

Kristine Castillo

Professor Elizabeth Hutchinson

ENG 2012- 0006

Word Count: 2559

11 November, 2019

Final Essay

*It's All Over Now, Baby Who?*

The individual's transition into budding adulthood is a stage in the development process that is coupled with reminiscing of a distant past, expunging previous unattainable desires of youthful idealisms. This passage is one that marks its own sets of complications regarding answering the more philosophical questions, such as: "Who am I?" "What is my purpose here?" "Will things ever get better in the end?" The romanticization of this maturation in various platforms of media, like literature or song or film, does seem to touch upon the individuals recognition that the ascertainment of a wider freedom and the solidification of one's understanding of the Self does manifest its own set of existential complications, however, these mediums seem to share the resolution that individuals will eventually "figure it all out" in the grand, ambiguous End. "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" by american singer and songwriter Bob Dylan is a folk song, illustrating "Baby Blue's" passing into the ever-looming next stage in life, yet does not conclude with Baby Blue convinced that he or she will "figure it all out". The text reads from a second person standpoint, with the speaker presumed to be talking to Baby Blue, yet I would interpret that Baby Blue is performing an internal dialogue with himself or herself in

order to prepare he or she for what is to come, therefore, I will be analyzing the text of *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue* from a psychoanalytic lens as well as arguing that the larger, cultural implications rest in contributing or influencing the genre of an almost anti-folk rock pathos.

### **Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis**

Sigmund Freud was the father of the psychological theory known as psychoanalysis which attempts to deconstruct the inner consciousness. Aside from his various psycho-dramatic models that manifest themselves in psychoanalytic theory, one of his major models was focalized on the id, ego, and the superego paradigm, introduced in Freud's paper titled "The Id and the Ego". He details that "the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions," and also that "the superego manifests itself essentially as a sense of guilt (or rather, as criticism...) and moreover develops such extraordinary harshness and severity towards the ego," (Freud 10-30). In other words, the ego is the facet characterized in pleasure seeking principles, the superego tends to uphold moral code, and the ego is the mediator between the two. Thus, there is a compromise of urges to a more healthy equilibrium of both the id and the superego: the ego.

Alongside his obvious endeavors to dissect the individual psyche, he was fascinated with art and the analyzation of it, stating that: "I must say at once that I am no connoisseur in art, but simply a layman... Nevertheless, works of art do exercise a powerful effect on me," (Burke 6). He even goes as far to state that, in regard to the Moses statue by Michelangelo, the Moses statue should be a point of interest in probing its deeper meaning (Library of Congress 1). Moreover, Freudian psychoanalytic theory has been applied countlessly to the field of art in an attempt to further investigate the ways in which art is essentially related to the psyche. Particularly, as I will

be analyzing a song, the theory is also applied to literature and music. In an academic journal titled “Psychoanalysis and Music” by Richard F. Sterba that details a report by S. Pfeifer published in Robert Lach’s book titled “Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der ornamentalen Melopoeie”, Pfeifer explores psychoanalytic findings in regards to music. Pfeifer is stated to “use the concept of regression to explain the ornament in music”, which is essentially viewed as providing introspection on primitive narcissism. Further, Lach attempts to vocalize the ways in which sexuality is intertwined closely in song, including the ways in which “sexual excitement” is communicated through song, an idea already expressed by Charles Darwin (Sterba 98). Thus the vast encompassment of sexuality can be alluded throughout the makeup of a song.

In another journal published by The American Journal of Psychiatry titled “Writings on Art and Literature” by Richard D. Chessick, Chessick argues that for Freud, the magnitude of how powerful a work of art is is dependant on the degree to which the audience is affected by it, (Chessick 1). Although there are innumerable pieces of music that do resonate heavily on a particular audience, the aftermath of such pieces may linger only slightly. Thus, the effect is substantial at a certain point in time, but the immortality of the piece is absent. The work is void of transcendence. However, the song “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue” is everlasting in contributing to an anti-folk rock culture.

### **Bob Dylan and the Folk Rock Movement**

During the 1960’s, Bob Dylan had written the song “Mr. Tambourine Man”, in which the song was soon later dubbed a classic. Richie Unterberger, author of “Turn! Turn! Turn!: The ‘60s Folk-rock Revolution”, where Unterberger attempts to examine the Folk-rock Revolution and implications on a larger culture, forms an analysis of “Mr. Tambourine Man”, stating that the

song was proficient in channeling or “evoking not just [the] escape from bondage but an altered state of perception,” (Unterberger 101). The song itself is a response to political trifles of the time and the abolition of such dilemmas, yet, interestingly, seems to take a more introspective approach, an approach that conflicts with the majority of folk-rock songs. In an academic article titled “The Seven Themes of Music Geography” written by Peter H. Nash and George O. Carney, American folk music seems to include a great deal of reference to “cultural hearths”. Further, folk-music was used as a major motivator in promoting a firm and communal national sentiment, (Carney, Nash 71). Thus, folk-music is indicative of a collective outlook. Yet, instead of reflecting on the nation as a singular body of people’s, “Mr. Tambourine Man” is more evocative of the behavior attributed to the singular body of an individual it would seem, with Dylan using words such as “me” and “I” in his lyrics, such as in the line “I’m ready to go anywhere I’m ready for to fade”, proving a stark divergence from usual, (Dylan 1). Yet, that is not to say that the song is entirely dedicated to the individual pneuma.

A year later, Dylan wrote the song “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”. Similar to it’s predecessor, the song details heavily on the individual rather than taking an entirely collectivist approach, differing strikingly with the themes attributed to folk. However, in contrast to “Mr. Tambourine Man”, “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue” contains a hint of doubt and worry in the lyrics. “Mr. Tambourine Man”, on the other hand, indicates a more grounded or defined air in the lyrics, with the speaker being firm in his pronouncements. “Mr. Tambourine Man” does take into account the individual, however, the individual is seen more as a character, with the speaker being a spectator to the unnamed characters actions. In the song, Dylan states that “In the jingle jangle morning, I’ll come followin’ you,” which notably includes some hints of collectivism,

however, “followin’” is a decision that was up to the character at hand. Therefore “Mr. Tambourine Man” is not a prime example of a piece straying fully from the genre norms. Although “Mr. Tambourine Man” does channel the individual in the lyrics, the lyrics do not detail the processes of the mind and what may inspire certain feelings, and instead, simply states an already solidified assertion to comply with the other crowd. Therefore, although the character defines themselves as nonconformist to the ideals of the populous, they are still a piece of the collective “other”, ultimately proving “Mr. Tambourine Man” to be not exclusively anti-folk rock as it is not inherently individualistic. “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”, on the other hand, may be.

The primary reason for selecting the song is due to the implications of an anti-folk rock genre throughout Dylan’s piece that inspired that social culture of individualistic selfhood rather than a nationalistic character. The lyrics detail the ambiguous figure of Baby Blue and his or her introduction into this new world for himself or herself. For the purposes of narrowing the scope of this essay, rather than paying particular attention to the musical elements of the piece, I will be analyzing the lyrics.

### **Application**

Dylan begins with a harmonica played at *forte*, or played loudly, that then transitions into an immediate *diminuendo*, or *decrescendo*, all melding cohesively and richly with a somber, yet nostalgic acoustic guitar. It’s an almost melancholic lyricism. His first lines read:

*“You must leave now, take what you need, you think will last*

*But whatever you wish to keep, you better grab it fast*

*Yonder stands your orphan with his gun...” (Dylan 1).*

There is a certain degree of cynicism when reflecting upon a sort of “hope for a better future” that seems to be a topic of animosity for Dylan, with the character Baby Blue holding onto some idealized version of Baby Blue’s past life or self. Baby Blue is weary in his or her affirmation that the future is unable to give him or her the same highs and “good times” as his/ her past experience. This past, to Baby Blue is fading and is telling himself or herself to “take what [Baby Blue] need[s], what [Baby Blue] think[s] will last” invoking what can be described as a “red pill- like” dreamscape that is all things quixotic. Because despite the “better time” that the past was for Baby Blue that is apparently fading, the past is a site that, for all, holds an unavoidable lachrymose that Baby Blue chooses not to excavate possibly due to fear of failure, whatever he/ she may determine that to be, in discerning what he/ she wants. Because, in the end, it is easier being a child. The use of the word “orphan” induces feelings of singularity and the “gun” may be suggestive of the weight of worry that Baby Blue is now faced with. Dylan also states:

*“The highway is for gamblers, better use your sense*

*Take what you have gathered from coincidence...” (Dylan 1).*

Baby Blue is uncertain of what he or she wants in the coming future, however, he or she wants to take a path contrary to the collective, as it may be an “easy way out”. “The highway” is symbolic of the path that the majority chooses to follow, and Baby Blue desires an unknown “something” that goes beyond the mundane. He or she is aware that if they were to pursue the inclinations of the majority, it would be a “coin toss” or a “dice roll” to whether that would precipitate a sense of contentedness in their life. There is a sense of brief security that exists when choosing a path that is already “laid out”, as it prevents the individual from having to

make any decisions for themselves. For Baby Blue, that security is null of permanence.

Therefore, that road is a gamble in regard to his or her perception of what fulfillment is. Baby Blue, instead, collects the lessons learned from past experiences and pursues his or her own path, learnings “gathered from coincidence”, yet, his or her feelings of fulfillment is unguaranteed.

Dylan continues:

*“The empty handed painter from your streets/ Is drawing crazy patterns on your sheets.../  
All your seasick sailors, they are rowing home/ Your empty handed armies are going  
home/ Your lover who just walked out the door/ Has taken all his blankets from the  
floor,”* (Dylan 1).

Baby Blue in this citation, who dips his or her toes into “adulthood”, is perceived to have a temporary fulfillment that is soon interrupted by disenchantment in regard to a sexual experience. “The empty handed painter” may be a random individual that he or she shares this experience with that is “drawing crazy patterns in [Baby Blues] sheets.” This brief instance of affection is passing, with the “seasick sailor” returning back to their own life right after, picking their things off the floor. Baby Blue feels an incompleteness succeeding a moment that is presumed to be a time of satisfaction, and is cognizant that affection does not entail “happiness” in his or her own life, referring to himself or herself as an “empty handed army” following the act. Previously, he or she describes his or her worry as a “gun”. However, his or her worry and doubt has only increased exponentially, as it is now sizable to an “army.” Sex, a presumably human impulse, only prompts a pulsing sadness in Baby Blue. Dylan continues:

*“The sky too is folding under you... /The carpet too is moving under you... /The vagabond who's rapping at your door/ Is standing in the clothes that you once wore/ Strike another match, go start anew/ And it's all over now, Baby Blue,” (Dylan 1).*

Baby Blue is plagued with an overwhelming degree of pressure in his or her life, with “the sky folding [under] him”, or the world seeming to fall apart around Baby Blue. Simply stated, nothing is going right. The carpet that is moving under Baby Blue is representative of “blanketing the issue”, which can be described as putting a metaphorical “blanket” over a problem or “sweeping it under the rug” until, eventually, the problem enlarges and cannot be kept under the rug any longer. Baby Blue, then, is overcome with an unbearable degree of stress. “The vagabond” is indicative of Baby Blue’s past self, a site that he or she revisits, reflective of “better times”. Yet, regardless of his or her trials and tribulations, Baby Blue is hopeful, as he or she is “striking another match”. Baby Blue, who, throughout the song, continues to repeat “it's all over now, Baby Blue”, is doubtful that things will ever change for the better and may be interpreted as experiencing periods of despondency and self-debasement. Yet in the end, his last “it's all over now, Baby Blue” is characteristic of Baby Blue’s internal rebirth, telling himself or herself that the act of self pitying is one that does not prompt any edification to the Self, rather, confines the individual to an almost comfortable sadness. Baby Blue declares that things are “bad”, and ends his dialogue with another attempt to cultivate optimism, determining that that period of an almost learned helplessness is “over now”.

## **Conclusion**



For our anti-hero Baby Blue, the Self is flawed. Introspection is, as described in the song, a burdensome and almost futile endeavor. Perhaps the urgency to scrutinize the processes of the mind and its inner mechanics may be, for some, a task too arduous to pursue as the difficulty of delving into what may motivate an individual to engage in certain behaviors, as one example, rests not in the actualization that the mind, not the brain, is an incorporeal substance, and the intimate spaces that constitute it is too large of a scope of itself. Regardless, a wearing task does not equate to a trivalty and there is merit in exploring something as unfathomable and as intrinsically vulnerable as the human itself. And the human is not defined by their physical makeup, being the physical body, but of the emotions and passions and depth of character that make up the Self.

## Works Cited

Burke, Janine. "The Shrine of the Dream Collector." *Monash University Museum of Art*, 2008, pp. 6.

<https://sydney.edu.au/museums/images/content/exhibitions-events/freud/freud-catalogue.pdf> . Accessed 7 Dec. 2019.

Carney, George O., and Peter H. Nash. "The Seven Themes of Music Geography." *The Canadian Geographer*, Vol 40, No. 1, 1996, 71.

Chessick, Richard D. "Writings on Art and Literature." *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1998 pp. 290. <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/ajp.155.12.1793>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2019.

Dylan, Bob. "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." *Bringing It All Back Home*, Columbia Records, 1965. <https://open.spotify.com/track/4EgKcG7aswxVfQEqa3dl8S?si=cuG7WzRdQZeuvq0erh12Xg>

Dylan, Bob. "Mr. Tambourine Man." *Bringing It All Back Home*, Columbia Records, 1965. <https://open.spotify.com/track/3RkQ3UwOyPqpliIvGVewuU?si=wsSig27TRUyxmC1-9X-xRA>

Freud, Sigmund. "The Ego and the Id." *2015-Present www.SigmundFreud.net*, 1923, pp. 10-30. <https://www.sigmundfreud.net/the-ego-and-the-id-pdf-ebook.jsp> . Accessed 7 Dec. 2019.

“Sigmund Freud: Conflict & Culture.” *Library of Congress*.

Sterba, Richard F. “Psychoanalysis and Music.” *American Imago*, Vol 22, No. ½, 1965, 98.

Unterberger, Richie. “Turn! Turn! Turn!: The ‘60s Folk-rock Revolution.” San Francisco, Backbeat Books, 2002.