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Chronicles: Volume One. Bob Dylan. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004, 293 pages, $24.00 cloth.

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In *Chronicles: Volume One*, Bob Dylan has stunningly come forth, from what has long been his remarkably unyielding inwardness, to illuminate segments of his life in a voice that is fluent, candidly self-revealing, at times self-depreciating and humorous, and yet revelatory as well of the extent to which Dylan has always been and remains self-possessed, purposeful, and driven. Dylan narrates his recollections of particular situations with an immediacy that brings to mind an aspect of what he admired in Robert Johnson's songwriting: "The compositions seemed to come right out of his mouth and not his memory . . ." (p. 284). *Chronicles* has the intensity and fullness of a novel. Three of the book's five sections recall his early days in Minneapolis and New York City. Two additional sections are drawn from later periods of Dylan's life. In each of its five sections, *Chronicles* is structurally complex, consisting of shorter narratives within which Dylan's authorial consciousness roams from minute recollections to relevant reflections and back again. As a result, Dylan's first serious book, though limited in scope to a few selected episodes of his life, paints a surprisingly large canvas.

In the sections describing his early days in Minneapolis and New York City, *Chronicles* presents a wonderfully engaging portrait of Dylan as an aspiring artist. It is a portrait of single-minded, dauntless determination against the backdrop of a disbelieving world. From this self-depiction arises a noteworthy surprise: this perspective, as revealed in *Chronicles*, aligns the path and focus of Dylan's artistic development with the historical culmination of American idealism, as expressed through a development of American literary history in the nineteenth century known as American Transcendentalism, and articulated most notably by Ralph Waldo Emerson.[1] This aspect of Dylan's way of relating his experience, from a per-

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[1]Here and elsewhere in my text, I use the term "American" in accordance with its pervasive usage with reference to literature of the United States and other historically, geographically related literature, as reflected in the titles of textbooks widely used in college courses that follow the historical development of this literature (for example, *The Heath Anthology of*

spective that can be shown to agree implicitly with Emerson's view of human nature and history, is repeatedly conveyed in various ways that call attention to symptoms or to evidence of a widespread skepticism that is ordinarily inconspicuous but potentially pernicious. Dylan makes the inference to be drawn from such observations nearly explicit while describing Paul Clayton as "a folksinger friend of Van Ronk, good natured, forlorn and melancholic . . . an intellectual, a scholar and a romantic with an encyclopedic knowledge of balladry," an artist with numerous recordings, but unappreciated by "the American public" (pp. 25–26). Dylan's sketches of the people with whom he crossed paths early on in New York and the various settings in which he found himself, such as the capacious interior of the apartment occupied by "Ray Gooch" and "Chloe Kiel," with its books and music and oddities, contribute to the overall impression that Greenwich Village served as a supporting environment for new artists.[2] The people Dylan describes in the Village — not only artists such as Dave Van Ronk and Clayton — but others who observed or played a role in bringing about Dylan's artistic emergence — John Hammond, Lou Levy, Izzy Young — all appear to share an assumption about the ever-present possibility of originality among performing artists who have been drawn to the Village. Dylan's account of his artistic development also shows that the Village's expectant atmosphere was not to be found elsewhere outside its extraordinary sphere.

This contrast is implicitly clear as Dylan describes his earlier days in Dinkytown, a pocket-size bohemia just off campus from the University of Minnesota. It is here that Dylan trades his electric guitar for an acoustic Martin, learns about Woody Guthrie and Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and begins to develop himself as a performer of folk music. The people Dylan describes in the Minneapolis setting and the way he deems their opinions and the crosscurrents of their snobberies as "irrelevant" from his own perspective produce the impression of limitations that Dylan would leave behind in his determination to transcend the sphere of the ordinary (pp. 253, 257). This is not the simple inference to be drawn, however, from Dylan's recollection of Jon Pankake, co-editor with Paul Nelson (1962/1990, pp. 59–61) of the *Little Sandy Review*, who would later write a review praising Dylan's first album (*Bob Dylan* released in 1962). But remembering his initial encounters with Pankake, Dylan describes him as "part of the folk police, if not the chief commissioner, [who] wasn't impressed with any of the new talent" (p. 248). Pankake approaches Dylan as though from a sense of duty to put him on notice: "You're trying hard, but you'll never turn into Woody Guthrie . . ." (p. 250). Moreover, Pankake introduces Dylan to an album by Ramblin' Jack Elliott, an already accomplished Guthrie disciple of whom Dylan was previously unaware. Pankake wants to show Dylan not only how

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American Literature, and *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*), in journals of record (*American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* [Duke University Press], *American Literary History* [Oxford University Press]), and in references (*American Literary Studies: An Annual* [Duke University Press]).

For other comments on Emerson in connection with Dylan, see Michael Gray (2000, pp. 75–76, 206), who juxtaposes lines from Emerson's poetry with observations of Dylan's lyrics, and John Hinchey (2002, pp. 12, 27, 29, 95, 127, 175, 233, 234), who makes passing references to Emerson in connection with his examination of Dylan's songs.

[2]Unlike the names of other people who are part of Dylan's personal history, "Ray Gooch" and "Chloe Kiel" are not indexed in biographies of Dylan by Heylin, Scaduto, Shelton, and Sounes, suggesting that Dylan may have changed their names.

far he is from Elliott's level as a performer, but also that Elliott has already achieved what Dylan has just recently been inspired to attempt — that is, to absorb as much of Guthrie's genius as possible.

As described by Dylan, the way in which Pankake feels compelled to bring valuable knowledge to Dylan's attention appears to be inseparably bound up with an ambivalent and partly hostile motive to defeat Dylan's determination, and also with a rationalized desire to disabuse Dylan of his naive illusion — his implausible ambition. After Pankake has "let" Dylan listen to the Elliott record several times, Dylan recalls being beset with confusion and despair. After leaving Pankake's apartment, Dylan's resilient single-mindedness reasserted itself, however, as he resolved to pretend that Elliott's music and Elliott himself did not exist:

> I felt like I had nowhere to go, felt like one of the dead men walking through catacombs. It would be hard not to be influenced by the guy I just heard. I'd have to block it out of my mind, though, forget this thing, tell myself I hadn't heard him and he didn't exist. He was overseas in Europe, anyway, in a self-imposed exile. The U.S. hadn't been ready for him. Good. I was hoping he'd stay gone, and I kept hunting for Guthrie songs. (p. 252)

The comic retrospection continues in the next paragraph as Dylan relates how Pankake made another assault upon his performing ability, exposing Dylan's failure to adhere to the private resolutions disclosed above:

> A few weeks later Pankake heard me playing again and was quick to point out that I didn't fool him, that I used to be imitating Guthrie and now I was imitating Elliott and did I think in some way that I was equivalent to him? (p. 252)

For Pankake (again, as Dylan remembers him) the existence of a lengendary Guthrie, a masterly Elliott — like the historical fact of all great artists whose art has made them seem larger than life — can only occur, or have happened, outside the boundaries of Pankake's own experience. As a result, Pankake could not recognize the necessity of the imperative to which Dylan had freely subjected himself — that is to participate in, to express the inexhaustible genius of, the music to which he had dedicated himself. Pankake does ironically advance Dylan's musical development, but appears primarily motivated as an antagonist who attempts to destroy Dylan's hopes of becoming a real artist. The complexity of Dylan's rendering of this naive episode in his musical education achieves a compelling critical equilibrium due to his self-depreciating humor, which seems both engaged with, and detached from, the determination and confusion that he experienced as Pankake illuminated the path on which Dylan was journeying.

Dylan's portrait of Pankake reveals a form of disbelief in the possibilities of the here-and-now that is an important focal point of Emersonian Transcendentalism. It is in fact the first thing addressed by Emerson in the opening words of his first book entitled *Nature*:

> Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? (1836/1983, p. 7)

As these questions suggest, to claim to believe that such profound aspects of human experience have occurred in the past but are no longer possible reflects a skepticism that may assume the form of a dogmatic certainty about the past. Such a state of mind can be pernicious in its desire to conform the beliefs of others as a way of reinforcing itself. Dylan's recollection of Pankake's aggression as a guardian of folk music registers an encounter with precisely what Emerson repudiates as the unsupportable outlook of a "retrospective" age. The "also" on which Emerson bases the prospect of "an original relation to the universe" not only exposes the denial inherent in dogmatic coerciveness, but also opens the way to a relation between present and past that maximizes the demands to be made of present human endeavors.[3] Because of the repressive nature of this skepticism, Emerson has been misunderstood as an idealist who rejects human history, when it is just such an unacknowledged rejection that Emerson's statements above expose on the part of a false historical consciousness. Dylan would continue to find himself on a collision course with different aspects of this false consciousness as his phenomenal emergence as an original artist and charismatic figure increasingly made him a focal point of the misguided expectations of others. Dylan's understanding of this matter is one of several indications of his awareness of some of the most complex challenges posed by Emerson's idealism.

In view of the tone of worldly disaffection that appears to have gained ground in much of Dylan's music after the early albums, other significant parallels with Emerson's idealism (which may be said to arise unexpectedly in *Chronicles*) add to Dylan's self-portrait a different kind of philosophical coherence and spiritual depth than would be expected, or could otherwise, perhaps, be inferred from his music alone. Dylan's initial reactions to Woody Guthrie's music reveal a paradoxical situation that corroborates what Emerson envisions about an individual's seeking of an "unattained but attainable self" (1841/1983, p. 239). In *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*, Stanley Cavell illuminates this relationship, which is about recognizing, being attracted to, a new sense of ourselves through what we admire in others. Emerson says of this form of seeking that "[a] true aspirant, therefore, never needs look for allusions personal and laudatory in discourse. He hears the commendation, not of himself, but more sweet, of that character he seeks . . ." (1841/1983, p. 239). Addressing what Emerson means by differentiating the "attained" from the "unattained," Cavell explains: "To recognize the unattained self is, I gather, a step in attaining it." This does not mean "that there is one unattained/attainable self we repetitively never arrive at, but rather that 'having' 'a' self is a process of moving to, and from, nexts." Considering the open-ended complexity of this process, Cavell goes on to observe a problem: "That the self is always attained, as well as *to be* attained, creates the problem in Emerson's concept of self-reliance . . . that unless you manage the reliance of the attained on the unattained/attainable (that is, unless you side that way [toward a further possibility]), you are left in precisely the negation of the position he calls for, left in conformity" (1988/1990, p. 12). Emerson admonishes: "Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing" (1841/1983, p. 266). Dylan has similarly observed: "People talk, act, live as if they're never going to die. And what do they leave behind? Nothing. Nothing but a mask" (cited in Cohen, 1985/2004, p. 231). As a result of this insight, there are

[3]For other observations stemming from Emerson's "also," see for example Porte (1979, pp. 77–78) and Richardson (1982, pp. 57–59).

moments in Dylan's lyrics when Dylan, like Emerson, has admonished the inhabitants of a democratic world who live (or as Henry David Thoreau puts it, "are said to live") in obedience to the requirements of social conformity.[4]

Dylan reveals his genuine understanding of what Cavell sees as a fundamental aspect of "Emersonian perfectionism," an "attraction" toward someone else who represents "the unattained but attainable," as Dylan describes gaining an immediate sense of new self-awareness while being enthralled by Guthrie's music:

> That day I listened all afternoon to Guthrie as if in a trance and I felt like I had discovered some essence of self-command, that I was in the internal pocket of the system feeling more like myself than ever before. A voice in my head said, "So this is the game." I could sing all these songs, every single one of them and they were all that I wanted to sing. It was like I had been in the dark and someone had turned on the main switch of a lightening conductor. (pp. 244–245)

After registering this gain in self-possession, Dylan describes the intensity with which he felt drawn in a new direction. Reading Guthrie's *Bound For Glory* heightened Dylan's devotion to its author: "I said to myself I was going to be Guthrie's greatest disciple. It seemed like a worthy thing" (p. 246). Dylan emphasizes the power of the attraction, the extent to which he tried initially to imagine himself as Guthrie, refashioning himself after his idol: "Woody's songs were having that big an effect on me, an influence on every move I made, what I ate and how I dressed, who I wanted to know, who I didn't" (p. 247).

Dylan's account of his self-directed apprenticeship includes moments of discovery charged with an intensity again implying a heightened receptivity. Dylan conveys this stance in relation to Guthrie through a string of impressionistic metaphors repeatedly punctuated by violence: "All these songs together, one after another made my head spin. It made me want to gasp." Dylan explains that he had heard a little of Guthrie "here and there" but "not in this earth shattering kind of way. I couldn't believe it. Guthrie had such a grip on things. He was so poetic and tough and rhythmic. There was so much intensity, and his voice was like a stiletto . . . . His mannerisms, the way everything just rolled off his tongue, it all just about knocked me down" (p. 244). Dylan goes on to describe Guthrie's intensity in terms of "his diction," his "perfected style of singing," his way of throwing sounds "like a punch." In this revelatory moment, Guthrie's songs impressed Dylan with their "infinite sweep of humanity . . . . Not one mediocre song in the bunch" (p. 244). To judge the startling images that Dylan paints here merely as hyperbole would miss what he evidently wants to emphasize: that the "humanity" expressed through Guthrie's songs awakened in Dylan a sense of their representativeness, which drew him, in turn, toward a new sense of the humanity within himself.

Considering this kind of a relationship from a Kantian perspective, Cavell observes that Emerson "shows the intelligible world to be entered into whenever another represents for us our rejected self, our beyond . . ." (1988/1990, p. 58). Cavell notices Emerson in "Self-Reliance" calling attention to this by saying "I will stand here for humanity." As a result of tracing Emerson's "inflections of standing up and understanding in relation to standing for and in relation to standards," Cavell insightfully "links" such inflections with Kant's "two standpoints." Kant establishes the possibility of our freedom and our humanity by attributing our abil-

[4]Thoreau's words are from the third paragraph of *Walden*.

ity to think about these things to a standpoint of our existence that is independent of the "natural necessity" of this world, in which it must be said that every event has a cause (1785/1997, p. 60).[5] For Kant, as Cavell observes, it is this autonomous standpoint that makes possible our "access to the intelligible world — the realm of ends . . ." (1988/1990, p. 58). Dylan's sight of the "infinite sweep of humanity" in Guthrie's music conveys a comparable metaphysical revelation of a different standpoint or perspective from which Dylan becomes aware of Guthrie's vision of humanity. In the context of Emerson's "standard" and "standing for," Cavell notes that "Emerson . . . describes the true man as 'measuring' us" (1988/1990, p. 58). Finding in Guthrie's songs the "infinite sweep of humanity," Dylan goes on to say that "Woody Guthrie tore everything in his path to pieces" (p. 244). Guthrie's vision appeared to Dylan to overshadow every other along the creative path of his songwriting and performing. Moreover, Dylan's violent metaphor here conveys a more precise and powerful idea of the operation of Guthrie's genius than can be suggested by the familiar metaphor of overshadowment.

Here is the substance of Guthrie's vision as Dylan perceived it: "Guthrie divides the world between those who work and those who don't and is interested in the liberation of the human race and wants to create a world worth living in" (p. 245). Notwithstanding the questions that might be asked about "those who work and those who don't," the intelligible world that Guthrie stood for, as Dylan recalls it, aligns Guthrie with Emerson and Kant in terms of his commitment to the possibility of freedom and humanity from an autonomous standpoint that shows them to be possible. Within the context of American idealism, the view that Dylan attributes to Guthrie agrees essentially with what Ernest Lee Tuveson has identified (in *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role*) as the predominant form of American millennialism, a postmillennial view advanced in New England by Jonathan Edwards (in connection with the Great Awakening of the 1740s) that envisions "new heavens and new earth" as a fulfillment in "stages" brought about "*within* history" (1968/1980, pp. 28, 30, 56–57). The postmillennial orientation to history is antithetical to the historical view of premillennialism, which "is *anti*-progressivist in attitude" (Tuveson, p. 34). Premillennialists see world history as remaining in the grip of evil and believe that supernatural intervention will bring the world as we know it to an apocalyptic conclusion. While American history includes expressions of premillennialism, Dylan's account of Guthrie's view of human nature and history, to which Dylan also gives his assent, aligns them both with the prevailing idea of a millennial America — an ongoing evolutionary pattern of postmillennial thinking that came to be a legacy of American independence, which was subsequently inherited and further articulated by American Transcendentalism.[6]

This ideological outlook may be said to support the belief that America as a nation has a millennial destiny to liberate the human spirit around the globe. But Transcendentalism's aspiration toward such a destiny, as a result of awakening individual spiritual vigilance, does not provide any basis for using the millennial rhetoric of freedom for all human beings in connection with coercive interventions into the affairs of other nations. Cecilia Tichi (in *New World, New Earth: Environmental Reform in American Literature from the Puritans through Whitman*) adds

[5]Or see Academy edition, volume and page (AK 4:456), customarily included in the margins of translations.

[6]For a notable expression of premillennialism, see Michael Wigglesworth's popular seventeenth-century poem *The Day of Doom*.

relevant insight from the historical perspective of early nineteenth-century America, when the belief that an American millennium had already begun raised observations about the disparity between advances in technology, on the one hand, and the absence of signs of a "spiritual" reform of human nature, on the other (1979, p. 164). Tichi observes that "Emerson and Thoreau moved in another direction and avoided confrontation with ideas of an actual New Earth" (p. 161). By affirming the American millennium as an inner realization, a spiritual awakening within each individual, Transcendentalism gives it an enduring vision that effectively averts the issue of *when* the destiny of American idealism, and of real equality and democracy, must either be reached, or be rejected as a human possibility. John Dewey and William James each endorsed this democratic aspiration. Dewey (1903/1977, p. 191), who saw Emerson as "the philosopher of democracy," predicts "that when democracy has articulated itself, it will have no difficulty in finding itself already proposed in Emerson." James professes the belief that the world "little by little" makes gains in tolerance and inclusiveness, "and the religion of democracy tends toward permanent increase" (1899/1992, p. 868).[7]

Dylan's wholehearted allegiance to what he saw as Guthrie's desire to liberate "the human race" and "to create a world worth living in" stands as an invitation to examine whether Dylan may be recognized after all as a voice of American idealism, who has in his own way understood what it means to imagine John Winthrop's seventeenth-century vision of a "city upon a hill" as an enduring symbol of America's millennial destiny. The visibility implied by that image together with the continuing emergence of a culture defined by a spirit of union paradoxically resistant to uniformity have made this aspiration toward a better world sustainable despite its continual debasement and the evils, past and present, that have threatened and continue to plague its development.[8] On the one hand, a sense of hope for justice to prevail even in this world can be inferred from what Dylan modestly calls his "finger-pointing songs," along with other well known songs that others have called his "anthems" ("Blowin' in the Wind," "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall," "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," "The Times They Are A-Changin," "Only a Pawn in their Game," and others). These songs, of course, produced Dylan's initial fame and influence as the "voice" or "conscience" of a generation. On the other hand, Dylan's continuing assessment of what is to be expected (at

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[7]For notable Transcendentalist passages articulating the nature of this millennium and commenting on signs of its progress on both sides of the gender line in the first half of the nineteenth century, see (respectively) Thoreau's paragraph on "morning" as "the awakening hour" (in the second chapter of *Walden*, 1854/1992, pp. 60–61) and the opening pages in Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845/1998, pp. 7–24).

[8]Winthrop's statement about a "city upon a hill" may be found in his sermon entitled "A Model of Christian Charitie," often referred to as his "*Arabella* sermon," after the name of the ship upon which he delivered it. The historical significance of the possibility of spiritual union without uniformity came to my attention in the context of the evolution of thought about civil as well as religious liberty after the Great Awakening in the 1740s, as observed by historians Alan Heimert and Perry Miller. Heimert describes "the death of the old notion of religious uniformity, and the birth of a new ideal of unity." "[T]he "post-Awakening debates," which give the misleading impression, Heimert says, of "the utter fragmentation of American Calvinism," nonetheless reveal "to the analytical eye," as Perry Miller noted, "an almost unconscious, method of maintaining some perverse form of solidarity" (see Heimert and Miller, 1967, p. lix). For other observations about Winthrop's "city upon a hill" in connection

best) in this world, as expressed particularly in the songs and outlook reflecting his conversion at the end of the 1970s to a fundamentalist form of Christianity, have been too pessimistic about the corrupt state of the world to be easily connected with American idealism. Moreover, in some of the songs reflecting his turn to Christianity, Dylan alludes to, and (within these songs) expresses his assent to, the premillennialist belief in the coming of a literal doomsday.[9] But in *Chronicles*, Dylan's sense of an early connection with Guthrie's idealism is implicitly reinforced by his identification of America as a redeemer nation in terms of its emergence from the crisis and carnage of the Civil War. Based on his reading of nineteenth-century newspapers at the New York Public Library, Dylan states: "Back there, America was put on the cross, died and was resurrected. There was nothing synthetic about it. The godawful truth of that would be the all-encompassing template behind everything that I would write" (p. 86).

Dylan's intriguing analysis of what compelled him to turn from his previous repertoire of traditional songs to Guthrie's body of work stops short of detailing explicit differences between the two, but he does relate his recognition of a moral consciousness that he had not previously internalized with such clear-sighted conviction: "The folk and blues tunes had already given me my proper concept of culture, and now with Guthrie's songs my heart and mind had been sent into another cosmological place of that culture entirely" (p. 248). Moreover, Dylan reveals that his commitment to the myths of the youth culture that he grew up with had been tenuous:

> In the late '50s and early '60s, teenage rebellion was beginning to make noise, but that scene hadn't appealed to me, not in a wholehearted way. It had no organized shape. The rebel-without-a-cause thing wasn't hands-on enough — even a lost cause, I thought, would be better than no cause. To the Beats, the devil was bourgeois conventionality, social artificiality and the man in the gray flannel suit. (p. 247)

Dylan moves nimbly if somewhat cryptically back to Guthrie by observing that "[f]olk songs automatically went up against the grain of all these things and Woody's songs even went against that. In comparison, everything else seemed one-dimensional" (pp. 247–248). Looking back on this momentous turning point, Dylan doesn't recall any new realizations regarding the naive and unconsciously skeptical nature of popular culture. These realizations were soon to follow, however, as Dylan turned to songwriting and became himself an icon of popular culture.

Dylan's focus on Pankake, the confrontation between "purist" skepticism and Dylan's genius, can also be viewed as a foreshadowment of the antagonistic relationship that was to develop during the 1960s between Dylan and the up-swelling multilayered consciousness of millennial America. Dylan was right to reject, to get

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with Dylan's sphere of music, see Marcus's (1997) *Invisible Republic*, particularly the chapter entitled "City on a Hill." Changing his book's title to *The Old, Weird America* was a good idea, if only because the metaphor of invisibility was antithetical to the Puritan vision of visibility, not only of a city on a hill but also the corollary idea of visible sainthood. These points of Puritan identity mark an unmistakable difference between the first settlers of Massachusetts Bay and the millenarian groups who withdraw themselves to remote areas or compounds and who follow charismatic leaders that have sometimes led them to self-destruction.

[9]For example, on *Slow Train Coming* (1979): "Precious Angel," and "When He Returns."

out from under, the mantle that would have made him the "voice" or "conscience of a generation." Speaking of Dylan's emergence as a phenomenal influence during the revival of folk music, Greil Marcus (in *The Old, Weird America*) has insightfully observed that "he symbolized . . . a whole way of being in the world." At a deeper level, "he embodied a yearning for peace and home in the midst of noise and upheaval, and in the aesthetic reflection of that embodiment located both peace and home in the purity, the essential goodness, of each listener's heart" (1997, pp. 20–21). But this glimmering of a millennial awakening was not to last. As Dylan's appearance and music changed, his "performance now seemed to mean that he had never truly been where he had appeared to be only a year before, reaching for that democratic oasis of the heart — and that if he had never been there, those who had felt themselves there with him had not been there." Dylan's devoted listeners, Marcus (1997, p. 31) explains, felt tricked and betrayed. Marcus also accurately identifies the nature of the problems that developed between Dylan and his young, idealistic audience: the confusion of life with art, and an objectification of authenticity that did not allow for individuality, did not permit real people to be themselves (pp. 27–29).

In *Chronicles*, Dylan's critique of the inauthenticity of personal aspirations engendered by American society focuses on its source, not in the movement, but in the mainstream of popular culture itself. While reading newspapers in a diner with Len Chandler, who looked for ideas for topical songs, Dylan recalls: "The dominant myth of the day seemed to be that anybody could do anything, even go to the moon. You could do whatever you wanted — in the ads and in the articles, ignore your limitations, defy them. If you were an indecisive person, you could become a leader . . . . If you were a housewife, you could become a glamour girl . . . . Are you slow-witted? No worries — you can be an intellectual genius" (p. 90). This aspect of American popular culture is essentially changeless, as indicated by Cavell's observations nearly three decades later: "False or debased perfectionisms seem everywhere these days, from best-selling books with titles like *Love Yourself* to the television advertisement on behalf of Army recruitment with the slogan, 'Be all that you can be'" (1988/1990, p. 16). Cavell points out that Emerson describes individuals enslaved by conformity as "bugs" or "spawn." With this in view, Cavell observes: "The worst thing we could do is rely on ourselves as we stand — this is simply to be the slaves of our slavishness" (p. 47). Regrettably, this seems to have been the case among those followers of Dylan in the sixties who felt his "voice" to be their own, and who turned to Dylan for some kind of spiritual direction or leadership. Reflecting on his own loathing of this idolatry, Dylan coincidentally reiterates Emerson's Kafka-like metaphor as he observes that after his withdrawal from the public eye "the big bugs in the press kept promoting me as the mouthpiece, spokesman, or even conscience of a generation" (p. 115).

Cavell's insight into this popular-cultural phenomenon as something ever present in a democratic world brings a visionary perspective to Dylan's detection of the falsity of debased expressions of self-help promises or goals as recollected in *Chronicles*. Speaking of "[t]he inevitability of debased claims to Christianity, or to philosophy, or to democracy," Cavell explains that this inevitability does not disprove the possibility or reality of what is "genuine," but should be recognized as "part of its inescapable circumstance and motivation. So that the mission of Perfectionism generally, in a world of false (and false claims for) democracy, is the discovery of the possibility of democracy, which to exist has recurrently to be (re)discovered . . ." (1988/1990, pp. 16–17). For the sake of gaining a clearer view of the misdirected

allegiance of Dylan's angry followers, it helps to understand how Cavell clarifies Emerson's idea of "representativeness" in a democratic world, also implicitly Emerson's idea of genius, by contrasting it with comparable ideas in Plato's *Republic*:

> I might at once declare that the path from the *Republic*'s picture of the soul's journey . . . [relevant to "only a few, forming an aristocratic class"] to the democratic need for perfection, is a path from the idea of there being one (call him Socrates) who represents for each of us the height of the journey, to the idea of each of us being representative for each of us . . . . Emerson's study is of this (democratic, universal) representativeness . . . if we were not representative of what we might be . . . we would not recognize ourselves presented in one another's possibilities . . . . (1988/1990, p. 9)

Cavell examines the complexity of this relationship as a paradoxical but integral part of the perfectionist "dimension" of Emerson's thinking: "Emerson elects himself to be our representative man (anyone is entitled, and no one is, to stand for this election) . . . . In a sense his teaching is that we are to see beyond representativeness, or rather see it as a process of individuation" (p. 10). There is this irreducible indeterminacy at the heart of Emerson's idea of a representativeness that attracts and thus opens the way for individuals to glimpse, perhaps to enter, the intelligible sphere of a better world as a result of finding that sphere within themselves, which also means discovering (perhaps renewing) their own purpose in this world. This millennial or utopian realm cannot by some leadership strategy be made to happen. As Cavell observes, "[y]ou cannot bring Utopia about. Nor can you hope for it. You can only enter it" (p. 20). In all likelihood, there were individuals committed to the protest movements during the 1960s who experienced genuine spiritual awakenings, who entered a new awareness of the world that they discovered within themselves, a point that Marcus has perceptively documented.[10]

Nevertheless, the unconscious skepticism of the "betrayed" followers of Dylan is implicitly clear: no one can lead others to enter an Emersonian realm of self-reliance, a Kantian "kingdom of ends," or Guthrie's "world worth living in" by telling them what to think, how to feel, and how to *be*, to become inhabitants of a new and better world. A question could be raised here as to whether Dylan's attraction to Guthrie is truly analogous with Dylan's inspiration of the members of a generation. They did not turn to Dylan — to his representativeness — as Dylan turned to Guthrie, which was to further his development as a musical artist. But this view of the matter misses the essential point that applies to both situations: that the outcome of the attraction toward an exemplary figure, whether a mentor in a line of endeavor, or an exemplary model or loved one, must always be a movement toward individuation. With this outcome in view, it is evident that while the genius of Dylan's early songs did function in what seems to have been a strikingly Emersonian manner, elevating Dylan in the minds of many as their "voice" and "conscience," this development by itself — the elevation of Dylan as a collective act — reveals what Emerson and Dylan both see as a false position for claiming a new consciousness: their attributing to Dylan what Emerson would insist they needed to recognize within themselves. The result of Dylan's allegiance to Guthrie moved him in the other direction, as he recalls feeling elevated by Guthrie's songs, "instantly risen up...

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[10]See Marcus's (1997, pp. 209–212) citations and comments in connection with Casey Hayden's "memoir" entitled "The Movement."

to an honorable knight" (p. 247). Dylan's experience clearly corroborates what for Emerson is the necessary receptivity to see our own possibility in the example of someone else.

An additional element of the dynamic of Emersonian perfectionism as described by Cavell is relevant to introduce here. Emerson observes a "shame" that is attendant upon conformity, and he asserts there will be times when "we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another" — only because we would not say "what we have thought and felt all the time" (1841/1983, p. 259). Cavell links this form of shame with an "unsettling" sense of "self-dissatisfaction, the state of perceiving oneself as failing to follow oneself in one's higher and happier aspirations, failing perhaps to have found the right to one's own aspirations . . . ." From such a sorrowful state, he imagines further that "[t]o look then for the maximization of a given state of culture is to give up looking for the reality of one's own" (1988/1990, p. 51). While neither Dylan nor his antagonists in the 1960s seems to have been much preoccupied with self-dissatisfaction, it could be argued that Dylan, because of his extraordinary accomplishments, should be given a "pass." But Dylan does not exempt himself completely. Recalling his change of behavior under the initial impact of Guthrie's genius — how Guthrie influenced his "every move," his diet, his appearance, who he "wanted to know," and who he "didn't" — Dylan, as though looking back and yielding to a spirit of comic abandon, draws himself in a posture of pure idolatry (p. 247). Dylan, of course, outgrew this dependence on Guthrie. As he learned Guthrie songs, he felt he was being spoken to by Guthrie's spiritual voice. "One thing for sure," Dylan recalls, "Woody Guthrie had never seen nor heard of me, but it felt like he was saying, 'I'll be going away, but I'm leaving this job in your hands. I know I can count on you'" (p. 246).

Chronicles will sustain other insights and reflections, of course, than those presented here as a result of focusing on Dylan's self-portrait as an artist. If the new voice with which Dylan has put on record his own thoughts and recollections in connection with the remarkable nature of his creative development, and more broadly his personal outlook and sense of self, in *Volume One* indicates what may follow, the other projected volumes could produce an even larger, revelatory-rich tapestry. Because this first volume of *Chronicles* draws upon only a fraction of Dylan's life and accomplishments over more than four decades, the extent to which it nonetheless conveys sharp impressions of Dylan's way of experiencing the world indicates that he has successfully challenged himself as an artist to make *Chronicles* a significant achievement.

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