CHAPTER 3

Against Liberals: Multi-layered and Multi-directed Invocation in Dylan's Christian Songs

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Abstract: Bob Dylan's conversion to Christianity was a long time coming. So was his protest against protest, his hostility to politics. In this essay Dylan's gospel songs are appreciated as the pivot of his songwriting, augmenting the multi-layered sense and multi-directed meaning in the invocatory design of his songs, a pattern which of course is also to be found both earlier and later in his oeuvre.

Keywords: invocation, interpretation, description, sense, meaning

Sammendrag: Bob Dylans omvendelse til kristendommen var lenge forberedt i sangverket hans. Det samme gjelder hans protest mot protesten, hans forakt for politikk. I denne artikkelen blir Dylans gospelsanger betraktet som sangverkets omdreiningspunkt, for gospelsangene øker betydningsrikdommen og meningsmangfoldet i sangenes henvendelsesstruktur, en struktur som naturligvis også finnes både tidligere og senere i forfatterskapet.

Stikkord: henvendelse, fortolkning, beskrivelse, betydning, mening

> But with the truth so far off, what good will it do?
> —Bob Dylan, Jokerman

Against interpretation as exegesis

In most poems (and songs) we may – perhaps rightly, perhaps not – assume that the speaker (often verbally present as the "I" of the lyrics)

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is referring to the same entity in all parts of the poem. The same applies to the addressee (the "you" of the lyrics) – and in this respect it makes no difference whether the entities in question are human, allegorical abstracts or transcendent beings. From where do these assumptions arise? The answer to this question, which may challenge the hermeneutic idea of reading as exegesis, may seem obvious: We derive the idea of the coherence of a poem's speaker (and addressee) from the idea of language functioning as communication.

But unfortunately, perceiving the lyric as patterned on communication implies an inadequate understanding of works of art, wholly unable to explain the blatant fact that lyrics exist at all. Undeniably, successful communication can be accomplished more effectively through other verbal and non-verbal means. So, we have to look for a healthier reason. We derive the idea of the coherence of a poem's speaker (and addressee) from the more substantial idea of the work of art as a unique and singular entity, and this idea with its strong Hegelian bearings seems to have survived even in the fragmented contextual and ideological mixture of current scholarship.

But this idea – the work of art perceived as a unique, sensual, and particular entity – cannot in and of itself be said to require the coherence of a poem's first person speaker and its second person addressee. The coherence of these entities is not called forth by anything other than the demands of interpretation, and in this essay I shall argue that rather than conceiving reading as interpretation and exegesis, as the cracking of "the nightingale's code", Dylan's oeuvre encourages readings understood as *allowances of reading*, the *letting occur* of readings, and perhaps we should be content with these allowances and occurrences and halt the superstitious pursuit of fully elaborated interpretations. In order to understand at all, we have to relinquish the neatness of complete understanding.

"Ballad of a Thin Man"

To pave the way for the wrestle with Dylan's evangelical and metaphysical songs an example shall briefly be invoked. The enigmatic "Ballad of a Thin Man" (1965) is a ballad, albeit of a special sort. The song tells a story

of a kind, but not in the third person; the song is addressed to a second person. In the stanzas the "you" is never named, but in the refrain the addressee is called "mister Jones". It isn't, however, necessary to read the whole song as addressed to Jones, rather just the refrain. This might be unsettling seen from the point of view of interpretation, but it provides reading with new opportunities. The general and preferably allegorical meaning of the refrain (Jones understood as the ordinary man, each of us) can be seen as juxtaposed to the more particular, frightful, and disordering experiences of the more personalized "you" of the stanzas.

Perhaps the "you" of the stanzas is best understood as Dylan himself, not as a private man, of course, but as a highly creative mind struggling with his imagination. This line of thought also gives reading new opportunities regarding the ominous and perhaps also apocalyptic sense of the song, and makes it possible to read strands of the song's "you" as Christ himself – as imagined in His Second Coming.

These remarks demonstrate that what is either obvious or just slightly ambiguous on the level of description (of the lyrics' verbal sense) is far more enigmatic on the level of interpretation (of the meaning this sense is pointing out).

Multiple sense and meaning of the addressee

The listener may in many Dylan songs rightly be puzzled by the sense and the meaning (and reference) of the song's addressee. For example, is the sense of the song's "you" singular or plural? In most cases grammaticality may provide an answer; but questions still arise. Could the singular "you" (say of a song like "Positively Fourth Street", 1965) be a collective addressee (the Folk community at large) addressed as a singular metonymy rather than as a particular person? Furthermore, do the songs' "you" have an allegorical meaning in addition to the more personal one – for instance in love songs, which may have a particular and even biographical point of departure, but where the meaning of the (not any longer so deeply) loved one being addressed is extended allegorically, and in many cases even extends to transcendent meanings, related to inspirational forces, such as

the Muses. The many Dylan songs with more or less obvious meta-lyrical strands of meaning are surely cases where a multi-layered addressee would be hard to avoid in accomplished readings.

"Tangled Up in Blue" (1975), a song with a long history of altered pronouns, especially in performances over a long period of time, is another example. Even in print the song's addressee does not easily read as a coherent entity. The song comes across as a first-person ballad, but the story is neither linear nor coherent. Rather, it is circular, and different stanzas are perhaps outlining largely unconnected scenes and persons. All in all, it seems to be necessary to allow for different senses and meanings regarding the song's "you" (including, or course, a reference to the Muses).

Much the same applies to other songs from the same period, for instance the raging "Idiot Wind" (1975), despite the song's close ties to other split-up and divorce songs from the mid-1970s. The song's addressee is obviously a figuration of the singer's wife, but this initial meaning is quickly enlarged and the addressee takes on both a metonymical extension, comprising the whole of American society in the 1970s, and a metaphorical (and allegorical) depth including spiritual warfare (stanza 4). The allusion to Roger McGuinn's "Chestnut Mare" (1970) in the fifth stanza is intriguing as well, and allows for inclusion of The Byrds' front man in the song's multiple addressee.

The multiple speaker

In spite of Dylan's quite frequent use of a multi-layered addressee, most songs would seem to lend themselves readily to readings where the coherence of the speaker need not be questioned. However, this is not always so. Dylan critics have often commented on the remarkable divergence between the speakers of the first, middle, and even the last part of "Sign on the Cross" (1967). The song is more polyphonic (also regarding the sense and meaning of the speaker) than most lyrical readings are usually prepared to allow for, and it would be a progressive leap for readings of the lyric if we were able to deal with this idea (the coherent entity of the

speaker) as just a convenience and not a necessary piece of the nature of the lyric.

The idea of salvaging the coherence of the speaker by saying that he is giving voice to different personas, is not very helpful. The reason is that while "persona" (mask) is operating on the level of sense (description), and while the singer of a song is understandable only on the level of meaning and is, or was, a living entity, *the speaker of a poem has no real existence, only a verbal and theoretical one*. The meaning of the speaker cannot be reached by adding up his personas, his different senses, but must also include his pure tropological being, or rather, tropological beings.

Related to the question of the incoherence of the speaker of a poem, is the question of this speaker's sense. Is he more or less congruent with the singer himself, biographically or psychologically? Is he one or several masks (persons) the poet sees fit to hide his real and unknown face behind? Is the speaker another entity, quite different from the person who composed the poem, as could be the case in "Make You Feel My Love" (1997)? Literally the song reads just as well as the Lord speaking this love plea to man as the common perception of love songs would have it, that a man loving a woman indulges in singing his love plea out loud. A strange thing to do in any circumstance, perhaps silly too, and not at all in harmony with Dylan's long career of remodeling the love song – one of his great lyrical achievements.

The blurring of coherent sense and unified meaning in some late songs

There seems to be a discernable shift in Dylan's long song-writing career. Most of his early songs may fit the common sense perception of lyrical utterances, as patterned on communication. The songs address a more or less clearly perceived addressee, whose coherence doesn't need questioning, even though its sense might be ambiguous and multi-layered. This demonstrates that multiple sense (on the level of description) is not sufficient to make neither speaker nor addressee into incoherent enteties. The level of meaning (interpretation) has to be involved.

After his resurfacing in the wake of the Americana-albums in the mid-1990s, Dylan changed a song-writing practice that from the start had been very much a patchwork of love and theft. From now on he didn't even bother much in trying to hide the stitches knotting the patches together and quoted more extensively than ever before.

The consequences are disputable. The obvious advantage is the inclusion of different and seemingly unrelated scenes, passages, and quotations, extending and deepening the feeling and worldview of the songs. On the other hand, coherent sense and unified meaning can be seen as being sacrificed for the unity of (an often time-honored) sound (and feeling). The long dialogue in the middle part of "Highlands" (1997) may serve as an example. Some love it, others don't. Unified sound and emotion can, however, be attained just as well alongside coherent sense and unity of meaning, fully demonstrated by many earlier Dylan songs.

The sacrifice, or, more carefully put, the blurring, of coherent sense and unified meaning is discernable in most of his later songs. For instance, the beginning of "The Levee's Gonna Break" (2006) is presented in the first person, and the "you" seems initially to have the sense "one", "any one person". But the addressee soon becomes more personalized ("I picked you up from the gutter and this is the thanks I get"), and in the seventh stanza the distinctions between the "I" and the "you" are wiped out: "Well, I look in your eyes, I see nobody other than me, / I see all that I am and all I hope to be." In the next stanza the distinctions are even more shattered: "When I'm with you, I forget I was ever blue, / Without you there's no meaning in anything I do." This might still be read as a fairly common love plea, albeit of a high romantic kind, which rhymes well with the consequential spite of the eleventh stanza: "I tried to get you to love me, but I won't repeat that mistake."

Okay, the end of a love affair. But this reading is quite incompatible with a more punctillious reading of the eighth stanza, as a pledge to Christ, a reading which is explicitly called for by the millennialist line in the tenth stanza: "Few more years of hard work, then there'll be a thousand years of happiness."

The ambiguity of the addressee in this apocalyptic song might blur and even confuse the meaning (or message). On the other hand, it very well serves Dylan's purpose of transcending common sense, and speeds up the spiritual quest of his art. This urge is taken further in "Ain't Talkin'" (2006), another apocalyptic song, where the coherence of the speaker is most certainly questionable. The mystic garden in the song's opening line is obviously not just a natural place, but a site of spiritual contemplation and revelation – making Jesus a likely speaker of the song. If so, we have to concede that this is not a loving Jesus: "In the human heart, an evil spirit will dwell" (stanza 2) – "If I catch my opponents ever sleeping / I'll just slaughter 'em where they lie" (stanza 3).

Eventually this narrative coming from the mouth of Jesus in the Garden turns into a more personal plea from the mouth of Jesus (or the poet himself): "I practice a faith that's been long abandoned / Ain't no altars on this long and lonesome road"; but hope is added to misery: "Who says I can't get heavenly aid"; and the end of the final stanza ("Excuse me, ma'am, I beg your pardon: / There's no one here, the gardener is gone"), perhaps signifying the death of God, more likely means that God, according to plan, has abandoned Jesus at this crucial moment, and by metonymic extension will abandon any man, including the spiritual wanderer Bob Dylan.

A similar duality of desired salvation and violent rage, and a similar compounded speaker, appears in another late song, "Pay in Blood" (2012). The speaker is worn out and miserable, but his anger is outrageous: "I could stone you to death for the wrongs that you've done / Sooner or later you make a mistake, / I'll put you in a chain that you never will break / Legs and arms and body and bone/ I pay in blood, but not my own" (stanza 1). It would be inadvisable to read this speaker as a human being, rather he seems to be of heavenly origin: "The more I take the more I give. / The more I die the more I live" (stanza 2). The speaker must surely be Christ himself, addressing Satan: "I'm sworn to uphold the laws of God" (stanza 3). Therefore, not a loving Christ: "You bastard! I'm suppose [*sic*] to respect you? / I'll give you justice, I'll fatten your purse / Show me your moral virtue first" (stanza 5). And it gets worse: "You get your lover in the bed. / Come here, I'll break your

lousy head. / […] / I came to bury, not to praise. / I'll drink my fill and sleep alone / I pay in blood, but not my own" (stanza 6). (The lyrics of this song are quoted from *dylanchords.info*. *Bobdylan.com* renders the lyrics incompletely.)

The speaker seems to be a composite of a vengeful Christ and a vindictive Christian upholding the laws of God by literally acting out the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Longstanding themes peaked in the years of conversion

Dylan's conversion to evangelical Christianity shocked many of his listeners and left most rock pundits astonished. He had been a cherished asset of the liberal left for two decades, despite the ostensible break with the protest song, the civil rights movement, and the liberal left – first through the infamous speech upon receiving the Tom Paine Award late in 1963, and unequivocally in 1964.

Arguably, Dylan's gospel songs are the decisive backdrop for the changes, outlined above, in the later part of his oeuvre. The shattering of common sense perception and the disdainful neglect of mundane concerns can be seen as a prolongation of the explosion of Dylan's protest impulse – obviously a vital part of his creative urge all his life – which appeared so forcefully in the gospel years.

Dylan songs were always tapestries, collections of pieces of information, perception, allusion and argument – aphorisms, dialogues, quotations, narratives, invectives and so on. Though many of his songs featured coherence of sense and unity of meaning, these features rarely were Dylan's main concerns. His songs were always more about unity of sound and an unimpeded urge to transcend the common sense level of perception, apprehension and understanding. This line of reasoning makes his gospel rock the pivot of his song-writing career, both in terms of transcendence and in terms of techniques of lyrical design – but concededly not always in terms of lyrical subtlety.

In the gospel songs the longstanding themes of Dylan's oeuvre became highlighted. His rage against greed ("flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark", "It's Alright, Ma", 1965) and both mundane and spiritual corruption, his adversity to commercialism, consumer society and the grand but false promises of materialism, and his war on the inclination to wipe out personal responsibility in the age of politically correct voluntarism – all these themes can be traced throughout his long career.

From human will to divine providence

Dylan emerged as a renowned artist, songwriter and political activist early in the 1960s, particularly through the so-called *protest songs*, songs about civil rights issues, often cast in a judicial vocabulary, but with broader social and political perspectives as well. He also wrote about other typical liberal issues, and was embraced by the American left, and soon after by leftists all over the world.

The embrace was, however, perhaps too hard, and probably also felt to be impeding his artistic freedom. Dylan revolted and at one point he wanted to give up singing and song-writing altogether, but the intent came to naught; and it should be noted that the songs he wrote in the following years, when he reached the summit of rock stardom and a worldwide popularity he later only rarely and briefly regained, have more political and social depth than his earlier topical songs. He also reached the summit of infamy, the 1966 world tour being accompanied by constant shouts of disapproval coming from large (and probably leftist) parts of the audiences.

Dylan's songs from the 1970s are less political than the songs of the previous decade, but they are still social commentaries by virtue of being songs of love and marriage with much societal echo. With a few exceptions, explicit political issues are absent. One exception is the protest song "Hurricane" (1975), but at the same time Dylan wrote the ballad "Joey", a tribute to the gangster Joey Gallo. Again he claimed his autonomy and artistic courage.

Towards the end of the 1970s Dylan, as the story goes, experienced an epiphany, converted to evangelical Christianity and started a manic production and frenzied performance of gospel rock songs. The new songs are decidedly more fiercely protest songs than the cherished songs from the 1960s. This provoked his fans even more than his farewell to the civil rights movement and the liberal left.

Dylan was criticized for judgmental songs and a missionary posture, because these are songs admonishing non-believers to seek redemption – before it's too late: "Now there's spiritual warfare and flesh and blood breaking down / Ya either got faith or ya got unbelief and there ain't no neutral ground. / The enemy is subtle, how be it we are so deceived / When the truth's in our hearts and we still don't believe?" ("Precious Angel", 1979). It's all about taking sides. In "Gonna Change My Way of Thinking" (1979) Jesus is quoted as saying: "He who is not for Me is against Me" (cf. Luke 11: 23), echoed in the old labor song "Which Side Are You On", explicitly referenced in "Desolation Row" (1965).

Dylan embraces the thought that *the world is not governed by human will, but by divine providence*. This is perhaps the main reason why songs from the latter part of his oeuvre neither have got nor *can* get the same approval as his early work – because voluntarism, the will to will, the ontological foundation of the present age of Western decline, is sharply at odds with Dylan's Christianity.

Apocalypse and Christ-identifications

In hindsight it is easy to see that Dylan's Christian songs didn't appear out of nowhere. Apocalyptic songs abound throughout his oeuvre. Many of the protest songs are apocalyptic, for instance "The Times They Are A-Changin'" (1963), a song with flood-images referencing The Great Flood (Noah) and Exodus, and with quotations from the Sermon on the Mount about the final judgment. Eschatology is of course the most pertinent and unifying feature of Dylan's gospel songs. They are all about salvation or damnation. The misinterpretation of "The Times …" by leftists, claiming that this is a song about the generation gap and the surging youth revolt, will probably not be judged kindly by future scholarship.

The left, which, with few exceptions, has dominated Dylan-scholarship, has no problems with apocalypse as such. Leftist ideology is founded on a secular tale about class struggle and revolutions, and, besides, it is undeniable that apocalypse is one of the original tales of Western civilization – from Gilgamesh and Noah to the visions in the Book of Revelation – and further on in secular events like the decline and fall of the Roman empire, the great plague, the French revolution, holocaust, the nuclear threat and contemporary fear of an imminent climate crisis. Even the left approves of apocalypse, but it doesn't approve of Christianity. And metaphysical Christianity that cannot be stowed away as a cultural oddity, apocalypse coupled with ardent personal faith, is not at all likeable to leftists.

What happened in 1967, after the accident, is another sign of what was to come. Dylan immersed himself in Americana, like he had done around 1960, and like he did several times later. In Woodstock he and the band recorded a substantial oeuvre, partly new songs, partly sundry traditional material, including gospel songs and songs with an ambiguous religious urge, like the above-mentioned "Sign on the Cross". And in the autumn of 1967 Dylan recorded *John Wesley Harding*, an album of moral and religious parables, one of them being "All Along the Watchtower", referencing the prophecy of the fall of Babylon. Also *New Morning* (1970) includes many religious allusions, and introduces usage of the gospel choir.

Remarkable are the Christ identifications in 1970s songs which otherwise deal with love, marriage and divorce, like "Idiot Wind" and "Shelter from the Storm" (1975). The first sings: "There's a lone soldier on the cross, smoke pouring out of a boxcar door / You didn't know it, you didn't think it could be done, in the final end he won the wars / After losin' every battle"; while the second says: "She walked up to me so gracefully and took my crown of thorns". These passages foreshadow crucifixion-references in later songs: "Swords piercing your side" ("Gonna Change My Way of Thinking", 1979); "There's a Man on a cross and He's been crucified for you" ("When You Gonna Wake Up?", 1979); and the much later "We all wear the same thorny crown" ("When the Deal Goes Down", 2006).

And on the album released prior to the epiphany of 1978, *Street-Legal*, there are several songs presaging the conversion. The penultimate stanza of "Changing of the Guards" prophesies: "Gentlemen, he said / I don't

need your organization, I've shined your shoes / I've moved your mountains and marked your cards / But Eden is burning, either brace yourself for elimination / Or else your hearts must have the courage for the changing of the guards". (Incidentally, the shoe-motif just cited reappears in "I and I" (1983): "I've made shoes for everyone, even you, while I still go barefoot".)

And "Señor (Tales of Yankee Power)" mentions "an iron cross still hanging down from around her neck", before it ends with a reference to how Jesus expelled the money lenders from the temple (Matt 12): "Señor, señor, let's disconnect these cables / Overturn these tables / This place don't make sense to me no more / Can you tell me what we're waiting for, señor?"

Although it would be inadvisable to read too much pre-Christianity into early Dylan songs, it cannot be denied that he was both fully immersed in the traditional Christian song-bag and almost obsessed with biblical and Christian themes.

Christian rage

The apocalyptic songs, a pertinent feature in all of Dylan's phases, do culminate in his gospel years. A feeling of imminent Judgment is central to evangelical Christianity, and calls for resoluteness. The presence of this theme in Dylan's gospel rock, and throughout his later work as well, is almost infinite, permeating the songs from top to bottom. A few examples: "Can they imagine the darkness that will fall from on high / When men will beg God to kill them and they won't be able to die?" ("Precious Angel", 1979); "Are you ready for the judgment? / Are you ready for that terrible swift sword? / Are you ready for Armageddon? / Are you ready for the day of the Lord?" ("Are You ready", 1980); "I see pieces of men marching, tryin' to take heaven by force / I can see the unknown rider, I can see the pale white horse" (Angelina, 1981); "Only a matter of time 'til night comes steppin' in" ("Jokerman", 1983); "Tomorrow all activity will cease" ("Man of Peace", 1983); "The word could come to an end tonight, but that's all right" ("I and I", 1983); "As the last firetruck from hell / goes rolling by, all good people are praying / It's the last temptation the last

account / The last time you might hear the sermon on the mount / The last radio is playing" ("Shooting Star", 1989).

There's no need to deal extensively with this subject, mainly because it is obvious. Instead, it would seem wise, in view of the criticism aimed at his gospel songs, to try to encircle Dylan's Christianity (aided by Stephen H. Webb's book *Dylan Redeemed, from Highway 61 to Saved*, 2006, a truly invaluable piece of Dylan scholarship). In this way my subsequent remarks on the invocatory pattern of these songs can gain pertinence and importance.

Dylan's gospel songs are criticized for theological exclusivity. This is, however, pointless, since eschatology *is* and has to be discriminative: "When destruction cometh swiftly / And there's no time to say a fare-thee-well, / Have you decided whether you want to be / In heaven or in hell?" ("Are You Ready?", 1980). Some years later "Ring Them Bells" (1989) puts it like this: "For the chosen few / Who will judge the many / When the game is through"; and "Ain't Talkin' (2006) says: "There'll be no mercy for you once you've lost".

On the other hand, "Gotta Serve Somebody" (1979) seems to be all-inclusive, at least on its surface: We are either serving God or Satan. But the song is not just descriptive, it is prescriptive too, and projects service onto the future: one day you will have to *decide* whom you shall serve.

The gospel songs are also accosted for preaching with fire and brimstone. Rage is, however, nothing new in Dylan, but compared with the Christian songs, songs such as "Positively Fourth Street" or "Like a Rolling Stone" (both 1965) are more easily managed because the rage seems to be directed against a third party. Listeners are siding with the speaker, while in the Christian songs rage is directed at the audience (see Webb, 2006, p. 92).

The rage is triggered by the imminence of Doomsday. Until Christ returns earthly peace is an illusion: "Will I ever learn that there'll be no peace, that the war won't cease / Until He returns`" ("When He Returns", 1979); "For me He was chastised, for me He was hated, / For me He was rejected by a world that He created. / Nations are angry, cursed are some, / People are expecting a false peace to come" ("Solid Rock", 1980); "No kingdom made of human hands can stand" ("Yonder Comes Sin", 1980).

As Webb argues, more and more human and humanitarian love cannot make right the wrongs of the world. For instance, "Man of Peace" (1983) is not just saying that Satan is dressed up as a humanitarian philanthropist: "He's a great humanitarian, he's a great philanthropist, / He knows just where to touch you, honey, and how you like to be kissed. / He'll put both his arms around you, / You can feel the tender touch of the beast. / You know that sometimes Satan comes as a man of peace" (stanza 6); but the song also says that good intentions may easily end up producing evil results: "He got a swift gift of gab, he got a harmonious tongue, / He knows every song that ever has been sung. / Good intentions can be evil […]" (stanza 2). (See Webb, 2006, p. 88.)

Social criticism in the gospel songs

The claim that there's a lack of a progressive social program in the gospel songs, is surely false. The social criticism in the gospel songs is both more fierce and wide ranging than ever before in Dylan. But rather than turning to simple, superficial, and favored liberal issues like oppressed minorities, which he used to do, and which still after all these years of worldwide changes on a grand scale seem to be the darling issues of liberals, he now bites into more unpleasant and dangerous contemporary features:

Sexual confusion and disorder, with "Sons becoming husbands to their mothers, / And old men turning young daughters into whores" ("Gonna Change My Way of Thinking", 1979), or as "Trouble in Mind" (1979) says: "Satan whispers to ya, 'Well, I don't want to bore ya, / But when ya get tired of that Miss So-and-so I got another woman for ya'" – in brief, "the politics of sin" ("Dead Man, Dead Man", 1981).

Attacks on other religions and New Age-like spiritual substitutes: "You were telling him about Buddha, you were telling him about Mohammed in one breath, / You never mentioned one time the Man who came and died a criminal's death" ("Precious Angel", 1979), or as "When You Gonna Wake Up?" (1979) is observing: "Counterfeit philosophies have polluted all of your thoughts. / Karl Marx has got ya by the throat […]" and "Spiritual advisors and gurus to guide your every move, / Instant inner peace and every step you take has got to be approved."

And on science: "Don't wanna learn from nobody what I gotta unlearn" and "Don't put my faith in nobody, not even a scientist" ("Do Right to Me, Baby", 1979); "They like to take all this money from sin, build big universities to study in / Sing 'Amazing Grace' all the way to the Swiss banks" ("Foot of Pride", 1983); "I don't care about economy / I don't care about astronomy" ("Slow Train", 1979); "the world of research has gone berserk / Too much paperwork" ("Nettie Moore", 2006).

The world is in disorder; violence and turmoil on the one side, cockeyed arrogance on the other: "Groom's Still Waiting at the Altar" (1980) is singing: "Cities on fire, phones out of order, / They're killing nuns and soldiers […]", while "Dead Man, Dead Man" (1981) is saying: "What are you tryin' to overpower me with, the doctrine or the gun? / My back is already to the wall, where can I run?"

Arabian sheiks are up for a swipe as well: "All that foreign oil controlling American soil, / Look around you, it's just bound to make you embarrassed. / Sheiks walkin' around like kings, wearing fancy jewels and nose rings, / Deciding America's future from Amsterdam and to Paris" (stanza 3, "Slow Train", 1979), while isolated Israel is praised in "Neighborhood Bully" (1983).

"The politics of sin"

"The politics of sin" designate the power, corruption, self-righteousness, and falsity of the profane world. In this world righteous life is just not attainable. Only in the other world, the world of faith, can righteous life be fulfilled, and this other world is breaking into the profane world with terror and liberation, turning hierarchies upside down. The man who acknowledges this becomes a holy outlaw. Jesus Christ as the ultimate outlaw, embodying the paradox of victory through defeat, progressing from crucifixion to resurrection, is the pivotal figure of this collision of earth and spirit.

Thoughts like these might provoke those who have abandoned Christianity. The justice Dylan is pleading for now, "justice's beautiful face" ("I and I", 1983), no longer advances the liberal redistribution of wealth and reduction of social differences. In 1962, in "North Country Blues", he sang

about the ravages of global capitalism: a mining town where employment has gone up and down, until the mines are finally shut down. The speaker of the song is a mother who has lost most of her family in the mines. The mines are closed, leaving behind a ghost town. The seventh stanza explains why: "They complained in the East, they are paying too high. / They say that your ore ain't worth digging. / That it's much cheaper down in the South American towns / Where the miners work almost for nothing."

This stanza is not only interesting in that it, more than 50 years ahead of Donald Trump, says what he, and Bernie Sanders too, repeatedly opined in the 2015–2016 presidential campaign, but also because it prefigures another Dylan song, "Union Sundown" (1983), which, 30 years ahead of Trump and Sanders, says: "Well, my shoes, they come from Singapore / My flashlight's from Taiwan / My tablecloth's from Malaysia / My belt buckle's from the Amazon / You know, this shirt I wear comes from the Philippines / And the car I drive is a Chevrolet, / It was put together down in Argentina / By a guy makin' thirty cents a day" – before the refrain concludes: "[…] it's sundown of the union / And what's made in the USA / Sure was a good idea / 'Til greed got in the way."

A tougher go at global capitalism, and also at the other meaning of "union", the trade unions: "The unions are big business, friend / And they're going out like a dinosaur". Democracy, as well, is abandoned: "Democracy don't rule the world / You'd better get that in your head". But as Webb suggests, globalization is perhaps not the heart of the matter. The last stanza says: "This world is ruled by violence / But I guess that's better left unsaid." He has said it, but simultaneously made it clear that no one will bother about his saying it: that there's something seriously wrong with human nature, which no politics can mend, *original sin* (Webb, 2006, p. 56–57).

Animosity towards politics

To rank religion above politics is conservative, perhaps even reactionary. But is it at all conservative or reactionary, or the opposite for that matter, to sideline politics completely? "Political World" (1989) is a crucial song in this respect: "We live in a political world / Where peace is not welcome at

all". The song not only says that politics is *not* the answer, but in fact the very *problem*. We use the language of politics to avoid personal responsibility and in order to justify the cravings of our sinful nature (Webb, p. 55–56). For Dylan history is primarily the history of salvation and damnation. Mundane history and politics are only to be found enclosed within these categories. Dylan is not only uninterested in politics, he rejects any political thought and makes it part of the realm of evil. This in no way disqualifies his songs from having ideological impact, and it is noteworthy that the only period when he spoke directly about the political world (of sin) – both on and off stage – was precisely the conversion years of 1979 and 1980.

Dylan's notion of Christ is conservative as well (Webb, 2006, p. 17), eschatological as it is, and not drawn from the tolerant point of view of contemporary mainstream Christianity. Tolerance is certainly of considerable value, but when it becomes *absolute*, its potential for social criticism seems to be emptied out. Many liberals are so tolerant of all kinds of dubious identity politics that they find it hard to criticize even the most appalling moral decay. Dylan seems to have been aware of these problems long before the criticism of political correctness became a regular issue.

Many can go along with this, but fewer will acclaim the theology of evil that is Dylan's answer to the contemporary mainstream flirt with absolute tolerance. In Dylan's view Satan is not clothed in moral vice, but rather materializes in the inner voice of the deadened conscience, saying that everything is all right and making us worship the works of human hands: "Here comes Satan […] / […] / He's gonna deaden your conscience 'til you worship the work of your own hands, / You'll be serving strangers in a strange, forsaken land" (stanza 3, "Trouble in Mind", 1979). Or as "Slow Train" puts it: "Fools glorifying themselves, trying to manipulate Satan".

Original sin

The notion of man's sinful nature seems to have a long history in Dylan. In his early anti-war songs a feeling of the futility of human effort is detectable. Our freedom is limited by weakness and fallibility. (See Webb, p. 51–52.)

"Saved" (1980) puts the point astutely: "I was blinded by the devil, / Born already ruined, Stone-cold dead / As I stepped from the womb"; and so does "Yonder Comes Sin" (1980): "I can read it in your eyes, oh, what your / Heart will not reveal / And that old evil burden has been draggin' you down, / bound to ground you 'neath the wheel"; and "Pressing On" (1980): "Temptation's not an easy thing, Adam given the devil reign / Because he sinned I got no choice, it run in my vein." In a similar fashion "Trouble in Mind" (1979) pleads: "[…] how long, Lord, must I be provoked? / Satan will give you a little taste, then he'll move in with rapid speed."

Evil, the work of Satan, is inherent in human nature, and the strongest of alienations, because it is not political or social, but metaphysical. "Pressing On" (1980) sings: "You know the adversary never sleeps – he is a roaring beast. / He always comes at the time that you expect him least. / And you know that he's responsible for death and pain and loss, / But we know we'll overcome him by the victory of the cross" (additional third verse sung November 4, 1979, cited from *dylanchords.info*). And "You Changed My Life" (1981) sings: "There's someone in my body that I could hardly see / Invading my privacy making my decisions for me / Holding me back, not letting me stand / Making me feel like a stranger in a strange land" (stanza 6). "Property of Jesus" (1981) puts the point in the form of a rhetorical question: "But you've picked up quite a story and you've changed since the womb. / What happened to the real you, you've been captured but by whom?"

The appearance of the Prince of Darkness in the songs is massive. "Yonder Comes Sin" (1980) speaks of "your uninvited guest", while "Angelina" (1981) says that "[y]our best friend and my enemy is one and the same". "Man in the Long Black Coat" (1989) sings: "Somebody said from the Bible he'd quote", while "Ain't Talkin'" (2006) sums it up: "In the human heart, an evil spirit will dwell." Similarly in "Shot of love" (1981): "There's a man that hates me and he's swift, smooth and near, / Am I supposed to set back and wait until he's here?"

We are free but still forced to sin, and each of us is alone responsible for his sins. We can be saved only through God's interference. A strong belief in original sin can easily lead to inertia, but the insistence on personal responsibility balances this tendency to fatalism.

Evangelical theology is no idealism, Webb argues, but preaches a personal responsibility at odds with *idealistic voluntarism*. Dylan clearly despises the doctrine of liberal idealism, which preaches that human beings are essentially good, and that evil is the offspring of society and circumstance. He treats the liberal mock-praise of the freedom of speech with contempt. "Caribbean Wind" (1981) depicts men bathed in perfume practicing "the hoax of free speech", while "them distant ships of liberty on them iron waves so bold and free, / Bringing everything that's near to me nearer to the fire".

The invocatory design of the gospel songs

A large number of Dylan's gospel songs, as well as later songs imbued with Christianity, have this pattern: a first person speaker (often verbally present as the "I" of the lyrics) addresses a second person. In most of these songs both the speaker and the addressee have a multiple sense: the speaker is the redeemed convert who through conversion has received a visionary and prophetic gift and can address his audience with fervor and credibility, while he at the same time is part of the collective "you", at least in his former state as unbeliever. In short, the speaker is a composite of sin and vision, while the addressee has a multitude of sense – each of us, fallen man, the audience, the congregation, and even the whole mundane world personified.

This pattern is typical of songs like "Gotta Serve Somebody (1979), "When He Returns" (1979), "Ye Shall be Changed" (1979), "Saved" (1980), "Solid Rock" (1980), "Pressing On" (1980), "Are You Ready" (1980), "City of Gold" (1980), "Watered-Down Love" (1981), "The Groom's Still Waiting At The Altar" (1981), "Dead Man, Dead Man" (1981), "Trouble" (1981), "Union Sundown" (1983), "Disease of Conceit" (1989), "Dignity" (1989), and many more.

In addition to its multiple sense, the addressee in some songs designed like this have a multi-directed meaning, in as much as the addressee obviously also is the Lord, at least in parts of the lyrics. This is the case in "Gonna Change My Way of Thinking" (1979): "O, Lord, you know I have no friend without you"; while in other songs the addressee gets the

additional meaning of a physical lover, as in "When You Gonna Wake Up?" (1979): "You got some big dreams, baby […]", and in "Man of Peace" (1983): "Look out your window, baby […]"; "He knows just where to touch you, honey […]".

In some songs of this kind the addressee, besides signifying each of us as sinners, also signifies Satan, and sometimes even both Satan and the Lord in different parts of the song, as in "Shot of Love" (1981): "I don't need no alibi when I'm spending time with you" (possibly referring to the Lord), and "Why would I want to take your life? / You've only murdered my father, raped his wife / Tattooed my babies with a poison pen / Mocked my God, humiliated my friends" (probably referring to evil if not outright to Satan himself). The same seems to apply to "Jokerman" (1983), where the addressee sometimes has satanic, at other times Christ-like, features, and even a third sense involving, and a third meaning referring to, the artist himself as being drawn between Satan and the Lord. In "You Changed My Life" (1981) the speaker is as stated above, while the multiple addressee includes both all sinners (including the speaker) and Christ (both in the refrain and the last stanza). In "Yonder Comes Sin" (1980) the addressee seems to have a multitude of sense and meaning: the speaker addressing himself, all sinners, a loved one, and Satan.

This brief summary of the invocatory nature of a large part of Dylan's Christian songs amply demonstrates that the blurring of sense and confusion of meaning I mentioned earlier in connection with some of his later work have a long history of preparation. The same is true for another and even more interesting feature of the gospel songs: some of them not only have a multiple sense and a piecemeal multi-directed meaning, but a pervading duality of both sense and meaning.

Dual invocation

Remarkably few of Dylan's gospel songs have a third person presentation. Exceptions are "In the Garden" (1980) and "Property of Jesus" (1981). First person presentation in balladic style without invocation of an addressee is also fairly rare, but does appear in songs like "Caribbean Wind" (1981) and "Blind Willie McTell" (1983).

Songs with a dual invocation are fairly uncommon as well, but there are several of them, and the tendency is detectable in quite a number of songs. In spite of the multiple senses of the two addressed entities, the duality is fairly clear-cut between an earthy (sensual) and a divine (transcendent) extremity.

"Precious Angel" (1979) is a song with a dual invocation throughout the lyrics. Sometimes the addressee reads as a lover: "You're the queen of my flesh, girl, you're my woman, you're my delight. / You're the lamp of my soul, girl, and you torch up the night" (stanza 6). But this lover also has the aura and qualities of a Muse and of divine guidance and salvation, maybe even of Christ himself as the Muse of conversion: "Precious angel, under the sun, / How was I to know you'd be the one / To show me I was blinded, to show me I was gone / How weak was the foundation I was standing upon?" (stanza 1).

The speaker remains as outlined above, sinful man in need of redemption – this is evident from the words of the refrain: "Shine your light, shine your light on me / Ya know I just couldn't make it by myself. / I'm a little too blind to see." This "you" of the refrain signifies the sun, a precious lover, the Lord.

In some passages one might be tempted to include even a third addressee, the audience, or the world at large, or more specifically the lover before her conversion: "Sister, let me tell you about a vision that I saw / You were drawing water for your husband […] / You were telling him about Buddha […]" (stanza 4). This is well adjusted to the second stanza's spiritual warfare: "Ya either got faith or ya got unbelief and there ain't no neutral ground. / The enemy is subtle, how be it we are so deceived / When the truth's in our hearts and we still don't believe?"

This theme of resolve is of course innately coupled with the song's apocalyptic features, and implies the visionary and prophetic gifts of the speaker, chiding his "so-called friends": "Can they imagine the darkness that will fall from on high / When men will beg God to kill them and they won't be able to die?" (stanza 3), and the last stanza's journey towards the final judgment: "But there's violence in the eyes, girl, so let us not be enticed / On the way out of Egypt, through Ethiopia, to the judgment hall of Christ" (stanza 6).

Duality of sense and meaning

A similar invocatory pattern appears in "I Believe in You" (1979): the speaker is the compound we have already outlined as sinful man seeking redemption and blissful convert with a visionary gift, though the latter is not very prominent in this song. The first two stanzas are telling the addressee how "they" (the unbelievers) treat the speaker with contempt, condescension and even outright animosity: "They'd like to drive me from this town" (stanza 1); "They say don't come back no more" (stanza 2). But the speaker isn't discouraged, because he believes "in you", and the last two stanzas speak directly to the addressee in the mode of a prayer: "Don't let me drift too far" (stanza 3); "Don't let me change my heart" (stanza 4).

This addressee has a similar duality of sense and meaning, as mentioned above. The invocations seem to be predominantly directed at the Lord: "Keep me where you are / Where I will always be renewed" (stanza 3); "Keep me set apart / From all the plans they do pursue" (stanza 4). The second refrain makes this fairly obvious: "I believe in you when winter turn to summer, / I believe in you when white turn to black, / I believe in you even though I be outnumbered". But this doesn't contradict the other mentioned sense of the addressee, the fellow converted lover, almost impossible to miss in the third of the following lines from the first refrain: "I believe in you even through the tears and the laughter, / I believe in you even though we be apart. / I believe in you even on the morning after".

"In the Summertime" (1983), "Shooting Star" (1989), and "This Dream of You" (2009) present a similar dual addressee: the physical lover and the transcendent divinity. The speaker of "In the Summertime" is not so much sinful man as the redeemed convert, and the salvation (or the ignition of a love affair) came swiftly: "I was in your presence for an hour or so / Or was it a day? I truly don't know". The adversity of the unbelievers is very much present: "Fools they made a mock of sin / Our loyalty they tried to win" (stanza 2); "Strangers, they meddled in our affairs / Poverty and shame was theirs" (stanza 3). The exquisite ambiguity of "saved" (preserved and redeemed) in these lines from the third stanza is well worth noticing: "And I'm still carrying the gift you gave / It's a part of me now,

it's been cherished and saved,/ It'll be with me unto the grave / And then unto eternity."

At first glance "Shooting Star" reads as a melancholy plea to a lover lost, but the line "You were trying to break into another world" (stanza 1) and the apocalyptic bridge ("Listen to the engine listen to the bell / As the last firetruck from hell / goes rolling by, all good people are praying / It's the last temptation the last account / The last time you might hear the sermon on the mount / The last radio is playing"), make it fairly apparent that we are dealing with an addressee with at least transcendent aspirations and probably transcendent qualities too.

In much the same manner the addressee of "This Dream of You" at first glance seems to be a distant and lost but still loved woman, but this impression is disturbed by the rhetoric and comprehensive scope of refrain and bridges: "All I have / and all I know / is this dream of you / which keeps me living on" (refrain); "I don't wanna believe / But I keep believing it" (first bridge); "Everywhere I turn / you are always here / I run this race / until my earthly death / I'll defend this place / with my dying breath" (second bridge).

Duality of genre, speaker and addressee

The woman in "Covenant Woman" (1980) has the mentioned spectrum of sense stretching from (fellow convert) lover to soul mate, and even to inspiring Muse. But in this song another kind of duality appears, a duality of genre: The song is simultaneously a love song and a spiritual tribute, much in the manner of "What Can I Do for You?" (1980), even though the addressee of the latter is unequivocally transcendent.

In "I and I" (1983) the duality is located within the speaker, while the addressee seems to be all of mankind, and more specifically the singer's and the song's audience. The speaker is still the redeemed convert with a visionary gift for examining the secrets of the world, but someone else is speaking through him, or rather *for* him, through his heart, his innermost house of being: "Someone else is speakin' with my mouth, but I'm listening only to my heart." Christ himself seems to have become a part of the speaker's house of utterance.

In "When the Deal Goes Down" (2006) we again face a dual addressee. The "you" of the song seems to signify all mortals, and the speaker seems to address all of us as a companion, but eventually the addressee takes on another sense as well, the Lord: "You come to my eyes like a vision from the skies" (stanza 3); "I owe my heart to you, and that's saying it true" (stanza 4). And this duality on the level of description (sense) makes it almost impossible not to include, on the level of interpretation (meaning), the Lord in the speaker as well: "And I'll be with you when the deal goes down".

From evangelism to providentialism

The gospel protest phase was just as brief as Dylan's early and politically correct protest period, approximately two years. The evangelical revival ended quickly, and Dylan fans, predominantly atheists with a liberal agenda, have, through the subsequent years, been looking for signs of Dylan the apostate. But the signs never became clear, rather the opposite: "And I'm still carrying the gift you gave, / It's a part of me now, it's been cherished and saved, / It'll be with me unto the grave/ And then unto eternity" ("In the Summertime", 1981). Dylan's late work is imbued in Christianity, albeit of a kind that seems hard to identify.

Webb explains this well. Dylan moved from evangelism to providentialism, which professes confidence in divine providence, an outlook that minimizes human will and action. It springs out of a long historical tradition which has its intellectual basis in Calvinism's doctrine of predestination. Revivalism depends too much on the will; it encourages bravery and action, but the belief in providence is more down to earth. The holy is found in details rather than in ecstatic experience. (See Webb, 2006, p. 162.)

Webb sees signs of Dylan already moving from evangelism on the second gospel album, *Saved* (1980); and on the third, *Shot of Love* (1981), he spots two songs articulating the new orientation. "In the Summertime" deals with the public ridicule the singer has been subjected to, something that has led to his faith becoming more private and durable. The song quotes Romans 8: 18: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth

comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." The song puts it like this: "But all that sufferin' was not to be compared/ With the glory that is to be" (stanza 3), making the song, as already mentioned, both a profane and a heavenly love story. (See Webb, 2006, p. 163.)

And "Every Grain of Sand" (1981) shows how providence is the answer to the problems of revivalism. The song deals with liberation of the self through confidence in God's providence: "Toiling in the danger and in the morals of despair. / Don't have the inclination to look back on any mistake, / Like Cain, I now behold this chain of events that I must break. / In the fury of the moment I can see the Master's hand / In every leaf that trembles, in every grain of sand" (stanza 1–2). The singer will not look back; instead he will break the causality chain. The futility of his despair tells him to leave everything in the hands of God. Only through faith in God's creation can we step into the future (Webb, 164).

However, providentialism is no happy faith. It takes a lot of hope and patience to believe that everything is happening as a result of a hidden reason. The words "and a world to come that's already been predetermined" ("Jokerman", 1983), in the dual portrait of Jesus and Satan, and the artist's inclination to be drawn to both of them, are quite telling. Religious despair permeates many songs throughout the 1980s, particularly the album *Oh Mercy* (1989), but according to Webb the album most influenced by provindentialism (and negative theology) is *Time Out of Mind* (1997). (See Webb, 2006, p. 166.)

No congenial reception to be expected in today's universities

Dylan's adversity to the liberal belief in man's essentially good nature is highlighted in his criticism of the belief that human effort can create a perfect world (postmillennialism): the Second Coming shall occur after the establishment of the Millennium. According to Webb, this is sentimental mainstream Christianity, over-optimistic on behalf of human capacity for goodness, believing that social reformers have sown the seeds of Utopia and that Christ won't return until we have met him midway. (See Webb, p. 94–95.)

The opposite is premillennialism, implying that the world shall come to a terrible end before Christ establishes the Millennium. This thought is permeated by a distrust of human nature. At its worst it can lead to paranoia and misanthropy, both of which have, at times, been present in Dylan, but at its best it fills his songs with a serious desperation (Webb, 2006, p. 95–96). As Webb laconically puts it: "Dylan trusts himself, not his audience. He is authentic, not sincere" (Webb, 2006, p. 118). And: "The authentic does not *need* to be trusted. It just needs to be expressed" (Webb, 2006, p. 119).

Dylan's religious quest is spiritually challenging. It pushes us in the direction of the Lord by pushing us beyond the borders of knowledge – a way of thinking that liberal citadels like today's universities will find it almost impossible to handle. The antagonism between art and current scholarship makes it hard to believe that Dylan's Christian protest songs will ever enjoy the sort of warm reception his earlier protest songs have been granted.

Multiple sense and meaning on the levels of description and interpretation

As we have seen, we may – or rather, forced by truth, *we have to* – acknowledge a multi-directed invocation in Dylan songs, both earlier and late ones. The difference between earlier and later songs is not discernable in this broad picture, but rather in the way the multi-directedness is being played out in the web of the songs' more or less unified meaning. Quite a number of Dylan's later songs seem inclined to relinquish unified meaning and relish in a unity of feeling, sound, or rhetorical amplification, which certainly produces endless labor for critics, while it also might conceal the possible deterioration of Dylan's lyrical genius. Or perhaps the later Dylan's lyrical strategy is just another (and quite effective) twist of the joker's hand.

Anyway, as shown, the invocatory pattern of some of Dylan's later songs not only demonstrates a multi-layered sense and a multi-directed meaning, but the songs seem to be outright shattered and sometimes even confused on the level of both description (sense) and interpretation (meaning). This is of course no verdict on lyrical quality, but is indeed a remarkable development of what took place in the gospel songs. A significant feature

of some of these is the *doubly directed invocation*, which is easily discernable, and by extension this duality is making itself present in the speaker as well, which at times might be somewhat harder to detect.

To be more precise, the dual invocation in (some of) the gospel songs is not just a feature appearing on the level of interpretation (as is the case with the multi-layered addressees of most earlier Dylan songs), but presents itself on the level of *description*. The dual invocation is inseparable from the words's sense, while the duality of the speaker in many cases is reached only on the level of interpretation.

Furthermore, on the level of meaning the duality of both addressee and speaker relates to most gospel songs by way of eschatological extension: They all address both the listeners and the Trinity, unless one would wish to say that they are all both addressed to and being spoken from the point of view of the Holy Spirit. If so, the difference between description and interpretation becomes obsolete.

Prophet with no creed

Not surprisingly Dylan has been called a prophet. He has indeed a prophet's attitude, mostly of a contemplative and brooding sort, but fairly often a raging one as well. But all in all, he isn't a prophet with a creed. The closest we get to his basic credo is by acknowledging his enduring insistence on evil being inherent in man, and his distrust in human effort when dealing with high spiritual matters and how they both affect and probably will shatter the world as we today think we know it.

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Author description

Erling Aadland has published a number of books on poetry and literary theory, among them books about Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen.

Latest monograph: *The world of Literature, an Examination of Literature's Antinomies*, Vidarforlaget: Oslo, 2019. Book about Dylan: *"And the Moon Is High", Attempting to Read Bob Dylan*, Ariadne: Bergen, 1998. A number of essays on Dylan, including: "Work, Performance and Performance-work", *Bøygen* 2/2007; "We are not there (1967)", *Agora* 1–2/2007; "One Big Prison Yard", on (in)justice in some Dylan-songs", *Bøygen* 3/2008; "Dylan and Love", in: *Bob Dylan, mannen, myten og musikken*, Dreyer: Oslo, 2011; "He Got the Skills and He Got the Guts, Bob Dylan's Alternating Interaction with the Blues", *Agora* 1–2/2013.

Forfatteromtale

Erling Aadland har gitt ut mange bøker om lyrikk og litteraturteori, bl.a. om sanglyrikerne Bob Dylan og Leonard Cohen. Siste monografi: *Litteraturens verden, en undersøkelse av litteraturens antinomier*, Vidarforlaget: Oslo, 2019. Bok om Dylan: *«And the Moon Is High», noen forsøk på å lese Bob Dylan*, Ariadne: Bergen, 1998. En rekke artikler om Dylan, bl.a.: «Verk, fremføring og fremføringsverk», *Bøygen* 2/2007; «Vi er ikke der (1967)», *Agora* 1–2/2007; «'One Big Prison Yard'», om rett og urett i noen Dylan-sanger», *Bøygen* 3/2008; «Dylan og kjærligheten», i: *Bob Dylan, mannen, myten og musikken*, Dreyer: Oslo, 2011; «He Got the Skills and He Got the Guts, Bob Dylans omskiftelige forhold til blues», *Agora* 1–2/2013.