fan-related, there is, in essence, a unique, individual and personalised human life that is involved. There is a unique person, who does necessarily feel or act in any necessarily 'standardised', 'rationalised' or 'categorised' manner "as a fan", but more one which reflects and presents their inner-self on the changeable, sometimes unstructured, emotional, often erratic, fleeting stage of their specific and idiosyncratic everyday-life.

My research subject matter and focus of the Dylan fan and his or her exclusive and closely-held, even cherished in many cases, fandom and personal culture is a sensitive, complex and multifarious phenomenon, as it has to do with, not just 'fans', but with everyday human beings, human behaviour and human feelings, all of which are located and lived out in precise and personal experiences, within diverse social and cultural settings. These are phenomena and experiences we all, as human beings, (may) have been though, or will, at some time, go through in our life-time – just because they are all very human experiences and situations, and are part of human existence and the world we live in (van Manen, 1990).

It should be noted here that human life and human behaviour is, of course, the same as fan-life and fan behaviour – for, as I made clear in Chapter One, fans are simply human beings with a particular interest, passion and commitment to some thing or someone. The language label of the 'fan' is merely a common and constructed word

that has been used and attached by others (often non-fans) to the particular people who have the particular interest, passion and commitment to some particular thing or person.

Human emotions and sensibilities are, in themselves, often difficult to understand, describe, articulate or write about — particularly in a precise or formal written form/style, or, indeed, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, in any one-particular academic or non-academic disciplinary format — because the actual ‘real-life’ human lived-experience is so ultimately subjectively and personally experienced in such a very personal and existential way, and by a particular individual human being,. However, because we are all human, we can, and do, often relate on a human level to these individual or social lived-experiences. This human, ‘social sensibility’ is the same for, and pertinent to, Dylan fans and their Dylan-fan-experiences.

Although written many years ago now, Hans Rickman’s (1967) treatise on *Understanding and Human Behaviour* still resonates, and certainly connects with my research experience, findings and conclusions on Dylan fans and followers:

*“Human beings must be understood as human beings ... If our approach is too narrow we only get hold of a fragment of a complex state of affairs. Different approaches must be integrated by closer cooperation within and between disciplines. (Rickman 1967: xii)*

As fellow human beings, we can, then, understand much of the human experience of ‘being in the world’. We can relate to human behaviour, feelings and needs, effectively because we ourselves are human and part of the world we live in. To some extent, we can, and perhaps have already experienced something similar in our lives with those of similar intent, practices, and lived-experience. For instance, I wrote how I found it a real advantage to also be a Dylan fan myself as well as an academic researcher – it definitely helped me understand other Dylan fans in a more empathetic way.

The Dylan fan narratives are a valuable asset to understanding these important human lived-experiences, oral-histories and ‘documents of fan-life’ (see Plummer, 2001). These narrated lived-fan-experiences enlighten and make intelligible the human experience and meaning of being a Dylan fan and, thereby, they provide a very useful

contribution to a fuller and more in-depth understanding and sensibility of Dylan fandom and fan practices.

Human understanding and meaning are important because they help us relate to and 'know' as much as we can about what is happening in the world around us and in our daily everyday lives (e.g. how to behave, talk, dress, decide, believe, etc.). We can know and have knowledge of something if we have experienced understanding and meaning in our own lived-experience. Rickman (1967:131) noted how shared experiences and meaningful contexts are the basis and foundation of all the human studies, and when the researcher begins to understand the meanings of these expressions, only then will he/she realise and understand the facts of the situation or people he/she is studying. The Dylan fans' expressions of their fandom are, therefore, very valuable and useful insights on human behaviour — their fan inter-subjectivities are also invaluable for further understandings and examples of group behaviour, identity and interaction.

Human behaviour is complex and difficult to understand and analyse, simply because that's the way many human beings are! According to van Manen (2005), inquiry into the complex phenomena of human behaviour and the lived-experience entails and requires a certain affinity and sensibility with those you are studying or researching.

And, again, human (fan) experience, identity and behaviour are clearly very much influenced by how they are (perceived to be) 'framed' — existing in reality and perception in the subjective mind and mood of the individual, influenced and surrounded, knowingly or otherwise, by the situational context of time and place and persons, and all within the larger environment of community, society and the 'outside world'. As such, the fan phenomenon warrants academic attention as it an expression of human behaviour that connects with a wide range of significant social actions and activities ... through the participation and sharing of beliefs, meanings, and lived-experience (Kozinets, 1997; Thorne and Bruner, 2006)

## Chapter Summations

Because the individual and wider interactions that take place within human-life scenarios are human, social, complex and ‘thickly’ described from within the locus of everyday-life (Geertz, 1973), the contextual perspectives I have used in this chapter have been pragmatically applied as related to the goal and purpose of allowing the participating Dylan fans to have their own particular presence, discourse and autonomy in describing the essence and practice of their fandom. (Here, as opposed to being more ‘colonially’ spoken for, or represented or contained by a more ‘distant’, purely academic or singularly-prescribed framework – e.g. such as viewing fans and their fandom solely through a ‘consumption’ lens, or ‘media-audience’ theory.)

I have been rather cautious of using a singular or overly ‘distant’ theoretical stance to hypothesise what I, or others, think the fans themselves are saying about their own personal fandom, feelings and/or identification with Dylan’s music and lyrics, which are, of course, on very personalised and subjective levels. What I have attempted to focus on in my research are methodologies and resources that will shed light on the lived-experiences of the subject matter (Dylan fans) and give insights that will produce positive measures of clarity and understanding of the interpretations and meanings held by Dylan fans and followers.

And so, I have highlighted and used a multi-layered, multi-disciplinary approach and application to my research process, writing and analysis — for example, employing perspectives, contexts and theoretical ‘frames’ such as, theories of self, subjectivity, everyday-life, music, emotion and community. I have applied this methodology in order to locate, connect with, and describe the very human, subjective and diverse lived-fan-experiences, often referred and referenced by the Dylan fans to Dylan’s music, and from within their particular everyday-life settings and circumstances.

I found these applied contextual perspectives particularly useful in shedding light and understanding on the expressions of Dylan fan-life, which are embedded within the Dylan fans’ narratives and have been applied to their everyday-life and their lived-fan-experience. Each perspective is applied and purposed to develop and open up more communication and discussion towards a deeper and more holistic understanding of the active Dylan fans and followers, who are many, global, and diverse.

The everyday, real-life environment reveals the *rich* milieu and matrix of inter-personal relationships, interactions and communications that take place inside the everyday world, all of which is germane to Dylan fans and their fandom, and is particularly evident within and across the hubs of Dylan-fan-life, much of which takes place each day globally online via e-communications for (tens of) thousands of Dylan fans.

As exemplified in this chapter and throughout the Dylan fan narratives, the creation and maintenance of the self, identity and belonging are, to a great extent, produced and influenced through the *everyday* interpersonal relationships and communications. In order to extrapolate and uncover the various real-life experiences of (Dylan) fan-life and apply appropriate perspectives to my data, I have, therefore, highlighted the fan's experiences and actions in the context of their everyday routines of life, as a way to illustrate the fans' real-life experience and ephemera of daily life, which is, I believe, on the whole, descriptive and true of the majority of (Dylan) fans in my research.

The underscored interactionist-constructionist views of the self and their attached identities, along with the person's senses of belonging and perception, highlight critical and instrumental 'frames-of-life' — the 'everyday' being the setting of many of these habitual human interactions and 'routinizations' that happen in the course of life. The (Dylan fan-related) intersubjectivities and associations seem to clearly bring an explicit sense of identity, belief and belonging as a Dylan fan. And the recurrent (daily) fan interactions and lived-fan-experiences, in turn, have a long-term affect on the individual fan, in relation to the influences and affects on identity, self, sense of belonging, belief, feeling, emotion and perception.

Van Manen's (2007) seminal research explorations, using a phenomenological approach and practice at the 'reflective level' to support enquiry and analysis, which includes writing at the reflective level, introduces a complexity and sensitivity of understanding that attempts to 'feel the experience of others'.

In this chapter (five) of enquiry and analysis, with the purposed intention of obtaining a deeper understanding, and a more balanced perspective and account of the actual everyday fan-life experiences of being a Dylan fan/follower, I have presented theoretically-based perspectives and frames of enquiry and analysis that I hope have

contributed to the understanding of the 'experience of meaningfulness' that Dylan fans experience in their fandom. Van Manen describes thus:

*... We are so inclined to convert research into action and usable "results" that this activism can limit the possibility for understanding, a form of understanding that involves the experience of meaningfulness. (van Manen 2005:251)*

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

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## Thesis Synopsis

This research has emerged from a need to: (a) discover, connect and engage with a current sample of Dylan fans and their unique, 'lived-fan-experience'; (b) focus on and investigate an under-explored dimension of the fan research canon – i.e. the individual fan's unique one-to-one relationship and identification with 'Dylan', particularly highlighting the emotional responses experienced and the ensuing affective connections formed by the fan through Dylan's music and art; and (c) to interrogate my own research experiences and data, which are the descriptive life-experiences and narratives of Dylan 'fans and followers', considering how these accounts of Dylan fandom have impacted my research as well as how they are related to the production and construction of knowledge about fans and fandom, in general. My research methodologies have consequently and primarily been expressly applied to understand and describe this lived, often ineffable, Dylan-fan-experience.

My research intention has been to explore, enquire and communicate the lived-Dylan-fan-experience and consequently open up discussion to the research areas of Dylan fans and fandom, the individual emotive, musical experience and human expression, plus the related and extensive sensibilities of identity, affect, relationship, subjectivity, belonging, meaning, values and knowledge. These affective life-components are all very much included in the Dylan fan experience too, and related elements to the human existential experience. Human (fan) life is existential, idiosyncratic and complex. As my research aim and purpose has been to connect with the Dylan fans' 'voices' as well as their own representation and description of their particular practice of fandom, 'in their own words', I needed research perspectives, processes and constituents that would clearly illustrate actual, applied Dylan fandom in a 'true-to-life', accurate way, and which would represent 'real-life' lived-fan-experiences.

As summarised, the approaches and steps I have taken to express my research topic have been intended to provide an entrance and understanding into the ethnographic lived-fan-experience of Dylan fans and followers; to allow my subject matter (i.e. the Dylan fan) to 'speak', giving discourse space and credence to the fans' own narratives, their subjective perspectives, lived-experiences and applied interpretative meanings of their fandom. Although it is quite impossible to give a complete account for the plurality of voices, or a complete account of the lived-experiences of all Dylan fans through my

research, it has been my purpose and intention that this thesis has shown sufficient and useful insights into my employed methodologies and to contribute more understanding of the fandom of ‘Dylan fans and followers’.

I have stated that a fan is a multi-dimensional and unique human being (person) with diverse habits and idiosyncrasies, reflected and refracted by the routinization and ephemerality of every day-life. The everyday-life setting is an expedient and authentic setting for the discussion and analysis of fans and their fandom, as the practice and performance of fandom often ‘results and emerges from the ordinary, everyday life-events’ and eventualities (Highmore, 2002:16) — again, these are clearly evident in the Dylan fan narratives of their related lived-fan-experiences.

Using grounded, ethnographical approaches to my subject matter, with the purpose and goal of acquiring further *understanding* of Dylan fans and followers, my research has attempted to *acad-emicallly*<sup>60</sup> engage with ‘Dylan fans and followers’ and their original fan narratives, and to demonstrate the appropriations Dylan fans use, create and maintain in their practised fandom. As evidenced throughout the thesis, as much as possible I have incorporated the Dylan fans’ own narrative voices into the thesis as they themselves explain, in their own words, their particular fan experiences of what Bob Dylan “means to them”, and how this affects and influences their everyday-life. I have also inquired into what it’s like and what it means to those fans who take an active and participatory role in the virtual, global community of online Dylan fans.

I have responded directly to my own research experience and data on Dylan fans, for it has been the fans themselves and their narrated fan-experiences that have predominantly provided the ‘live-data’ for my research. And, these are some of the reasons that the Dylan fans themselves and their discourse voices are at the core of my research focus, and why they are referenced and highlighted extensively throughout the thesis chapters. The fans and the fan narratives have been by far the best and most authentic references and examples of Dylan fandom, illustrating and expressing the lived and practised Dylan fan-life experiences.

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<sup>60</sup> See explanation of ‘the emic in academic’ on page176

My research into Dylan fans and their fandom touches on what I believe is the most important element to any individual fan experience, and that is, the very personal, emotional, corporeal experience and bond that a fan feels, forms and maintains with their favourite subject/object of admiration. Consequently, I am exploring the individual Dylan fan's emotional attachments, 'connections' and identifications to Dylan and his music. By exploring the Dylan fans' emotional and affectual attachments, along with their perceptions of identification and 'relationship' to Dylan, I am also drawing attention to a somewhat neglected area of study in the literature on fans, plus investigating what has been, in general, a lack of representation of the subjective perspective and the lived-experiences of fans. There has also been a particular absence in the academic literature on 'Bob Dylan fans and their fandom'.

Enquiry into how do fans make such strong, affectual bonds of identification with their 'idol', the person or thing they are most interested in is, I believe, important, particularly if and when their fandom becomes a consistent and important part of their everyday life. Many Dylan fans have been a fan or follower of Dylan since 1961 when he first appeared on the grand public stage of the American music and culture scene, and these life-log fans have followed Dylan's music, career and personal life in great detail, and examples of such fan followings are illustrated throughout the various thesis chapters and sections.

Reading (many times) through the plethora of fan stories and feedback sent to me via my research website over the past almost three years, I could not help but see the emotion, passion and focused intensity so many Dylan fans have, and relate to, in very personal and meaningful ways, with Dylan and his music. Yet, as mentioned, comparatively few academic studies have actually explored the fans' emotional attachments and identifications to their 'idols', although it is arguably the most important aspect of any fan's experience towards their passion, interest, or 'favourite one' and is, therefore, an important area of research that warrants further study.

Many of the stories and responses I have received through my research from Dylan fans have described, and in much detail from many of the fans, just how, when and where they first heard, or identified with "Bob" — and that 'special' connection made through the musical experience listening to Dylan's music, particularly his song lyrics, is deeply embodied and embedded in the hearts and souls of many Dylan fans. Jamie,

a young sixteen-year-old fan from Canada, describes the effect and affect that Dylan's music had on her for the first time:

*I first heard Like a Rolling Stone in October 2009. I listened to it for maybe half an hour, again and again. I knew it was different from anything anyone had ever written. I never really noticed his voice as being irritating or even weird. It worked perfectly with the song – there was simply no other way to sing it. “You’re invisible nowwww, you got no secrets ....to conceeeeeeaaaaal – how does it feeeel?” I couldn’t get over it. I downloaded the rest of Highway 61 illegally, and listened to it at once. The songs, “Ballad of a thin man” and “Desolation row” really jumped out at me, and so I kept listening. With other artists, this wouldn’t happen. I would forget about them if there were only 3 good songs on an album, but I wanted to figure out what this was. How could the other songs be so forgettable if the album had opened with a song like, “Like a Rolling Stone”? I listened and listened, and downloaded more Dylan, and eventually I got to enjoy most of his albums ... Dylan’s songs seemed like something I had heard before, in another time, like had always known then deep inside.*

Dylan's songs 'speak' and articulate to his fans in an emotionally-charged way and are often linked and appropriated directly into their own everyday life-contexts and personal life-experiences, fantasises, wishes, desires, etc., which consequently make Dylan's words and songs even more 'personal' and 'true' to the fan and thus, very meaningful and significant on a very individual, cerebral and existential<sup>61</sup> level. This next fan narrative exhibits this existential feeling of 'being' (alone) in the world:

*My life has been filled with Dylan’s music and, like the air we breathe, we do not notice most of the time that we are being sustained and kept alive by this invisible, undetectable force. Like oxygen, Dylan’s songs keep my blood running through my veins. Dylan’s songs fulfill so many purposes. They rile, they tease, they seduce, they hurt, they inspire, they confuse and provoke thought. There are even a few that can raise a smile or an outright laugh! They are always intense, multi-faceted... nothing is to be taken at face value in Dylan’s world. Entering – no, immersing – oneself in Dylan’s world is like living Alice’s Adventures Through The Looking Glass. Characters recur.*

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<sup>61</sup> My applied definition and placement of the 'existential' here is, 'the belief that the reflexive individual remains at the centre of a mediated social and cultural life [and that] individual identity emerges, changes, creates, defines and adapts to the dynamics and emotive meanings attached to the particular social and cultural life' (Kotarba, 2002). It is also an 'inner-self experience' in the context of 'being in the world', 'with nothing to hold onto but our own being' (Denzin, 1992). By fans, it has been referred and related to as something that is 'a happening' to an individual, in a core, emotional and primary life-experience—as in a 'self-affecting', self-realising, self-reflecting way (Williams, 2013).

*Reality is exaggerated and twisted until it becomes a new reality. Dreams merge with consciousness and the lines become blurred. And yet, through all the twisting, blurring, posturing and allegory, listening to Dylan is like standing in a hurricane-force wind of truth. It is like standing on top of a mountain and taking a deep breath of the clearest air imaginable. It is enough to knock you off your feet with the power of the realization. Human emotion and condition laid bare. – Painfully so, sometimes.*

*It is as though Dylan says, 'Listen to me. I know how it is. I have lived it. I have felt the joys and the pain; the highs and the lows. Let me take that burden from you and guide you through to the other side. – Joanna, Sweden*

A Dylan fan can, and will, very much relate a Dylan song to the time that he or she was in such and such a place, or when they were treated a certain way as the lyrics in Dylan's songs most 'indignantly' describe in a particular song. These song 'identifiers', together with the feelings and emotions in Dylan's voice, which very much resonate, 'feel right' and 'make sense' to the individual fan; these all make the places, characters, events and happenings in Dylan's songs to be very 'real' and highly 'identifiable' and 'translatable' to the individual fan/listener.

Dylan fans have related to how Dylan and his music have, "been with them", in some direct and specifically personal way in their own particular life-journey experience. Listening to Dylan's songs (often over and over, and over again), and attending his live-concerts (as often as they can) has, for many fans, been experienced as something very special and distinctly relatable to their own personal life journey. The fans express how Dylan's music and story-telling, through his musical, lyrical imagery, have embedded themselves into the fans' life-narrative, as a 'blueprint' and a 'soundtrack' of their own lives, in some cases, becoming even a spiritual experience which has deeply affected their minds, bodies and souls, as the following fan narratives describe:

*Dylan was there at every transition in life for me. I can recount the important stages of my life by using the yardstick of which Dylan album had been released that year. I am an entirely "indiscriminate" Dylan fan. I love it all, the good and the bad, maybe especially the bad! I collect all the official music (several times over) as well as bootlegs. (I have dreams of finding rare bootlegs in record bins...) – David, 38 yrs. Australia*

*...I felt as if Dylan's song and album releases coincided with my deep involvement with him. I also began relating Dylan themes into situations in my own life. I started to use them as my life's road map—or, perhaps they started to 'guide' me? ... On September 10<sup>th</sup> 2001, I was anticipating Dylan's next album, *Love and Theft*. We know what happened the next day. The sound of this album serves as the soundtrack of those sad times and the lyrics seemed to describe the day's events. This was profound to me. In 2004, I moved to a small rural town, Dylan answered this by playing in the town I drove to get my groceries, on my birthday. In 2006, the very week *Modern Times* was released I took a risk and ventured into business ownership. That album became the soundtrack to my own *Modern Times* as I kicked the *Workingman's Blues*.*

*Soon, a fellow Dylan fan, and I, decided to get married. Surprisingly, the week before we embarked on a life of marriage together, Dylan released an album titled *Together through Life*. How did he know we wondered? Dylan continued playing to me on my Halloween birthdays throughout the course of the decade. The night our first child was born Bob played, "Happy Birthday" in his encore set...Now, 19 years after my first Dylan show. I have amassed hundreds of tapes and Cd's, attended 80 shows in 12 states, eight on my birthday and 26 with my wife. I have met two of my best friends at Dylan shows and seen a lot of the American Middle West because of him.*

*You name the album I will tell you the time of my life that it represents. But most of all, it's like Bob has been alongside me every step of the way during my adult life. So what does Bob Dylan mean to me, well, it's personal.* – James & Joyce, 41/45 yrs. USA

With such deep-seated, emotional responses, together with the very personalised attached meanings by its listeners, one can understand and envision music as a very powerful channel and vortex of meaning and emotion, to both its performing artist(s) as well as its audience(s), who often become deeply drawn into the same musical experience (or, 'happening'), and wherein, strong emotions, identifications, articulations, consonance and 'voice' are all experienced, transmuted and reciprocated to and from the musical performer/performance and the listeners/audience. There are many expressions and metaphors in the English language that exemplify this musical experience, e.g. "lost in the music", "moved by the music", "in another world", "far out", "groovy", "sublime", and so on. Dylan fans listening to Dylan's music and/or attending his live-concert performances have communicated these same feelings.

One young, high school student expressed the affect Dylan and his music has personally had on him in this way:

*He taught me that, [REDACTED]<sup>62</sup> ... I have used Dylan in my high school English classes to show them what being an individual means. – Adrian, 18 yrs. Scotland*

Dylan finds an audience who identify and relate very much to Dylan's songs and lyrics and those oral-histories that have been passed on through Dylan's music, interviews and writings. Many of his most ardent fans and followers seem to also be experienced, conscious and aware of the places in life where the individual struggles to maintain some form of value and autonomy with a sense of meaning and truth on an existential level. In her book, *Encounters with Bob Dylan*, Dylan fan Tracy Johnson (2000) recounts:

*Over the years of attending his concerts, I discovered I wasn't the only one who had fantasies of making some sort of connection with Bob Dylan. Standing in line at shows, nearly every fan I encountered shared memories of having met him or dreams of doing so. And with every single tale at every single venue, I was enthralled by these conversations...*

*Bob, you've given so many of us voices. So many of us have received courage and dignity through your words. You've touched the lives of the gentle, the inarticulate, the guardians, the protectors of the mind, the aching, the wounded, the luckless, the abandoned, and the forsaken. Now, it's time that we lifted up our voices to you, to give thanks for getting multitudes of us out of our boxes and into our own minds.*

Themes and topics highlighting 'being-in-the-world', the romantic artist, the believer in the power and magic of music and the wisdom of the sages, the separation from the seemingly all-pervading corruption greed, hypocrisies and injustices of a society ruled by a masked media and government, the individual surreal and spiritual journey of life – all are enshrined in Dylan's music and art. Dylan fans demonstrate a resonance with these themes and topics, and on a highly affective and individual level. Floyd, a middle-aged fan in the USA, has followed Dylan for the whole of his adult-life resounds Dylan's influences thus:

*... You can follow Dylan through many doors, into many realms: the disordered sensuality of Symbolist poetry, the high bohemia and low comedy of the Beats and Brecht, the guilt-ridden, God-yearning psalms of King David, the Gospel road of Jesus Christ, the shiv-sharp romance of Bogart and Bacall. There's*

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<sup>62</sup> Lyrics from the Dylan song, 'It's alright Ma, I'm only bleeding!' © Special Rider Music 1993

*Emerson in there, too, Keats, Whitman, even Rilke if you look hard enough: fodder for a thousand footnotes, signposts to a hundred sources of further enlightenment.*

Throughout our life-course, we often engage in activities and agency that affect and shape our ideas of self, who we are, what we want, who we aspire to be, and so on. Interactions with others reciprocate, or in some way affect our concept of who we are, or who/what we intend or want to be (Tajfel, 1981). Created, constituted, fashioned and often re-fashioned through the lived-experiences of the everyday life-world, as individuals we weave and write the narrative of our own selves and self-images. The Dylan fans' narratives and life-stories reveal the tangible Influences and the indelible marks that have been made on their personal senses of self and identity through their link with Dylan and his music. Again, these 'Dylan influences' surface and are exemplified in the following three fan extracts:

*Bob Dylan enriched my life by his lyrics and by going to his concerts. He inspired me to write poems to set my thoughts on paper and he was a magnificent "teacher" ... my publisher published three poetry books. I met many "soulmates" from across the world who became real friends and what's more I met my husband at a concert.*

*before bob i always thought you have to have a great voice and be beautiful for people to pay attention to you. then along comes bob without the great voice and he is telling me its ok to be the person that i am. he is telling me that i no longer just need to accept the values of my parents and teachers and its ok to question the morality of politics, religion, and virtue.*

*Bob dylan can put into song what i have a hard time speakin' out -- his aspect @ everything seems to fall into place ... Bob has also influenced me in my piano and guitar playin, especially as a youngster (6yrs. old). i find myself quotin' his words as i talk with my children (and they let me know, "that is what Bob said") plus friends and workers...*

In his tribute speech to honour and recognise Dylan's contribution to the music and culture of America, Tom Piazza made the following statement; "That sense of the power of the lone creative voice can be traced, its pulse felt, through the great river of creative imagery and action that stretches back centuries in the United States: traveling lecturers, tall-tale spinners, itinerant entertainers of all sorts...the sense of the

individual voice, intensely personal, indivisible, taking on (American) life, in all its epic contradictions” (Piazza, 1997).

Dylan fans are openly proud of Dylan’s music, songs, poetic lyrics and legacy, and they hold a recognition and appreciation of his place in the history of the folk, rock and art movement that evolved out of the 1950s and 1960s and continues on even today, albeit in different forms and apertures. It means a great deal to Dylan fans to be a Dylan follower and in my interactions with many Dylan fans over the years, I have seen how they feel truly happy and privileged to be a Dylan fan, and to have experienced and welcomed the sense of freedom and truth they have personally found in the lyrics and mood of many of Dylan’s songs. As one fan put it:

*I generally find Dylan fans to be more discerning and knowledgeable about the traditions of music and the history. They tend to have varied tastes and interests beyond one genre of music, and value the qualities of spontaneity and transformation. There is an interest to explore the influences that affected Dylan and that opens up a whole range of experiences - musical, literary and artistic. Because of the content and character of Dylan's music and creativity, people drawn to his music seem to be more interested in 'deeper' ideas and active participation in the listening process - they are drawn to music with longevity rather than shallow, transient 'passive' pop/rock music. I like the feeling of community with some of the Dylan fans - it is a little like a family with all the associated ups and downs! Sadly, there are some fans who are delusional, ignorant and aggressive - but we meet them in every walk of life, no matter who the artist in question is.*

In an effort to gain a more holistic, in-depth knowledge of anything (in this case, a particular fandom – Dylan fandom), I argue for the critical role of the lived-experience and narrative of the subject (here, the fan him/herself) to be clearly included and acknowledged in the research undertaking. To exemplify the positive outcomes of such in my research; it was through exploring the specific role that Dylan’s music, and music in general, played in the individual Dylan fan's everyday-life context that I discovered and realised just what a powerful role and influence music (and lyrics) played in each fan's own personal life.

It was that ‘musical key’ of emotion and passion that unlocked and revealed other significant fan-connected areas and processes, such as identification, subjectivities, perception and meaning-making, which all take place and exist as part of the fan’s

own particular (fan) 'life-world'. And, it was through the Dylan fans' contributions of their life-stories and narratives of their own particular lived-Dylan-fan-experiences with Dylan's music that these inner sensibilities and expressions of Dylan fan culture came to the fore and into focus in my research<sup>63</sup>.

### **Researching (Dylan) Fandom Online**

With my particular research and focus, I have essentially applied a form of 'virtual ethnography' as a way of accessing and communicating with Dylan fans and fandom. I wanted to connect with and understand more about Dylan fans and the online, global Dylan fan sites were as an entrance to a part of their 'virtual social-life' and their Dylan fan experience. Through these online networks<sup>64</sup>, literally thousands of Dylan fans interact and share their fandom, even their own personal feelings, reactions, emotions, and life-experiences everyday, sharing with each other just how much Bob Dylan's music/art exemplify and mean to them, as well as sharing how they like, appreciate and appropriate Dylan's music into their daily lives.

As stated in my methods chapter (three), the initial and main thrust in gathering data and making contact with Dylan fans was made through engaging with Dylan fans and followers online. I have recognised and placed the Dylan fan narratives, many of which were communicated digitally, as a primary resource for understanding both the individual fan-experience and their collective culture. The online DFNs, forum posts and anecdotes are numerous, personal and intimately illustrate the topics and areas that are of interest and importance the fans themselves. Online, Dylan fans openly discuss and offer lucid examples of their fandom; their individual meaning-making processes, their personal emotions, music knowledge and affect, plus their own lived-fan-experiences, which lucidly illustrate the very personal and meaningful senses of belonging and identity many Dylan fans have experienced as part of their fandom.

Academic studies of online fans, fandom and fan communities have increased rapidly in recent years as more and more people have access to, and make use of, the

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<sup>63</sup> For more elaboration and examples on this topic, again, see chapter 4 of this thesis on 'Dylan fans and followers'.

<sup>64</sup> See list of Dylan fan websites and networks in Appendix 4, page 206.

Internet in their daily lives, work and leisure time. The Internet is, indeed, a 'bee-hive' of activity for billions of people around the world everyday, and it is also a means for shared experiences and a regular locus for many active and participatory online fans of all sorts. For instance, the Dylan fan website, *Expecting Rain*, has a usual and regular 10,000 unique visitors everyday and has totalled over 1 million fan forum posts by Dylan fans and followers on topics and interest related to Dylan and his music— so, there is, and has been, a lot of concurrent interest and interaction from the fans and followers of Dylan on and via the world wide web.

As the Internet becomes more and more embedded into people's everyday lives, social research also enters into its domains more and more, in order to gain a better understanding of the people who use it, and who are affected by its technologies and interactions, in cyber-space and, again, as part of everyday-life both now and in the future. Current approaches in the ethnographic study of the Internet are diverse and, as such, 'virtual ethnography' includes a 'broad range of methodological approaches aimed at answering the complexities of the object of research and the different ways in which this object has been constructed' (Hines, 2000).

In many common, everyday ways and usages, it appears that online fans and followers within fan communities develop and sustain for many of the same reasons that many other 'traditional' or common social groupings and associations have been created and maintained. Fan interests attract other fans of that person, place or thing which is produced and reproduced online. Community sensibilities, identification and interaction develop and, as with any group identity, this can be beneficial and/or attractive to the individual (fan) in that it may provide a sense of community and belonging as well as be just simply fun, entertaining and interesting to fans of a similar interest and 'like'.

As technology and world-wide participation in and usage of the internet moves forward at ever increasing speeds and coverage, Wiatrowski (2011:21) has stated, "we will likely continue to the dissolution of boundaries and borders that had once prevented communities from creating new meaningful ideas and texts in particular ways." This ability and access to allow people and participants to congregate and interact in unlimited numbers permits online-fandoms to hear and amplify their voice, giving them perceived greater identity and power in the realm of the cyber-space they have

created. In the Foucaultian sense, they have become an identifiable group where they can 'dwell' with a sense of the community:

*Cyber-communities are, like any group, a community represented by both its social imaginary and its empirical reality that functions in traditionally expected modes with the notable modification that the communal experience is often hyper-mediated. This mediation is an important element of online groups, not to be overlooked. Cyber-communities effectuate their communal sense of self through historically new methods – mediating their individual and shared experiences through ever evolving online modalities. (Wiatrowski, 2011:5).*

In the domains of popular music, the cyber-ability to transcend distance means that fans, artists, bands and company conglomerates use the Internet to build and distribute fan bases in locations they never could before. For example, many official fan websites provide advance promotion on upcoming artist releases and concert tours and availability of ticket sales, etc., with some even able to offer some kind of 'special' access to the artists and/or other fans (for a price). These 'special offers' can often be accessed through, Internet bulletin boards, chat-rooms, and other fan web links. And, nowadays, most online fan clubs and "official" artist/music/film websites are actively focused on providing and catering to fans' interests, needs and commodities, in various ways, and to some degree or another — for instance, offering and selling fan related merchandise and memorabilia, clothing, accessories, photos, calendars, CD/DVDs, and such like.

Incorporating the many facets of fandom into one cyber-locale, it could be said that fan websites have become the predominant locales where many fans (and artists) "perform their fandom" (Booth, 2010). As Nick Levine of the Swedish Indie band, "Tack! Tack! Tack!" stated, "Bands should have their online page be a portal to all their online web 2.0 activities with links to their [bookmarks and device 'apps'] *Last.fm*, *MySpace*, *YouTube* —That's the wave of the future!" (quoted in Baym, 2008, parentheses added).

I found the online Dylan fans and communities are a particularly appropriate, interesting, accessible and knowledgeable fan/audience resource area, often containing the more active, vocal and 'hard-core', participatory fans and followers, as well as the average Dylan fan. The online fan forums and chat rooms contain many

interesting and provocative topics covered by the fans on the 'member only' access and discussion boards. These fan conversations clearly illustrate the everyday appropriations and practices of the fans themselves and demonstrate a 'real-life', fan way of life. The reflective interests and passions of the fans themselves are interesting and fascinating glimpses of the diverse aspects of fandom and fan-life.

I have very much valued and respected these active online fans and networks. Dylan fans are certainly interesting, enthusiastic and passionate about Bob and his music. My very first research response (via email) was from a fan in Australia who was writing his own personal life-story, chapter-by-chapter as a Dylan fan, aligning and reflecting his life with "his friend", "Bob" and "their" musical journey over the past 42 years — that's a total of 42 chapters of writing! This project is just one robust example of how much Dylan and his music can mean to his fans. I have also received hundreds of emails from Dylan fans around the world, which encouraged me that, perhaps, the sharing of perspectives *from* the fans was indeed of interest *to* the fans themselves.

I personally found the Dylan online and global fan community to be very active, 'alive and well'! As a registered online Dylan fan myself, I have been able to communicate with scores of individual Dylan fans during the course of my research, as well as having talked personally with many other fans when attending the live concerts of 'Bob and his Band' (stretching out over the past 15 years). I certainly and honestly believe I never would have been able to communicate with, or begin to understand so many Dylan fans without having the ease of access to these fans granted me via the Internet. It has been a rewarding research experience to begin to feel and learn what it is like to be a Dylan fan, from both a 'long-term fan' position as well as from an 'online fan' perspective.

Sharing subjectivities, like-mindednesses and camaraderie, with a sense of loyalty and belonging, all take place fervently inside of the online Dylan fan website locales, and especially when Dylan and his band are on their live-touring schedule in different places around the world<sup>65</sup>. During those times, hundreds (maybe more) of Dylan fans congregate together online and share their thoughts and excitement and reactions to which song Dylan is singing, as the live Dylan concert is actually taking place —

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<sup>65</sup> See Appendix 5, page 210 for Dylan's Global Touring Schedule.

whichever country, continent or city Dylan and his band are in at the time. The online Dylan fans use and refer to this shared, subjective emotion and attunement on their chat boards, online forums and in conversations they engage in with each other, embracing their passions for Dylan and his music, as we see again in the following e-texts:

*Dylan-Concerts for me are something to live for. I can just enjoy this music and forget about everything else while hearing it. Its a time to meet new ppl, enjoy life, relax and celebrate. I couldnt imagine a world without this.*

*Dylan's fans are family We feel and hear the songs in similar ways, I think. When you are with a fellow Dylan fan, communication flows. We understand each other.*

*Yes, we are different than other fans. We are dedicated to his music and his many abilities. We are deep thinkers. We have a different slant on life. We learn from his words. Fans of other musicians come & go, but Dylan Fans stay with him. He has become a big part of at least 4 generations. Not many others can say that.*

*There are all kinds of Dylan fans. I've met the silliest groupie and the most distinguished intellectual. You cannot categorize Dylan fans like you cannot categorize Dylan!*

*I love the camaraderie with other Dylan fans who I hardly know. Dylan fans will always have more fun than other fans trying to remember all the lyrics and debating what they mean, but apart from that I don't suppose we're any different and certainly not more special. We have an affection for poetry, words, reading between lines, the love of not-understanding, mystery, searching, trying, the on-the-road value, and the friendship.*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Internet now offers unprecedented, almost unlimited access to fans' needs, desires, and more. Online presence and fandom can be used as not only a means of expressing and validating a sense of identity and community with other fans, but also, notably, of affirming one's own individual existence and passions. And, because of the almost limitless possibilities and connections that can be made by people of all ages and cultures, the uses, impacts and advances of modern-day technologies and global, internet communications are, and should be, of great interest to all people of the world, particularly social scientists. In fact, social networking websites have become a widespread resource and subject for academic research in recent years.

A fan-life online is an exploration of cyber-space and a diverse audience. I discovered and experienced the same by entering into the world of online Dylan fans and their virtual world, “Inside the gates of Eden”, with ‘Bob”. But I also entered into a real and tangible communication and experience with real Dylan fans, who had a real sense of identification and community. — There is a person on the other end of the phone or at the ‘click’ of a mouse button ... they exist, as we do ... online. And, they are also reachable offline too! — It’s just a matter of choice and access - e.g. through personal messaging (pm) and email correspondence.

Traditional ethnography provides a way to explore and enter into portals of understanding and the lived-experience of others in more depth and truthfulness concerning the particulars of human experience. Cyber ethnography provides this too, via computer-mediated-communications, where the online writing of texts can often blur the lines of previously held distinctions that might have existed between virtual and actual realities. Markham (1998) has noted, “Online, what is real is what is experienced” – online and ‘live’.

### **Representation and Authenticity in the Dylan Fan Narratives**

\*I have included and integrated the fan narratives into my thesis as evidence of a fan culture and perspectives drawn from actual lived-experience and because I maintain that the Dylan fan narratives are rich, ‘true-to-life’ representations of lived-fan-experiences that reveal and shed valuable insights into other important human behaviour areas such as, subjectivities, identity, sense of belonging, and more. They are also reflective narratives, characterising living-examples of fan-life through the subject’s (read: fan’s) eyes, mind and body. They are an original, archived primary source and ‘true-likeness’ representation of Dylan fans and Dylan fandom. Indeed, in so many ways, these fan-life narratives are authentic and insightful research material and extremely valuable data to work with, and to use for further or new (fan) research.

I have presented the Dylan fan narratives and life-stories as indispensable components of my research on fans and fandom, and I have intentionally placed them on an equal, counterpart status and legitimacy to that of any academic or journalistic

writings on fans fan or fandom. These narratives and life-stories are ‘windows’ on the lived-Dylan-fan-experience. I consider the Dylan fans’ texts to not only intimately display a clear and critical account of the ‘real-life’ experience of being a (Dylan) fan, but they also elucidate the emotional and ‘affective intensity’ that lies at the heart of what it actually means to be a Dylan fan (Grossberg, 1992).

By drafting the original Dylan fan life-stories and narratives into the thesis, I am emphasising that the fans’ own accounts of their fandom are essential and valuable resources that need to be included in fan studies and writings. They are invaluable resources and original archived material that bring a wealth of understanding and depth to fan culture studies, and in a comparable way that intellectual perspective on fans and fandom can be enlightening and informative to its readers, students and followers.

Sennett (1998) declares the importance of people being able to narrate their own lives – to express themselves, which is also a way to form and re-form their own identities and to reinforce their self-worth. As reflective texts, I found the Dylan fan narratives most directly expressed and clarified the fans’ personal emotions, affects, identities, practices and beliefs like no other resources had provided, and clearly illustrate what it is like to be a Dylan fan. The legitimacy of the fan narratives is strengthened by being able to exhibit authentic existential feelings and emotions as the fans, through their personal stories, directly related their own private lives, beliefs and values, and described how...they have experienced in and through their everyday, life-specific situations, to Dylan’s music and song lyrics.

During the course of my research, much of the rationale and priority areas of my research have been articulated and driven by the fans themselves, many of whom highlighted their own expressed views and feelings about their experienced fandom. Some fan feedback was directly related to questions and issues around my original research questions; however, many Dylan fans also shared a plethora of ideas and information on other, highly personal and interesting topics, with many fans holding similar values and ideas that Dylan himself has iterated in his songs, writings and

interviews (e.g. on views of life, politics, relationships, ideals, and the world we live in.<sup>66</sup>)

The Dylan fan narratives and testimonials also reveal and delineate clear frameworks and perspectives of influence into Dylan fandom as well as clearly highlighting the affective impact, context and form of Dylan's music on the Dylan fan. Through these explicit frames of fan expression, we can, to a reasonable extent, understand the fan phenomena on many human and individual levels. As fellow human beings and members of society, we already have, or may have had, similar ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences as music listeners or fans of something or somebody, which we have witnessed, or that have occurred in our own lives. In other words, we can relate to human behaviour and expression, simply because we ourselves are human and live in the world that many others live in.

Many of Dylan's best-known and loved songs are those that tell a personal story, sung 'narratively' by Dylan and located from where certain, or ordinary caricatures and people, experiences or events are placed within the song/performance. Here songs such as, "Positively 4th Street", "Shelter from the Storm", "Like A Rolling Stone", "Tangled Up In Blue", "Romance in Durango", come to mind. These songs are usually strongly identified with and appropriated by the fans themselves as being very 'personal' and 'relatable' songs, that 'ring true' and have real authenticity to them, as this next Dylan fan excerpt describes:

*Lyrics from Dylan songs are in my brain. Different life events or experiences will frequently pull specific lyrics to my consciousness which have everything to do with the moment at hand. The lyrics usually clarify on a deeper level what I'm experiencing but had not been able to put into words.*

*From - A DYLAN FAN - Mr. Jones, 'Inside the Gates of Eden'*

My support for the case of true representation and authenticity in the Dylan fan narratives is that they most clearly exemplify and illustrate the lived-Dylan-fan-experiences that are appropriated through the everyday fan practises of Dylan fans, giving valuable insights and authenticity to the essences of Dylan fan-life, particularly

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<sup>66</sup> See chapter 4 for numerous examples of such.

in the areas of identity, self, emotion, belonging and belief. As no other resources I found or compared, the (Dylan) fan narratives cogently demonstrated the attached, very personalised and perceived meanings that many Dylan fans and followers make through their own distinctive lived-fan-experiences and through the music and art-form of Bob Dylan. These narrated lived-fan-experiences are central, vibrant and 'real' to the fans and, as such, I claim they have real research authenticity and value, as they bring 'first-hand' legitimacy and realism into the actual, personal, lived-experience of the Dylan fan.

In my research I found the Dylan fan narratives were also able to reveal and illustrate the very personal *affect* Dylan's music and lyrics have on the fans, and, without these *emic* and emotional narratives and insights, there wouldn't be the same well-defined transparency, passion and fan portrayal of the `Dylan-fan-experience available, that we (the reader) can see and feel and vicariously experience through these fan-life scripts and testimonials:

*There really is nothing like it. It's an experience so personal, riveting and thrilling to the individual that you have a groan at why you hadn't found it before ... Dylan gives something so fresh, but also so experienced; it's impossible to explain it in words! I've never been the same since Dylan. I make him sound like a God or something, but to me he just seems like an inner-friend that was waiting to be discovered. I don't know. It's just wonderful!* (Klaus, 35 Germany)

The Dylan fan narratives lucidly demonstrate, broaden and deepen *understanding* of the lived-fan-experience and offer a clear expression and description of (Dylan) fandom, through the illustrated and narrated, everyday-life fan appropriations and perceptions of the Dylan fan. Therefore, I believe the DFNs, have contributed and helped open up and further our understanding of Dylan (music) fans and their fandom.

I am thus presenting the Dylan fan narratives as authentic and essential components of my particular research methods and analysis. I deem they are extremely relevant, useful and meaningful to both scholars and fans, *in tandem*, as collaborative texts, and as part of the same interested and related population who contribute and give insight

into fan research and writings. In my research I found the written Dylan fan narrative as a recognised and authentic, ‘true-to-life’ representation of the Dylan-fan-experience.

“The stories people tell matter.

They matter for what they reveal about lived experience and for what they tell us about...*everyday life, subjectivity, self, identity and, meaning.*“

(High, 2010) [*Italics mine*]

### **Writing the ‘Emic’ in Acad-emic**

My research pathway led me to explore the emotive-side of the phenomenon of Dylan fans and followers in more depth and from a more ‘insider’ (fan) perspective (see Smith et al., 2007) – one that had not been looked at, or employed that much (at the time of first writing about this section in 2010), but one that I believed was needed and fitting for the study of my particular subject matter of ‘Dylan fans and followers’. Furthermore, as my research is specifically addressing and focusing on the affective senses of belonging, identification and loyalty in Dylan fans and followers – something I have called, ‘the emotive-fan-experience’ – I also wanted to be able to write and articulate my research in such a way that would allow both myself, as researcher, and my subject matter, as a PhD thesis, to be understood.

Within the community of fans and their fandom, much observable behaviour, interpretations, assumptions and communications are idiosyncratic, ‘open-ended’, subjective and fluid, and for individuals, life-experiences and life-affects are private, personal and unique. Furthermore, the narrative texts produced for this research are full of emotion for Dylan and his music; the narratives are emically written, attempting to give ‘true-to-life’ insights to their experiences of Dylan and his music and the impact these have had on their personal lives. Communicating the type of ethnographic fan research I have undertaken, much of which is ‘virtual’, thus presents challenges for the writing of the research (see Hines, 2000; Markham, 1998; Van Manen, 2005).

To develop a more reflective approach, I turned to work on ethnographic and phenomenological writing. Van Manen (2005), for example, has stated that to conduct research and write about the complex phenomenon of human behaviour (here, the

lived Dylan fan experience) requires a certain 'affinity and sensibility' with those you are studying or researching. In *The Ethnographic Imagination*, Willis (2000) presents texts that contain concepts and biographical vignettes which illustrate the ethnographical, emic approaches to his research and argues for greater 'ethnographic imaginations' to be employed as techniques for establishing emic 'connections with real life'.

These readings led me to discover the word 'emic' in the phrase 'acad-emic' and to further consider how I should conduct my research; how to write and communicate the very human and intimate behaviors of, in my case, Dylan fans and followers, which, of course, include very personal and subjectively-experienced human emotions, perceptions, thoughts, and more.

For me, the Dylan fan narratives were already clearly exemplifying these emic insights and understandings into Dylan fans and their fandom. These fan narratives were texts full of emotion for Dylan and his music; the narratives were almost 'naturally' emically written and were strongly connected, giving 'true-to-life' insights to their subject matter of Dylan and his music and how these have had their impact and affect on their personal lives and culture.

Max van Manen's (2005) book, *Writing in the Dark*, on writing phenomenologically<sup>67</sup>, has been an illuminative resource on the subject of research approaches and research writing, and the relationship and reciprocity between the two. Van Manen opens up discussion and possibilities for a creative experience in research writing – one which connects strongly with the research subject matter itself, and on the level of the research subjects themselves, as much as is possible. He writes:

*...Writing (researching) is not just externalizing knowledge, rather, writing is the very act of making contact with the things of our world ... In this sense to research is to write, and the insights achieved depend on the right words and phrases, on styles and traditions, on metaphor and figures of speech, on argument and poetic image(ry) (p.237).*

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<sup>67</sup> Here, 'writing phenomenologically' is having a focus on, and asking the 'meaning' of something, plus writing about the subject matter at the 'reflective' level (van Manen, 2005).

Willa Cather, the American Pulitzer Prize winning novelist of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who said that elaborate, "mathematical", textual and formal analysis "reduced all that was great in literature, the noblest flights of the human spirit, to dry-as-dust, arbitrary formulae" (Lewis, 1953:34). She resisted the assumption that readers needed special training, or some elite interpretive or academic training to enjoy or understand a text. Cather and her fans based their 'reader authority' on the attributes and descriptions of the *emotive* response to a text. In a 1925 interview she said, "A writer's own interest in a story is the essential thing. If there is a flash of warmth in *it*, it is repeated in the reader. The *emotion* is bigger than style..." (Bates, 2011:78).

I am sympathetic to Cather here when she claims that she feels she has reached the *essential thing* in her writing when its reception and reflection by its readers has taken place. In a similar vein, the aim and style of my writing and research methodology has been to connect with the *emotional* experiences and subjective meanings that Dylan fans have towards their Dylan fandom and music listening experience.

As I contemplated the word 'academic', I therefore realised that academic writing and research should have both formal processes and formats of presentation, with deference to recognised theoretical and intellectual material, and connect with their research topics and subject matter. I wanted to conduct and write my research academically, being intellectually robust while closely engaging with my subject matter (Dylan fans and followers) by using a more 'emic' and affective approach to style and wording. In this way, I aim to better represent the fans' narratives, which already exemplify these emic insights into and understandings of fandom.

I thus began to articulate and re-write my research aims, rationale and intentions as an attempt to develop what I felt would be a more holistic presentation of the meanings and appropriations involved in the lived-Dylan-fan-experience. I believe there is a need to give the fans and their fandom 'voice and 'presence' in fan studies, which can be available and referenced in the literature on fans and fandom. In my thesis and through my writing and inclusion of the Dylan fan narratives, I have thus attempted a fusion between the culture of academic thought and a culture and perspectives drawn from actual lived (fan) experience.

## Research Reflections

In this section, I discuss limitations to my thesis and areas for further study, my rationale for not taking other approaches in Fan studies, and the positive contributions of my research.

My research has been a response to the data that was collected and collated from a sample of Dylan Fans and Followers who had responded to my research enquiries, initially through the online portals of a well-known Dylan Fan Site, *Expecting Rain* ([www.expectingrain.com](http://www.expectingrain.com)) and a Research Website that I created exclusively for my PhD research ([www.mybobjdylanstory.com](http://www.mybobjdylanstory.com)).

As I have exemplified throughout the thesis, the focused objective of my approach to this enquiry into 'Dylan fans and followers' has been to better understand the expressions of Dylan-fan-life (this includes human emotions, belief, perception, passion, feelings, attitude, and culture), and through illustrating the lived-Dylan-fan-experience in the context of the fans' everyday-life. I have thus sought theoretical positions that 'fit' this objective and connected to the subject matter of my research. This has meant emphasising some methodologies (and 'positions') while de-emphasising or discarding others.

Of course, there are, and can be, problems, shortcomings and limitations (challenges) in research with almost any conceptual tool or theoretical framings and applications — especially if there is not a good 'fit' or explication of the subject matter; or they are not referenced or connected to other relevant perspectives and theoretical positions in order to better clarify and bring into focus the research matters at hand. For instance, I have previously made the point in this thesis that analytical and representation problems can occur when researchers construct certain narrow, limited fan categorisations, typologies and/or theory-related assumptions from more singularly-disciplined approaches and evaluations, especially when the actual subject matter is as complex and multifarious as human beings (read: fans) and their observed practices and behaviours taking place in fastidious and diverse socio-cultural settings.

Some of the limitations (perhaps 'challenges' and 'needs' are more fitting expressions), I have faced in the research have been;

The lack of focus on comparative data. Although I gathered a large amount of data, much of it comes from online fans who responded to my call for narratives relating to fan-life stories and their fan 'object of admiration' – Bob Dylan. I would have liked to have had more time and resources to collect even more (diverse) data. More diverse data would have heeded me look at other areas of fans and fandom, such as "non-fans".

The challenge of articulating and writing-up the research: There are complexities in the subject matter of 'Dylan fans and followers' and, apart from the actual Dylan fan narratives and the work of Max van Manen, I found very few resources in the social sciences that wrote 'as a way of making contact with the things of our world' (Van Manen 2007), which I saw as a need in disseminating my data of the lived-experiences of Dylan fans and their fandom.

The fan data samples I received in my initial data gathering were limited and 'narrow', in the sense that, although there was a high quantitative amount of fan data sent in the form of narrative responses from Dylan fans, yet many of the responders were self-identifying "hard-core" Dylan fans, and/or long-term, even life-long Dylan fans.

On this latter point, this could lead to a somewhat 'lopsided' dataset in terms of diversity, representation and the broader fan-life experiences. However, to counterbalance this particular dataset, I did conduct non-structured interviews and had numerous discussions, both face to face and via e-communications where diverse questions were asked, these questions being intended to promote theoretical emergence and development.

On a personal level, I have viewed the limitations and/or needs of the research as challenges and intersections to explore and experiment with, and I have enacted upon them as opportunities and times to discover new directions, methods and applications in order to progress with the research task ahead and accomplish research aims.

In many ways, fan studies and subsequent applied perspectives that researchers have adopted have developed into a kaleidoscope of topics – from audience studies and

autoethnography to transformative works and totemism. Whether researchers use more traditional research processes, grounded-theory methods, or try new, innovative hybrid approaches, the study of fans and fandom lends itself to many applied methodologies. I experimented with a few approaches and positioning's myself before choosing the focus, topics and perspectives I decided on in my research.

Most of the fan study topics and methods mentioned above could have been applied and carried out in my research on Dylan fans, but I chose the methodologies I felt worked best and engaged the most with my subject matter, and, therefore, I was not able to mention or include too many others. For example, I appropriated ethnography and reflective writing, as I wanted my research to engage and connect with the actual Dylan fan experience.

One premise of the research design was to speak to people who *are* active, self-identified fans of Dylan, and who participate to varying degrees in fan life, fan culture, etc. This was in order to understand, in depth, *how they make sense of the fan experience*, and what of this is important to include in the study of Dylan fans and followers. To do this, I had to talk to, and hear directly from Dylan fans. I wanted to hear directly from the Dylan fans themselves because their voices and experiences mattered to me, and, as I have documented in chapter 3, one way I did this was to connect with Dylan fans via their online fan site ("Expecting Rain"). Other methods were also used such as, phone calls, interviews and emails.

There was a question of 'circularity' in my research methods: the issue being that the sample of fans I received from the Dylan fans who responded to my research questions were only a 'self-selecting' sample, from an already self-selective field. My answer here is that seeking out fans who are affected by Dylan does not simply lead to a thesis that, "these fans are affected by Dylan". The epistemological premise in this thesis is that I am exploring fan experience with these people (fans) *because* they are affected as a fan, and I have conducted the research in the way I have to find out how and why this is significant in the research of (Dylan) fans and followers.

I have not generalised the data here – I have described, analysed and presented the data highlighting the *individual* fan experience of the Dylan fan. And I have considered

this as a reliable and true-to-life Dylan fan experience – plus, I have been able to meet and talk with many actual fans during my research to hear their experiences first-hand. In order to understand more deeply the nature of this fan experience and what it tells us about fandom, I worked hard to establish lines of communication with Dylan fans. And, because this is the first full thesis on Dylan fans and their fandom, I felt I needed to delve into their personal views, experiences and appropriations of their fandom for myself. I asked Dylan fans many questions and asked them to tell me what it is like, what do they experience, what do they *do* as a Dylan fan? To confirm and experience for myself more about Dylan fans, I went to locales where Dylan fandom was practised and enacted – e.g. Dylan concerts, Dylan fan meetings, joining online Dylan fan networks, attending academic conferences on ‘Dylan’.

I have provided my justification and the rationale for my research aims, goals and focus in previous chapters (see chapters 1, 3, 5). I have not claimed, nor inferred in any way that my thesis on *Dylan Fans and Followers* is fully representative, or even a broad generalisation of *all* Dylan fans and/or followers. Neither do I claim or intend that my research be interpreted as being indicative of all, or a majority of Dylan fans who are members of any online Dylan fan community, or Dylan fan site membership. As I have stated and exemplified, my research is a focused enquiry into the individual (Dylan) fan, highlighting the individual fan’s (human) senses of affect, identification, belief and belonging.

My applied methods *have* allowed me access, insight and engagement with the complex and diverse human expressions, feelings and experiences that take place in the fan-life of a Dylan fan. The data I received from the initial fan narratives has not been implied or applied to be the same for all Dylan fans. There has been no forcing of data in the research process; my goal of collecting the data was just as a starting point to explore the deeper goals of finding out and understanding more about the experiences of Dylan fan-life.

Scheibler (2000:76), with reference to Gadamer, notes that the notion of *theoria*, in its original Greek sense of ‘contemplation’, was in fact connected the broader context of the experienced ‘social realm of life’. Thus, ‘theoria’ does not equal or equate to a ‘distant-stance’ approach to theoretic-constructs, but may be understood as a more emic ‘proximity and affinity’ to its subject matter – making a participation in the event, a

real 'being present', as Gadamer writes. The inference here is that theory *should* describe and connect with lived-experiences and the 'practices of life', to heighten awareness and knowledge about them. Following this, the approaches and perspectives I have applied in my research have allowed me to access, describe, engage with, and uncover the complex and diverse human expressions of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that take place within the experience of being a Dylan fan.

Some of the contributions of my research to fan studies and the fan literature in this thesis are:

Although Dylan is recognised as one of the most influential musicians and song-writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with many fans following and being strongly influenced by Dylan's career and status, my research on 'Dylan fans and followers' is the first full-PhD thesis specifically focusing on Dylan fans and their fandom.

Utilising the fan narratives as part of the research rationale and analysis, my thesis extensively integrates Dylan fans' narratives into an academic analysis, offering new insights into the individual fan's sensibilities of emotion, subjectivity, identity, belief and belonging.

My research adds to discussion around the meaning of the 'fan', cyber fandom and online research, new genres of writing about fans and their fandom, methods and direction in fan studies, the relationship between fans' 'selves' and their fan 'objects', fandom practices and the shaping of identity.

The thesis illustrates how employing "phenomenologies of reading and writing that "open up possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, self and other ... between who we are and how we act", can benefit the understanding of the fan lived-experience (see van Manen 2007).

My approach, purpose, and reasoning towards my research topics have all been utilised to afford an entrance and portal into the Dylan fan phenomenon, with the intention that the 'lived-fan-experience' and the written fan narrative be recognised and included as a valid, 'true-to-life', fan experience in the research process – to give a view and insight on the Dylan fans' own particular fan experience. In order to gain a

more complete, in-depth knowledge of (any) fans and fandom and acquire insight into the lived-fan-experience, I have argued that the lived-experience of the fan him/herself is a critical role and contribution to be included and integrated into the full research process as much as possible.

A further fan research area I would like to explore would be how and why fans become and remain 'life-long' fans and enthusiasts, maintaining their interests in something or somebody they had discovered, or experienced, recently – or many years ago, in some cases. This area has been evident in talking to and researching Dylan fans and followers, and I believe these areas are also of academic interest – for instance, to areas related to stored emotions, memories, the life-cycle and feelings of nostalgia.

### **Final Thoughts...**

In my initial literature review on fans and fandom, I had found that most of the previously published fan books and studies did not address the more personal and 'affective' experience of the fan, nor consider the emotional energy and identification-relationship often experienced by the fan towards his or her 'object(s) of admiration' – for example, between the Dylan fan and 'Dylan' – his music, his persona and/or his lyrical writings. My research methodologies have consequently and specifically been applied to reflect on and understand the Dylan fan him/herself and their lived-Dylan-fan-life-experience. My research aspirations attempt to further understand and describe this lived, often *ineffable*, fan experience.

I have also tried to place emphasis and thought on my fan research as a discovery and a process, rather than a prescriptive undertaking of constructing a theoretical framework in which to place fans in a particular conceptualisation. I did not undertake my research to purely 'theorise' about fans, or to 'objectify' the subjects of my research (i.e. Dylan fans and followers). I do not want, nor am I seeking, to purely or rigidly apply analysis or theory to Dylan fans, their narratives or their lived-fandom experience, but my desire and intention is to, rather, gain a better and deeper understanding of my subject matter, and to be able to more holistically and accurately describe and connect with the phenomenon of 'Dylan fans and followers'.

The view of the everyday-life context of Dylan fans and their fandom and reading their narrated perceptions of such, very much corroborates with my own personal interactions and research experiences with Dylan fans — for I found Dylan fans to be, for the most part, just ‘regular people’, with a mostly ‘normal, ordinary life’ to lead, as many people do in the ‘everyday-life-world’ — but, in their case, as a Dylan fan, they have a very special interest in, and a strong passion for, Bob Dylan’s music and art, which they include as part of their everyday way-of-life.

Throughout the research process, I consistently found that the lived-fan-accounts and testimonials received from actual Dylan fans were, by far, the most accurate and authentic source and explanation on how and why these fans identify, appropriate and construct their own identifications, interpretations and meanings via the inspiration they, in turn, had received from Bob Dylan and his music/art. The fan narratives and oral-histories impressively elucidated how and why these people are affected in the way they are, and become a Dylan fan or follower.

I have personally very much appreciated and valued what every Dylan fan has contributed, written and sent to me via my research website and through other communication and correspondence channels. The fan stories and scripts have often been very personal, ‘moving’, heart-felt and sincere, and clearly inspired and affected by Dylan’s music and lyrics — from the simplest, brief fan reaction to one of Dylan’s live-concerts, to the more lengthy ‘life-stories’ and narrated experiences relaying where and when Bob and his music have ‘illuminated’ them, and embodied something very relevant and special to that particular individual fan at that particular time, which, in many cases, became a very special ‘moment’ in their life.

Dylan fans very much reflect and relate to the idioms, language, style, message, politics and poetics of Bob Dylan. No matter what the age of the fan, listening to Dylan’s music (often over and over again, and sometimes all day and all night), human emotions and feelings of identification, belief and *jouissance*<sup>68</sup> are experienced and heightened through listening to, and many times ‘being immersed in’, Dylan’s music, performances and lyrics.

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<sup>68</sup> *Jouissance* here simply signifies enjoyment and pleasure! As when Dylan fans thrill to Dylan’s music.

Many Dylan fans testified to me of an empathetic and dyadic 'relationship and connection' with Dylan. This experienced 'bond of emotional closeness' and consciousness can, at times, be strong enough to elicit within the fan a feeling of 'personal friendship' or even a feeling of 'love' towards their admired one – "Bobbie", as the Dylan fans often refer to him. And, this bond of emotional closeness, identification and attachment sometimes becomes a type of parasocial relationship. For instance, I did have one fan tell me she considered herself "married to Bob". Emotional bonds and interpretive sensibilities can provoke a sensitive response for the fan/listener/reader of Dylan.

Certainly, the Dylan fans display that artistic (musical) expression, enactment and attachment are important to music fans. Out of this musical experience, the areas of *affect* (emotion), identification and internal meaning-making emerge as key zones of illumination into the subsequent, and essentially human needs and behaviours such as, interest, attraction, belief and belonging – all of which, I believe, are deeply linked, in varying degrees and ways with core, deep-rooted human nature and behaviour. As Joan Baez once said of Dylan and his music, "Some people are just not interested in Dylan. But for those who are, he goes way, way deep."

One thing I do believe fandom clearly illustrates – and Dylan fans and their fandom are a good example of this – that there is a real breadth and depth of affect and emotion within the fan's personal meaning and identification 'systems' regarding their fandom – they feel deeply and care about it! (I found this illuminative as a researcher!)

To conduct research into fans and fandom effectively I have advocated a broad-based holistic methodology that seeks to integrate and describe the fans' own fandom, using relevant perspectives that highlight and include the actual fan practices and appropriations made by fans, including the context of the fans' everyday-life-fandom and practice. This, I believe, will facilitate a more accurate, contextual fan research enterprise and outcome, and one which can demonstrate the many different aspects and nuances of the individual fan and their particular fandom practices and appropriations.

Fandom today should be considered and viewed as being part of the everyday, lived-experience of many in modern-day societies and cultures around the world. And, fans

and their fandom can be an extremely useful and fruitful research area, to develop more understanding of today's life and cultures in our increasingly mediated and globalised world. At a recent European Fan Conference in the Netherlands, their 'call for papers' message stated:

*Fandom represents what it means to engage with popular culture today. Fans are active, inspired and passionate followers of media content. Both online and offline, fans have their own subcultures, habits and local practices based around their relationship with a range of media texts and objects, both domestic and global. (European Fan Cultures, 2015)*

Concluding here, I would like to reflect on the goals, achievements, appraisal and validation of my research methods and applied perspectives here<sup>69</sup>: As the aim and intent has been to inquire, describe and try to 'capture' the lived, emotional experience and expressions of the (Dylan) fan, with a commitment to grasp this experience from the subject's point of view, I would like to reflectively interrogate these particular goals and outcomes here, as to whether they have they been, and in what ways, achieved through the applied methodological approaches, content and context I have presented throughout the thesis, and particularly within this chapter on applied frames and perspectives of inquiry. And so I ask the following questions to my research undertaking and methodologies: on *Dylan fans and followers*:

- Has it made (Dylan) fandom more intelligible and relevant, and in the context of everyday-life?
- Have the emotional/affective sides of the fan and fandom been evoked?
- Can the reader relate, understand and identify with the everyday-lived-fan-experiences from the texts — either as one similar to their own, or as being tangibly related as an everyday-life narrative?
- Have personal biographies and life-stories been identified, related in history, time, place, and context — and related to the literature on fans and fandom?
- Have my research perspectives, approach, writing and analysis, shed light on, and given insights to the phenomenon of 'Dylan Fans and Followers'?

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<sup>69</sup> Thanks to Ellis and Flaherty (1992:1) for their presentation and synopsis on lived-experience.

If the answers to these questions are principally, “Yes”, then I consider the goals and legitimacy of my methodologies<sup>70</sup> and research have been achieved at this time, for it was for these particular research aims that I approached and proceeded with my research in the manner I did – through utilising and applying a range of theoretical perspectives and reflective writing styles such as, autobiography, short-story, essay, oral-history, life-experience and performance (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Denzin 1997).

My research has purely been intended and purposed to describe and relay the fans’ own fandom in terms of what is important to *them* as Dylan fans, thus proposing to *humanise* the subject matter of fans and their fandom. My emphasis has been more on exploring and documenting the lived-experiences of Dylan fans as opposed to placing Dylan fandom within a specific fan-theory, such as audience or media theory, for example.

In this thesis I have attempted to produce an ethnographic fan-research-experience that would allow my subject matter (the Dylan fan) to ‘speak’, giving space and privilege to the fans’ own subjective, interpretive meanings, sensibilities and emotions about Dylan and his music. Through my research and interaction with Dylan fans and followers, I have personally come to more fully comprehend, appreciate and acknowledge the importance and the need for the individual, subjective, lived-experience, and the attached emotive and perceptive elements of human-life to be as fully included and articulated in fan research as possible. I believe this area focus is important and, if utilized in fan research, will bring a more thorough and accurate portrayal of the phenomenon of fans and their fandom.

I end here with some words from Dylan himself about how he sees his fans, as he observes them as an audience from on-stage at his live concert performances around the world. He has obviously seen and encountered innumerable fans during his lifetime and career. So, here are some recent observations from Bob Dylan on his fans:

---

<sup>70</sup> Methodologies here meaning related to ‘the pursuit of knowledge’ (van Manen 1990:28)

Dylan observations on his fans<sup>71</sup>

[Redacted]

**Dylan:** [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

**Q:** What are you seeing from the stage?

**Dylan:** [Redacted]  
[Redacted]

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<sup>71</sup> Taken from a Bob Dylan interview conducted by the American organizational global magazine AARP. The full interview can be accessed at:  
<http://www.aarp.org/entertainment/style-trends/info-2015/bob-dylan-aarp-the-magazine-full-interview.html>

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## Appendix 1: Sample Graphs, Illustrations and Demographics

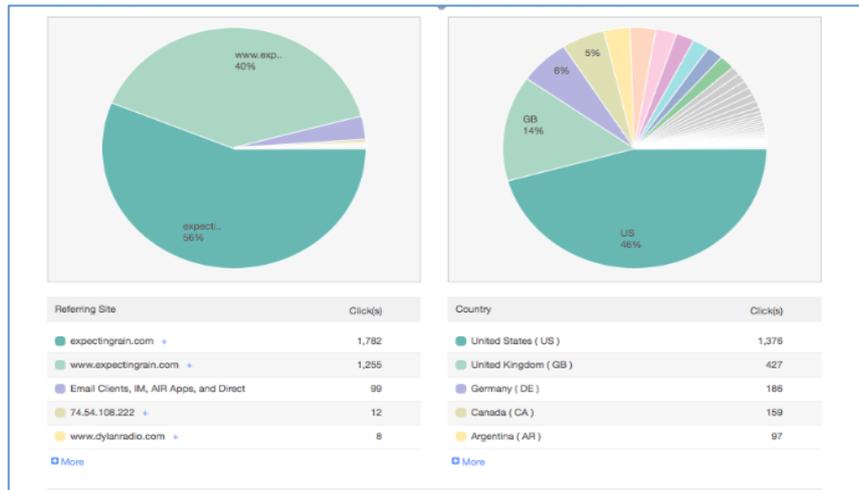


Fig. 7

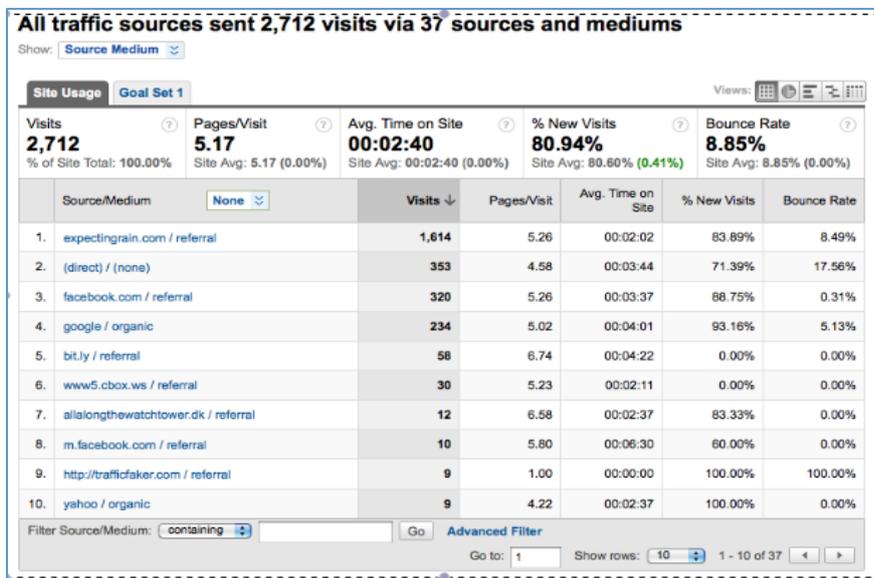


Fig. 8

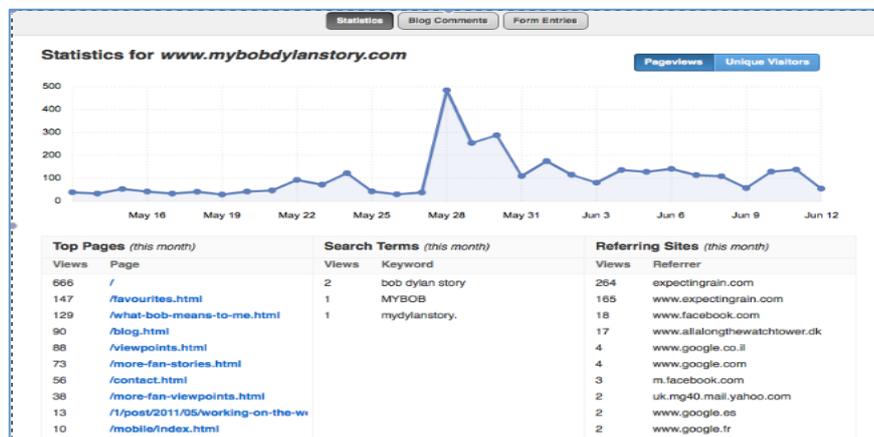


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Has Dylan's music had any influence on the fundamental personal life-values that you believe in?

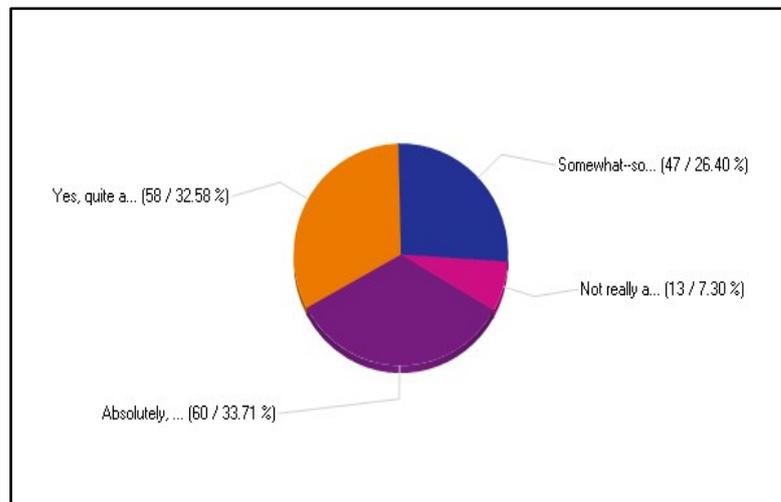


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

**Appendix 2:**

***Share your Bob Dylan story/experience and "what Bob means to you" by contributing in the spaces below--thank you!***

Name or Username \* \_\_\_\_\_

Your email \* \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \*

Male \_\_\_  Female \_\_\_

Education \*

Some High School \_\_\_  Completed High School \_\_\_  
 Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_  Master's Degree \_\_\_  PhD \_\_\_

Age \*

13-18 \_\_\_  19-29 \_\_\_  30-45 \_\_\_  46-59 \_\_\_  Over 60 \_\_\_

Nationality-Residing Country \* \_\_\_\_\_

Permission to use form content and 'Bob-stories' for research. \*

Yes \_\_\_  No \_\_\_

*Write short comments, feedback below\**

*Email any other stories, "Bob" experiences: [tobarry.w@gmail.com](mailto:tobarry.w@gmail.com) - Thank you!*

**SUBMIT**

### Appendix 3:

#### **\*Welcome to "My Bob Dylan Story!"**

(Actually, I'm really asking for your "Bob Dylan Story"!)

*I am currently undertaking my PhD thesis on "Bob Dylan and his Fans--the Music and the Meaning". And, I am utilising a more ethnographic, narrative account, drawing directly from the Dylan fans themselves as want to underline what the fans themselves say about their own personal feelings and identification with Bob's music and lyrics, which are, of course, on such a personal level.*

*Many scholars have already interpreted fans and fandom according to various intellectual theories of identity, consumption, power and/or ideology, etc., and whilst these theories certainly have a place and merit in themselves, I am choosing to have the fans speak on their own terms and in their own language, using and focusing on their personal experiences as Dylan fans, rather than only applying purely theoretical models or explanations.*

*Like many other Dylan enthusiasts, I have read most of the books about "Dylan"; the 'biographical, the 'journalistic', the 'academic', and so on. Many have been very interesting and thought-provoking, but very few, if any, have been 'moving', the way Bob and his music 'move' you when you listen to his recordings, or especially when you go to see him 'live'.*

*However, I personally think much of what his fans have written, and said, have been very 'moving', 'heartfelt' and sincere -- from a simple, short reaction to one of Bob's concerts to quite lengthy 'life-stories' and narrated experiences where Bob and his music inspired, illuminated and meant something to the individual fan at that particular time or 'special' moment. (Every 'Dylan-fan' will know what I'm talking about here.)*

***I would like to ask you to please send me your personal stories, thoughts and experiences, emails, etc., which I hope will eventually contribute to a virtual 'oral history' of Bob through his real-life fans. Thank you very much for your time, your love of music and for sharing what Bob Dylan means to you.***

*Yours very sincerely,*

***Barry Williams***

*Doctoral Researcher*

*Aston University*

*Birmingham, UK*

*Email: bw@mybobdylanstory.com*

\*Originally written January 2011 © Barry Williams

#### **Appendix 4: Online Dylan Fan Websites/Pages**

- Bob Dylan's Official Web Site* - [www.bobdylan.com](http://www.bobdylan.com) (© Sony Corporation)
- Expecting Rain* – [www.expectingrain.com](http://www.expectingrain.com) (by Karl Erik Andersen in Norway)
- Dylan Pool* (by Arthur Louie)
- Bringing It All Back Home* (by John Howell - the first Dylan web page on the Internet)
- All Along The Watchtower* (by Jonathan Schwabe in Denmark)
- A Ballad Of A Thin Man* (by Bruce Hughes)
- A Lily Among Thorns: Exploring Bob Dylan's Christianity* (by John D. Williams)
- An Introductory Guide To Bob Dylan CD-R Trading* (by Arthur Louie)
- The Annotated Bob Dylan* (by Nick Leggatt)
- Another Site of Bob Dylan* (by Hans & Anneke)
- Aviv Rosenfeld's Home Page*
- Blonde On Blonde* (Australian page by Tricia Jungwirth)
- Bob Dylan* (Australian page by Taffy)
- Bob Dylan* (by Tommy Ingvaldson)
- Bob Dylan Biography* (by Bobby)
- Bob Dylan Bootlegs* (Spanish site with details on bootleg CDs)
- The Bob Dylan CD Field Recordings Review Page* of William J. Clinton
- Bob Dylan - Crossroads* (focus on the 1965 and 1966 tours)
- Bob Dylan - Europe 2000*
- Bob Dylan: His Life and Work, 1964-1966* (by William D. Glenn)
- Bob Dylan Musical Roots and Influences Pages* (by Manfred Helfert)
- The Bob Dylan Picture Archives*
- Bob Dylan Songs Never Played Live* (Serge Tremblay's Dylan page)
- Bob Dylan: Tangled Up In Jews* (by Larry Yudelson) (page devoted to studying and collecting trivia relating to the Jewish religious/cultural odyssey of Shabtai Zisel ben Avraham v'Rachel Riva, a.k.a Bob Dylan)

*The Bob Dylan: The Icon* (by BJ Miller)

*Bob's Boots* (page by Craig Pinkerton)

*Bob's Written Word* (page by Jim Roemer) (Bob's writings including personal letters, published liner notes, on-stage raps, prose, and poems)

*The Book Of Bob* (Jim Roemer's extensive listing of song lyrics.)

*Bread Crumb Sins* (page by Giulio Molfese)

*The Church of Bob*

*Buckets Of Dylan - The Complete Guide To Bob Dylan* (page by Paul Allen)

*Come Writers And Critics* (page listing Dylan books by Michel Pomarede)

*Cowboy Angel* (site is dedicated to the music and poetry of Bob Dylan)

*Cowboy Angel Sings* (page by Andra) (cover songs performed by Bob Dylan including where they were performed and background information plus lyrics to nearly all of Dylan's songs)

*DylanArt.com* (art work by Brian West)

*Dylanbase* (an unofficial Bob Dylan bootleg database) (page by Dennis Cleary)

*Dylan CD Singles, Sleeves and More* (page by Pachi Becerril and Francisco Fernandezl providing a list of all Bob Dylan's CD singles and promotional CDs)

*Dylan Cover Albums* (page by Dave Plentus)

*The Dylan Daily* (Edited by Gerry Smith) (celebrates the art of Bob Dylan with news and views of new and back catalog recordings, live performance, and associated critiques.)

*Dylan In Austria*

*The Dylan Lyric Commentaries* (page by Steve Lescure) (contains commentaries culled from the newsgroup rec.music.dylan)

*Dylanology Page* (page by A.J. Weberman)

*Dylanes* (Spanish page by Pablo Velasco)

*Edlis Centrale*

*Dylansite* (page by Jan Pöhlmann)

*Dylantree.com - To The Tree With Roots* (page by Michael Pucci)

*Electric Dylan* (page by Roger Ford) (history of Dylan's 1965-66 recording: mono version, alternate mixes etc.)

*Eternal Circle* (page by Takemasa Tanaka) (database of Dylan's lyrics and albums)

*Every Grain Of Sand* (page by Michael Farry) (page concerned with the song "Every Grain Of Sand")

*George Staroatin's Bob Dylan Album Reviews* (Rumanian page)

*How Long Has It Been Since Dylan Played...*" (page lists the last time a song was played live) (by Adam Selzer)

*How To Follow Bob Dylan* (Itsuko Nishimura's page - in Japanese)

*I've Got A Song To Sing* (German site)

*"I Don't Have Time to Create a Bob Dylan Page"* (John Lattanzio's Dylan page)

*I Happen To Be A Swede Myself* (Olof Bjorner's page) (contains Olof's Yearly Chronologies and cover lists of Dylan's songs)

*Jacob's Bob Dylan Page* (Images and MP3 files)

*Japanese Bob Dylan Page* (by Hiroshi Yosizawa)

*Kaw Liga's Shelter From the Storm* (page by Francisco Garcia) (Spanish Dylan page)

*"The Land Of The Midnight Sun"* (Norwegian page by Geir Olsen)

*Leave No Stone Unturned* (page by Christie-Lynn and Lindsay)

*Maggie's Farm* (Italian page by Michele Murino)

*Masked And Anonymous Database* (page by Trev Gibb)

*Mike Hobo's Legendary Bob Dylan Website* (page by Mike Spreitzhofer)

*My Back Pages* (by Eyolf Østrem) Lyrics, chords, music analysis, and harmonica information

*New Pony* (page by Rachel Klingberg)

*Not Dark Yet* (page by Markus Prieur) (Page mainly focuses on some of the song performed occasionally starting in 1999)

*Page Of Spanish Leather* (page by Pachi Becerril providing Spanish translations of Bob's lyrics)

*Positively 24th Street: A Pilgrim's Guide To Hibbing* (page by John Berry)

*Power, Greed, and Corruptible Seed* (page by Paul Dean)

*Roots of Bob* (page by Seth Kulick)

*Searching For A Gem - Bob Dylan's Official Rarities* (by Alan Fraser)

*Shooting Star* (French site by Richard Lager) Contains album reviews, photos, and information on Dylan in France

*Shot Of Love Tour* (focus on the 1981 tour)

*Skeleton Keys* (page by John D. Williams) "The Interactive Examination Of The Music Of Bob Dylan"

*Slow Train* (Finnish page by Harri Huhtanen)

*Slow Train Coming* (page by Bill Parr - EDLIS Christianity and Dylan Agency)

*Smoking A Cheap Cigar* (Irish page by Derek Keogh) (mostly information about Bob in Ireland and England)

*Song Last Played* (page by Adam Selzer)

*Songs Never Played Live* (page by Serge Tremblay)

*The Songs Of Bob Dylan* (An interactive discography)

*Subterranean Homesick Blues*

*Tangled Up In Blue* (Page by Andrew Nugent)

*They All Play On Penny Whistles* (the unofficial webpage devoted to fan covers of Bob Dylan's songs)

*Time Out Of Mind* (page by Steve Spencer)

*Traduction* (page by Francois & Laurentl providing Franch translations of Bob's lyrics and other articles and interviews)

*TV Talkin' - Bob Dylan: On Film And Television* (page by Stephen Dunthorne)

*The Unofficial Bob Dylan Free Tape Library* (page by Simon M. Campden-Main)

*With Bob On Our Side* (Russian Dylan page by Anton Vorozheev)

"*Without A Home Page*" (page by Sonia & Keith)

*www.bobdylan.nu* (Norwegian page by Øyvind Brunvoll)

"*You Know You're A Dylan Fan If ...*" (page by Mike Fink and John Fink Jr.)

Listed pages courtesy of Bill Pagel  
Available at [www.boblinks.com](http://www.boblinks.com)

## Appendix 5: Dylan's Global Touring Schedule

Long-time Dylan fan, Olof Björner, has compiled these year-by-year chronicles of activities, recordings, and other items of interest in the life and career of Bob Dylan.

### Number of Dylan concerts year-by-year (1960 – 2015)

<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<b><i>60s</i></b>
0	36	33	19	45	67	48	0	2	2	<i>252</i>
<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<b><i>70s</i></b>
0	1	1	0	40	31	26	0	114	26	<i>239</i>
<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<b><i>80s</i></b>
70	54	0	0	27	0	60	36	71	99	<i>417</i>
<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<b><i>90s</i></b>
93	101	92	80	104	116	86	94	110	119	<i>995</i>
<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<b><i>00s</i></b>
112	106	107	98	111	113	99	98	97	98	<i>1039</i>
<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>					
102	89	86	85	92	87	<b><i>TOTAL (3435)</i></b>				

Courtesy of "Olef's Files" - <http://www.bjorner.com>

## Appendix 6: The Never Ending Tour

### **808 Cities, 2,503 Shows, and 1,007,416 Miles: The Staggering Geography of Bob Dylan's 'Never Ending Tour'**

- Jun 7, 2013
- 2.5k Shares
- Reuters



Today marks exactly 25 years since Bob Dylan first embarked on what's commonly known as his Never Ending Tour. During this time, he's played at least 2,503 shows in 808 cities and towns all over the world, and a conservative, as-the-crow-flies estimate of the complete itinerary puts his travels over the last quarter century at an astonishing 1,007,416 miles.

That's the equivalent of going to and from the moon, twice, then completely around the Earth, twice more — with enough left over to fly from Duluth, Minnesota, to New York City and back again. So, the man's kind of a popular performer.

There are six cities in which Dylan's played at least 25 shows on the Never Ending Tour — New York (52) and London (50) lead the way — and he broken double digits in 50 cities altogether. He plays the United States most often, but the tour is truly global: Dylan maintains about a 3 to 2 ratio of domestic to international shows and has reached 54 other countries to date. He frequents major world cities like Toronto and Paris and Stockholm and Tokyo and Melbourne, of course, but he's played in Estonia and Andorra and Macedonia and recently China, too.

He may well be America's most-popular cultural emissary.

## **An interactive guide to all the cities and set lists over the past 25 years**

*This map includes every show Bob Dylan has played for the last 25 years. Click on the icons and refer to the legend at lower right for a more detailed view. (Map by Sara Johnson and Eric Jaffe)*



*Twenty-five years of Bob Dylan shows, organized by city. (Compiled by Eric Jaffe and Sara Johnson)*

### **Legend:**



Dylan's been to so many places in these two-and-a-half decades that they start to form their own natural clusters. He's played Big Sky and Little Rock, Mountain View and Long Beach, Great Falls and Lake Placid, Palm Desert and Thunder Bay. He's played Eastlake and West Point and South Bend and Middletown and Northampton. He's played Providence and Christchurch and Las Cruces, and at least 20 different Saints or Sans or Santas, and Bethlehem (Pennsylvania).

He's played Forts Lauderdale and Myers and Pierce and Wayne and Worth. And Esch-sur-Alzette and Juan-les-Pins and Winston-Salem and Stratford-upon-Avon. And Elizabeth (Indiana) and Murray (Kentucky) and Eugene (Oregon) and Salina (Kansas) and Wayne (New Jersey) and George, Washington. And Altoona and Alpharetta, Chattanooga and Chula Vista, Kalamazoo and Kissimmee, Tuscaloosa and Tallahassee, Ypsilanti and Waikiki, and Normal, Illinois.

He's played Aberdeen in Scotland and Maryland, and Hamburg in New York and Germany, and Victoria in Canada and Hong Kong. He's gone from Louisville to Nashville to Knoxville to Asheville to Huntsville in eight days. He's toured Cork and Bordeaux, College Park and State College, Jean and Jaen, Dijon and Gijon, Nampa and Tampa. He played London, Canada, the same night a Dylan cover band played London, England. He once went straight from Assago to Zurich.

The very first song of the Never Ending Tour, played in Concord, California, was "Subterranean Homesick Blues." He's only played Duluth, Minnesota, twice — once more than he's played Duluth, Georgia. But he'll be going home again soon. The city is on the schedule for a new U.S. summer leg, stretching from Florida to California, that begins in just a few weeks.

• • • • •

In a sense, Bob Dylan has been on tour ever since he arrived in New York City in 1961. There were breaks — most notably, the roughly eight-year fallow period following his motorcycle accident in mid-1966 — but it wasn't until the late 1980s that Dylan seems to have started thinking his playing days "might well have been faded out," he writes in volume one of his memoir, *Chronicles* (2004). Then suddenly, a two-part transformation occurred that seems to have set the stage, so to speak, for the Never Ending Tour.

The first part of the change, related to Dylan's voice, was rather mystical. It occurred during some sessions with the Grateful Dead that took place during a break on his tour with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers. Struggling to connect emotionally with his old songs, he left the session and wandered into a jazz bar where he heard a singer who seemed to have "an open window to my soul." The experience called to mind some "elemental" singing technique that promised to help Dylan recapture some of the power he felt he'd lost.

He joined Petty for one final tour leg, and at a show in Locarno, Switzerland, in October of 1987, the vocal trick clicked:

Nobody would have noticed that a metamorphosis had taken place. Now the energy was coming from a hundred different angles, completely unpredictable ones. ... 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.

The other part, related to his playing, was much more mechanical. Dylan recalls that he replaced his "flat-picking" guitar style with a "highly controlled" system that blues artist Lonnie Johnson had taught him in the early 1960s. The effect might make Dylan's songs sound a bit unfamiliar and maybe even off rhythm, but it would also enable him to play with an emotional detachment. He described the style as "strict and orthodox" and the complete opposite of improvisation:

Nobody else played this way and I thought of it as a new form of music.

So if we're to believe Dylan's published recollections, come 1988 he felt like a "new" singing performer and had discovered a "new" musical style. The only thing left was to offer these insights to a new audience. He told his touring manager to plan at least three years of shows in the same towns, because he thought it would take him that long to get the techniques down. He thought he might lose

older fans but that younger ones would be intrigued and bring their friends back with them the following year. Ultimately this would form "the nucleus of my future audience":

I wished I was at least twenty years younger, wished that I had just dropped on the scene all over again.

• • • • •

Jeff Rosen, Dylan's manager, declined to comment for this article on the current strategy and operations of the Never Ending Tour, but statistics and trends suggest the two core concepts of Dylan's original plan remain in place.

Take his focus on playing the same towns. Of the 62 cities he played in 1988, for instance, Dylan went back to nearly half the very next year, and has since re-visited all but four. (For the record: Charlevoix, Michigan; Carlsbad, California; Middletown, New York; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina.) This repetition has endured. There are currently 390 cities that Dylan has played only once during the Never Ending Tour. That means 84 percent of the time he's performing in front of a fan who's had the chance to see him before — and maybe this time brought some new friend.

His focus on a younger audience persists as well. Back in 1988 he established a mid-tour college town presence that's become habitual during U.S. legs. Berkeley leads the way with 12 shows, but countless others have made the map. In 2004 he did an entire 29-show college leg. He'll play big arenas sometimes but also mix in downtown clubs and minor league ballparks. He'll share the stage with acts ranging from Elvis Costello and Paul Simon to Willie Nelson and Phil Lesh to Jack White and (this summer) Wilco.

Dylan's three-year outlook has broadened since 1988 — it's now twenty-five going on eternity — but a lot of other things haven't changed.

There's a regularity to the travel pattern, sometimes down to the month. (In recent years, New Yorkers could set their calendars to Dylan's November appearances.) Since 1989 he's played shows in Europe every year, and he returns to Asia or Australia about once every five. He tends to play four or five legs a year, give or take one; there were a high of seven legs in 1998, when Dylan logged nearly 66,000 miles on tour, including a trip to South America with the Stones. Even after his latest start — May 27, 1989 — he still managed 99 shows.

The wildest Never Ending leg is open for debate. A strong case can be made for Leg 2 of 1995, when Dylan began in Maine, worked west and south to San Diego, then headed back to Boston and down the East Coast before flying to Oslo four days later for Leg 3. But it's hard to top Leg 1 of 1990 for grandeur. It began January 12 with an epic 50-song, 4-set, 18-cover, 6-ish-hour show (with 240 minutes of actual music) at Toad's Place in New Haven, then to Brazil, then to Paris, then a six-night, six-show residency at the Hammersmith in London. All that inside a month.

Winston Watson, who played drums for the band in the early 1990s, describes the frenzy of the road in a documentary called *Bob Dylan Never Ending Tour Diaries* (2009). With the house lights up the band would do what's called a "runner," dashing for the 12-bunk tour bus (with a star coach, of course) and leaving for the next city. "A very well-oiled machine," said Watson of the whole operation. "Everybody's where they're supposed to be when they're supposed to be."

Watson said the grind wore him down physically and emotionally during his four years, but when it was finally over he must have found himself missing it a bit, because he joined a Dylan cover band called Highway 61 Revisited.

Dylan himself doesn't seem to care much for the Never Ending Tour moniker. Initially fans were led to believe Dylan coined the phrase during an interview with journalist Adrian Deevoy for *Q*, the British music magazine, in late 1989. According to Clinton Heylin's 1991 unauthorized biography, *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades*, Dylan responded to a question from Deevoy about the back-to-back nature of his recent tour schedule by saying:

It's all the same tour. The Never-Ending Tour. ... You know, you just don't have to start it up and end it. It's better just to keep it out there with the breaks ... extended breaks.

As it turns out, Deevoy seems to have put the phrase into Dylan's mouth. That's according to the writer Michael Gray, author of the wonderful *Bob Dylan Encyclopedia* (2006), whose comprehensive book devotes an entire entry to Deevoy. On the actual recorded interview, writes Gray, Dylan does say, "It's all the same tour." But then Deevoy suggests, "It's the Never-Ending Tour" and Dylan replies, "Yeah. Yeah."

"[I]n order to reference the source of what everyone said was Dylan's quote, I naturally checked that source — and found to my surprise that it was not Dylan's at all, but Adrian Deevoy's," Gray says.

Over the years Dylan has criticized the nickname. In the liner notes to his 1993 album *World Gone Wrong*, Dylan writes that fans shouldn't get "bewildered by the Never Ending Tour chatter," claims it ended in 1991 with the departure of lead guitarist G. E. Smith, and says that each leg of his tour has its "own character and design." The notes have a sardonic tone, but in a 2009 interview with *Rolling Stone*, Dylan showed some genuine rancor for the label:

"Critics should know that there's no such thing as forever. ... You never heard about Oral Roberts and Billy Graham being on some Never Ending Preacher Tour. Does anybody ever call Henry Ford a Never Ending Car Builder? Is Rupert Murdoch a Never Ending Media Tycoon? What about Donald Trump? Does anybody say he has a Never Ending Quest to build buildings? ... Anybody ever say that Duke Ellington was on a Never Ending Bandstand Tour? But critics apply a different standard to me for some reason. ... "

However Dylan truly feels about the Never Ending Tour name, it certainly exists in the minds of his fans. Bill Pagel's set list website is updated within minutes of the curtain as attendees call or email him. Olof Björner's keeps a concert history page celebrated for its detail. There's a "never ending pool" to predict what songs will be performed on a given leg, spinning off a contest that began in 2001. (Yes, my team did win once, thanks for asking.) And of course there are the joys of the shows and bootlegs themselves — hearing new songs played live for the first time, developing a taste for old tunes arranged like never before.

It's enough to keep fans busy forever, if there is such a thing.

• • • • •

The 1,007,416-mile question, of course, is what drives Dylan to tour at such a relentless pace. "People do say: he's a 72-year-old guy, he's got plenty of money, he doesn't have to do this," says Sean Wilentz of Princeton University, author of *Bob Dylan in America* (2010) and historian-in-residence at Dylan's official website. "He's obviously not doing it because he has to do it, he's doing it because he wants to do it."

Wilentz believes some of the mystery of what motivates Dylan slips away if we consider him a performing artist instead of a recording artist. That idea harmonizes with a few clues Dylan himself has left during recent interviews. Together they suggest we should be looking at the Never Ending Tour not as some static display of Dylan's creative process but rather its essence.

"He does the recordings, to be sure, and they're important, but the songs have a life much bigger than what's on the record," says Wilentz. "That's why he goes around performing them. That's what he does. That's what his art is about. It's about lots of other things, too, but that's, I think, at the core of it."

For one thing, Dylan clearly derives inspiration from being on the road. He soaks up every new corner of the universe: whether it's the low-income shore community in New Jersey where police found him wandering around a few years back, or Neil Young's home in Winnipeg where he once made an excursion just to walk the same steps Young had walked. Is it merely a coincidence that the Never Ending Tour has coincided with Dylan's most fertile songwriting period since the 1960s?

"Traveling allows Dylan's aloofness to ferment into clarity," Douglas Brinkley wrote in *Rolling Stone* in 2009.

Then there's the development of his musical sound. With the exception of bassist Tony Garnier, who's been around since The Hague show in 1989, band members unceremoniously come and go. Every band permutation — there have been twenty-two at last count — is like a fresh effort to enhance the vocal and technical epiphanies Dylan experienced back in the late 1980s. They try to perfect Dylan's songs every night, or perhaps let them evolve in some Darwinian sense that may itself be perfection.

"I don't think you'll hear what I do ever again," Dylan told Brinkley in 2009. "It took a while to find this thing."

And last there's the very artistry of performance. Maybe the reason Dylan gives new arrangements to old favorites or rewrites the lyrics to classics etched in cultural stone is because they're still growing in his eyes. "People still have this idea that the record is the real thing and shows are just kind of the unreal thing," says Wilentz. "But, in fact, the shows may be the real thing." In a 2012 interview with Mikal Gilmore for *Rolling Stone*, Dylan agreed that performance brought a song to life:

Songs don't come alive in a recording studio. You try your best, but there's always something missing. What's missing is a live audience.

May his search for that missing something never end.

*Enormous thanks goes to Atlantic Cities fellow Sara Johnson for producing the maps and to Dylan-pool teammate Chris Chase for numerous suggestions.*

*A note on data: The main source of geographic data for the interactive map was bobjdylan.com. A handful of "private shows" tracked by the site were removed. Some venue details have been clarified with the help of Olof Björner's concert history page, which has show information Dylan's site doesn't. In cases where ambiguities or differences could not be reconciled, details were presented as they appeared at Dylan's official site.*

*A note on mileage methodology: Total mileage for the Never Ending Tour was calculated via Google Maps using an as-the-crow-flies distance tool. The estimate is imprecise in three notable ways. First, it measures distance from city to city rather than venue to venue. Second, it measures distance to the start of a new leg from the end of the previous leg (thereby omitting whatever changes in location occurred in between). Third, Dylan typically travels by bus instead of by air. For this last reason in particular the mileage should be considered a conservative estimate. The actual distance covered by the tour is likely much greater.*

Pages 217-222 removed for copyright restrictions.

## Appendix 9<sup>72</sup>: Raw Data Samples from Facebook Online Dylan Survey, 12/2012

### Raw Data Samples from Facebook Online Dylan Survey 12/2012 Your nationality (country of birth or current residence)

israel states texan birmingham united france (uk) live england **british** u.s.a. born america usa)  
greece **uk** australian dutch  
canada ireland born) (dk german irish city nl **american** currently **US** netherlands - new finland nyc  
york germany belgium Denmark french

England

New York

NYC

Birmingham England

British

Netherlands - Dutch nationality. Currently living in Antwerp, Belgium

united states

New York City

USA

British

British

usa

england

DK

france

Italian

german

texan (jk usa)

British

UK

Canadian

Italy

Greece

Finland

NL

France

<sup>72</sup> The ensuing pages are just 'parts of' the full data sample received from the Facebook Survey conducted online in 2012. I have not touched this data as regards spelling, format, etc., as I wanted to show the 'rawness' and authenticity of the data. The bold-type headings and words in parentheses are what I wrote on the original online survey form created to communicate and engage with Dylan fans. The intent of the short Facebook survey was to test and compare the data I had previously received from my Research Website ([www.mybobbydylanstory.com](http://www.mybobbydylanstory.com)), active from April 2011 until April 2014 and set up to receive Dylan fan feedback to my research questions, in addition to providing a place for the Dylan fans' voices and narratives about their own fan experiences.

British  
[OBJ] American  
israel  
[OBJ] New Zealand (UK born)  
United States  
[OBJ] English  
america  
[OBJ] british  
American  
[OBJ] USA  
British  
[OBJ] Australian  
uk  
[OBJ] austria  
English  
[OBJ] Bangladeshi  
UK  
[OBJ] Netherlands  
USA  
[OBJ] English  
Irish Ireland  
[OBJ] canada  
US  
[OBJ] USA  
English  
[OBJ] Turkey  
Germany  
[OBJ] Germany  
Swiss - live in in NY since 11 years  
[OBJ] usa  
USA  
USA  
American  
USA  
USA  
English living in Spain  
USA  
british  
british  
Uk  
uk  
USA  
Canada  
Ireland  
canadian  
Norwegian  
British  
USA  
belgian  
Belgium  
American (living in the UK)  
Denmark  
USA  
american born in los angeles

gt. britain  
British  
USA  
USA  
USa  
Germany  
United States of America  
USA  
Germany  
US  
German  
UK  
British  
Irish  
Ireland  
American  
Denmark  
USA  
USA  
Canada  
U.S.A.  
British  
Canada  
UK  
Swedish  
ireland  
canadian  
British  
[OBJ:OBJ:OBJ:OBJ] English  
[OBJ:]UK  
Japan  
[OBJ:OBJ:]now english  
USA  
[OBJ:]german  
Germany  
[OBJ:]Sweden  
new Zealand  
British, Glasgow - Scotland  
[OBJ:]canada  
USA - Wisconsin  
[OBJ:]Mexico  
US  
[OBJ:]UK  
Canadian  
[OBJ:]England  
english  
[OBJ:]Germany  
France  
[OBJ:]USA  
austria  
[OBJ:]USA  
german

## Raw Data Samples from Facebook Online Dylan Survey 12/2012

### Answers to question: *Are Dylan fans different than other music fans?—in what ways?*

Lately I'm reading that his music, turned up real loud, is great to clean to! Think I may try it. Maybe my house will be a lot cleaner!

A fan is a fan is a fan, however the sheer longevity of Bob's career is exceptional. But no, and I agree with Elizabeth Taylor, the only thing wrong with Bob Dylan is his fans. In our group we try not to be sycophants, and to be respectful!

I generally find Dylan fans to be more discerning and knowledgeable about the traditions of music and the history. They tend to have varied tastes and interests beyond one genre of music, and value the qualities of spontaneity and transformation. There is an interest to explore the influences that affected Dylan and that opens up a whole range of experiences - musical, literary and artistic. Because of the content and character of Dylan's music and creativity, people drawn to his music seem to be more interested in 'deeper' ideas and active participation in the listening process - they are drawn to music with longevity rather than shallow, transient 'passive' pop/rock music. I like the feeling of community with some of the Dylan fans - it is a little like a family with all the associated ups and downs! Sadly, there are some fans who are delusional, ignorant and aggressive - but we meet them in every walk of life, no matter who the artist in question is.

I think that most Bob Dylan fans come from a good background, have studied and are intellectuals. I know big fans who are doctors, lawyers, writers, philosophers etc.

I love that I'm of the same generation, only seven years younger than him. I was hanging out in Greenwich Village in the late 1960s. He was there in the early 1960s. I was a recording engineer at WBAI-fm, the listener-sponsored non-commercial radio station where all the Village musicians and poets came to be on the air. I was part of the same scene. That makes his music even more special to me. We were part of the same group of people back in the day, so it's like listening to the music of a friend.

Dylan fans may be different in all ways...whatever road they have been down and whatever path they are taking in life, and what they take and learn from Bob Dylan, is all so different..but we all seem to share somethin' about him. Fans just 'keep on, keepin' on like a bird that flew, tangled up in blue".

I believe that being a Dylan fan is something really special, it can be frustrating a solitary but now I am fortunate to have many 'Dylan Friends' on line, who feel the same way about this man and his work. I often say, you either Get Dylan or you don't and if you do your life will be richer for it.

I love the camaraderie with other Dylan fans who I hardly know. Dylan fans will always have more fun than other fans trying to remember all the lyrics and debating what they mean, but apart from that I don't suppose we're any different and certainly not more special.

affection for poetry, words, reading between lines, the love of not-understanding, mystery, searching, trying, the on-the-road value, and the friendship. The description above could go for deadheads as well. I got thousands of vinyls, cds, tapes, and I just love anything musical, but Dylan (and The Dead) is a totally other ballgame.

dylan fans are bobcats that look out for each other and have a great camaraderie in bob

True hard-core fans are sort of "totalitarian". Not that they don't appreciate anyone else, but this passion seems so quite overwhelming. You don't just listen to Bob or collect some bootlegs, you "study" about him, you get involved in heated discussions, you sometimes ground a new religion! We "girls" also find him very attractive, even though he is not the perfect handsome a lá ...who knows, Goerge Clooney, Paul Newman, Jake Gyllenhaal, Charles Shaughnessy? He is not even the role model for

an husband and father..but nevertheless...we fancy him!

Special: you have to explain yourself so often to ignorant people.

Dylan fans are the "sand and Glue!" a breed apart !bd60

I'm not sure Dylan fans are 'different or special' than fans of other music, but it is a good way to meet some very interesting people. It does seem many fans tend to be thinkers (as opposed to fans of say 'New Country' or 'X Factor' type of music... However, since the Internet has come along, it is disappointing to see how many people get too obsessed with Bob Dylan, and a small core of fans are obnoxious, aggressive and delusional. Of course, that probably applies to some fans of all music or musicians.

I don't think so ....

There are all kinds of Dylan fans. I've met the silliest groupie and the most distinguished intellectual. You cannot categorize Dylan fans like you cannot categorize Dylan.

Dylan's fans are family.

Dylan seems to have been the false god of folk rock, according to Reader's Digest in 1970. Now he is old but still strong and vital singer and songwriter and poet who keeps on travelling throughout the world since 1960, more than five decades. "Never Ending Tour" since 1988. He is the only one among rock stars who can win the Nobel Prize for Literature some day! Elvis, Beatles, Jim Morrison, Hendrix, Cohen, Jackson and Madonna cannot.

I don't know if Dylan fans are different from other fans, but I suspect that we are all very much bitten with Bob's unique and particular bug! We feel and hear the songs in similar ways, I think. When you are with a fellow Dylan fan, communication flows. We understand each other.

Dylan fans don't always walk the easy way. I think that most of the Dylan fans are people who always "think twice" about the most important things in life.

I feel being a Dylan fan IS really Great, Different and Special, first because I do think Bob is a Great, Different and Special artist, and also because being a Dylan fan makes you feel sensitive as well as sensible and profound in a level of communication with his songs and music that doesn't and can't exist with other artists Besides and consequently as Joan Baez once said "Not everyone gets Bob Dylan ...But, for those who do, he goes way deep." ~ so paradoxically there are thousands of fans but lots and lots of non fans too ! and this makes it a special thing !we feel like a chosen kind of people .

They like to talk about how they found Dylan, and what Dylan's music means to them. But that isn't true about all fans I've met...

We Get It All

i loved dylan in 1964 and i love him in 2011...i never went through a stage where...he used to be good but now hew washed out bob is like wine the older he gets the better..his music changes like his moods changes hes not static hes not a record..hes alive...theres nothing like grateful dead concert and this applies to bob theres nothing like a bob dylan concert .he wont bore you hell always find a way to surprise you but he can be subtle...so u got to be alert and aware at all times to see how different he can be from every concert

Um.. It's certainly unique! Being a young un into Dylan was odd.. You tend to be ridiculed through primary and high school then everyone starts to venerate him when you hit college-ish age. I remember having boyfriends who would finally 'get' the music and then start imitating and SLAUGHTERING songs that were very sacred to me when I hit 20ish which was annoying! There is a huge sense of the 'sacred' in genuine Dylan fans. I do notice a big divide between the people who 'just like' his sixties stuff and the 'other' fans. It seems to me that the people into just the sixties period tend to be more cognition driven peeps and the people into the latter parts of his career more spiritual. But.. of course there's all sorts..

Yes, we are different. We are dedicated to his music and many abilities. We are deep thinkers. We have a different slant on life. We learn from his words. Fans of other musicians come & go, but Dylan Fans stay with him. He has become a big part of at least 4 generations. Not many others can say that. He is loyal to his fans in return. We all watch our parking meters.

I've been in contact with many generous Bobheads who share or exchange recordings of concerts.

we take abuse but not as much as Bob did. we are all stronger for it though.

Seeing him live over the past ten or so years has been a great adventure. The avid Dylan fan no longer looks for a consistently excellent concert but, rather, soaring moments within the overall set; one or two of those is enough to hang your hat on for a week.

I think being a Dylan fan gives you special insight into the history and American music, a more profound sense of justice and a spiritual path you can walk. Also if you are interested in poetry or songwriting as an art there is no better artist you can be interested in to learn about these things.

Bob's fans are no different to other artists fans, my favourite artists have always been Bob and The Beatles and I feel I have grown up with their music always being the soundtrack of my life

They have a lot to put up with, but he can repay in spadeloads. The world will be a lesser place without him to share it.

I think Dylan Fans are special, but I can't explain why. It's interesting to hear their stories and their thoughts about Bob.

My experience is don't stereotype Bob fans - we come in all ages and from all backgrounds. Very few music fans can have endless debates about changing lyrics say on Tangled Up in Blue or whether the Blood on the Tracks version of Shelter from the Storm is better than during Rolling Thunder. How many great versions of Hard rain can you compare - original / Nara / Zaragosa. The discussions about favourite periods, best live band.

No, they are no different. But surely many of them think they are. What is great? His concerts especially from 2000s, there so big variety of arrangements, melody changes, moods, reconceptions that can keep you amused for long time, and there are still so many stuff to discover. I like this approach serious, truly whole hearted artist, very conscious of his art and performance. He sounds like a guy who is doing it not because it sells good but because he has urge to do it.

Being a BD fan makes me wonder why people don't like him. I have been in the situation where I have been ridiculed and mocked for liking him but it simply does not matter to me. I don't know about other people to me this is a very personal thing if they like him fine I am interested if not that's fine too - we all have choices. I don't go to many other concerts etc so I am not able to compare. I just feel so lucky to get the opportunity of being in the same room and listening to the show.

Dylan is a great artist. Many does not like him at all or like his later works. I don't mind that. I think everyone has the right to hate/love certain musicians. I don't think Dylan is way better than other great musicians like Louise Armstrong or Neil Young. I just like Dylan more than others. Maybe someone else prefers Armstrong, not Dylan and I respect that. Thanks

We have an active Dylan group in Newcastle meeting once a month since 1986. I couldn't imagine any other songwriter being able to inspire and sustain such a phenomenon.

Sometimes it is difficult to convince other people but if you succeed they get addicted to Bob

Literate music, with complex imagery is not popular or profitable anymore, Dylan and his lyrics allow me to show others that great music can be great writing too. Plus it's great to have Dylan aphorisms for every occasion!!

As a broad generalisation I often find Dylan fans to be somewhat smug and superior - from those that believe it gives them some sort of intellectual edge to the anoraks who can quote complete dates/set lists and other minutia. Probably the thing that makes them different from other music fans is how obsessional they can be. On the positive side one of the happy aspects of being a Dylan fan is that you don't have to wait 5 years for the next tour and there is always a useful quote to fall back on in any life situation. I'd see him in anything!

I don't think I'm very different. I would like sometimes that people look at Dylan the way I do.

His longevity, creativity, diversity, long web of influences and influencees

The only difference is that we are fans of the best there is.

Being a Dylan fan requires a great deal more fortitude. So many people don't get him or his music and they enjoy ridiculing those of us who do. The derision and misunderstanding comes from all quarters. Dylan himself also challenges his fans like no other artist. He does not cater to expectation and is not afraid of angering his fans or others, but this is one of the things I respect about him.

I don't know many other Dylan fans.

Since I do not know many fans from other artists, I cannot tell the differences. But the Dylanologists I met all around the world in front of the venues have become dear friends of mine. Connected via world-wide-web, we meet in places like "Expecting Rain", "The Neverending Pool", "Bob Links", "Facebook" and of course "Bob Dylan.com" Meeting means always discussions, sharing emotions and much more!

Most other artists continue to do the same thing repeatedly. Bob changes things up and rearranges his music at his will. The people that this appeals to are usually pretty smart and interesting.

I'm not sure being a Dylan fan is any different than being a fan of any other band, but it's always inspiring and exciting to find someone who you can relate to in all things "Bob". You know, the people that understand what you mean when you start talking about "Eat the Document" or "The Genuine Basement Tapes" or the only live performance of "Abandoned Love". I'm sure most artists have moments or songs that their fans cherish and can discuss in a similar vein to the above mentioned Dylan things, but I suppose that Dylan just has MORE of those kinds of things based on his longevity and his tendency to record more songs than he releases (I only mentioned three, but I could go on and on with similar obscurities that nearly every Dylan fan is familiar with).

playful word freaks

I don't know. It's nice to talk to Dylan fans. Sort of outsiders because mainstream people don't like his voice. Interesting how much is going on on different levels. Dylan's Birthday parties every May, University lectures, concerts bands and musicians play Dylan covers. He has something for everybody. Nice Christmas album, great book he wrote, like the paintings, like his albums - he keeps you busy all year long since decades :)

Every Dylan fan is different. My Bob is not your Bob.

That we have Dylan :-)) I don't know that we're any more or less special than any other group of fans that get together at concerts and festivals and online to celebrate music and share friendship.

It's been great listening to some very well written songs.

Dylan fans were the first group of people who shared a common like that brought entirely differing individuals together collectively. Also the concert going experience found lots of resonance in the shared thoughts of Nick Hornby's football fan.

I don't know if there is any difference in being a Dylan fan as opposed to being a fan of others. I love Elvis Presley, U2, Prince, Tupac Shakur, Grateful Dead, Genesis, and none of these seems to take away from the others. Dylan seems more mysterious and

confident than a lot of musicians, and that is probably an attractive trait. That and his decided influence on other musicians explains my interest in him and his music.

When I first started listening to Bob he was not touring. Later - late 70's I saw him in Denver with a band and backup singers and was disappointed. A couple of years later I saw him in Albuquerque during his Jesus phase and was again disappointed. Then the neverending tour started and I saw him lots - sometimes multiple times in a year and have continued to do so. Sometimes the shows are great, sometimes they are terrible and most are somewhere in between - but it doesn't matter - I am in the presence of The Bob and that is enough. When he was around 10 my son started to go with me. He is now 16 and it is one of my great pleasures in life to see how into Dylan he is. He finds obscure videos on U-Tube and shows them to me and "discovers" songs that he wants to talk about. His i-pod is stuffed with Dylan and the Band. The torch has been passed to a new generation.

The difference is probably that Dylan is his own man, rarely being influenced by current music and fashions (he probably did attempt to follow fashion in the eighties with poor results).

Bob Dylan, through all his different phases, has so much to offer; much more than any other musician I know of. And he writes so well. I think Dylan fans tend to be a fairly literate bunch, so having the connection of being a Dylan offers up a wealth of possibilities in conversation. For myself, Dylan has also introduced me a wealth of other musicians, such as Willie McTell, John Hurt, Charley Patton, Roosevelt Sykes, and a host of others. He is tapped into the psyche of the music of Americana and relays that to his fans. Being a Bob Dylan fan opens up a world of music, literature, and culture!

### **Sample of Answers to question: *What Does Bob Dylan Mean To You?*<sup>73</sup>**

*(The question is intentionally 'open-ended' for you to write what personally matters to you. If you need more space, please send me as a separate email to: bw@mybobdylanstory.com -- Thank you!)*

hey Barry, next month I'm coming out with a memoir Tangled Up In Tunes: Ballad of a Dylanhead. My website has a blog where I have a lot of personal Dylan content. I think you might find some interesting stuff. If I can help you in any way, let me know. My book is a case study on being a Dylan and Grateful Dead fan.  
[www.tangledupintunes.com](http://www.tangledupintunes.com)

Fantastic, great danceable music; great imagery in the lyrics; freedom of expression in his music and life.

I was 13 when we emigrated to New Zealand, I was lost, lonely and embarking upon a journey of self harm (not eating, cutting, overdoses) which lasted 50 years. I desperately needed something in my life in which to believe, an anchor to bind me to reality that is life. I bought a record by Peter, Paul and Mary, and began to wonder, who is this MAN? who writes certain songs I liked called Bob Dylan. A year or so later

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<sup>73</sup> In these samples of more narrative style of answers sent by Dylan fans, I begin, as researcher, to separate each response by person. As explained in Chapter 3, I continued the process of sifting and sorting through the fan narratives, organising them thematically, as the major themes emerged clearly from the data.

FREEWHEELIN was released in NZ and I found what I had been looking for. I was able to relate to what this young man, not so much older than myself was singing. He spoke to my parents when I was unable to 'Come mothers and fathers throughout the land...', yet they still criticised! I was saved, although hospitalised at 16 with Anorexia Nervosa, I had gained a reason to stay alive. And I thank Bob everyday for being exactly who he is. I am now singing and recording several of his songs on my own album which I hope to publish. Do you publish an album? Good luck with your venture! Sue!

Bob Dylan enriched my life by his lyrics and by going to his concerts. He inspired me to write poems to set my thoughts on paper and he was a magnificent "teacher" because my publisher published three poetry books. I met many "soulmates" from across the world who became real friends and what's more I met my husband at a concert. I even was a very lucky girl because I met Bob Dylan twice. One time I had a 20 minute conversation with him over a cup of coffee and last month I met him in the Hilton hotel over here in Antwerp where I live.

before bob i always thought you have to have a great voice and be beautiful for people to pay attention to you. then along comes bob without the great voice and he is telling me its ok to be the person that i am. he is telling me that i no longer just need to accept the values of my parents and teachers and its ok to question the morality of politics, religion, and virtue.

I adore his music, because it's so danceable and the imagery of the lyrics is phenomenal. I couldn't care less what the "real meaning" is. I just bask in the images!

Bob dylan can put into song what i have a hard time speakin' out....his aspect @ everything seems to fall into place with our Creator.....he makes me laugh, cry, love, feel and think about whatever is goin'on in my life or others....just so sweet and smart and funny and a very gracious loving person Bobby is..I thank him at every concert i have been to ....just yellin' it out to him...and i do pray for him very much, askin' the Creator to bless him for makin' others aware of reality. i, personally love his songs @ God....any shape and form,as there are many and many quotes from the bible. i really love his love songs as they make me feel whole as a woman....Bob just says the sweetest things "put you in a wheel barrel and wheel ya down the street", "sittin on my lap and drinkin' champagne". as a child, his music and words have comforted me, along with Jesus' words, as i tried to make it through the days. Bob has also influenced me in my piano and guitar playin, especially as a youngster(6yrs. old) i find myself quotin' his words as i talk with my children(and they let me know, that is what Bob said") and friends and workers.. My happiest moment is when Bob Dylan was invited by PopeJohn Paul II, to come and play for a youth rally...Bob was just so kind and played "blowin' in the wind". could go on and on but it's all good...peace love and prayers.

My relationship with Mr Dylan's music is one that has endured my whole adult life.. at the age of 14 his music opened my ears and my eyes and lifted me out of my East London, working class background and taught me another way to see the world. He has been my constant companion through good times and bad, never ceasing to inspire and challenge my thinking. For me personally, I have enjoyed all of Bob's different phases and I have embraced the way he has revamped and changed many of his songs. I see Mr Dylan influence in many genres of music and he is respected and admired by many and of late we see covers of his great songs popping up everywhere, I even heard a young British band (The Kooks) covering 'Tangled up in Blue' the other day. For all the criticism that has been hurled at him he can still sell out

pretty large venues and I have recently had the pleasure of seeing him perform in London at the age of 70, still rocking the house whether it be old or young followers. Bob has written some great songs and if you take the time to listen to them you will find the pure poetry, thought provoking and emotional.

I love the music (folk rock is my favorite genre) and the poetry. His use of words is amazing/inspiring/puzzling (what does he mean by that?)/unsurpassed by any other pop/rock artist. The first Dylan album I heard was Blood on the Tracks when I was 17. It blew me away. I've bought every album before and after. I first saw Bob live at Earl's Court London in 1978 and later the same year at Blackbushe - fantastic memories - and have seen him on nearly every tour of Britain since, including at Cardiff in October 2011.

When I were 9 I started buying singles each week, worked to pay for my music addiction. My dad was a Johnny Cash fan who hated anything counterculture - Beatles, Stones, longhairs, so btw Dylan was too folky for me, I digged the lyrics, but not the music. At 14 we had feature days at high school, and I started really liking the raggedness of Bob. At 18 I bought Blood On The Tracks - changed my life forever. Started singing and quoting anything Bob. A song is like a really good novel or poem; always the same but always new. Nowadays I realize fully how he steals - standing on the shoulders of giants - Both Dylan and The Grateful Dead give me a glimpse of stories from way behind. In Denmark we sometimes refer to a danish album title - BBreve fra Onkel Bob - Letters from Uncle Bob - sums it all up nicely. And, singing something like You Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go, I can make it my own - the imagery, collapse of time, lack of logic, subject/object, stream of consciousness, and it's still touching my soul, heart and feet on a very personal level, and even beyond - as the zen monks say don't even try describing - The Bob That Is - Is Not ;-)

Hi I would say Bob dylan has personally affected my belief system i remember the first time i played saved then read an interesting article in the telegraph (dylan fanzine written by the sadly missed john bauldie) i was blown away by the personal message that dylan sang about how jesus had transformed his life this was made real when i saw him live at the nec with tom petty and the highlight of the set was in the garden there is not a day goes by when i dont listen to bobby one of the reasons that life is worth living

Bob Dylan is the main reason why i decided i wanted to be a musician,he is also the only artist still living who's still relevant.I had my first musical "epiphany" listening to"sad eyed lady of the lowlands".

I love music. I was doomed to "meet" his Bobness some day, since I started listening to the Beatles as a little child, then

fell in love with U2. After moving on from the "disappointment" one experiences at school(forced to play Blowin' in the wind"

with the flute and such things), I got to learn his multi-sided, sometimes irreverent sometimes soothing voice, his vast production. I got to appreciate his talent as a songwriter, as a composer and as a stage interpreter. I "got in touch" with him like with no one else! The years as a "dylaniata" (Italian passionate hard-core fans) simply forged me. This is something I miss now that I live in Austria. More detailed things should be said...some hints are in my blog <http://felicitamodna82.wordpress.com/> or maybe I will send you an e-mail?

Without his music and especially lyrics, world would be a little bit darker. Without seeing him from time to time, visiting his concerts my life would be much darker. Without the rose, he gave me eleven years ago, there would be much lesser joy in my life!

Bob is sort of the blue print to my life, I listened outside of my elder brothers bedroom door to him, and got it right away, at the age of 8yrs, I still feel as though I have come home when I hear him, and also see him perform, I was at five gigs this year!

I felt he was saying things that I empathised with but couldn't articulate. I also felt somewhat that he was my alter ego - I identified with him and the changes he was going through - including approaching old age!

I find comfort and inspiration in Bob's music. His words find their way in my thoughts daily. His humor, both subtle and overt makes me laugh. His insights to love and the human condition sometimes overwhelm me. His melodies and his voice soothe me ... most of the time.

No one can turn a phrase or string words together better than Dylan.

I first heard Bob through a neighbour who lent me his first 2 albums and I've loved his music ever since, I have seen him only once but loved his show, his music although going through many changes and directions has always, in my view, carried messages of the day and affected thinking of the time, he hasn't really altered my views on the values I believe in but reinforced how I feel about them.

In this movie No Direction Home Joan Baez says that there are some Dylan fans that are true believers and that his music goes right to the core of those fans, I am one of those each song that I love get right to me and who I am. I am a poet and lyricist myself, I am greatly influenced by the writers that Dylan's lyrics have led me to discover, and by the history of music that Dylan has led me to find. Also I believe that Dylan has led me to become a more spiritual person, as he has searched and continued to search so have I, not necessarily the same path as him, but my own path. I often find in my life that I have used BOTT as a Rorschach test for my feelings and this has helped many times in my life.

He fascinates me as an individual. I think he is a near genius, although I can't be quite sure. He constantly surprises, delights, disappoints me and apart from producing some of the most sublime music over the years, that is what he does for me.