

2007

Documenting Dylan: How the documentary film functions for Bob Dylan fans

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Documenting Dylan: How the Documentary Film Functions for Bob Dylan Fans

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Communication
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
March 27, 2007

Keywords: music, popular culture, celebrity, rock 'n' roll, identity

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Janna Jones. Enduring a move and a new position, Janna still found time to provide insights and encouragements throughout my writing and research process. Her contribution to this project and my education is much appreciated and will continue to help me throughout my academic career.

I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Marcy Chvasta and Dr. Mark Neumann. Marcy took a larger role in this process acting as advisor and served as the Tampa to Gainesville liaison. Mark dedicated his time to this project during what must have been an extremely busy time for him. I appreciate the help and encouragement each member provided.

I would like to thank the dedicated Bob Dylan fans from several online communities. Their passion for his music and appreciation for his art are proof of Dylan's continuing role in our culture.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Lisa, for supporting me throughout this process and for putting up with more Bob Dylan than any non-Bob Dylan fan should.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of the documentary film in the relationship between the artist and the fan; specifically how Bob Dylan fans use the documentary films *Dont Look Back*, directed by D.A. Pennebaker, and *No Direction Home*, directed by Martin Scorsese. Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese are three important figures in American popular culture, and these are the two most prominent films about Dylan. These films discuss relatively the same time period, yet delineate two different versions of Dylan's identity. *Dont Look Back*, released in 1967, documents Dylan's 1965 tour of England. Because of Pennebaker's rhetorical placement and treatment of particular scenes, Dylan often comes across as mean and spiteful, lashing out at reporters and those around him. Scorsese's 2005 film combines archival footage with contemporary interviews to create a different picture of Dylan— a picture of an artist who was mistreated and misinterpreted by the folk community, his fans, and the press. By conducting interviews with passionate Dylan fans, I concluded that these films demonstrate the rhetorical presentation of identity. Fans use the images found in these films to construct their identity of Dylan. The documentary film is unable to fully capture one's identity, but, as these films show, can only rhetorically construct the celebrity persona.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For an artist primarily known for his music, Bob Dylan has been documented in many different ways; fans have access to Dylan in a variety of media. Of course, fans are primarily able to connect to Dylan through his recorded albums and by attending live concerts. As one of the most written about rock icons in the western world (I counted fourteen books about Dylan at a local Borders bookstore, rivaled only by the Beatles and Kurt Cobain), fans can also learn more about Dylan through print. The documentation of Dylan does not stop with the printed word, however. From the seminal D.A. Pennebaker documentary film *Dont Look Back* (1967)¹ to Martin Scorsese's 2005 documentary *No Direction Home*, Bob Dylan and his musical/cultural impact have also been analyzed with the camera lens. A search of Amazon.com reveals up to fourteen DVDs about Dylan. These films help to create the persona his fans have come to know and love. The goal of this study is to make sense of how the documentary film functions for the fan; specifically this study interprets the documentaries *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* and their role in the relationship between Bob Dylan and his fans.

Robert Schickel describes the relationship between celebrity and fan as an “illusion of intimacy” (*Intimate 5*)— a situation where a fan believes that he or she has a personal relationship with the artist, but the artist has only a vague understanding of an audience or a “mass.” While the intimacy may only be illusionary, the connections between the artist and the fan are real and ever-shifting. Before the 1877 invention of

Edison's phonograph, if a person wanted to hear music, he or she had to be within earshot of a musician. With the recording and broadcasting technology of the early 20th century, one only needed to be in the presence of the proper technology (i.e., record players and radios) to hear music. James W. Carey noted how the telegraph "permitted for the first time the effective separation of communication from transportation" (203). Recording technology created a similar physical separation between the musician and the audience. The audience no longer needed to be physically present in the same location as the performer.

At the same time, the record also brought the performer closer to the audience by "domesticating" the performance of popular music (Marshall 154). In the form of a vinyl record, cassette tape, compact disk, or currently, an MP3, the fan can literally own the music. This ownership creates an identification between the fan and the artist. The personalization of the listening experience has increased this identification. The contents of one's iPod can compose an important personal statement.

P. David Marshall notes how technology has changed the way popular music is experienced. As recording technology advanced, the sound quality of the recorded music improved. Songs were no longer a live performance captured on tape, but the ultimate performance, created with many layers, effects, and improvements that would be impossible to capture in one take. Even things like timing and pitch are altered to perfection in the studio. The result is that the recorded music becomes the "authentic" version of the song, and the live performance becomes a reenactment or ritualization of the original version. The live version functions almost as a tribute to the original song,

either by how closely it matches the studio quality or by how differently it arranges the pieces.

Marshall views performances as a kind of “ritualized authentication” (159) because these songs are available to be heard in a higher quality form through the record, yet fans do not hesitate to spend double or more what the album costs to see a band live. Fans attend rock concerts for several reasons— to spend an evening on the town, to experience a large crowd, to see an important cultural icon, or to pledge allegiance to their favorite artist. It is often not the case that the fans come to concerts to hear the best performance of the music.

The rock ‘n’ roll documentary film seems to fit somewhere between a live concert and a recording because a documentary film usually doesn’t contain the high quality, error-free sound that can be found on a record produced in a studio. It also doesn’t have the excitement and intensity of seeing the musician live as part of a massive group of devoted fans. Nor does it offer the intimacy or even “proximity” (the feeling that often gets misinterpreted as intimacy) of a live performance (Schickel *Intimate* 38). Yet these films do seem to serve an important function in the lives of fans.

Rock ‘n’ roll documentary films can be used in many ways. They can be used as a means of remembering a past experience— a “souvenir” or reminder of a memorable experience. They can also be used as a substitute for an experience one has yet to achieve; for example, the desire to see U2 in concert may be whetted by watching a documentary film of a live concert. They may be used as a means of time travel as well. Because Jimi Hendrix fans born after 1970 are unable to see him perform in person, the

documentary film *Woodstock* (1970) allows them to “time travel” to 1969 upstate New York to witness Hendrix’s historic performance.

Documentary films offer perspectives that recordings and live concerts cannot. They allow the viewers an up-close view of the subject— something neither a record nor a live performance can offer. Unlike a live concert, where details and intensity can shift depending on what section of the building you are sitting in, the documentary film allows a “closer-than-front-row” and “more-intimate-than-backstage” connection with the artist. This connection is created, of course, by the information and conversations that are shown on film, but just as importantly, by the visual details that we are able to see within a documentary film that we are not allowed during the listening of a record. We are able to see the artist’s hands moving along the guitar, facial expressions, and posture. We can lip-read what the lead singer mouths to the guitarist in the middle of a song. We can watch the artist’s eyes light up as he or she speaks of an important moment or smirk after a sarcastic comment. Our desire to “get closer” to the celebrities we admire is simultaneously satisfied and intensified by the images presented in a documentary film.

I have chosen *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* as the main texts of this study for several reasons. Both films discuss an important musical and cultural icon with a huge fan base. If I wish to study how fans use documentary films, Bob Dylan is an appropriate subject because there are important documentary films about him, and he has a large number of fans. Both films were made by influential filmmakers. D.A. Pennebaker was a pioneer in the cinema verite movement of filmmaking. His innovative style and technical advances allowed the camera to be simultaneously portable and capable of recording sound. This led to a movement in documentary filmmaking that has

had a huge impact on the entire field of filmmaking, both fiction and nonfiction. Martin Scorsese has had a noteworthy career as both a documentary and fiction filmmaker. Films like *Taxi Driver* (1975), *Raging Bull* (1978), *Goodfellas* (1990), and *Casino* (1995) have solidified Scorsese as a prominent Hollywood filmmaker. *The Last Waltz* (1978), Scorsese's film about The Band's final concert positioned him as a documentary filmmaker. Also, *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* deal with a similar time period in Dylan's life. While *No Direction Home* covers a longer period of time, they both deal with Dylan in 1965. In fact, Scorsese uses footage directly from Pennebaker. They both, to an extent, depict Dylan's struggles with being labeled, misunderstood, and misidentified by both the press and his fans. Finally, these two films serve as end marks (thus far) of documentary films about Bob Dylan. *Dont Look Back* was the first film made about Dylan, and *No Direction Home* was one of the most recent films made about him.

Dont Look Back offers a "pre-interpretation" look at Bob Dylan. It is filled with scenes of Dylan backstage and onstage, in hotel rooms, and being interviewed by the press. Pennebaker's camera follows him through crowds and hallways, in cars and trains, and anywhere else Dylan goes. All of this is "displayed;" there is no voice-over narration or interviews to give us interpretive access to Dylan's intentions, thoughts, or feelings. There isn't even a soundtrack outside of the music Dylan plays on camera. *Dont Look Back* is presented as if it were a fly-on-the-wall look into Dylan's life.

Early in the film we see Dylan fielding impossible questions from the press. These questions were so difficult to answer seriously that Dylan responds with humor or indifference. One reporter asks him what his "real message" is. While holding a giant

light bulb, Dylan replies, "Keep a good head and always carry a light bulb." Another asks him why he is so popular during this tour of England compared to his last tour. He simply responds with, "I have absolutely no idea." One asks him if he thinks his fans understand his music. Another asks if he cares about people. To emphasize the incompetence of the mainstream press, Pennebaker includes a scene where a reporter asks Dylan's friend and fellow folksinger what her name is. When she replies, "Joan Baez," the reporter responds, "I didn't recognize you. Nice to see you. I've been looking for you all day."

It is impossible not to sense that Dylan does some posturing for the camera. In one scene Dylan gets upset about a glass that had been thrown from his hotel room into the street. Dylan demands to know who threw the glass. He declares, "I don't care who did it, man, I just want to *know* who did it." In the ensuing argument his antagonist claims, "You're a big noise." Dylan responds, "I know it, man. I know I'm a big noise." Scenes like this force the audience to wonder if Dylan is really like this, if he is putting on a show for his friends and guests, or if he is aware of the camera and wants to play a character. Later that evening, Dylan listens to a performance by Donovan, a "Scottish-Irish Dylan imitator" (Hajdu 255). During his performance, Dylan exclaims, "Hey, that's a good song." Dylan later plays "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." During his own performance, Dylan passes a seemingly snide smile to one of his friends. Some feel that Dylan is being insulting with his seemingly sarcastic praise of Donovan and his smirk. With the two songs performed side-by-side, it becomes clear that Dylan is a much more sophisticated songwriter and musician. Dylan's performance might be interpreted as a way to belittle Donovan.

There were times when it felt like Pennebaker captured “the real” Dylan. On stage, Dylan was funny, gracious, and entertaining. Dealing with fans, Dylan is appreciative of their admiration and courteous to their requests for autographs. We see Dylan speaking very graciously with the High Sheriff’s Lady as she invites him and his friends to stay at her mansion the next time they are in town. In down time between concerts, he and his friends play classic Hank Williams songs. He signs autographs for fans before shows, answering questions like “Do you have brothers and sisters?” and defending his new rock music. Playing music and typing on a typewriter between concerts, Dylan seems not to be playing a role, but being himself.

Much of this film is focused on the press. Dylan is constantly looking at newspapers and magazines, oftentimes reading reviews of his own concerts. In one scene, Dylan reads aloud a newspaper article that claims that he smokes eighty cigarettes a day. To which Dylan replies, “I’m glad I’m not me.” Two of the most striking scenes show Dylan being interviewed, first, by a “science student” who was reporting for a paper and, later, by a reporter from *Time* magazine. Pennebaker allows these scenes to run uninterrupted for over eight minutes and six minutes, respectively, granting each scene gravity. Despite claiming himself to be a “delightful sort of person” earlier in the film, Dylan appears to be at his least “delightful” during these scenes. Dylan is spiteful, aggressive, and insulting to these men. These scenes are less an interview of Dylan and more a berating of those reporters at the hands of him.

As the film comes to a close, Dylan rides away from his tour finale Royal Albert Hall performance and says, “I feel like I’ve been through some kind of thing [...] something special.” This appears to be Dylan at his humblest. But Dylan’s vulnerable

state is quickly interrupted when his manager Albert Grossman points out that the press has been referring to him as an anarchist. Dylan returns to his posturing when he says, “Give the ‘anarchist’ a cigarette.” The audience is left to wonder whether or not they just saw a glimpse of the “real” Bob Dylan.

No Direction Home depicts the first part of Bob Dylan’s musical journey. Scorsese takes us from the roots of Dylan’s journey in his hometown of Hibbing, Minnesota, to the completion of his journey (at least as far as this film describes it) with his final tour of England before his motorcycle crash in 1966. Scorsese continuously reminds us of where Dylan is headed by interrupting the early biographical narrative with shots of live concerts from 1966. Dylan never really felt at home in Hibbing, and left for Minneapolis as soon as he graduated high school. In Minneapolis his interest in folk music increased as he was exposed to more of it. He finally left for New York City to visit his hero Woody Guthrie and to expand his music career. In Greenwich Village, Dylan was exposed to the expanding folk scene and the Bohemian atmosphere. After playing in that scene and meeting many influential singers, poets, and artists, Dylan was offered a recording deal from Columbia Records. His first record, *Bob Dylan*, was largely unsuccessful. Immediately following the recording, Dylan knew he had already moved beyond those songs.

Dylan’s second record, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* contained timeless songs like “Blowin in the Wind,” “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall,” and “Don’t Think Twice, It’s Alright.” Dylan quickly moved from being an interesting folk singer to the prophet status that made him so uncomfortable. Fellow folk singer Joan Baez thought that she and Dylan had a great opportunity to truly make a difference in the world. Dylan resisted the

pull to become the Left's new voice, the next Woody Guthrie or Pete Seeger. Dave Van Rank claimed that if there was such a thing as Jung's idea of a collective unconscious, "Bobby had somehow tapped into it." Part I of Scorsese's two-part film ends with Dylan and several other artists walking off the stage at the Newport Folk Festival after singing "Blowin' in the Wind." A voice from the stage can be heard: "He has his finger on the pulse of our generation."

Part II of *No Direction Home* begins with Dylan's performance at the March on Washington in 1963. His songs were labeled as protest or topical songs, two labels that Dylan to this day has tried to shun. Expectations of how Dylan was supposed to act were starting to make him uncomfortable. He became much more popular, even was referred to as a genius. Gradually his songs became recorded by other artists, often reaching the top of the pop charts. This got Dylan thinking about writing songs that might place higher on the pop charts. The result was "Like a Rolling Stone," one of Dylan's most loved and most recognizable hits. Wanting to recreate the magic they achieved in the studio while recording "Like a Rolling Stone," Dylan and the Mike Bloomfield Blues Band performed electric music at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. The rock 'n' roll music was poorly received by several members of the audience, most notably Pete Seeger.

Taking his new rock 'n' roll songs on the road with a group of guys that would later form The Band, Dylan became restless with doing interviews and answering silly questions about philosophies and protests. He claimed that people who were outside of music started to get a "distorted, warped view" of him. His concerts, which consisted of an acoustic solo set and an electric set with his band, were often received with boos and hostility. Finally, nearing the end of his 1966 English tour, a road weary Dylan tells a

reporter, “I just want to go home.” Scorsese ends the film with the powerful image of an audience member shouting, “Judas!” as Dylan walks on stage. Dylan, visibly shaken, replies with “I don’t believe you! You’re a liar,” then proceeds to launch into an especially biting rendition of “Like a Rolling Stone.” It seems that Dylan’s entire journey ended right where it started, looking for a way to get home.

As mentioned before, the two main texts for this paper share many common traits. They both deal with Bob Dylan’s early years. In *Dont Look Back*, Dylan comes across as a juvenile, angry young man— except when he’s playing music or interacting with fans. At those times he seems to take on a much humbler demeanor. For the most part, he can be seen scowling and puffing on an ever-present cigarette. *No Direction Home* paints a different picture of Dylan. Through the interview as narration, Dylan takes on a calmer, milder persona. He is portrayed as more of a victim of being misunderstood and mislabeled. Even the interviews with the press take on a more light-hearted feel than the scathing attacks dished out in *Dont Look Back*.

This is not to say that one film is “truer” than the other, or that one is fairer to Dylan than the other. These films, made almost forty years apart, have different perspectives and goals, but they share a common subject: a musical icon with an extremely devoted fan base. What is important for this study is how the films construct the Dylan persona and how fans use the films. These issues must be dealt with if we are to fully understand the importance of documentary films in the everyday lives of people.

Literature Review

The documentary film is an important piece of cultural production. It simultaneously documents the world as we know it and documents a specific view of the world. People use documentary films for entertainment, to get information, and to interpret and remember events. Documentary films are presented from the perspective of the filmmaker. Pennebaker and Scorsese, for example, bring their own interests and ideas to help create their portrayals of Dylan. To better understand the significance of the documentary film in general and the importance of these two documentaries in particular, I reviewed the literature on documentary films. Because this study focuses on the documentary film and its relationship with the celebrity identity and the fans, I've also reviewed literature concerning the culture and production of the celebrity identity, as well as the impact it has on fans. With so much literature available on Bob Dylan, I have reviewed some of the more relevant scholarly and popular literature about him.

The attempt to define the documentary film has served as a stimulus for discussion since the release of Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* in 1922. The most obvious definition is a "non-fiction" film, however this term doesn't completely describe the way that Flaherty produced his film. Erik Barnouw points out that Flaherty recorded several "takes" to ensure a high quality recording. Flaherty had a special igloo built to allow the proper lighting and camera equipment. He filmed the Inuits on a dangerous whale hunt, forcing them to use an antiquated technique. When things appeared to be getting too dangerous for the Inuits, Flaherty offered no help (Barnouw 36-38). In his criticism of *Nanook of the North*, William Rothman writes, "Reality plays an essential role in all films, but in no film does reality simply play the role of being documented."

Reality is transformed or transfigured when the world reveals itself on film” (38). Certainly the staged aspect of *Nanook of the North* is not simply reality being documented, but reality being manipulated or “transformed,” as Rothman puts it. The transformation or manipulation of reality draws a blurry line between fiction and nonfiction. To simply label Ross McElwee’s *Sherman’s March* (1985) as non-fiction does not do justice to the influential role the filmmaker takes in creating the action. Much of what takes place in front of the camera would not have taken place had it not been for the prodding and instigating from behind the camera. To simply label it as fiction ignores the fact that there were real people, behaving as themselves in front of a camera. Similarly, to simply label Christopher Guest films like *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) and *A Mighty Wind* (2003) as fiction ignores the fact that these films were unscripted, consisting largely of improvised dialogue. Conversely, to label them as non-fiction ignores the fact that the actors were playing characters, not themselves.

Bill Nichols, an authoritative voice on documentary film theory, further explores (and possibly confuses) the issue. He does not make the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, fiction and documentary, but between “documentaries of wish-fulfillment” and “documentaries of social representation” (1). Documentaries of wish-fulfillment is the term Nichols uses to describe fiction films. They capture our dreams, nightmares, and imaginations. Documentaries of social representation, on the other hand, attempt to document the way people encounter the real world. They often have a “truth claim” about the world in which we live. Each type of film is a documentary because it provides “evidence of the culture that produced it and reproduces the likenesses of the people who

perform within it” (1). Nichols also distinguishes between reproduction (what a documentary is not) and representation (what a documentary is). He explains:

We judge a reproduction by its fidelity to the original— its capacity to look like, act like, and serve the same purposes as the original. We judge a representation more by the nature of the pleasure it offers, the value of the insights or knowledge it provides, and the quality of the orientation of disposition, tone or perspective it instills. (20-21)

A documentary film is not merely catching and reproducing reality, it is representing a particular view of reality.

Carl Plantinga argues that a documentary film is marked as a film that contains “asserted veridical representation” (105). He is claiming that the representations are asserted to be truthful and “reliable guide[s]” to the pro-filmic scene (111). His definition of a documentary film is a film that is made in such a way that the audience accepts the ideas, images, and shots as approximations of what the actual pro-filmic event looked like. Documentary films, according to Plantinga, are films that appear truthful (114-115). It is noteworthy that Plantinga did not say that documentaries *are* truthful, but simply that they *appear* truthful.

Another key point from Plantinga, a point in which Nichols and most documentary theorists would agree, is that documentaries are *asserted*. An assertion necessarily implies an “asserter”— someone making a claim, positioning evidence, or attempting to change those around him or her. Documentary filmmakers have a particular point of view, an agenda, and vested interests in the subject of their films. These films should be viewed as constructions or arguments put together by the filmmaker.

Nichols describes six modes of documentary films: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative (99).² *Dont Look Back* is a quintessential observational documentary. “Direct cinema” or “cinema verite”— titles given to the observational movement in documentary filmmaking— is the movement that resulted from the technological advances that allowed both the synchronous recording of sound and portability. This new technology led to the observational style in which filmmakers played little or no role in initiating the action, but simply allowed the action to take place in front of the camera. When direct cinema is mentioned, *Dont Look Back* is one of the first films that comes to mind. *No Direction Home* uses extensive footage from *Dont Look Back* and other observational archival films, yet it could more easily be categorized as expository, with its use of interviews as the voiceover narration. Other rock ‘n’ roll documentary films fall into different categories. *Gimme Shelter* (1971), the Maysles brothers’ depiction of the tragic Rolling Stones’ concert at the Altamont Speedway, is extremely reflexive. In fact, we not only see the editor editing the film, we see the Rolling Stones react to the film. Portions of *Gimme Shelter* and *The Last Waltz* (1978), Scorsese’s film of The Band’s final concert, could be categorized as performative. The viewers are encouraged to place themselves in the position of the camera and experience the concert as a live audience member. Each of these modes creates a unique experience as the fan connects to the artist.

Jeanne Hall and George M. Plasketes are two critics who directly address the rock ‘n’ roll documentary film. Hall’s insightful critical analysis of *Dont Look Back* argues that Pennebaker might claim that he had no agenda while making his film, but *Dont Look Back* truly incriminated the mainstream media of distorting the truth. By continuously

showing scenes where Dylan either attacks the press or demonstrates their inability to label him, Pennebaker makes an argument against the mainstream media and their style of reporting and towards the cinema verite/observational style of filmmaking. According to Hall, Pennebaker allows Dylan to present his “systematic critique of the value of conventional reporting methods” (235).

Plasketes examined the significance of rock ‘n’ roll documentaries in the 1960s and 1970s. Plasketes argues that four major “rockumentaries” represent the birth (*Monterey Pop*, 1968), utopian perfection (*Woodstock*), demise (*Gimme Shelter*), and death (*The Last Waltz*) of the rock ‘n’ roll spirit. Plasketes describes the Altamont tragedy: “Altamont’s filmed portrayal in *Gimme Shelter* resembles a tribal ritual where youth have gathered to worship and sacrifice” (64-65). He writes of *The Last Waltz*, “The physical and emotional costliness of music and ‘the road’ are magnified by Scorsese as foreshadowing the end of rock” (67). Rock ‘n’ roll films have been an important part of the history and identity of the rock culture, especially the rock culture of the 1960s.

According to Plantinga’s asserted veridical representation, audiences come to rock ‘n’ roll documentary films to glimpse some “truth” of the celebrity in which they are interested. *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* are presented as accurate depictions of how Bob Dylan really was. However, if the viewers were to keep in mind both the asserted and representation portions of Plantinga’s definition, they would be aware of both the filmmakers’ vested interest in these films and the constructed nature of the celebrity persona that is presented.

Joshua Gamson, P. David Marshall, and Robert Schickel have interpreted and explained the construction of celebrity. Gamson discusses the history of the celebrity.

Historically, famous people were famous for accomplishing something. There was a direct one-to-one ratio between accolades and accomplishments. If you were a “great man,” you would become famous. If you were famous, it was because you were a “great man.” Gamson argues that with the onset of the “image”— through film and television— there became a separation of the self— a public versus a private self. This opened the door to skepticism about the one-to-one ratio between greatness and fame and the relationship between the “persona” that is presented and the “real” (46).

Marshall notes how this separation of renown from accomplishment leads to a system that emphasizes “exchange value” over “use value” (11). This means that each celebrity is not important for what he or she may represent, but purely for surface value. This type of thinking points out the consumption aspect of the celebrity culture. Celebrities are products that can be marketed and sold to many different people for many different reasons. Yet the celebrity is ultimately indebted to the crowd. Certainly, if it were not for an audience, there would be no celebrity. But Marshall explains how the audience plays a role in the formation of the celebrity:

The celebrity is a negotiated “terrain” of significance. To a great degree, the celebrity is a production of the dominant culture. It is produced by a commodity system of cultural production and is produced with the intentions of leading and/or representing. Nevertheless, the celebrity’s meaning is constructed by the audience. An exact “ideological fit” between production of the cultural icon and consumption is rare. Audience members actively work on the presentation of the celebrity in order to make it fit into their everyday experiences. (47)

Marshall explains how “the celebrity is an embodiment of his or her industrial/institutional setting as well as the expression of an audience/collective that attaches meaning to the public figure” (185). The influence of *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* would be miniscule if it wasn’t for the audience attaching meanings to the two films and to the documentary form in general. Even further, the audience must first attach meaning to Bob Dylan’s music and his role in their understanding of the world. The filmmakers, the “actors,” the promoters, and the marketers can only do so much. It is up to the audience to attach significance to any work of art or to any celebrity.

Schickel points out that our communication with celebrities is all one-way communication. The celebrities are the “senders” (360). In fact, they don’t even know that you or I exist, only a collective we from surveys, ratings, and basic demographics. This realization can be hurtful for fans. For most, the pain only cuts as deep as not getting an autographed baseball card returned after sending it to a favorite player. For some, the pain cuts deep enough to prompt stalking, harassing, and even murder. It is this one-way communication which allows for the multiple interpretations of a song, book, or in this case, film. For example, Scorsese allows Dylan to speak to his audience. Each audience member must attach meaning to this film without being able to speak back to Dylan.

Gamson refers to the “active production of semifictional information” (76) which is at the core of the celebrity story. This involves the reframing of each event to fit nicely into the overall picture being told. A celebrity’s identity is tightly intertwined with the narrative explaining his or her rise. Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre describes identity as “a concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end” (191).

MacIntyre discusses the necessity to attribute intentions to actions in order to find meaning in them. These intentions are entirely wrapped up in the historical context or narrative that is taking place. His example of a person writing can be described in several ways: writing a sentence, finishing a book, pursuing tenure, and creating more scholarship. Each of these descriptions is accurate, yet each one explains the action from the context of a different narrative, ranging from a narrative in a relatively short historical context to one that encompasses the entire history of philosophical thought (193). He writes, “There is no such thing as ‘behavior’, to be identified prior to and independently of intentions, beliefs and settings” (194). Action cannot be meaningful unless it can be explained within the context of some form of narrative. This goes for speech acts as well. MacIntyre writes, “In each case, the act of utterance becomes intelligible by finding its place in a narrative” (196).

According to MacIntyre, this view of life as narrative is a natural result of the way we think of all actions. He writes:

It is now becoming clear that we render the action of others intelligible in this way because action itself has a basically historical character. It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told. (197)

These actions are not isolated from the rest of the world. MacIntyre writes, “An action is a moment in a possible or actual history or in a number of such histories” (199). It is

necessarily involved in a history, usually much larger than the simple context in which it takes place.

Psychoanalyst Alan Parry puts forth a contrasting view of narrative identity. He claims that people can change the way they feel about themselves by more or less changing their life story. He writes, “It needs to be realized that a story is not a life, only a selection of events about a life as influenced by that person’s beliefs about herself and others. Thus, it becomes possible to use the story to re-invent, revise or otherwise re-write the story of the person’s past” (43). Parry presents this as an effective way for a psychiatrist to help a patient cope with a difficult past and look forward to a positive future.

MacIntyre and Parry approach the issue from very different perspectives. As a philosopher, MacIntyre is discussing “the good life” from an ethical perspective. The good life would be guided by a unity of life or life story. As a psychoanalyst, Parry is trying to help people to lead a better life, a life that is more fulfilling and satisfying. By reframing the past, Parry hopes his patients will enjoy better presents and futures.

Paul Ricoeur presents his own version of a narrative identity that argues with MacIntyre. He sees narration as taking the place between description of the past (Parry) and prescription of the future (MacIntyre) (Ricoeur 114). He sets up his narrative theory of identity by pointing out “the competition between a demand for concordance and the admission of discordances” (141). Concordances are the plans that are supposed to take place, and discordances are the inevitable reversals that arrive. Ricoeur uses the term “configuration” to describe the “art of composition which mediates between concordance and discordance” (141).

Ricoeur presents his theory of narrative identity: “Understood in narrative terms, identity can be called, by linguistic convention, the identity of the *character*” (141). This character is what endures through time to create an enduring personal identity. Our identity is simply our character, which can be thought of in the same way in which George Costanza is a character on *Seinfeld*.

Ricoeur notices a dialectic between the concordances and the discordances. He writes:

The dialectic consists in the fact that, following the line of concordance, the character draws his or her singularity from the unity of a life considered a temporal totality which is itself singular and distinguished from all others. Following the line of discordance, this temporal totality is threatened by the disruptive effect of the unforeseeable events that punctuate it (encounters, accidents, etc.). (147)

This is how chance turns into fate. This is how accidents become part of the story, or at least part of the ultimate challenge that the agent has overcome.

MacIntyre, Parry, and Ricoeur put forth different theories of narrative identity. To differentiate between their ideas and relate their ideas to the construction of celebrities, I will refer to the VH1 program *Behind the Music* in which the biographies of popular musicians are told in hour-long programs. Each story seems to have the same formula: a difficult childhood, quick success, decline in fortune, and ultimate triumph. Usually along the way there are drug and alcohol addictions, failed marriages and personal relationships, and a death of a bandmate or loved one. MacIntyre might argue that the musicians had a goal for themselves (to become Rock Stars) and lived out a narrative that

would help lead to that. Parry might argue that after the fact, these musicians selected and defined the events in their lives as elements of their current story. Ricoeur might argue that it is a mixture of both— a balance between history and future, prescription and prediction— this mixture is what makes up their Rock Star “character.” Regardless of how these theorists would explain the story, all would agree on the influence of personal narratives on personal identities. The angry, spiteful Dylan portrayed by Pennebaker contrasts sharply with the calmer, wiser Dylan portrayed by Scorsese. It is up to the audience and the critic to reconcile these two narrative identities.

Ellis and McLane further support the importance of narrative to identity by writing, “Cv/direct (cinema verite/direct cinema) is closer to narrative forms, in any case, than to the descriptive expository, argumentative, or poetic forms that documentary earlier concentrated on and developed in unique ways” (221). The format that Pennebaker chose to construct his film leads to the creation of a narrative character. Narrative identity is a powerful way to construct a celebrity persona, and cinema verite facilitates that construction.

Richard E. Hishmeh further discusses the created celebrity persona. He claims that Dylan and Allen Ginsberg developed a friendship to market each other as geniuses. Dylan’s alliance with Ginsberg, hinted at in *Dont Look Back*, helped to put him in the position of rock poet, a title he had yet to earn. Hishmeh claims that in the film Dylan announces his “new allegiances and suggest[s] that Dylan’s identity [...] is under construction” (398). He writes of Dylan’s “Subterranean Homesick Blues” music video where Dylan shows cue cards in coordination with the lyrics of the song: “No longer wilding the folk artist’s acoustic guitar (as he does throughout the rest of the film), he is

introduced here in the company of poets, playfully manipulating words as would a poet” (398). Hishmeh notes that a similar scene occurs in Scorsese’s film as well, when Dylan playfully rearranges the words on a sign outside a building (405). Hishmeh’s conclusion is that Dylan and Ginsberg constructed a friendship in a similar manner as corporations merge brand names— another example of the constructed nature of personal identity.

Bob Dylan has been the subject of scholarship within the communication field. His poetic lyrics, his mysterious personality, and his traditional, yet innovative style have provided plenty of material for rhetorical scholars, popular music historians, and cultural studies practitioners in the form of books, journal articles, and documentary films. I have selected to review three such articles from communication journals to show how Dylan has been considered from a communicative stance— one, a rhetorical analysis of Dylan’s music, and the others, performance studies approaches to his music.

Alberto Gonzalez and John J. Makay describe the rhetorical techniques Dylan uses during his Gospel music phase. *Slow Train Coming* and *Saved*, released in 1979 and 1980 respectively, were Gospel albums in which Dylan sang about his recent conversion to Christianity. Gonzalez and Makay explain that Dylan borrowed from a combination of Christian images (extrinsic ascription) to appeal to Christian fans and his own musical and lyrical images (intrinsic ascription) to appeal to his current fan base. Through rhetorical ascription, Dylan was able to introduce a new form of material to his old, loyal fans.

Betsy Bowden examines two different performances and interpretations of Dylan’s “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”— one performed by Dylan in 1963 and one performed by Bryan Ferry in 1973. She comes to the conclusion that “ambiguity on the

page can allow for flexibility in performance” (35). Bowden points out that the differences in instrumentation, arrangement, timing, and vocal inflection lean towards a different interpretation of the song. Ferry’s mocking version of the song leads to a triumphant conclusion, quite different from the drowning singer presented in Dylan’s rendition. Bowden clearly accounts for the interpretation of a text to be tied closely to the performance and presentation of that text.

Thomas O. Beebee also considers the text of Bob Dylan’s “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall.” Because the song closely resembles the English ballad “Lord Randall” and because of its apocalyptic imagery, Beebee refers to this song as an “apocalyptic ballad” (18). Breaking from the tradition of the folk movement where songs are about specific social topics, Dylan sings about his place in the community of singers. Breaking from the tradition of the ballad, “Hard Rain” does not deal with a narrative story, but rather with a series of images that point both to the direction of the political situation around him and to his place as a singer within that situation. Beebee sees this song as a combination of traditional ballad, with the question and answer form to each verse, and the liturgical litany, where each line has a first part that is answered by the second part (for example, “Where the executioner’s face / is always well hidden”) (27). The song is also a combination of three ideas: the apocalypse, politics, and Dylan’s place as a singer (32).

Dylan’s influence ranges much wider than these three articles show. In fact, none of them go into much detail about what many would consider Dylan’s most impressive, or at least important, body of work—the rock ‘n’ roll albums of the mid-sixties, specifically *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde*. They also don’t go into any detail about the Bob Dylan fan. These writers explain a

possible interpretation of Dylan's music, but don't discuss why that is important for the fan. There is plenty of room to further study the importance of Bob Dylan to his fans from a communicative perspective.

Howard Sounes, author of *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan*, offers an extensive biography of Dylan. He begins with the birth of Zigman Zimmerman, Bob's grandfather, in 1875 and ends with Dylan's tour in March of 2000. Clinton Heylin authored *Bob Dylan: A Life in Stolen Moments* in which he chronicles as closely as possible every move Dylan made during his career. The day-by-day tracking of Dylan, while not necessarily an enjoyable way to read Dylan's story, is a useful tool for following his movements through both documentary films. David Hajdu's *Positively 4th Street* chronicles the lives of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Mimi Baez Fariña, and Richard Fariña. The lives of these four talented individuals were closely intertwined at the peak of their artistic achievements. The book ends with Richard Fariña's tragic death on a motorcycle, and Dylan's narrow escape on one. Each biography discusses the making of *Dont Look Back* and Dylan's humble beginnings and rise to fame just as Scorsese does in *No Direction Home*.

Greil Marcus, one of the best-known rock critics, has written two books dedicated to Dylan. *The Old, Weird America* examines the importance of the "basement tapes" made by Bob Dylan and The Band in the basement of The Band's house in Woodstock, New York. Marcus explains how the folk community of the early 1960s envisioned "another country" (*The Old* 21), and when Bob Dylan sang his folk songs, "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" (*The Old* 21). The folk revival emphasized the song over the singer, the common good over personal gains (*The Old* 28). The rock 'n' roll music on Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde* directly opposed the country envisioned by his folkie friends. Dylan's rock songs emphasized

city over country, and capital over labor [...] the white artist over the black Folk, selfishness over compassion, rapacity over need, the thrill of the moment over the trails of endurance, the hustler over the worker, the thief over the orphan. (*The Old* 30)

Marcus frames the resistance to Dylan's rock music—the resistance touched on by Pennebaker and elaborated on by Scorsese—not as disputes over instrumentation and rhythms, not as competing musical tastes, but as a battle of ideologies.

Marcus also wrote *Like a Rolling Stone*, a tribute to and examination of Dylan's monumental song of the same title. Marcus considers the song one of the most important rock songs ever written. As the subtitle of the book says, "Like a Rolling Stone" is an "explosion of vision and humor that forever changed pop music." He refers to Dylan's performances captured by Pennebaker during the spring of 1965 as ritualized, recognizing that the folk songs he played were not where his heart was (Marcus, *Like a Rolling* 55). His heart was in the rock 'n' roll songs found on *Bringing It All Back Home*, and the yet to be written "Like A Rolling Stone."

Bob Dylan's memoir *Chronicles: Volume One* offers insight into the construction of his character. Dylan introduces the idea which *No Direction Home* reiterates—that he was feeling uncomfortable with the labels and his own stardom:

I had a wife and children whom I loved more than anything else in the world. I was trying to provide for them, keep out of trouble, but the big bugs in the press kept promoting me as the mouthpiece, spokesman, or even conscience of a generation. That was funny. All I'd ever done was sing songs that were dead straight and expressed powerful new realities. I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of. (115)

This book was released approximately a year before Scorsese's film was released.

Dylan's memoirs and Scorsese's film present Dylan as a misunderstood victim who was forced into a role he was uncomfortable filling.

All these writers, including Dylan, offer their interpretations and perspectives on who Dylan is. They are trying to discuss Dylan biographically, musically, or from a scholarly perspective. While these are important ways of talking about Dylan, only Hall, with her article on *Dont Look Back*, addresses specifically how Dylan is presented on film. Rather than focusing on Pennebaker's agenda as Hall did, this study will focus on the fans co-construction of Dylan's identity. This literature of documentary film theory, celebrity culture, identity construction, and Bob Dylan history constitutes the background upon which I explore the ways that these documentary films function for the Bob Dylan fan.

Method

In order to understand how the fan and the documentary film interact, I must employ two approaches. First, I will conduct critical and cultural analyses of the

documentaries *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home*. I will analyze how each film constructs and presents different versions of Dylan; how each film contextualizes Dylan's place as a cultural icon, poet, or prophet; how each film constructs the changes that take place throughout Dylan's early career; and how fans deal with those changes.

The critical and cultural approach will allow me the freedom to explore the many avenues of meaning-making that the texts will allow. The cinema verite style of filmmaking started out as a way "to find 'the reality of life,' 'the truth in people' hidden under the superficial conventions of daily living" (Ellis & McLane 217). As one could expect, this attempt at an unobtrusive look at reality spurred on discussions concerning the camera's impact on the subjects, the role of the filmmaker, and the subjective art of editing. Rather than creating a clear understanding of the reality of the situation, cinema verite created an ambiguous representation of reality. Surely the interpretations of Bob Dylan in *Dont Look Back* will be as varied as the number of people who view the film. This is without even considering those viewers who have experienced *Dont Look Back* after first seeing *No Direction Home*, reading his memoirs *Chronicles: Volume One*, or reading a Greil Marcus book about Dylan. Past experiences play an enormous role on how current experiences are processed and interpreted. All this is to say that a critical and cultural analysis of *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* is the appropriate method to allow me to explore as many ways as possible that these films create Dylan's persona and the possible interpretations that might arise.

Second, if I am to truly understand how Dylan fans feel about and use these documentary films, I need to find out from them firsthand. To do this, I will analyze what bloggers write about Bob Dylan, *Dont Look Back*, and *No Direction Home*. Google.com

dedicates a section of their website to “groups.” These groups have blogs that discuss topics that pertain to the title of the group. For example, in early 2007, a blog dedicated to *No Direction Home* included thirty messages by twenty different bloggers. It began with a blogger offering a vague criticism of the film, searching for others who were less than satisfied with the film. One respondent disagreed, writing, “Hearing him talk about his Minnesota roots and the way that those songs on the radio embedded themselves was a great insight— how many artists do you get to see looking back on how it all began.” Another wrote, “I was delighted with the film. I thought it showed the struggle that Dylan has (even to this day) with ‘fans’ who want to own or change him.” This film has created a new way for these fans to interpret Dylan and who he is (or claims to be on film). These fans are coming to grips with Dylan’s roots, his struggle with being labeled, and his “true” identity.

Within the same time period, a discussion from Google Groups regarding *Dont Look Back* contained 44 messages from 29 bloggers. They discuss the “obnoxious” behavior of Dylan and his treatment of Donovan, the *Time* magazine reporter, and the science student. Many respondents were disgusted with the rudeness of Dylan, while others either defend his actions as being appropriate for the situation or dismissed the behavior as an immature young man acting up for the benefit of the camera. Either by defending and/or ignoring Dylan’s behavior or by taking offense to it, these fans have shown how important *Dont Look Back* can be to their understanding of who Bob Dylan is.

The website www.bobdylantalk.com is the self-proclaimed “Bob Dylan Discussion Authority.” This site boasts over 13,000 threads, 300,000 posts and nearly

1,000 members. Another website, www.dylanchords.com, is home to a large blog about Dylan. Members are able to discuss all things Dylan. Blogs like these are abundant online. Dylan has many fans, and those fans find outlets for their interest in Dylan online.

When I found passionate and articulate Dylan fans on the blogs, I conducted several interviews via email. The responses from these fans varied. Some provided short answers, while some provided several pages of response. Through these interviews, I was able to consider the ways that Bob Dylan fans truly perceive his image, his role in their lives, and the meaning of these films.

This study assumes a certain intensity of fanaticism towards Dylan. A lukewarm or casual fan would not make an interesting study, nor would they use the films as an experience or a medium for exploring and expanding their relationship with Dylan. The fans I am interested in understanding must be both passionate about Bob Dylan and articulate enough to accurately describe their relationship. For example, the “monumental changes” that take place during Dylan’s early career depicted by Scorsese and described by Greil Marcus in *The Old, Weird America* and *Like a Rolling Stone*— his shift from topical social protest songs to introspective songs, his shift from acoustic folk music to electric rock ‘n’ roll— are only monumental to those attuned enough to Bob Dylan to perceive these shifts. For a casual fan, or especially for someone who is not a fan, the changes between *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* (1963) to *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965) to *Blonde on Blonde* (1966) are either unimportant or imperceptible.

Thesis

Dont Look Back and *No Direction Home* create a fascinating view into the life of Bob Dylan. Told from completely different perspectives and time periods, they combine to depict a fascinating conversation between Dylan of the mid-1960s and Dylan of the mid-2000s. Viewed alone, the viewer is presented with an isolated, incomplete description of Bob Dylan. However, when viewed together, the viewer is forced to deal with issues of “truth,” “reality,” and “memory” as the history gets filled out on film.

In the second chapter of this thesis I will contextualize of the two films by looking at the impact of Bob Dylan both musically and culturally. The imprint of Dylan can be seen in many facets of American culture including rock ‘n’ roll music and political discourse, yet it is possible for a college student in 2006 to wonder who Bob Dylan is and whether or not he is still alive. From his debut album *Bob Dylan* in 1962 to his 2006 Grammy winning album *Modern Times* Dylan’s more than forty-five-year career of making music has been as eventful and important to popular music and popular culture as any other musician in history.

In the second chapter, I will also demonstrate the importance of the two filmmakers of these documentary films. D.A. Pennebaker and Martin Scorsese are important cultural figures and their participation in these projects is an important element of the interpretation of the films. Pennebaker was a leading player in the technological advances that led to the cinema verite movement. Martin Scorsese has made several critically acclaimed and commercially successful fiction films and has been praised for his work on other nonfiction films. It is important to understand the impact of these filmmakers.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I will also discuss the place of each film in the history and trends of documentary filmmaking. *Dont Look Back* is a landmark film in the American cinema verite movement. Since its release, both Dylan fans and documentary film enthusiasts have come to appreciate the depiction of Dylan and Pennebaker's unobtrusive style of filmmaking. *Dont Look Back* captures one isolated moment in Dylan's entire career. Offering no background information and no future plans, Pennebaker gives viewers a "here and now" look into Dylan's past. Since no one knew at that time how important a cultural figure Dylan would become, no one was really interested in his past or his future.

No Direction Home, shown on PBS in 2005, is a different sort of film. Comprised of interviews, photographs, and archival footage, *No Direction Home* presents a biographic retelling of Dylan's childhood, early career, and rise to legend status. Scorsese's film is mostly back-story, with the present only being depicted in the old faces of the interviewees contrasted with their young faces in the archival footage. This film was released on the heels of Dylan's 2004 memoir *Chronicles: Volume One*, and shortly after Dylan gave a *60 Minutes* interview. Dylan fans were thirsty for more Dylan material. The second chapter of my thesis will place Dylan, Pennebaker, Scorsese, and both films within a context that will show the importance of this discussion and allow for an arena for the discussion to take place.

The third chapter of my thesis will discuss the different ways each film constructs the character of Bob Dylan. *Dont Look Back* demonstrates an angry young man who may or may not be posturing for the benefit of the camera, his friends, or his own entertainment. Pennebaker's camera seems to capture Dylan at a few vulnerable moments

which include his interaction with fans, his live performances, and in the final scene as Dylan is caught “with his defenses down” (Hall 236) as he honestly comments on his experience on tour. *No Direction Home* presents a Dylan who is humbler than the one seen in *Dont Look Back*. He is portrayed as truly affected by the audience reaction to his electric music and honestly hurt by Pete Seeger’s attempt to cut his performance at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. In *No Direction Home*, Dylan appears to be the wiser, older legend telling stories about his wild, younger days. In each film, the viewer is presented with a different version of Dylan’s identity. I argue in the chapter that Dylan’s identity cannot be accurately reproduced on film, but must be rhetorically constructed by the filmmaker and attributed significance by the viewer.

Seen together, these films present a clear example of the distinction between Janna Jones’ “time past” and “time passing” (3). In exploring the relationship between an archival film and a contemporary documentary that integrates archival footage, Jones argued that archival documentaries, like *Dont Look Back*, display “time past,” a glimpse into the world as it once was. Contemporary documentaries that use archival footage, like *No Direction Home*, display “time passing,” making the audience aware of both the past, by showing the archival footage, and the present, by showing contemporary footage. The “reality” captured in Pennebaker’s film gets treated as a memory by Dylan and his friends in Scorsese’s film.

In this third chapter, I will analyze and interpret the interviews I have conducted with Bob Dylan fans. I will discuss how Bob Dylan fans use these documentary films to expand or explore their relationship with Dylan. I will try to understand the relationship between Dylan and his fans and the role these documentary films play in that

relationship. By doing so, I must come to grips with what makes these films important to Dylan fans, how these films have changed their relationship with Dylan and their interest in his music, and how the more recent film has changed their interpretation of the earlier film.

Bob Dylan is an interesting and important musician to study. His political awareness, his innovative style of rock 'n' roll, his influence on popular music, and his elusive personality make for fascinating material. The documentary film is also an interesting and important subject. From *Nanook of the North* to *The Inconvenient Truth*, the documentary film has played a significant role in our cultural and political awareness, and identity. The quest for truth, the subtleties of persuasion, and the artistic treatment of a particular point of view make the documentary film a rich and important area to study. Understanding that the importance of an artist like Bob Dylan or a documentary film is constructed socially by the audience, it is important to understand how fans use these documentary films. My thesis will analyze how *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* create a particular identity of Bob Dylan and how his fans use the documentaries to shape their understanding of Dylan.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALIZING THE SUBJECT, FILMMAKERS, AND FILMS

When viewers interpret a documentary film, they are simultaneously interpreting three separate, but overlapping elements. They are *viewing the subject matter*; whether that is a rock ‘n’ roll star or global warming. There is a subject or message being presented, and it is up to the viewers to accept or reject, modify or integrate this message. Viewers are also *interpreting the filmmaker*. This may or may not mean anything to the viewer, but when you have important filmmakers like Al Gore, Michael Moore, Martin Scorsese, or D.A. Pennebaker, the audience may become aware of who is sending this message— who is behind the film. Finally, the viewer is *taking in the film as an artistic whole*, an event experienced at a specific time, in a specific context. This study will benefit from an examination of the social, political, cultural, and musical context into which these films were released. In order for us to truly understand how *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* function for Dylan fans, we must first come to understand the importance of those three elements: the subject matter, Bob Dylan; the filmmakers, D.A. Pennebaker and Martin Scorsese; and the films, *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home*. In this chapter, I will show the importance of Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese, and I will discuss the context into which these two documentaries were released.

Bob Dylan has been called “the greatest American rock presence since Elvis Presley” (Riley 128). His impact on American music cannot be overestimated. D.A.

Pennebaker pioneered the cinema verite filmmaking style and engineered the equipment required for this style. From art house documentary filmmakers to *The Blair Witch Project* to reality television, the innovative work of Pennebaker has influenced many filmmakers. Martin Scorsese's style of fiction filmmaking has been much imitated throughout Hollywood, and his work on nonfiction films has achieved much praise. In order to completely understand how important these two documentary films are to Bob Dylan fans, we also need to understand the context into which these films were released and how they were (and are) received. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* was filmed in 1965, before Dylan had "gone electric" at the Newport Folk Festival, but was released two years later in 1967, after his motorcycle accident. Many important events took place between the filming and releasing of *Dont Look Back*. Scorsese's *No Direction Home* was released roughly a year after Dylan published his memoirs *Chronicles: Volume One* and roughly a year before the release of his first album in over five years, *Modern Times*. Understanding the contexts into which these films were released is crucial to understanding how the fan might use these documentary films.

Because of the nature of their work, Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese have been elevated as more than just artists. By doing what they do, they have been placed in the position of mentor, guide, and leader for those who wish to follow. Many devoted Dylan fans will claim that seeing him live, listening to a particular song, or watching a film of him changed their lives. It is important that we discuss why and how these men achieved this high position. Their work has put them in positions of power— as artists and as leaders. By examining their careers, we will appreciate both their artistic and cultural influences. We will come to understand how music was influenced by the work Dylan

did forty years ago, how documentary and fiction filmmaking owes a debt of gratitude to the ingenuity of D.A. Pennebaker, and how Martin Scorsese is considered one of the most influential filmmakers of a generation. The names Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese carry cultural importance. The focus remains on Dylan, as he is the subject of the films, but we must consider the impact the filmmakers bring to the interpretation of these films.

Bob Dylan

Born in northern Minnesota in 1941, Dylan had an uneventful middle class childhood. He played in a variety of rock 'n' roll bands in high school and found folk music while attending the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. It was in Dinkytown, Minneapolis's bohemian village where Dylan first experienced and later performed folk music. Dylan received an education, though most of it outside the classroom. He immersed himself in learning and performing different folk tunes, finally falling in love with Woody Guthrie's memoir *Bound for Glory*. In 1961, he set out to New York City to visit his idol who was gravely ill.

While in New York, his education continued. He established a relationship with Guthrie, though it is disputed how intimate that relationship was. (Guthrie was suffering from Huntington's chorea, and was probably unaware of who Dylan was. It is certain, though, that he appreciated Dylan's renditions of his songs.) Dylan worked his way up the ladder of folksingers in Greenwich Village, playing a wide variety of music in his distinctive style. He claimed to be born in Duluth, Minnesota, but grew up in a traveling carnival. He created elaborate, fantastical stories about his background. On November 20

and 21, 1961, Dylan began his career as a Columbia recording artists with John Hammond producing his first record, *Bob Dylan*.

Dylan's second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, earned him the titles like prophet and savior he so adamantly claims to hate. Songs like "Blowin' in the Wind," "Masters of War," "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," and "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright" positioned Dylan as a master songwriter who is able to tap into the emotions that so many young people were feeling at that time. Yet he did so in such a way that to many people these songs remain timeless, relevant decades after they were written. His third and fourth albums, *The Times They Are a-Changin'* and *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, reiterated his unofficial title as the voice of a generation.

In January of 1965 Dylan began recording the songs that would change popular music. *Bringing It All Back Home*, Dylan's first rock 'n' roll record, was half electric and half acoustic. With songs like "Subterranean Homesick Blues," "Maggie's Farm," "Mr. Tambourine Man," and "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," this album was appealing as a folk record and a rock record. With his follow-up, *Highway 61 Revisited*, released later that year, Dylan shunned the folksinger label and released an impressive rock 'n' roll album. The lead track, "Like a Rolling Stone," opened up a new world to Dylan and a new way to express himself. Bruce Springsteen described the opening snare hit to "Like a Rolling Stone": "[T]hat sounded like somebody'd kicked open the door to your mind" (qtd. in Marcus 94). *Highway 61 Revisited* was full of rock 'n' roll songs that set up an impassible divide between Dylan and the folk community.

In 1966 Dylan released *Blonde on Blonde*. This album is full of instant classic rock songs and will be remember by some as one of rock's greatest albums of all time.

Following the release of *Highway 61 Revisited* Dylan embarked on a world tour. These concerts contained two halves: the first, an acoustic set full of his old folk songs; the second, an electric set with a group of rock musician's called The Hawks who would later form The Band. Typically, the audience would sit in attentive awe during the acoustic first set and would boo during the electric second set. These concerts became tense as Dylan and the audience would exchange words, culminating in the "Judas" incident near the end of his 1966 world tour in which a disgruntled fan compared Dylan and his new rock image to the infamous Biblical traitor. After the tour on July 29, 1966, Dylan was in a motorcycle accident near Albert Grossman's home in Woodstock, New York. Following the accident, Dylan took a hiatus from touring to spend time with his family in New York.

Dylan followed up *Blonde on Blonde* with *John Wesley Harding* in 1967. This was the summer of love. The Beatles had put out their masterpiece *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and the flower children were roaming California. *John Wesley Harding* was a minimalist recording of folksy tunes. This album was the opposite of *Blonde on Blonde* and the antithesis of *Sergeant Pepper*. Next came *Nashville Skyline* in 1969, a country record featuring Johnny Cash, which was the first of a number of critically and commercially unsuccessful records. Finally, in 1974 Dylan released the emotionally loaded *Blood on the Tracks* which was filled with songs dealing with Dylan's crumbling marriage. His 1975 follow-up *Desire* reached number one on the pop charts containing the song "Hurricane" which pleaded for the acquittal of boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter.

Followed by some less successful albums, inspired by his conversion to Christianity, Dylan released *Slow Train Coming* in 1979. The evangelical lyrics put many of his fans off, yet this was one of his most successful records of the decade. He followed that record in 1980 with *Saved*, a much less successful recording. After a few more poorly received albums, it appeared that Dylan was a washed-up has-been. In 1992 and 1993, Dylan rediscovered the music that caught his interest as a young child in northern Minnesota. He recorded two albums, *Good As I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong*, full of traditional tunes. His next record, *Time Out of Mind*, won the Album of the Year Award at the Grammy's in 1997. In 2001, "*Love and Theft*", released on September 11, was well received by fans and critics alike, though understandably overlooked by the press. His most recent 2006 release *Modern Times* has received much praise from critics and debuted at number one on the pop charts.

Dylan never truly enjoyed the recording experience. He often rushed through the songs, trying to capture them quickly and efficiently, spending little time rehearsing with musicians. This naturally created a difficult, sometimes tense scenario for the studio musicians. Discussing the art of making albums, Dylan told Jonathan Lethem in *Rolling Stone*, "Maybe I was never part of that art form, because my records really weren't artistic at all. They were just documentation" (80). Maybe ... but these "documentations" had a huge impact on the way people see and think about the world they encounter ... and many would consider that more important than making an "artistic record."

From 1962 to 2006 Dylan has made music that pushes the boundaries of genres. His insightful records from the early Sixties and his innovative rock 'n' roll records of the mid-Sixties will always be remember as his "prime." Richard Corliss wrote, "But four

decades of post-[1966 motorcycle] crash Dylan can't come close to matching what he accomplished between the ages of 19 and 25" (Corliss "Bob Dylan at 65"). With a handful of great records (*Blood on the Tracks*, *Desire*, *Slow Train Coming*), mixed among a handful to mediocre recordings, Dylan's career and genius had come into question. With his last three albums receiving critical acclaim and commercial success, few music fans would question the importance of Bob Dylan to popular music in the 1960s and now.

An important event happened to Dylan early in his career. On November 4, 1963, *Newsweek* published an article announcing that Dylan was not the traveling, carnival-trained orphan he claimed to be. In fact, he was raised in middle class Minnesota and led a sheltered childhood. The article explains how Dylan's fans "seem jealous because they grew up in conventional homes and conventional schools. The ironic thing is that Bob Dylan, too, grew up in a conventional home, and went to conventional schools" (94). This exposé angered and humiliated Dylan. Many have rationalized Dylan's behavior to the *Time* reporter captured on *Dont Look Back* as having been a result of this article. This experience taught Dylan a lesson that he has taken with him to this day: be careful with your personal information. On November 22, 1965, Dylan married Sara Lownds, a friend of Albert Grossman's wife Sally. Dylan kept his marriage and family as far away from the press as possible. Even close friends did not know that Dylan had married. Jeff Rosen, one of Dylan's employees said in 1998, "Mr. Dylan has always taken extraordinary steps to protect his image and likeness from any unauthorized exploitation. This has included making his image extremely controlled and thereby creating more value to that image" (qtd. in Sounes 424).

Throughout Dylan's career, his cultural importance was rarely missed by critics and reviewers. While not all agreed with Dylan's messages or enjoyed his raspy, nasally voice, many recognized that his songs resonated with an entire generation of young people. In 1963 *Time* referred to "Blowin' in the Wind" as "an anthem for the whole lost crowd he speaks for" ("Let us now praise" 40), in 1968 recognized "Dylan's power as a trendmaker and prophet for the college-age crowd [...]" ("Basic Dylan" 50), and in 1969 called him "a primogenitor of the rock generation" ("A Folk Hero Speaks" 58). Of the thirty Dylan records reviewed by *Rolling Stone*, six have earned five star ratings, including 2006's *Modern Times*, and eleven have earned four stars, and this doesn't include any of the albums before *John Wesley Harding* in 1968.

Dylan is still receiving praise from the press. Jonathan Lethem wrote in the September 7, 2006 issue of *Rolling Stone*, referring to Dylan's three latest albums, "We're three albums into a Dylan renaissance that's sounding more and more like a period to put beside any in his work" (75). Greg Kot wrote of Dylan's 1997 release *Time Out of Mind*, "Dylan has made a coherent, sonically striking but equally subdued ensemble album that sorts through the mess of the more recent past" (54). Rob Sheffield calls Dylan's 2001 release "*Love and Theft*" "a stone-cold Dylan classic" (65).

Dylan has received ten Grammy Awards throughout his career including the prestigious Album of the Year in 1997 for *Time Out of Mind* which also received Best Male Rock Vocal Performance for "Cold Irons Bound." Dylan's 2006 release *Modern Times* earned Grammy Awards for Best Contemporary Folk/Americana Album and Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance for "Someday Baby" in 2007. He won an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award for "Things Have Changed," a song that appeared on the

Wonder Boys soundtrack. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 1991 Grammys, performing a poignant rendition of his antiwar anthem “Masters of War” during the height of the first conflict with Iraq (Sounes 394).

He has been honored with the Polar Music Prize, the Kennedy Center Honors, and has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Songwriters Hall of Fame. William McKeen, a Dylan biographer, described him as “the library of congress of American music,” “the most American” of rock musicians because he carries “a breadth of knowledge of American music: country, blues, old rock ‘n’ roll, pop music” (McKeen). This is what makes Dylan such an important, interesting, and continuously relevant artist. Richard Corliss acknowledged that Dylan changed “nearly every aspect of pop music” from “what a popular song could express” to “what a popular singer could look like” to “who could write the songs” (Corliss “Bob Dylan at 65”). The imprint of Dylan can be seen through all modern American rock ‘n’ roll music.

Modern Times, Dylan’s 2006 release became his first number one album since 1976’s *Desire*. He has become the oldest artist to reach the top of the charts, at age 65 (wikipedia.com). Dylan’s career is full of incredible moments and forgettable flops, yet it is impossible to doubt the importance of the artist who was called the “Rock Poet” or the “Crown Prince of Rock ‘n’ Roll.” Bob Dylan has stayed relevant and important and is still making some of the best and best-received music in the industry.

In 1965, Dylan and manager Albert Grossman approached young cinema verite filmmaker, D.A. Pennebaker to create a film about Dylan on his 1965 tour of England. Pennebaker agreed, simply because “it interested me just to watch Dylan,” he claims during his interview in *No Direction Home*. Pennebaker got hooked on making this

movie and packed his newly-designed, cutting edge camera to record Dylan's hijinks. This film would change the way people viewed Dylan, and would become a landmark film for Dylan's and Pennebaker's careers, as well as for the cinema verite style.

D.A. Pennebaker

Donn Alan (D.A.) Pennebaker was one of the leading figures of the cinema verite filmmaking movement. This movement was fueled by the technological advances that allowed a camera to be portable, silent, and equipped with sound recording technology. Pennebaker's "engineering background" placed him in the center of the experiments with Richard Leacock, who was part of Drew Associates, a cinema verite filmmaking group including Robert Drew, Leacock, Pennebaker, Albert and David Maysles, and others (Barnouw 240). As often is the case, the technical improvements spurred a new style of artwork.³ The cinema verite filmmakers were not interested in making films with voice-over narration or a clear message. They were interested in making films that show the world as it happens, with no altering or influencing by the filmmaker. As noted in chapter one, this style lead to a more ambiguous, subjective view of reality, rather than leading to a clear, objective understanding of the world. The style of cinema verite, translated "truth on film," calls into question the very notion of objective truth.

While working with Drew Associates, Pennebaker helped make important cinema verite films such as *Primary* (1960) about John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential primary campaign in Wisconsin and *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* (1961), a film documenting the Cuban Missile Crisis. After *Dont Look Back* Pennebaker made *Monterey Pop* (1968), a film about the Monterey Pop Festival which included

performances by Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. In 1977 he formed a professional and personal relationship with Chris Hegedus who later became his wife. They have made films together including *The War Room* (1993), a film about President Clinton's 1992 Presidential campaign and *Down from the Mountain* (2000), a film about bluegrass music.

Throughout his career, Pennebaker has shown an interest in capturing musicians doing what they do best. In addition to *Dont Look Back* and *Monterey Pop*, he made *Keep on Rockin'* (1972) about Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, and Jerry Lee Lewis, *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1983), a film documenting David Bowie's final concert as the persona Ziggy Stardust. He made *Dance Black America* (1983), a film about a four-day celebration of African-American dance. He made films about numerous other musicians including singers Suzanne Vega and Victoria Williams, the rock band Depeche Mode, and Jimi Hendrix. Pennebaker's credibility as a documentary filmmaker and as a rock 'n' roll documentarian has been well established, with the crowning film being *Dont Look Back*.

Pennebaker's style of filmmaking changed the way nonfiction films were made. His films are completely unscripted. There is no storyline, plot, narrative, or plan. Pennebaker needed to be able to work on the fly, filming scenes that only happened once. If an important scene was missed, there was no recovering. If the tape ran out (as happened during Dylan's striking performance of "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carol" during *Dont Look Back*), the conclusion of the scene cannot be recaptured. Pennebaker compares his process of making a film to "a research program in something you didn't think you needed to know about— you end up getting really into it" (qtd. in Stubbs 46).

Discussing how the newest technology changes the way films are made, he says, “I don’t think films are made with the equipment anyway. They’re made in your head” (qtd. in Stubbs 51). His films ultimately come together in the editing room. That is where “you see better what you’ve made. When you’re shooting you’re not sure what you’re making” (qtd. in Stubbs 51).

As noted before, another important legacy from Pennebaker is the technological advances that he helped develop. The key to being able to synchronize the visual image and the sound was that they both needed to run at predictable speeds. If one tape ran faster, the image and the sound would not match up. Luckily for Pennebaker and his colleagues, they were working for Time-Life, which had plans for style of programming now represented by “The History Channel.” Time-Life spent a lot of money for the development of this technology (Stubbs 59). Another important step in this process was to make these cameras as quiet as possible in order for the people in the film not to be drowned out by the camera noise on the audio tape (Stubbs 60). In order for this to be truly effective the way Pennebaker envisioned it, the camera needed to be portable, easily moved according to the whims of the subjects being filmed. After many less successful attempts to sync image and sound, Pennebaker saw an advertisement for an Accutron watch which contained a tiny tuning fork that produced “360 cycles, which you could use as a signal [a pulse to drive the sync between camera and sound recorder]” (Stubbs 62). Pennebaker also spent a considerable amount of time developing a battery that would power the entire system. Again, it needed to be light enough to be carried anywhere the filmmaker needed to go. With the camera finally perfected, Pennebaker was able to make films like *Primary*, *Crisis*, and *Dont Look Back*, films that attempted to provide an

unobtrusive, fly-on-the-wall perspective into the everyday lives of important American figures. The cinema verite style, marked by shaky camera handling and out of focus shots, is often mimicked by nonfiction and fiction filmmakers, alike, creating a sense of authenticity. The shaky camera, the less than perfect sound, the ability to move quickly to follow the footage implies that this is not a slick, Hollywood production, but an authentic, uncensored view of the action taking place. This type of filmmaking has become even easier to produce with the advent of digital video, allowing both audio and video to be recorded by a single operator.

Pennebaker has been honored with many awards individually and with Hegedus. They were nominated for a Sundance Film Festival Documentary Award for *Jimi Plays Monterey* in 1987. *The War Room* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 1994. Pennebaker was awarded the Double Take Documentary Film Festival Career Award in 2000. Both received the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival Career Award in 2000 and the Woodstock Film Festival Career Award in 2001. They were awarded the CINE Trailblazer award in 2004 as well as being nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Directing for a Variety, Music or Comedy Program for "Elaine Stritch at Liberty" in 2004. Pennebaker was awarded the International Documentary Association Career Award in 2005.

A *Time* review of *The War Room* by Richard Schickel recognized that this film couldn't possibly document the entire Clinton campaign. But Schickel observed that, it is amusing (or appalling) to see a roomful of grownups arguing over whether hand-lettered or printed signs will have the best TV impact at the convention. Or to see ties being tested for their sincerity before a debate.

But the film works most instructively, most memorably, as a kind of nature documentary stalking one brightly colored political animal as he patrols his territory. (98)

D.A. Pennebaker has proven to be an incredibly important figure in documentary filmmaking. Not only has he helped create an entire style and genre of filmmaking, he also helped make the very technological advances necessary for that type of genre. His hard work both on and behind the camera has changed the way we think of documentary films and what we expect from them.

Pennebaker's work on *Dont Look Back* created the new genre of "rodocumentaries." A decade later, Martin Scorsese would direct what is still considered by many to be the finest of rock 'n' roll documentary film, *The Last Waltz*, documenting the Band's farewell concert. Scorsese also borrowed extensively from Pennebaker when he directed *No Direction Home*, using excerpts and outtakes from *Dont Look Back* as well as the never released (though much distributed via bootlegging) *Eat the Document*.

Martin Scorsese

Martin Scorsese's interest in film was a result of his childhood battle with asthma. To keep him occupied, Scorsese's parents took him to many movies (Scorsese 4). While his interest in movies continued to grow, he envisioned his future as a Catholic priest. When that dream started to drift away, Scorsese found himself attending film courses as a New York University undergraduate studying under Haig Monoogian in the early 1960s (Freidman 12). During his time at NYU, Scorsese wrote and directed the short film *What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?* Combining the influences of the

Westerns he enjoyed as a youth, with the great American classics such as *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *East of Eden* (1955), with the foreign films he saw on TV and later studied at NYU such as *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960), *Jules and Jim* (1961), and *The Tales of Hoffman* (1951), Scorsese created an “urban cowboy” style of film where instead of shooting up the Wild West, his characters were shooting up New York City (Freidman 17).

Throughout his career, Scorsese has worked on several films of critical and box office success. His filmography includes most notably *Who’s That Knocking at My Door?* (1969), *Mean Streets* (1973), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980), *The Color of Money* (1986), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), *Goodfellas* (1990), *Casino* (1995), *Gangs of New York* (2002), and *The Aviator* (2004), a list that could serve as a syllabus for any late 20th Century film course. He also worked on nonfiction films. He served as assistant director and editor of *Woodstock* and director of *The Last Waltz*.

Woodstock, “arguably the greatest concert film ever made,” according to Lawrence S. Friedman, documented the three day festival of peace, love, and music in late 1969 (41). The Woodstock Festival took place on Max Yasgur’s farm outside of Bethel, New York, and featured some of the biggest names in popular music— Joan Baez, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Sly and the Family Stone, Crosby, Stills, and Nash, and Joe Cocker, just to list a few. Most notably not on the list was the “voice” of that generation, Bob Dylan. Scorsese may not have been granted enough credit for his work on the film. As senior editor, Scorsese was charged with making a coherent, enjoyable film out of the hours upon hours of footage. James Monaco writes, “The real creative job lay in reducing the amorphous mass of raw material to a running time of three hours and

giving it shape and pace” (qtd. in Friedman 42). Friedman gushes about “the editing magic of Scorsese and [co-editor Thelma] Schoonmaker” (43).

The Last Waltz documents The Band’s final concert at San Francisco’s Winterland Auditorium on Thanksgiving Day, 1976. What started out as a project to simply document the concert for archival purposes turned into a huge production filmed on “35mm, with full sync sound and seven cameras” (Scorsese 73). A blend of live concert footage, sound stage performances, and backstage interviews, *The Last Waltz* “captures the uncommon richness of The Band’s mix of American musical styles ranging from jazz and soul to folk and country” (Friedman 109). On stage, the “music is the message” but during the interviews, lead guitarist and band leader Robbie Robertson “seems bent on mythologizing the decision not to play along with the playing itself” (Friedman 110). Frank Rich claimed in a *Time* review that *The Last Waltz* could be the “best [rock-concert] film ever made” and praises Scorsese and his crew for their use of “film to enhance the music rather than smother it” (70). A beautiful film about the end of one of America’s greatest bands (some might say, the last great band), *The Last Waltz* invokes both celebration and mourning, life and death.

Scorsese has achieved much critical acclaim during his career making films, especially for his fiction films. He has been nominated for nine Academy Awards for his work, and finally was rewarded in 2007 with Oscars for Best Motion Picture and Best Directing. *Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* won Best Film at the 1975 British Academy Awards. *Taxi Driver* won the New Generation Award at the 1976 L.A. Film Critics Association and Best Film at the 1976 British Academy Awards. *After Hours* won Best Director awards at the 1985 Independent Spirit Awards and at the 1986 Cannes Film

Festival. *GoodFellas* won Best Director at the 1989 L.A. Film Critics Association, the 1990 Venice International Film Festival, and the 1990 New York Film Critics Circle. *GoodFellas* also won Best Film and Best Director at the 1990 British Academy Awards. *The Age of Innocence* won Best Director from the National Board of Review. *Gangs of New York* won Best Director at the 2002 Golden Globe Awards. *The Aviator* won Best Director at the 2004 Broadcast Film Critics Association. Scorsese has also been honored with several lifetime achievement awards including awards from the American Film Institute in 1997, the London Critics Circle Film Awards in 1998, the Las Vegas Film Critics Society Awards in 1998, the Directors Guild of America in 2003.

Scorsese's influence on American cinema cannot be overstressed. His edgy films have influenced every filmmaker after him. His career is well-decorated with box office success and critical recognition. His celebrity, like Dylan's, ensures a certain amount of commercial success. These three figures in American popular culture—Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese—have provided some of the most striking images and significant advances in their respective careers. These three men are truly cultural icons. *No Direction Home* combines three major forces in American culture in one film and provides viewers with a document that truly demonstrates the achievements of all three men. Before focusing on Scorsese's film, I must discuss the frontrunner to the rock 'n' roll documentary film, Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back*.

Dont Look Back

The timeline of the events in Dylan's life leading up to the release of *Dont Look Back* is important to our discussion of the context into which this film was released. A

shift started to occur in Dylan's music in mid-1964. *Another Side of Bob Dylan* was released on August of that year containing some songs in his earlier tradition— "Spanish Harlem Incident" and "Chimes of Freedom"— but also containing some highly personal songs relating to his romantic relationship with Suze Rotolo— "Ballad in Plain D" and "It Ain't Me, Babe." "Ballad in Plain D" chronicles the break-up of Dylan and Rotolo, climaxing in a shouting match between Dylan, Rotolo, and her sister. The song is biting and harsh ("For her parasite sister, I had no respect"). Dylan later implied that he regretted ever writing and recording that song (Sounes 154). While *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (an album for which Dylan pleaded a different name) was not Dylan's best collection of songs, it represented a moving away from the "topical," "protest" songs of his earlier albums, more toward the personal, inward looking albums to come.

In early 1965 Dylan recorded *Bringing It All Back Home* and released the album in March of that year with the single "Subterranean Homesick Blues" / "She Belongs to Me" released two weeks earlier. After just a handful of concerts in the United States to promote the album, Dylan headed out for his tour of England to be documented by up-and-coming filmmaker, D.A. Pennebaker. This new album represented an even greater shift in Dylan's music. The first half of the album was rock 'n' roll, with the blazingly fast "Subterranean Homesick Blues" kicking it off. The second half of the record was full of acoustic performances which included "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "It's All Over Now Baby Blue," which some took to be his farewell to the folk community.

Dylan was now a rock star, receiving a rock star's reception as he came and went to shows, but he was playing a folksinger's concert. His shows were filled with "The Times They Are a-Changin'," "With God on Our Side," and "The Lonesome Death of

Hattie Carroll,” while, according to McKeen, his mind and heart seemed to be on rockers like “Subterranean Homesick Blues” and “Maggie’s Farm.”

Dylan returned from England on June 2, 1965, and promptly recorded “Like a Rolling Stone” on June 15, which was released as a single on July 20. On July 25, Dylan played his rebellious performance at the Newport Folk Festival to a lukewarm reception. On August 14, “Like a Rolling Stone” hit number two on the pop charts and on August 20, *Highway 61 Revisited*, Dylan’s first full-fledged rock album, hit the record stores. After extensive touring across the U.S. in which Dylan played each show with one half acoustic and one half accompanied by musicians who would become The Band, Dylan headed out on a world tour in April 1966, with stops in Australia, Denmark, Ireland, France, and England. This tour of England was filmed again by Pennebaker, this time directed by Dylan, to be included on the unreleased film *Eat the Document*. Much of this footage makes up the striking concert footage used by Scorsese in *No Direction Home*. At the end of May, Dylan’s world tour ended, and he and his new wife, Sara, took a brief vacation in Spain and returned to the U.S.

On July 29, 1966, Dylan fell off his motorcycle. While the injury may have been exaggerated by the press— *Time* reported that he broke his neck (“A Folk Hero Speaks” 58)— Dylan took it as an opportunity to take a break from the fast-paced, drug-laced lifestyle he had been living on the road. During his break, Dylan worked on *Eat the Document*, spent time with his family, and studied painting. In March 1967, *Bob Dylan’s Greatest Hits* was released to critical praise, while feeding rumors that Dylan was no longer able to make original music. On May 17, *Dont Look Back* premiered at the Presidio Theater in San Francisco. Almost after a year of being out of the spotlight, and

fully two years since it was filmed, *Dont Look Back* was already an archaic picture of a Dylan whom no one knew anymore. The Dylan presented in Pennebaker's film barely resembled the one touring England with the Hawks and was almost unrecognizable as the Dylan who released *John Wesley Harding* later that year in December.

Dylan was incredibly prolific in the mid 1960s. He released four albums in twenty-two months starting with *Another Side of Bob Dylan* in August 1964 and ending with *Blonde on Blonde* in May 1966. A pace like that is inconceivable today, but even back then was extremely prolific. Fans were getting used to hearing a new message (and new incarnation) from Bob Dylan every six months or so. A year had passed since *Blonde on Blonde* when *Dont Look Back* finally came out. With concerns about Dylan's health and future, his fans were hungry for more Bob Dylan material.

Dont Look Back's release in May 1967 received poor reviews and attendance in the middle of the country, but was well-received in both New York and California. Journalists used the release of the film as "an excuse [...] to heap praise upon Dylan for his past achievement" (Sounes 225). Joseph Morgenstern's gushing review of the film in *Newsweek* in 1967 read, "The honest truth it shows is a singing genius who does not know where his songs come from, and who is brave enough and wise enough to not let it bother him too much" (65). Morgenstern referred to one of the reporters who tried to interview Dylan as an "idiot reporter" (65). John Wasserman was a little more critical of the film in his review in *Life's* August 11, 1967 issue. He complained that "what we do not see, or feel, is what is going on inside Dylan," described the filmmaking as "not much above a home movie," and found Dylan to be "ruthless and arrogant" (10). Yet Wasserman concluded that it is "an engrossing film, a real account of an artist practicing

his profession” (10). *Time* found less to appreciate about both the film and the singer: “Pennebaker has created a 96-minute essay in cinematic truth-telling that may explain how the thin-voiced bard of the bedraggled became a subcultural prophet and a millionaire by combining the most resonant clichés of alienation and some not very distinguished music” (“Pop Prophet” 72). It is not terribly surprising to see a less-than-thrilled review from the magazine that employs the reporter whom Dylan most viciously attacked.

Things were happening outside the world of Dylan. It was the summer of love, 1967; the year of the Beatles’ classic *Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and a riotous year in cities across the country. Racial tensions reached dangerous peaks as race riots occurred in several cities including Washington, D.C. The Vietnam War was sliding out of control. The fear of nuclear annihilation was still permeating everyday life. The country was still getting over the shock of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and would soon be blindsided by the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. It was a tumultuous time in American history—a time when pop music seemed simultaneously trivial and important, when music could help to alleviate the pain of everyday life or point it out and offer insights and solutions.

Dont Look Back was released into a violent, turbulent world, and featured a performer who had been absent for nearly a year. Yet the press and particularly his fans were eager for any- and everything Bob Dylan put out. It is no surprise that the film received praise from the press and from his fans. During a dark period for the nation and seemingly for Dylan, this film provided a glimpse into the real life world of a rock star.

Forty years later, Martin Scorsese took the sparse, almost random images found in *Dont Look Back*, and placed them into a narrative explaining the first 25 years of Dylan's life, primarily the first six years of his career.

No Direction Home

Dylan's 2001 release, "*Love and Theft*" hit record stores on that fateful eleventh day of September. It was almost fully four years after his 1997 comeback record *Time Out of Mind*. Yet to say that Dylan was not in the public eye would be a mistake. In the fall of 1998, Dylan released the fourth volume in *The Bootleg Series*, a recording of the mislabeled "Royal Albert Hall" concert in 1966 which featured the "Judas" taunt. In the fall of 2000, *The Essential Bob Dylan*, a collection of Dylan's best songs, was made available. On September 12, 2001, it comes as no surprise that the least of our concerns was the lack of press "*Love and Theft*," a wonderful collection of songs, was receiving. Dylan was officially back with two widely praised records recorded at the ages of 56 and 60, respectively.

In the fall of 2002 *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 5: Bob Dylan Live 1975: The Rolling Thunder Revue*, was released, followed by *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6: Bob Dylan Live 1964: Concert at Philharmonic Hall* in March 2004. On October 5, 2004 Simon and Schuster published Dylan's *Chronicles: Volume 1*, which was on the *New York Times* Bestseller list for nineteen weeks. Less than a year later, *No Direction Home* premiered on PBS on September 26 and 27, 2005. The film was accompanied by the release of *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 7: No Direction Home: The Soundtrack*, featuring many home recordings, alternative takes, and never-before-heard recordings. Only two months later

The Best of Bob Dylan was released. Interestingly, this album contained only one song not included on *The Essential Bob Dylan* released only five years earlier, and in fact, contained 14 fewer songs than the earlier release.

Dylan was featured on a *60 Minutes* interview with Mike Wallace following the release of his memoir in December 2004. Beginning in the spring of 2006, Dylan began hosting an XM satellite radio program. He focuses on a particular theme for the day and plays music that relates to that theme. In the fall of 2006, (“It’s fall; it’s Bob Dylan season,” says McKeen), Dylan released *Modern Times* at age 65, debuting at number one on the pop charts. Dylan has kept his name and image in the public eye. One can only speculate if the timing of these releases (it seems something “Dylan” comes out about once a year in the fall) is something he does on purpose to stay relevant or if it only fits his natural working cycle. Regardless, while Dylan’s new original albums only appear every five years or so, his fans are not forced to go without.

It is within this almost rhythmic pattern of Dylan to which *No Direction Home* was released. While the times may not be quite as tumultuous during the release of *No Direction Home* as they were during the release *Dont Look Back*, the war in Iraq has turned into this generation’s Vietnam, and Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast leaving thousands homeless, jobless, and seemingly futureless, reigniting discussion about racism in the United States. The times might be “a-changin’,” but they can seem eerily similar.

No Direction Home was based on a 2000 interview of Bob Dylan by “longtime Dylan associate” Jeff Rosen (Taubin 31). While Scorsese didn’t shoot most of the footage which appears in the film, it was his artistic vision that created the phenomenal film.

Scorsese created dramatic tension by contrasting the early Dylan footage, the interview scene with older Dylan and his friends, with the chaotic footage of Dylan's wild 1966 tour of Europe with the Hawks. The vision of the older, wiser Dylan's commentary over the younger, wilder Dylan's image provides the viewers with a powerful take on how time changes people, images, and events.

Scorsese's film received its share of praise. Amy Taubin appreciated the way "he turned the tired documentary trope of the slow gliding movement into and out from a still photography into a rhythmic ostinato" (32). *Rolling Stone* reporter Brian Hiatt appreciated the "unseen footage and unheard music" unearthed by Scorsese and the "unusually relaxed and open conversation" with Dylan (par. 4). Hiatt quotes Suze Rotolo, "It was nice because the movie did not perpetuate that god myth. It wasn't a fan talking about something they mythologize— it was coming from everybody's own story" (par. 1). Both Hiatt and Richard Corliss appeared to appreciate the film, but found fault with the omission of information about "Dylan's private life" (Corliss "When He Was..." par. 8). Corliss also called Scorsese "a master documentarian as well as a prime picturemaker" (Corliss "When He Was..." par. 4). Jonathan Lethem understood the constructed nature of Dylan's public persona. He could have been referring to his memoirs, the documentary film, the *60 Minutes* interview, or the XM radio show when he wrote, "Puncturing myths, boycotting analysis and ignoring chronology are likely part of a long and lately quite successful campaign not to be incarcerated within his own legend" (128).

While it is important to understand the context and the history behind each element in the process of interpreting and internalizing these two films— the subject

matter, the filmmakers, and the films themselves— it is important to understand that the context into which each film is received is somewhat individualized. There are certain elements that may be common to many of those viewing the films (i.e. the news of Hurricane Katrina surely preceded the viewing of *No Direction Home*), however, each individual must interpret, internalize, and make conclusions for himself or herself in order to personally use these films in a specific way. That is the process that I am trying to understand— the way that these films are viewed by thousands of people, yet are personalized individually to become important in an individual's life. Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese are important cultural figures. However, there will be viewers of *Dont Look Back* who have never heard of either Pennebaker or Dylan. There will be viewers of *No Direction Home* who have never seen a Scorsese film and have never listened to a Dylan record. Yet these people will take these films and use them to create their understanding of Dylan or the filmmakers.

These three figures have contributed much to popular culture. The least known and least recognized of the three, Pennebaker's technological advances and stylistic innovations helped create a new genre of documentary filmmaking and a new aesthetic that can be seen in fiction and nonfiction films, journalism and reality television. Scorsese is one of the most creative filmmakers to come out of a generation that changed the way cinema was considered. His work on fiction and nonfiction films has earned him much praise and has greatly influenced the entire film industry. Dylan has given the civil rights movement some of their most powerful songs in the early 1960s, created an edgy style of rock 'n' roll that changed the way rock music was considered in the mid-1960s, and has returned to make some of his most innovative and critically acclaimed music in

the last ten years. *No Direction Home* combined the cultural forces of Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese to make a significant and artistic film about one of the best known American icons.

The history of these two films and their filmmakers offer insights into why they have become so important. The achievement by Dylan, Pennebaker, and Scorsese have placed them in positions in which the things they do and say matter to other people. They are in positions of power, whether they like it or not. Both of these films about the “Rock Poet” were made by master filmmakers who have made some of the most interesting and well-respected films in their fields. But the truth of the matter is Dylan makes these films remarkable. It is his cultural importance that shines through both films, carries each film to the elevated status they have received. The final chapter of this thesis will discuss how each of these films works to create a unique picture of Bob Dylan and how these films work together or against each other to achieve this.

CHAPTER THREE: AN INTERPRETIVE LOOK AT THE FAN'S EXPERIENCE

D.A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* provides the audience with a look at two weeks in Bob Dylan's life— an extremely short period of time. In contrast, Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home* considers nearly sixty years. The film concentrates on Dylan's career between 1960 and 1966, but begins with his childhood and upbringing in the 1940s and 1950s and is narrated by an interview conducted in 2000. Pennebaker and Scorsese use different methods of presenting Dylan. Pennebaker allowed Dylan to show us himself. His actions are all the information the audience receives. Scorsese, on the other hand, allows Dylan and his colleagues to provide explanations and rationales for Dylan's actions. Pennebaker leaves the interpretation up to the viewer while Scorsese does much of the interpreting for the viewer.

In *Dont Look Back*, Pennebaker shows a series of actions— Dylan meeting with the press, performing on stage, arguing with reporters, and so on. To make meaning of these actions, the viewers must attribute intentions or motivations to these actions. The tendency is to assume that these motivations result from an overall character trait. When Dylan says something, we assume it comes from a deeply-rooted characteristic. What he says demonstrates a permanent element of his character or his identity. By showing these actions without providing the intentions, context, or rationale, Pennebaker leaves the meaning up to the audience; hence the ambiguous nature of the film and the myriad interpretations of it.

Scorsese, alternatively, provides both the actions and the intentions. In providing the intentions or rationalizations, Scorsese thereby explains Dylan's actions. The viewers are reminded that Dylan's behavior does not necessarily represent a permanent character trait, but may have resulted from his position in a temporary situation. By showing that Dylan was acting in response to a particular situation, Scorsese created a new way for the viewers to consider Dylan's identity.

Dylan's identity goes through many interpretive layers as viewers find meaning in these films. The layers of interpretation in Pennebaker's film involve the interpretation of Dylan's persona first as presented by young Dylan, then through Pennebaker's camera and editing, then to the hands of the viewers. In Scorsese's film, it is Dylan's persona through Dylan, through Pennebaker (or the filmmakers of the other archival footage), then through older Dylan and his contemporaries over time, then through Scorsese's editing, and finally into the hands of the viewers. To fully understand the way these films are interpreted by the viewers, it is important for me to have direct contact with Dylan fans. By interviewing passionate and intelligent Bob Dylan fans and getting them to discuss the ways that these films are important to them and their understanding of Dylan, I have been able to get to the core of how these films are processed by the viewers.

Each of these two films claims to address Dylan's identity. They are presented as a personal look at the "real" artist— an insider's view into Dylan's life. However, one's identity is a complex and ephemeral concept— hardly something to be captured on film and presented in ninety minutes. Rather, one's identity can only be presented rhetorically on film, a mere representation and interpretation of the "real," leaving issues of accuracy and authenticity for the viewers to consider.

There are two distinct yet interconnected ways of thinking about the term identity. First, identity can be understood as something that a particular person owns about himself or herself. In the second sense of the term, the one most useful for our discussion, “identity” refers to how an individual is understood by others. The second use of the term must be defined by things that an outsider can observe. This consists mostly of actions and words. Voicing an opinion, authoring a book, and writing a song are all actions. Even someone as close to me as my wife knows me only by the things I have done and said. In order to draw conclusions about someone’s identity, others must attribute intentions to the actions.

This second form of identification requires an interpretive process. The thoughts, intentions, and motivations are *attributed* to the agent based on his or her actions. For example, in the song “She’s a Jar,” Jeff Tweedy of Wilco sings, “She’s a jar/With a heavy lid/My pop quiz kid/A sleepy kisser/A pretty war/With feelings hid/You know she begs me not to hit her”(Wilco). Wilco biographer Greg Kot writes, “Tweedy’s allusiveness went only so far. His lyrics were fiction steeped in truth, beauty dipped in blood” (137). The last line of the song, “You know she begs me not to hit her,” can be interpreted in several different ways. The most common interpretation is that Tweedy is singing about an abusive relationship he has been in. By ascribing such intentions, the audience will draw particular conclusions about Tweedy. However, it is also likely that listeners would conclude that Tweedy is writing fiction. A novelist writing about a murder is not admitting to murder. This attribution of intentions removes blame from Tweedy. Another possible interpretation of the lyric is that Tweedy was using a clever twist of words. The first time that line appears, Tweedy sings, “You know she begs me

not to miss her.” He may be creatively contrasting the opposites “miss” and “hit.” None of these interpretations is necessarily informed by Tweedy’s actual intentions, yet in each case, the listener attributes Tweedy’s intention to the lyric. Each interpretation would have a very real consequence on how Tweedy would be known according to that witness. Coming to know someone’s identity requires attributing intentions to actions.

The concept of personal identity is complex. Pinpointing a formula to defining one’s identity is virtually impossible. Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre understands the importance of intentions and narratives to the conception of one’s identity. He writes, “There is no such thing as ‘behavior’, to be identified prior to and independently of intentions, beliefs and settings” (194). Action becomes meaningful when it is explained within the context of a narrative. Dylan’s action in *Dont Look Back* only makes sense or “becomes intelligible” (196) once it is placed in the context of a narrative.

Following MacIntyre’s reasoning, it would be impossible for spectators to separate Dylan’s actions in *Dont Look Back* from his life story or his identity. The viewer necessarily assumes that these actions reflect who Dylan is (a narrative identity assumption). The viewer does not assume that Dylan was simply reacting to his environment (a behaviorist assumption). Dylan’s actions become part of his narrative, either the story he tells or the story others associate with him. It is the way “we understand our own lives” (MacIntyre 197) that leads viewers to see Dylan’s actions in 1965 as a result of his character and his narrative, rather than as a reaction to the environment or as a young man trying to make his way through some difficult situations.

The shifting nature of one's overall narrative highlights the way one's identity can be altered. Writing about the constructed nature of personal identity, Alan Parry writes:

It needs to be realized that a story is not a life, only a selection of events about a life as influenced by that person's beliefs about herself and others. Thus, it becomes possible to use the story to re-invent, revise or otherwise re-write the story of the person's past. (43)

As we consider the difference between *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home*, the latter is overtly constructed, and as one fan said, "the ideas presented are intended." *No Direction Home* is not Dylan's life. It leaves out important information about his marriages, children, and countless other important people and events in his life. Dylan's life, like everyone's lives, cannot be captured fully on film. Rather, Scorsese provides us with a story—"a selection of events." Of course, the same could be said of Pennebaker's film. There was much footage that Pennebaker was unable or unwilling to show. Yet the presentation of *Dont Look Back* was as a fly-on-the-wall, observing real life, attempting to deny the camera's influence and the directorial choices. *No Direction Home*, alternatively, openly admits that this story is built upon the memory and interpretation of those involved in the story. Scorsese's film demonstrates Parry's claim as it retells Dylan's story to create a different past.

Even Pennebaker understood how Dylan's identity was seen as something that was shifting, ephemeral, and only slightly grasped on film. He said during an interview in *No Direction Home*:

We showed [Dylan] the first rough cut [of *Dont Look Back*]. What he saw must have made him look like he was bare bones. And I think that was a big shock to him. But then he saw, I think the second night, he saw that it was total theater. It didn't matter. He was like an actor and he suddenly had reinvented himself as the actor within this movie, and then it was okay.

According to Pennebaker, Dylan looked at his actions in the film as a performance, rather than an accurate representation of how he really is.

To come up with Dylan's identity is as difficult as it would be to label one for you or me. Dylan is a "multi-faceted man," one fan wrote. Another wrote, "The man's built a whole career on having an ever changing image." Dylan's identity cannot be based solely on two weeks as a twenty-four year old, nor can his identity be based on a documentary selectively chronicling his rise to stardom. These films claim to capture his identity, though such a feat is impossible.

The discussion of personal identity raises many questions. Did Dylan's identity change as he began to appreciate the power of rock 'n' roll over the folk song? When Dylan lied about his past, did that become his identity? These are questions that are beyond the scope of this study, but they highlight the fact that one's identity is in constant interplay between many forces. Paul Ricoeur describes this as a struggle between concordance and discordance, between our plans and the unpredictable events of our lives (Ricoeur 141). Mikhail Bakhtin describes it as the pull of the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language: "Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical

heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)” (Bakhtin 272). Language simultaneously distinguishes us from and unites us with those around us.

Bakhtin believes that these forces of language are necessary for the understanding of identity. He writes, “I achieve self-consciousness, I become myself only by revealing myself to another, through another and with another’s help” (qtd. in Baxter & Montgomery 25). Because of this “on going interplay” (Baxter & Montgomery 26) between the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language, the self is in a constant state of becoming and constantly influenced by others. Impossible to document completely on film, Dylan’s identity can only be presented rhetorically by Pennebaker and Scorsese.

Because *Dont Look Back* provides very little narrative, it becomes the viewers’ duty to provide one. Failing to conceptualize a narrative would result in finding the film unintelligible (and this is not an uncommon conclusion). There are, of course, myriad narratives one could come up with to find Dylan’s actions intelligible. This is in fact what many of the fans I interviewed did. As I will discuss further in the chapter, the fans provide narratives and ascribe intentions to explain Dylan’s actions.

No Direction Home provides a narrative. By showing Dylan’s upbringing in northern Minnesota, by talking about his high school bands, and by telling stories about his days as a college student at the University of Minnesota, Scorsese shows the human side to the artist. By showing Dylan’s rise to stardom in New York City and the creation of his first albums, Scorsese shows the “genius” of Dylan. By explaining repeatedly that Dylan was a drifter who never felt at home, Scorsese creates a sympathetic response to Dylan. By showing him heckled by fans, booed by the folk community at Newport, and hassled by the press, Scorsese shows that Dylan’s behavior could be blamed more on

those around him than on Dylan himself. The narrative that Scorsese presents makes Dylan's actions intelligible in a specific way, so as to exonerate him from the blame many placed on him after *Dont Look Back*.

Depicting Dylan as an artist in transition is key to changing the way he comes across in *No Direction Home*. When one considers the personal crisis that often accompanies such a transition, it becomes clear why Dylan lashed out at those who mislabeled or misunderstood him. By framing his action within the narrative of an artistic transition, the blame is again shifted from Dylan onto those who were not up to speed with his creative development. The film seems to say, Dylan kept moving forward, and the fans, folk community, and press moved too slowly to keep up with him.

By retelling these events in the framework of a different narrative in *No Direction Home*, Dylan's actions seem to make sense. His faults seem more like virtues. His lyrics seem more like prophecies. And these films taken together seem as close to the "real" Dylan as his fans will ever get.

Dont Look Back

Dont Look Back provides a static image of Dylan. By showing him in a relatively short amount of time, the viewers are unable to witness any major changes. His mood goes up and down, but a particular image of Dylan emerges. *Dont Look Back* demonstrates a ruthless side of Dylan. The scenes in which Dylan seems rude, arrogant, and obdurate—the backstage interview with the science student, the interview with the reporter from *Time Magazine*, and the incident in the hotel room with the glass—are the

most memorable. Dylan dodges questions and plays games with the reporters who interview him, making jokes about the light bulb in his hand, lying about not writing while on tour, and questioning whether we have a common definition of the word “people.” It is these scenes that seem to get lodged in the viewers’ minds, especially for those who are barely, if at all, Bob Dylan fans. As an example of the way this film was typically received by mainstream press, Roger Ebert calls Dylan “immature, petty, vindictive, lacking a sense of humor, overly impressed with his own importance and not very bright” (par 2).

Viewers may almost feel embarrassed as Dylan demonstrates this side. His vicious attacks on the *Time* reporter and the science student are hard to watch. These men think they are doing their jobs, getting a story about what many consider the best songwriter of a generation, having a conversation with the man who penned compassionate works like “Blowin’ in the Wind” and “Only a Pawn in Their Game.” As depicted by Pennebaker’s film, they seem find an arrogant young man who is more interested in elevating himself by pushing down on those around him. The more they try to find the man they thought they were interviewing, the further away they seem to be pushed.

These less than flattering scenes are the ones cited by Ebert during his scathing review. It is a curious thing that these scenes make the lasting impression rather than the many scenes in which Dylan shows kindness, wit, and appreciation to those around him. A possible reason for the conclusion that Dylan is mean and angry comes from the gravity that each of these scenes is granted. The scene in which Dylan ridicules the science student runs over eight uninterrupted minutes. In a film that is ninety-six minutes

long the scene with the science student takes eight percent of the film. At over six minutes long, the interview with the *Time* reporter takes six percent of the film. These two intense scenes take up nearly fifteen percent of the film's total running time. Combined with almost three minutes of fighting over the thrown glass in the street and over six minutes of watching Dylan's manager Albert Grossman shamelessly negotiating for more money for a Dylan appearance on television, nearly a quarter of the film is devoted to these four scenes. What really grants them gravity is not the overall length of time, but the uninterrupted aspect of them. By using few cuts during these scenes, the viewer interprets these as "life as it happened," granting credibility and authenticity to each scene. The unedited quality also emphasizes the unrelenting nature of Dylan's attacks.

The deriding of the *Time* reporter also came at an important point in the film. The scene appears in the 78th minute of the film and ends six minutes later. The proximity to the end of the film not only creates a more lasting image of Dylan, but also implies a climax. It surely is the most climactic interview with the press. Dylan challenges the reporter: "You're going to die. So am I. I mean, we're just gonna be gone. The world's gonna go on without us. Alright now, you do your job in the face of that and how seriously you take yourself, you decide for yourself." If cultural critic Jeanne Hall's analysis is correct, Pennebaker was trying to accomplish two goals: to implicate the mainstream press of distorting the truth and to promote the cinema verite movement as a better way to get closer to the truth. Pennebaker rhetorically put Dylan's potent and unrelenting criticism of the press at the climax of the film. Even Dylan's own definition of the truth—a definition with which he visibly struggles—fits Pennebaker's agenda:

“The truth is just a plain picture.” Pennebaker and other cinema verite filmmakers could not agree more. Pennebaker’s rhetorical placement of this scene contributed to the lasting impression of Dylan as an angry young man.

Dylan also spent much of his time with his nose in a newspaper, reading reviews and articles about his concerts. It becomes clear that Dylan has become very interested in what other people have to say about him and about the impression he makes in the press. He seems concerned about image and pop chart placement, publicity and money, fame and fortune. A dissonant image from the proletariat singer presented in the short clip of Dylan singing “Only a Pawn In Their Game” during the civil rights rally in the South. This apparent interest in the material things his music has brought him sets up another discordance between Dylan’s newest philosophy and the idealistic philosophy of the folk movement. Dylan’s interest in rock ‘n’ roll, his media image, and pop chart positions added credence to the idea that Dylan was changing for the worse, becoming self-absorbed, and caring only for himself and material things.

In a hotel room scene, the hotel management appears at Dylan’s door to inform the group of some complaints and asks them to keep the noise to a minimum. After some words are exchanged between Grossman and the hotel employee, Grossman finally shouts, “You’re one of the dumbest asshole most stupid person I’ve ever met. If this were someplace else, I’d punch you in your goddamned nose.” While Grossman’s actions do not necessarily represent Dylan, the viewers might interpret this as one more aspect that is unpleasant about Bob Dylan. For an audience to leave the film thinking that Dylan is a self-absorbed, arrogant jerk does not come as a shock.

This is not to say that there are not several moments when Dylan appears to be personable, friendly, humble, and appreciative. There are many scenes in which Dylan speaks fondly with fans who wish to show their appreciation of him. He treats the High Sheriff's Lady with respect and honor. When on stage, there is a charm and magnetism that comes out. If one were trying to find the "true" Dylan, a case could be made for that being the one on stage. However, because of the gravity, length, and timing of the scenes in which Dylan is rude, many viewers leave the film with an unpleasant view of Dylan.

Dont Look Back functions as a snapshot of Dylan at a unique time in his life. Dylan is transitioning. As Dylan-biographer William McKeen explains it, *Dont Look Back* shows us the "new Bob Dylan. He's the 1965 Bob Dylan, but when he goes on stage [the fans] want the 1964 Bob Dylan" (Personal Interview). The "1964 Bob Dylan" is extremely politically aware. He writes songs like "Blowin' in the Wind," "With God on Our Side," "The Times They Are a-Changin'," and other so-called protest songs. He requires no more than an acoustic guitar and a harmonica to accompany his songs. Any other instrumentation would only distract from the important lyrics, the essential message, he wishes to communicate. He embodies everything the folk community would want— civil rights compassion, anti-war passions, and a distrust of anything labeled "commercial."

But the "1964 Bob Dylan" appears to be dead and gone. His remains are found in the grooves of some much celebrated vinyl records and in the hearts of those searching for a voice for their concerns. After a few minutes of watching the "1965 Bob Dylan," one gets the feeling that the 1965 version wants very little to do with the 1964 version. This new Dylan doesn't worry about being too commercial. In fact, record sales and pop

charts have caught his interest. He is not concerned with people understanding his lyrics. In fact when asked whether he thinks his fans understand his lyrics, he prefers to crack a joke. The new Bob Dylan is interested in electric guitars and in “having a good laugh.” The 1965 Bob Dylan writes rock ‘n’ roll songs like “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” “Maggie’s Farm,” and “Bob Dylan’s 115th Dream,” and will soon write the much celebrated rock hits “Like a Rolling Stone,” “Highway 61 Revisited,” and “Ballad of a Thin Man” which appear on his next album.

Clues of Dylan’s transition can be seen throughout the film. He gets treated to a rock star’s welcome everywhere he goes. Screaming fans follow him to and from concerts, push their way closer to him, and even latch onto his car as he drives away— an honor at that time only bestowed upon groups such as the Beatles. The performances speak loudly. Dylan seems to rush through the much loved songs “The Times They Are a-Changin’” and “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll.” The latter song recounts the murder of Hattie Carroll at the hands of William Zantzinger and the subsequent trial. After each verse documenting a different part of the saga, Dylan reminds people “now ain’t the time for your tears.” It is only after the verdict is read, a ridiculously small six month sentence, Dylan sings, “now is the time for your tears” (Line 47) Yet Dylan’s performance of this moving song, caught by Pennebaker as he lay on his back before the singer, seemed rushed and unemotional. Dylan gave the crowd just what they wanted— a reenactment of the 1964 Dylan.

The performances that seemed most important to Dylan were songs from his latest record, *Bringing It All Back Home*. Dylan sang “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” with as much passion as he seemed to be able to muster. Singing “So don’t

fear if you hear, / a foreign sound to your ear” (Line 21-22), Dylan announces his shift. “A new sound is coming,” he seems to be saying, “Don’t be alarmed.” It should be no surprise that Dylan was bored with the old standards of his repertoire and more passionate about his most recent songs.

In one scene, Dylan walks past a music store advertising the sales of his “Subterranean Homesick Blues” record. This store has electric guitars in the windows. Dylan stops to look and says, “They don’t have guitars like these in the states.” The new Dylan is much more interested in the electric guitars than the old Dylan would have been. While conversing with the young band that plays Dylan covers, Dylan is less interested in their discussion about getting the audience to appreciate the lyrics as he is in the way they arrange the rock versions of his songs, signs of his new outlook towards music.

As Dylan, Grossman, and his entourage ride in the back seat of a car leaving Royal Albert Hall, the film neatly comes to an end—the finale concert is over, the tour is ending, and Dylan and his company are ready to head home. At this moment, Pennebaker poignantly flashes the title of the film on screen. At the end of the tour, the viewers are reminded again not to look back. Not only has this concert, tour, and film ended, this version of Dylan has officially said goodbye. “Like a Rolling Stone” hit the record store shelves only months after this moment. Bob Dylan— and the world of rock ‘n’ roll music— would never be the same. The title of the film suggests that the changes we are witnessing are permanent and important. There is no need for much reflection or nostalgia. Looking back would only pale the vividness of the present.

As viewers watch Dylan on screen, they must decide for themselves who this man is. They must attach intentions and meaning to these actions. By considering these

intentions, the viewers tend to make overall judgments on Dylan's character, morality, and personal identity. Because this film shows Dylan's actions, both on stage and off, and little else, the audience must make their conclusions based entirely on those actions and the motivations and intentions behind them. Dylan's identity, as presented in *Dont Look Back*, depends on the interpretation of those watching.

No Direction Home

Rather than giving us a still image of the past, Scorsese offers a moving image. We don't simply see Dylan during a transition, we see the entire transition, the before and after. Scorsese, through interviews with Dylan and his colleagues, offers rationalizations and explanations of Dylan's actions— something Pennebaker did not. The result is that Dylan's image is more controlled and carefully presented to the viewers. To do this, Scorsese layers his film with three important time periods. First, the present is represented by seeing Dylan's aging face and hearing his road-worn voice narrate the film. We see Joan Baez with graying hair and Bob Neuwirth looking like a shadow of the energetic young smart-aleck shown in *Dont Look Back*. Pete Seeger looks closer to the nursing home than the stage, and the rest of Dylan's friends look nearly elderly.

Scorsese also shows us the past. Beginning in small town northern Minnesota, we are shown the upbringing and genesis of this man so revered. From high school yearbook pictures to never-before-heard home recordings, we travel with Dylan through the north woods of Minnesota to the university campus in Minneapolis, finally stopping in New York City. The images of a baby-faced Dylan playing his songs in New York coffee

shops or recording his earliest records at Columbia studios demonstrate fixed moments in Dylan's past.

There is another time period Scorsese represents. Using flash-forwards, Scorsese shows us the "past-future"—the important events to come in Dylan's life. Seven of these flash-forwards appear in the film, six of which take place in the first part of the film. These appear between ten to twenty minutes apart, rarely lasting more than two minutes. We see images of Dylan playing on stage with the Hawks, jawing with disapproving fans, and playing solo-acoustic songs during his tumultuous 1966 tour of Europe. These flash-forwards create dramatic tension between the calm images of Dylan's seemingly inevitable rise to stardom and the disruptive images of his raucous 1966 European tour. It is an hour and fourteen minutes into the second part of the film, over three hours into the entire film, with only thirteen minutes remaining that the narrative of Dylan's story catches up to these dramatic flash-forwards.

Yet more than simply providing the film with dramatic tension, these images solidify the overriding picture of Dylan. Scorsese did not provide footage of the concerts that were well-received during that time. (And there were some.) He did not provide clips of fans and press praising the ingenuity and creativity of Dylan and his new sound. (And there were some.) He also did not provide much reasoning for the poor reception the fans were giving Dylan and the Hawks. These images complement the idea that Dylan was misunderstood by his audience. The film suggests that people tried to put Dylan in a box, labeling him a protest-singing-dustbowl-folkster. From early on, Dylan resisted labels. This resistance ultimately manifested itself in some of the most aggressive rock 'n' roll music of the time. The contrasting images, between the present, past, and past-future lead

to an understanding of Dylan as a homeless troubadour, wandering the streets of Hibbing, Minneapolis, New York, and finally theaters in Europe, searching restlessly for his home.

Scorsese is no doubt a master filmmaker. His flair for drama makes this story something much more than a simple biography. It becomes an epic narrative of chronicling the undeniable rise of the most talented songwriter in the world. The use of the flash-forwards and silence at poignant times (during a violent section demonstrating the troubled times of the 1960s, during a car ride through snowy weather near the end of the film, as the crowd lines up before the final concert) create a sense of drama found in fiction films.

No Direction Home has a rhetorical goal: to tidy up Dylan's image during the 1960s. Much of the damage done to his image took place during *Dont Look Back*. Dylan had changed from the idealistic folksinger of the early '60s to the materialistic rock singer of the mid-'60s. As presented above in my analysis of *Dont Look Back*, to many viewers, Dylan comes across as selfish, arrogant, and mean in *Dont Look Back*. Scorsese accomplishes this disabusing by making some claims about Dylan in the 1960s. First, he portrays Dylan as a wandering soul, never able to find the peace of being home. Second, Scorsese shows how Dylan was severely misunderstood and mislabeled by his fans, the folk community, and the press. This affected Dylan and led him to write, "How does it feel/To be on your own/With no direction home/Like a complete unknown/Like a rolling stone" (*Highway 61 Revisited*).

The title of Scorsese's film announces the first major technique to reframe Dylan's actions in *Dont Look Back*. Bob Dylan is a lost soul, searching for home. This theme is important to understanding who Dylan is and why he acted the way he did.

Scorsese highlights this theme by starting the film with a lengthy quote from Dylan which ends, “I was born very far from where I’m supposed to be and so I’m on my way home.”

This theme resurfaces several times throughout the film. Dylan describes the first time he heard “Driftin’ Too Far from the Shore” from one of his father’s old country music records: “The sound of the record made me feel like I was somebody else. And that I was maybe not even born to the right parents or something.” Life in Hibbing didn’t satisfy the artist in young Dylan. He knew that this wasn’t where he was supposed to be— that there were bigger things in store for him. He said, “I began listening to the radio; I began to get bored being there.” As soon as the opportunity arose, Dylan left Hibbing. He said, “Got out of high school and left the very next day. I’d gone as far as I could in my particular environment.”

Even while in Minneapolis and New York, he denied that his journey began where it should have. He said, “I just don’t feel like I had a past. And I couldn’t relate to anything other than what I was doing at the present time.” He claimed to be a “musical expeditionary” with “no past really to speak of, nothing to go back to, nobody to lean on.” During a performance in 1966, before Dylan played “Ballad of a Thin Man” an audience member shouts, “Go home!” One is left to wonder whether Dylan had any idea of just where home might be.

The viewer feels a kind of sympathy for a man with no home. A visibly burned-out Dylan near the climax of the film and of his 1966 tour of Europe tells a reporter:

I want to go home. You know what home is? I don’t want to go to Italy no more. I don’t want to go nowhere no more. You end up crashing in a

private airplane in the mountains of Tennessee. Or Sicily. [...] I just want to go home.

Ever the musical historian, Dylan alludes to the many deaths that have taken place on the road. This reference mythologizes the idea of being on the road, but nonetheless supports the theme that Dylan was a wandering soul struggling to find his home. Certainly, a life on the road was not home.

Scorsese establishes the second theme of a misinterpreted and misunderstood Dylan by giving constant reminders of the ways Dylan was mistreated. The first half of the film, lasting nearly two hours, shows Dylan on his rise to stardom. It seems like destiny when Dylan first heard country music in Hibbing, met folk music enthusiast Paul Nelson in Minneapolis, and found Woody Guthrie on records and in New York. Dylan's rise was inevitable, propelled by his own genius. While this is a familiar story to most Dylan fans, Scorsese continually foreshadowed the events that were in Dylan's near future. During the flash-forwards to Dylan's 1966 European concerts, Scorsese shows how fans criticized and taunted Dylan. Fans called him a traitor, referred to his music as "rubbish," told him to "go home," and referred to him as a "bastard" and a "prostitute." For all his greatness, Dylan's fans had turned on him during what many now consider the pinnacle of his musical career.

During his rise to fame, Dylan received overwhelming accolades from the press and the folk community. An obviously surprised and embarrassed Dylan sat through lavish praise during *The Steve Allen Show*. Allen read a few quotes from the press, one saying, "Genius makes its own rules, and Dylan is a genius. A singing conscience and moral referee as well as a preacher." This type of hyperbolic praise started to become

common to Dylan. The film makes clear that he did not want to be considered a “conscience and moral referee” or a “preacher,” a genius or a poet. He was a songwriter, and when people began to expect more than just songs, he felt like he was being misunderstood.

Folk concert promoter and manager Howard Leventhal understood Dylan’s role in the folk community: “There was Woody Guthrie, transition to Pete Seeger who carried on Woody’s tradition. Now who was to carry on from Pete Seeger? And in the spot, really, came Bob Dylan.” Dave Van Ronk said, “It’s almost enough to make you believe in Jung’s notion of collective unconscious. That if there is an American collective unconscious [...] that Bobby had somehow tapped into it.”

Dylan was introduced at the Newport Folk Festival:

He came to be as he is because things needed saying and the young people were the ones who wanted to say them. He somehow had an ear on his generation. I don’t have to tell you. You know him; he’s yours, Bob Dylan.

As the first part of the film came to a close, Peter Yarrow, after singing “Blowin’ in the Wind” with Dylan at Newport, said, “I would like to say that he has a finger on the pulse of our generation.” Such over-the-top praise created demands and expectations that Dylan was not interested in and probably incapable of fulfilling. The first part of the film shows the audience just how great Dylan was and leaves them wondering how his fans could have turned on him so quickly.

The second part of the film begins by introducing a new theme. Dylan responds to a question during a 1966 interview about his departure from protest songs by saying, “All

my songs are protest songs.” This cryptic remark is just one of many that demonstrated how Dylan’s relationship with the press deteriorated. By dodging, ignoring, or ridiculing the questions, Dylan demonstrates the press’s inability to understand him.

The first half of the film demonstrated Dylan’s rise to stardom, his critical acclaim, and his undeniable greatness. The second part of the film shows just how misinterpreted Dylan was. Despite writing such powerful songs championing the very ideals of the Left, Dylan resisted getting involved in politics. During his acceptance speech at an awards banquet by the progressive Emergency Civil Liberties Union, Dylan referred to politics as “trivial.” Older Dylan said, “To be on the side of people who are struggling for something doesn’t necessarily mean you are being political.”

Scorsese demonstrates that when Dylan shifted from socially-minded folk songs to inward-looking rock ‘n’ roll songs, people were disappointed in him. Leventhal said, “When Bob began to ignore topical material, it bothered me because he wrote such marvelous material. And suddenly to have stopped that meant that he was going away from a political consciousness that we felt we all had.” Dylan was no longer living up to the expectations of the folk community.

The relationship between Dylan and the folk community finally came to an end at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. Headlining the show, Dylan, backed by the Mike Butterfield Blue Band, played only three songs, “Maggie’s Farm,” “Like a Rolling Stone,” and a version of the song that would become “It’s Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry.” The rock ‘n’ roll music was too much for the sound system. The music sounded muddy; the lyrics unintelligible. The myth of this event has lingered. Many said that Pete Seeger was livid, swinging an axe madly and threatening to cut the microphone

cables. Seeger claims that he was merely disappointed with the sound quality, not the style of music. After the three songs, Dylan and his band left the stage. With a disappointed crowd, due in part to the short length of the headlining performance, in part to the poor sound quality, and in part to the nature of rock 'n' roll music, Dylan was persuaded to play an encore accompanied only by his acoustic guitar. Dylan played "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" as his farewell to the folk community.

Perpetuating the idea that Dylan made his final stand before the folk community, Scorsese dedicates twelve minutes to the events that took place that night in Newport. The twenty minutes on stage became symbolic of the "new Dylan." By playing those three songs backed by an electric blues band, Dylan made a statement that was, to many, more than just about music. It was about ideology. It was about values and morals, right and wrong. By playing those songs, so the myth goes, Dylan put himself directly at odds with the rest of the folk community. By devoting so much time to the event, Scorsese marks it as a major, if not *the* major, event in Dylan's career.

The folk community did not like the new music Dylan was playing. Peter Yarrow said, "It was not possible to share the kind of intimacy that we were sharing with folk music when you've got those electric instruments going." The film makes clear that intimacy was not what Dylan was trying to achieve anymore. Minneapolis folk collector Paul Nelson said, "Rock 'n' roll was considered a real sellout music for a lot of folk fans and 'Like a Rolling Stone' seemed like the direct slap in the face to everything that topical songs represented. [...] It was not 'Better World A-coming.'"

Scorsese portrays a Dylan who would not allow himself to be pushed into a label. Dylan thought of himself as just a songwriter and wanted to be known only for that. He

resisted becoming the “trained seal” (as Allen Ginsberg put it in the film) for the Left. He was not interested in politics like Baez hoped he would be. Just when the folk community anointed him king of the folk world and successor to Guthrie and Seeger, Dylan plugged in his Fender Stratocaster and rock ‘n’ rolled the misleading titles right out of their mouths.

To emphasize the futile attempt to label Dylan, Scorsese dedicates five minutes near the end of the film to the press and their incompetence. One young reporter asks Dylan the silly question, “Do you prefer songs with a subtle or obvious message?” The reporter later admitted that she got the question from a movie magazine. Another reporter asks Dylan how many protest singers are working today. To which Dylan responds, “I think there’s about 136.” When asked to clarify, Dylan responds, “It’s either 136 or 142.” Another reporter asked, “Don’t you think your first records were much better than the ones you do now?” These questions were either impossible to answer or unworthy of one. Older Dylan said, “At a certain point, people seemed to have a distorted, warped view of me.”

Directly following the interview in which Dylan claims he just wants to go home, Scorsese flashes this sentence on a black screen: “On July 29, 1966, shortly after returning from his European tour, Bob Dylan was in a motorcycle crash.” Scorsese uses silence to build the tension as he shows the line of people waiting to get into the theater where Dylan was performing. The silence slowly gives way to the sounds of Dylan and his band talking before they go on stage. As Dylan walks onto the stage, an audience member shouts “Judas!” The climax of the drama arrives with the “Judas!” taunt, comparing him to the ultimate traitor. Dylan responds by saying, “I don’t believe you.

You're a liar." He turns to his band behind him and says, "Play it f---ing loud," and launches into a biting rendition of "Like a Rolling Stone." By screaming the lines, "Once upon a time you dressed so fine/Threw the bums a dime, in your prime/Didn't you?" Dylan seemed to be saying, "You think I'm Judas? Well, you're no Christ." In the film, the fans seem like the ignorant ones who are missing the point, and Dylan seems to take the brunt of their ignorance.

By highlighting the "Judas" incident, Scorsese points one final accusatory finger at those who just could not "get" Dylan's new music. During the performance of "Like A Rolling Stone," Scorsese flashes these words on screen: "After the motorcycle accident, Bob Dylan continued to write and record songs. He would not go back on tour for eight years." As presented in the film, the fan's "ignorance" resulted in Dylan's burn-out, his motorcycle accident, his hiatus from touring, and the end of some of the most creative rock 'n' roll music ever made. Scorsese deftly leads the viewers to the conclusion that Dylan's behavior was a result of those disrespectful fans who were too thick-headed to recognize the greatness and genius of the music pouring from Dylan's body.

Scorsese needed to be careful not to implicate the documentary film audience. By focusing the attention on the fans in the 1966 concerts, the documentary film audience, along with Scorsese, could heap blame on those fans at those European concerts. "True" Bob Dylan fans, the ones who were watching the documentary film, knew or would have known better than those fans in 1966.

No Direction Home goes a long way to try to purify Dylan of any wrongdoing in his past. By recasting Dylan as a victim rather than an attacker, all of Dylan's behavior gets reframed. Scorsese creates an argument around the old footage and contemporary

interviews. By strategically juxtaposing images of Dylan's 1966 tour in which he was often booed and taunted, images of the folk community heaping lavish praise upon him, images of the press trying to label him or demanding answers from him, Scorsese convinces the audience that Dylan is the misinterpreted artist, and if he ever appeared rude, arrogant, aggressive, or mean, it was only a defensive reaction to his circumstances.

Three groups, according to the film, seem to victimize Dylan. First, his fans turned on him during his live concerts in 1966. Taunting him from their seats, they demonstrated to Dylan just how much they disapprove of his new style of music. Second, the folk community considered Dylan the most important figure of the folk revival. His shift to electric music put him at odds with their goals. Third, the press labeled Dylan as a "genius" or "conscience" for a generation. They began to expect things that Dylan simply couldn't deliver. The way he acted in London in 1965, as documented by D.A. Pennebaker, was not entirely his fault. He was a victim of the situation. By explaining Dylan's actions within the framework of a larger narrative, Scorsese does more of the identity construction for the fans and provides a less ambiguous, but more rhetorically constructed image of Dylan.

Dylan, His Fans, and the Rhetorical Presentation of Identity

Dylan's history is complex and blurry, often blurred by his own resistance to reveal too much about himself. No one can deny the events that were documented by Pennebaker's camera. Those events happened. Dylan truly behaved that way. But what is left up to debate is what those events mean. In *No Direction Home* Dylan said, "Words have their own meaning, or they have different meanings and words change their

meaning. Words that meant something ten years ago don't mean that now. They mean something else." The same can be said of those events.

It is important to recognize who does the work of identity construction during *Dont Look Back*. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, one's identity, as understood by others is composed of actions and intentions. Dylan was ultimately in control of his actions. When interviewed by the science student or the *Time* reporter, he could have easily blown them off or patiently given them what they were looking for. But instead he made the decision to be difficult, confrontational, and subsequently, more entertaining to a documentary film audience. As far as the actions are concerned, Dylan was in control.

The intentions, as ascribed by the viewers, are out of Dylan's control. The way this film is presented, with no voice-over narrator and no further explanation or elaboration, the viewers must do the work of attributing intentions and motivations. Dylan may or may not know the reasons behind his actions, but to make sense of the film the viewers must conclude what those reasons are. Who Dylan is in this film is, in large part, up to the viewers. In order for viewers to understand and make sense this film, they need to confront Dylan's actions, because that is all the film is. This involves coming to grips, to a certain degree, with why he acted the way he did. This burden of explanation is left to the viewers, not provided by Pennebaker. Pennebaker presents this footage as data, fact, or truth. The audience must analyze the material to come to a conclusion— a highly subjective process.

In many ways, the fans I interviewed explained Dylan's actions. Some excused him. Others blamed him. Still others seemed to enjoy his "misbehavior." In every case, a

larger narrative or internal intentions were ascribed to Dylan's behavior. One fan wrote, "I just thought he was the coolest person on earth in the film." One fan explains, "[*Dont Look Back*] is a portrait of a brash, somewhat snotty, but very hip young man." This is "Dylan being Dylan" type of reasoning. His actions needed little explanation because that is how most "cool" people would act. The fan also considered him a "rebel with a cause," framing his actions inside of an activist framework.

Another fan claims, "I've always thought that he was acting in [*Dont Look Back*] to some extent though, because he knew the camera was on." It wasn't really Bob. It was him *playing* Bob. This theme resurfaces again in the interviews. Another fan said, "He seems to have been a very different person than the one portrayed—the Dylan acting his role in that film." One fan claimed:

During [*Dont Look Back*] Bob is totally wearing his "Bob Dylan mask," as he calls it and I believe it's more who he thinks we should think he is and less who he really is.[...] [*Dont Look Back*] is false and [*No Direction Home*] is true. That doesn't mean that [*Dont Look Back*] is a lie, it isn't. It's just false, as all masks are.

These fans are making sense of this film by considering it a form of fiction. According to this line of reason, one should refrain from making any judgments about Dylan's action. He was simply putting on a show. These fans have described a particular narrative to explain his action.

Another narrative described by his fans was that of an artist in transition. One fan called this time "an amazing point in [Dylan's] career." Another eloquently described this turning point:

The whole genius of [*Dont Look Back*] is about the tension between Dylan's reputation (which in early 65 was as a "protest" singer) and his emerging reality. So we see him start every show rattling off ["The Times They Are a-Changin'"] to satisfy the masses before taking longer over songs like "Gates of Eden" from his new album.

Another fan claims, "Time has made [*Dont Look Back*] more interesting, more revealing in an off-handed and subtle way, of the artist in transition." One fan even refers to this transition as a "crisis" for Dylan. Amid such personal and artistic turmoil, his actions are an inevitable reaction. By considering Dylan's actions in the framework of a crisis, these fans have explained Dylan's action and found positive meaning in the film.

Others point to the nature of the music industry at that time as responsible for the way Dylan acted. One said:

When I first saw *Dont Look Back* I was a bit shocked and taken aback at how callous and cruel Dylan seemed in it but then I realized that the music and journalistic biz was cruel and in order to beat it at its own game he had to be crueler and tougher. He knew he had to be like that to survive or he'd end up like [fellow folksinger] Donovan or the dozens of other folkies of that era, i.e. forgotten and swept away by Beatlemania.

Another referred to Dylan in *Dont Look Back* as "the streetwise and scared fighter who lashed out at anything that moved, just in case it might prove to be a threat." In this narrative, Dylan's actions were not mean. He was trying to survive.

One fan rationalized the action by putting the blame on the filmmaker. He claimed, "I don't think Pennebaker captured Dylan's essence at all (only the portion of it

he wanted to portray—the sneering iconoclast). It perpetuated a myth that Dylan is a distant even cruel man (quite untrue).” The narrative to make sense of the action was that Pennebaker did Dylan wrong as he portrayed him in such a poor light.

Up to this point we have let Pennebaker off the hook. We have discussed Dylan’s role in creating his own identity. He made important choices and could have chosen to behave in a certain way. We have discussed the viewers’ responsibility in creating the meaning of the film. The attribution of intentions or an overall narrative is the interpretive work of the audience. We must also discuss the important choices the filmmaker made when filming and editing the footage.

Pennebaker and the rest of the cinema verite movement claim that they did not want to control meaning. They wanted to film life, demonstrate a “truth,” and leave the interpretation and meaning-making up to those who view it. Critic Jeanne Hall calls this philosophy into question by pointing out the important choices the filmmaker is forced to make. For example, by showing the beginning of what appeared to be a productive interview with Dylan, then cutting to archival footage, Pennebaker “suggests, as Dylan later explicitly declares to the *Time* reporter, that the interview ‘can’t be any good’” (Hall 234). Here Pennebaker is stating his claim, that the press cannot present the truth accurately. This sequence “flaunts itself most flagrantly and self-consciously as a directorial/editorial choice” (Hall 235), thus denying the idea that Pennebaker had no agenda and was leaving the interpretation entirely up to the audience. He intended for the film to be interpreted a certain way.

As discussed above, I have suggested that Pennebaker’s agenda of promoting the cinema verite movement over the flawed approach of mainstream press, as described by

Hall, influenced the way Dylan came across. In order for Pennebaker to argue his point, he had to show the media at its worst and Dylan at his most confrontational. By showing the scenes in which Dylan verbally attacked the reporters, by letting these scenes run in a lengthy and uninterrupted fashion, and by placing them near climax of the film, Pennebaker simultaneously condemns the press and portrays a vicious Dylan. Pennebaker's role in the presentation of Dylan's identity should not be overlooked.

Scorsese's film does not claim to be as "interpretation free" as Pennebaker's does. There is no question that we are getting someone's story of "Bob Dylan." The use of interviews of people who are forty years removed from the events underlines the assumption that these are personal memories and the events are constructed from those memories. Yet the focus of this film seems to be setting the story straight, something Dylan was unwilling to do until recently. Over the last forty years, the events of *Dont Look Back* have been reframed to adjust Dylan's identity—the result is an image of an artist who was abused, misinterpreted and mislabeled by the public.

The two films show a significantly different Dylan. Of course the older Dylan in *No Direction Home* is wiser and calmer, but even the younger Dylan, the one we saw rise from the iron range of Minnesota to become one of the most beloved songwriters in America, seems different than the one in *Dont Look Back*. While Pennebaker didn't attempt to demonstrate Dylan's motivations, Scorsese provides an outlet for Dylan to explain himself. One of the major differences between these films is that the viewers of *Dont Look Back* must interpret the events for themselves and in *No Direction Home* Dylan and his colleagues interpret the events for the viewer. Viewers who have seen both films must reconcile the contrasting images provided by each film.

Many of the fans I interviewed recognized the controlled aspect of Scorsese's film. One fan referred to it as "more careful, more scripted." One fan said that "[*No Direction Home*] is Bob trying to write his own legacy." One called *No Direction Home* a documentary where Dylan "had much more control" and concluded that this film, along with *Chronicles: Volume One*, his XM satellite radio program, and the Bootleg Series live albums are all a "part of a multi-media assault [...] which lead to a number one album [2006's *Modern Times*]." One fan called *No Direction Home* "a much more professional (and hence sanitized) version of the story." The accuracy, or at least credibility, of the film seems to be called into question.

However, many fans fully buy into the new version of Dylan. One fan wrote that "I hear many people say after seeing [*No Direction Home*] that they now understand Bob Dylan better; understand more why he is the way he is and how he sees the world and his legacy. [*Dont Look Back*] just muddied the water more." This fan also considers *No Direction Home* to be "more accurate" because Dylan is "unmasked." The conclusion for this fan is that in *Dont Look Back* Pennebaker did not capture the "real" Dylan. He only filmed an actor. However, in *No Direction Home*, the "real" Dylan shines through.

Several fans appreciated the honesty and sincerity that Dylan presented in *No Direction Home*. One referred to "a different side to him, and one that I really like" in *No Direction Home*. Another plainly said, "[*No Direction Home*] is a much better film [...] and allows a much more rounded picture to emerge of the man and his art." Another claims that *No Direction Home* along with the radio show and *Chronicles: Volume One* "feature Bob in a more candid light than ever before." Many of these fans consider this film to have captured an authentic version of Dylan.

Another fan appreciated Scorsese's depiction of Dylan. By providing the explanations and intentions, Scorsese does not allow for the misinterpretation of Dylan.

This fan wrote:

[*No Direction Home*] is a much better film [than *Dont Look Back*]. It shows Dylan's humanity and humor as well as his exasperation at his fans dictates. It humanizes his image...allows a much more rounded picture to emerge of the man and his art. It is a wonderful film and I believe it redresses some of the damage done by *Dont Look Back*.

Many of these fans seem to accept Scorsese's presentation of Dylan as an accurate and appropriate depiction. A possible explanation for this is that Scorsese's film confirms much of the popular literature available about Dylan. The claims that Dylan makes in *Chronicles: Volume One* coincide with much of the claims made in *No Direction Home*. Because many of these fans already agreed with what was being presented, it only follows that they would fully accept it as accurate.

Dont Look Back functions similarly to a photograph, freezing Dylan in a fleeting moment in time. The narrative behind the film must be provided by the viewers. In *No Direction Home* the narrative is provided by Dylan and the spectators who witnessed the events take place. Scorsese crafts his film out of their memories and stories. The interpretive work of assigning intentions has been done for the viewer. The viewer is then forced to judge the narrative and intentions and decide what to do with them.

There are many strategies for viewers to confront a narrative when presented on film. As many fans did, they can fully accept the narrative. One fan wrote:

I was delighted with the film. I thought it showed the struggle that Dylan has (even to this day) with ‘fans’ who want to own or change him. This seems to me to be a heroic struggle and one that Scorsese captured the beginnings of brilliantly on film.

Another wrote, “It’s a real insight into his multifaceted personality.” Viewers can also reject the narrative presented in *No Direction Home*. None of the Dylan fans that I interviewed rejected the narrative entirely. Scorsese presented the information authoritatively, but used credible sources like Dylan, Baez, Van Rank, and many other firsthand witnesses. There was no reason for most Dylan fans to reject the narrative provided in the film. Viewers can integrate the narrative into their own version. One fan referred to Scorsese’s glossing over certain details of Dylan’s life: “more details about the motor accident, or drug use.” Another fan wrote, “A Dylan expert should have been on board to make sure this ‘definitive’ documentary was actually exhaustive as well as definitive.” Another strategy is to modify the narrative in the film to fit what they have already considered true. One fan wrote, “I loved [*No Direction Home*] but, again, was not surprised by it. It confirmed what I already knew.”

No Direction Home can easily be seen as “the perfect partner” to *Dont Look Back*, as one Dylan fan put it, because they discuss relatively the same time in Dylan’s life, but lead the viewer to different conclusions. Pennebaker tried to leave the conclusions completely in the hands of his audience, but many viewers found the film to function as an opprobrium, showing a darker side to the “prince of protest.” Many viewers of Scorsese’s film conclude that Dylan was indeed misinterpreted and misunderstood. By providing the rationale and context of Dylan’s actions, Scorsese thereby explains Dylan’s

actions to the audience, showing that it was not necessarily a bad side of Dylan, but that Dylan was in a bad situation.

These films show Bob Dylan as a young artist struggling with his new position as a rock 'n' roll icon. Yet they present different versions of Dylan. In Pennebaker's film, Dylan appeared to be a vehicle to promote Pennebaker's own views on the current state of journalism. In charging the mainstream media of being unable to capture truth, Pennebaker also demonstrated a side of Dylan who could be vicious, spiteful, angry, and difficult. Scorsese's film attempted to do the opposite. By providing the viewers with the appropriate context, Scorsese helped the audience understand Dylan as a victim of the treatment by fans, the folk community, and the press. Pennebaker allowed the audience to ascribe a narrative to Dylan's actions in order to make sense of the film. Scorsese provided a narrative as told by Dylan and his colleagues, and challenged the audience to accept, reject, modify, or integrate that narrative into their understanding of Dylan.

The presentation of one's identity is complicated in everyday life. On film the process gets even more complicated. These two films rhetorically presented Dylan's identity, something that cannot be accurately depicted in the limited time available on film. Regardless of the presentation, the meaning of the film is ultimately in the hands of the audience. By ascribing intentions or delivering a narrative, the audience is able to make sense of the images and draw conclusions about the subjects of the film. Undoubtedly, *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home*, provide Bob Dylan fans with a view of Dylan they would never receive from listening to his albums or even seeing him in concert. These films are an important part of the process of the fans' understanding and co-construction of Bob Dylan's identity.

CONCLUSION: THE DOCUMENTARY FILM AND EVERYDAY LIFE

To demonstrate the cultural significance of an artist like Bob Dylan, I need only point out the overwhelming amount of information available about him. Very few other cultural icons have received this amount of attention. His music has been recorded by hundreds of other artists. It seems that each year a new tribute album comes out. With this much information and material available, the documentary film must offer something different than the rest of the information. By using a visual image, the documentary film is able to present information in a uniquely engaging fashion. The documentary film offers an alternative form of information dissemination that other mainstream media cannot. The documentary film, specifically the rock 'n' roll documentary film, is important to the fans because it offers an alternative visual experience.

A rock 'n' roll documentary film offers a unique depiction of the world from one perspective in a way that a book, music video, record, or live concert cannot. Through providing a new way of seeing things, the documentary film allows the viewers to get close to an artist in an important way. The captivating part of these rock 'n' roll films cannot simply be the music— a record could do that. It cannot simply be the information— a biography could do that. It cannot simply be the pictures— photographs could do that. These films represent all of those and more with a moving image of an artist. By offering an alternative visual experience, the documentary film plays an important role in the culture of the fans.

The documentary film provides an alternative form of information. There is a level of credibility connected to such films. There are no commercials, no sales pitches and no interruptions— a far cry from the news media of today. Television seems now to offer as little information between commercials as possible, hoping to entice the viewer to continue watching. Game shows and talent competitions build a sense of drama with music and lighting, but before the drama is resolved, the viewer must sit through three more minutes of commercials for Pepsi or Coke, Tide or Era, Buick or Ford, Budweiser or Miller. News magazines like *60 Minutes* and *20/20* save the most interesting stories for the end, prompting viewers to watch the entire show, especially the commercial breaks. The mainstream media forces corporation after corporation into our minds so that the difference between programming and advertisement is either moot or indistinguishable.

The documentary film comes across as the anti-commercialized form of information or entertainment, an alternative to the mainstream media. To ignore the large studio money and corporate sponsorships that can be associated with the making of a documentary film would be a mistake, but a documentary film offers an uninterrupted, presentation of a truth, of someone's reality. Independent filmmakers document their lives and the lives of others, offering a different view of the world, a highly visual and intimately personal view of the world. The complexity of an issue, topic, or artist can be either simplified or further complicated through the filming process.

The documentary film, especially a film like D.A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back*, allows a very unique and, at that time, innovative way to look at a subject. Pennebaker's camera work would not be suitable for a Hollywood film or a network news program. The inaudible conversations, shaky camera work, and poor lighting add to the credibility

of the film and create an aesthetic that represents truth, accuracy, objectivity, journalistic integrity, and investigative tenacity. Documentary films offer alternative views of the world, and some fans depend on them for their information.

The rock 'n' roll documentary film also offers important visual images. The striking footage captured by D.A. Pennebaker in 1965 demonstrates this. Dylan looked surprisingly different than the baby-faced one that had appeared on the cover of his self-titled first record. In *Dont Look Back* he appeared more worldly, wiser, and harder. He looked different than the one walking arm-in-arm with then girlfriend Suze Rotolo on the cover of his second record, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. He was no longer the sweet, innocent youth. He looked different than the sober and stern image on the cover of his third album, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. He wasn't as concerned for others or as politically enraged. For many fans, the new image was strange and disconcerting. As the film moves along, Dylan seems further and further from those images offered earlier in his career.

For many fans, Pennebaker's depiction of Dylan was truly their first look at Dylan as a human being rather than as "Dylan the Artist." The film created a lasting visual image of "Dylan Behind the Scenes." When fans heard a record, they could picture him singing. They saw how he scowled when he bickered with the science student or smiled when joking with his friends. Watching Dylan do the ordinary parts of his everyday life was an important aspect of these films. How he lit a cigarette, how he typed at the typewriter, and how he read the newspaper on his hotel room bed are unimportant elements in his day to day life, but are important elements to the lasting humanized image

provided by the film. Bob Dylan the human is on display alongside Bob Dylan the rock star.

The images provided by Scorsese in *No Direction Home* have a similar effect. The archival images of Dylan show an earnest young man trying to make his imprint on a cutthroat and demanding industry. The images of Dylan's 1966 European tour show the striking conflicts between Dylan and some of his less-than-faithful fans. Scorsese also uses iconic images of the times. He shows images John F. Kennedy's motorcade, Mario Savio's arrest, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington. These images stir up immediate and unavoidable emotions in the audience. When combined with Dylan's music, these moments take on an important role in the story of Dylan and the identity that the audience attributes to Dylan. When the visual images are artfully shown with other images and powerful music, the emotional impact of each element is elevated. Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" is a powerful song, but when Scorsese places it over an image of young John F. Kennedy, Jr. at his father's funeral it takes on an entirely new meaning. That is the power of the documentary film: its ability to blend moving image and sound; archival and contemporary footage to create new worlds and alternate realities in which the fans can further explore their relationship to the artist.

The documentary film is an experience. It is an opportunity for the viewer to stand in the filmmakers' place and view the world from another perspective. Bill Nichols calls this the performative mode of the documentary film (Nichols 130). He writes, "Performative documentary seeks to move its audience into subjective alignment or affinity with its specific perspective on the world" (132). It is a way for the fan to have a virtual conversation with the icon, for the movie theater to become a Royal Albert Hall in

London, and for the neophyte fan to attend a rock concert in 1966. Another world can be captured on film, edited into ninety minutes, and projected on a screen for others to experience. This has been the goal and strength of the documentary film since Robert Flaherty pioneered the genre with *Nanook of the North*. Flaherty allowed viewers living thousands of miles from the Arctic north to experience the lives of the Inuits. The documentary film is able to construct a visual history, retell a story with moving images, and recreate an event for those who did not see it for themselves. By allowing viewers to experience a new world, taking them places they may never be able to visit, and showing them an event that will never recur, documentary films have the potential to affect an audience.

The documentary film offers an alternative visual experience for the viewer. *Dont Look Back* and *No Direction Home* are only two in a line of documentary films about Bob Dylan. There have been several films documenting different tours and different periods in Dylan's career. Because these two films were made by recognizable and talented filmmakers, they carry a level of importance beyond that of the other films. *Dont Look Back* was the first of its kind, the first "rockumentary" to document a rock icon in the cinema verite style. *No Direction Home* has proven to be the definitive film chronicling Dylan's rise to fame and the best use of Pennebaker's 1966 European tour footage. These films are not just interesting to Bob Dylan fans, but also are fine specimens of the documentary form.

Of course, these films carry a special importance for the Bob Dylan fan. By showing Dylan at one of his most interesting and creative periods, these films both provide the visual element that the records lack. These films also create an image of

Dylan for the viewers. Dylan fans have taken a particular stance towards these films. During my interviews with Dylan fans, I quickly understood that they minimize the importance of these films in their “relationship” with Dylan. When I asked them directly, “What do these films mean to your relationship to Dylan?” many claimed that these films had little impact on their feelings for Dylan and his music. One fan said, “I think most Dylan fans have a direct relationship with him through the albums— he’s that kind of artist.” This sentiment recurred throughout the interviews. One said, “All we really need to know is contained within the music.” Another claimed that music is “for sure the most important thing.” Another fan feels so strongly connected to Dylan and his music that he wrote:

If there was never any movie made about him, no book written trying to explain him, or people sitting around deciphering his lyrics he would still be the most powerful songwriter to me and that’s because every word he says I can relate to like I lived it. I feel like he has lived my life and is explaining it to me.

According to the fans, these films do not change the way Dylan’s music affects them. However, as I discussed in my third chapter, these films are important to the fans as they construct Dylan’s identity. They claim the films are entertaining, but cannot offer anything to their experience as true Bob Dylan fans. When asked to discuss what these films meant to them as Dylan fans, they admitted that their conception of Dylan, the images that hold true for them, have been influenced by Pennebaker’s and Scorsese’s films. Although these fans minimized the importance of these films, these films have

played a role in their interpretation of who Dylan is. His music is on his records. His identity is in these films.

This is the power of the documentary film. Filmmakers are able to combine visual evidence, music, and information to artistically present a particular point of view or a particular reality. Through these images audience members are taken to that world, presented with that reality, and forced to confront the images. In the rock 'n' roll documentary, fans are provided with a look into the lives of the artist. As the fan sees the artists in such a light, an intimate relationship is created. The fans can feel extremely close to the artist, while the artist is often completely unaware of the fans' sense of intimacy.

The documentary film, specifically the rock 'n' roll documentary film, allows the spectator—the fan—to explore their relationship to the subject—the artist—in a seemingly intimate way. The films created an arena for the fan to get to know the subject on what appears to be a very personal level. The close shots during an interview create the feel of a one-on-one conversation. The in-studio or backstage bickering between band members allows the viewer into an area where most people are banned. These films allow the fans to ride in the tour bus, hang out backstage, sit-in during the studio session, and have a beer with the band after a show. All of this is generated by a filmmaker capturing the moment and representing that moment with visuals.

The documentary film demonstrates a reality that would be otherwise impossible to know for the viewer. The viewers might be able to imagine the inner workings of a major tour, the backstage antics and sound check performances, but the documentary film brings the viewers to these events, sits them in the center of the theater or concert hall,

and shows them what the event is all about. This alternative visual experience gives viewers an insider's look at the subject from a uniquely visual perspective.

The documentary film plays an important role in the relationship between the subject and the viewer, the artist and the fan. The visual imagery concretizes the musical connection between the artist and the fan. Seeing the guitarist play, the singer move, and the drummer crash the cymbals creates a visual memory that can become inseparable from the music. I am probably not alone in saying whenever I hear The Band's "The Weight" I picture Martin Scorsese's capturing of the song on *The Last Waltz*. The visual and musical images blended into one picture, one meaning.

The documentary film provides a place for the fan to go to connect to the artist, experience the music, and appreciate the art form. Myths and legends are created and expanded, or debunked. Relationships are built upon the alternative visual experience; receiving information from someone on the inside. The passage of information is subtle and artistic, but powerful and moving. The experience may be virtual and simulated, but the effect is similar to the live event. As music and image are combined, the affective aspect of each medium is compounded into an emotional visual and musical whole. The fan pays homage to the artist. The artist gives the fan a look into their world—a view from the front row or backstage. In a documentary film, the images of rock 'n' roll are digitally printed on a five inch disk, shipped around the world, and can be just as rebellious, subversive, persuasive, and meaningful to the viewer in a movie theater as to the fan at the concert.

On film, the identity of the artist is as constructed and rhetorical as it always will be, but this is as close to the real artist as many fans will get. It may only be a virtual

experience, but through these films, fans establish real connections to and interpretations of the artist.

Dont Look Back and *No Direction Home* demonstrate the rhetorical presentation of identity. They claim to present the accurate depiction of the celebrity, but can only present a construction. Personal identity, in the way I have been discussing it, is co-constructed by the self and others. It is the way other people think of an individual— who that person is. Aristotle describes the art of rhetoric as “the available means of persuasion” (Griffin 304). If an individual wants others to think of him or her in a particular way, he or she must rhetorically present their identity in hopes of persuading those around to come to the desired conclusion. This is one of the reasons why the punk rocker wears eyeliner and a mohawk hair cut, why the hip hop artist wears gold chains, or why the avid golfer dresses like Tiger Woods. These actions have a rhetorical function: to convince others to interpret a particular identity about that person.

While much of our personal identity has a rhetorical aspect to it, when on film, it is all rhetorical. There are many selections that must be made during the process of filmmaking: Whom to shoot; when; and where? What to focus the camera on in a particular room? Whom to microphone? Which scenes go into the film; which are left out? Where to place scenes in the film? These decisions are not unlike the composition of a speech. The speech writer and filmmaker must decide what evidence goes where, what points should be emphasized, and what should be ignored. Identity is rhetorical, and the documentary film is an ideal format for the rhetorical presentation of identity.

Something as complex and ephemeral as one’s identity cannot be accurately captured by a documentary filmmaker; it can only be presented. This communicative

event requires the interpretation of the audience—the attaching of meaning to particular portions of the presentation. This explains how two people can watch a film and have two completely different understandings of the subject, just like two people can interact with an individual and have completely different opinions about that person. The rhetorical presentation of identity that takes place on a documentary film is exactly the same each time the film is shown. The difference comes from the people who are doing the interpreting—in the case of this study, the fans. Each fan has come to know Bob Dylan in a particular way—some by seeing him play in the early ‘60s in Greenwich Village before he became famous; others by listening to their parents’ old records forty years into his career. In each case the individual will carry with him or her a contextual/interpretive screen through which they will interpret the text. Their likes and dislikes, age and gender, socio-political status, and every other aspect of their lives will be incorporated into how they interpret the images on screen. Dylan’s identity, so to speak, is up to each individual audience member.

The filmmaker, speech writer, or individual presenting his or her own identity has a limited amount of control in the process. As I pointed out in chapter three, Pennebaker and Scorsese both contributed to the lasting interpretation of Dylan. The filmmakers give clues about what they think is important and accurate. The presentation becomes rhetorical when the presenter attempts to influence the interpretation or persuade the audience to adopt one opinion. Scorsese’s selective use of archival footage helped lead viewers to the conclusion that Dylan was misinterpreted by the masses. In the same way, academics use their grandiloquent vocabulary to identify themselves as erudite scholars,

and skateboards use terms to describe tricks that the layperson might never be able to decipher.

The rhetorical presentation of identity is not something that only filmmakers do or that only celebrities might consider. It is a process all individuals engage when expressing ourselves to another individual, when we associate ourselves with a particular group, or when we attempt to distinguish ourselves within that group. This is not to say that all action is rhetorical and intended to persuade. In fact, there are times when we might wish our actions did not represent our identity. But some of our action is meant to demonstrate who we are. This action is a rhetorical presentation of our identity.

The documentary films that I have studied have spoken directly to Bob Dylan's identity. They have rhetorically shown us how we should interpret his actions. The communication of one's identity requires interpretation by each individual through his or her contextual/interpretive screens. However, as demonstrated by these documentary films, we can offer clues, rhetorical devices, that might persuade others to interpret our identity in a particular way. These films are clear examples of the way identity can be rhetorically presented, and this study has examined the way the fans interpret that presentation.

ENDNOTES

1. There is some dispute over the apostrophe in *Dont Look Back*. The cover of the DVD and the title frame of the film exclude the apostrophe. It appears in all caps: DONT LOOK BACK. In spite of this, Barnouw, Ellis and McLane, Hajdu, Hishmeh, Marcus, Nichols, and Riley all refer to the film as “*Don’t Look Back*”— apostrophe included. Both Hall and Sounes refer to it without the apostrophe as it appears on the film. Sounes addresses the issue briefly, quoting Pennebaker: “It was my attempt [to] simplify the language” (Sounes 171). I will honor Pennebaker by referring to the film without the apostrophe.

2. According to Nichols, the poetic mode emphasizes literary concepts such as “tone, mood, and affect” rather than rhetoric (103). The expository mode uses voiceover commentary to give the impression of objectivity and truthfulness (105). The observational mode arrived from the technology of lighter, more portable cameras with synchronous sound. These films give the impression of the fly-on-the-wall perspective of the action (109-111). The participatory mode stems from the anthropological practice of entering the field and reporting what was found. These filmmakers participated in the world they are revealing to the audience (116). The reflexive mode often discusses the process and difficulty of representing the world on film (126). The performative mode attempts to get the audience not only to understand, but experience the world in the way the filmmaker does (132).

3. There are numerous occasions where a new technological advance spurred on a new style of art. The sync-sound, portable camera designed by Pennebaker and his colleagues at Drew Associates led to the cinema verite/direct cinema style that was so influential in the 1960s. When the sound and film were able to be linked up for the first time, fiction films were no longer silent films set to music and captions, but were now called “talkies” and filled with dialogue. In music, when cassette tapes were made available, a new form of music emerged from the streets. Rap artists were able to cheaply record and distribute their music on cassette.

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