THE LYRIC FOLKLORE OF THE AMERICAN
YOUTH CULTURE OF THE SIXTIES

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Out of the rock 'n' roll of the fifties and the topical and freedom-song movements of the early sixties evolved the cultural literature of today's late adolescent--folk rock. As the folk-like literature of America's youth culture, this poetic-sociological-musical genre reflects the values, anxieties, immediate concerns, life-style, and idiom of this group. The performers are young songwriters who act as spokesmen and alter egos for the cultural group of which they are a part. The leading songwriter-performer is Bob Dylan. He formally united rock music and protest lyrics for a generation that had grown up with rock 'n' roll and had also witnessed a strong politically-oriented folk-song revival. To understand the development of folk rock as folklore, one must have a knowledge of certain social and economic aspects of American youth culture, as well as some understanding of the musical and environmental heritage of the group.

The American youth culture has been variously defined as the "war babies," teen-agers of the fifties, and the "rock 'n' roll generation." Born during the Second World War, many went through infancy without a father. For some there
is the recollection of the homecoming of "a stranger in uniform"; for others, he never returned. Since occupational concerns at home and then the Korean Conflict followed in such rapid succession, a large number of youths had no opportunity to establish a father-image during their pre-teen years. For the most part, the maternal influence overwhelmingly dominated these years—as reflected in later values and ideals. It is also significant that the childhood of these youths occurred during a decade of war and rumors of war.

According to a survey of the youth culture published by the American Academy of Political and Social Science in 1961, 57 per cent of the nineteen million teen-agers of the fifties lived in the cities.¹ Theirs was essentially a leisure-class culture as a result of the postwar affluence of their parents. And Madison Avenue was the first to recognize the buying power of young people, as it established one youth fad after another, from hula hoops to sidewalk surfboards, from leather jackets to ivy league pants. In catering to youth, advertisers took the side of the teenager against parent, teacher, or minister, who often disciplined, restricted, or denied. The result was the

beginning of a generation gap. The gap was widened on the material level by the conflicting values of an affluent youth and their *nouveau-riche* parents who had gone through adolescence during the Depression.

The American Academy of Political and Social Science further characterizes youth culture as a lower-middle-class phenomenon during early teens, and an upper-middle-class phenomenon during late teens, when young single men outnumber young women by about half. Thus a stereotype of the youth culture might be identified as an upper-middle-class male of urban background, who has experienced affluence all of his life, and goes on to college free of the responsibilities of military service and marriage. It is interesting to note that practically all of the later topical and folk-rock songwriter-performers fit this pattern.

Sociologist Jessie Bernard points out that "the values and preoccupations of teen-age culture may be discovered by analyzing those aspects of the mass media beamed directly to them: teen-age periodicals and popular records." Such an analysis during the fifties revealed heavy emphasis upon material possessions—especially of a car, which frequently became a dominant motivating force, leaving little time or interest for other activities. Social acceptance through conformity in dress, beliefs, tastes, and grooming was also

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of major importance and minimized the class structure. Teenage magazines played upon two words--fun and popular. And a survey of all categories of popular songs of the era revealed that well over half dealt with courtship and the downward course of love.\(^3\) The typical lyrics were simple, sad, and sexy--or completely nonsensical.

In light of the youth involvement in politics and social movements during the sixties, it comes as some surprise to learn that polls of high school students in the fifties revealed that

One of the commonest characteristics of American teen-agers . . . has been that, in alleged contrast to those of some other societies, they are politically apathetic. Interest in politics is not an integral part of teen-age culture.\(^4\)

When political opinions were expressed, they generally reflected class background; i.e., the lower-class youth were more likely than the upper-class to be liberal, except with respect to civil liberties and race relations.\(^5\) Even as late as 1960, white teen-agers remained largely unresponsive to the civil rights movement. The majority remained "uninvolved with the serious issues of our times."\(^6\) By way


\(^5\)Ibid.

of summary of youth culture values, Ernest Smith says:

Although the peer associations of youth may largely evade adult control, there are several pervasive areas within which youth behavior is patterned by adult norms and institutions. The broadest areas involving political, religious, property, and linguistic systems.

But beneath the facade of American youth culture, as described by the Academy of Political and Social Sciences, there was a strong subterranean tradition that emerged in protest activity regarded by some as "merely a teen-age fad." Prior to the civil rights movement of the early sixties, when it became popular among teen-agers to sympathize with the Negro, the spirit of protest prevailed only among the collegiate "beatnik" and the young Negro himself. The movement at this time was essentially pacific or non-violent, but it had all the markings of student radicalism: the vision of apocalypse, faith in populism, and even evangelism—as reflected in the readings of Allen Ginsberg. Although the youth culture of the fifties was not immediately involved with the beatniks and early civil rights activities, these teen-agers were vicariously oriented toward revolutionary radicalism. And though the sociologist David Matza contended in 1961 that "the great majority of vulnerable youth are barely touched by these

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8Himes, "Negro Teen-Age Culture," p. 100.
the influence of Bohemian culture was to be fully realized by the mid-sixties, even to the extent of unrestrained pursuit of hedonistic experiences and quest for transcendence.

Influential environmental lore was passed on to the media-nurtured generation by radio, phonograph, television, and movies. Born at the same time that the transistor was developed, this generation was unique—electronically turned on, tuned in, and involved with songs from the earliest moment of memory. The mass media made possible a universally-shared folklore of American youth culture. A significant development of the media was the invasion of the home by television during the late forties and early fifties, providing a convenient, idealistically-oriented baby-sitter for the children and putting a heavy demand upon radio to survive until rock music replaced serials and interviews. Then the magnetic tape recorder made record production a comparatively easy and inexpensive process, and small companies were ready to take chances with unknown personalities who had a promising big-beat sound. Finally, the movie industry foresaw profit in catering to young audiences with inexpensively produced movies that glorified the teen-age singing idol.

The purpose of this study is to survey the song lore of the American youth culture, beginning with the rock 'n' roll era of the fifties, treating the topical-folksong movement of the early sixties, and finally focusing upon the folk-rock genre that resulted from an amalgamation of the two forms of expression. In addition to the art of folk rock and the cultural values reflected in the lyrics, attention will be given to the folk aspects of the performance, the life-style of the performer, and the participation of the youth as a cultural group.
CHAPTER II

ROCK 'N' ROLL: ORIGIN OF A FOLKLORE

"Rock 'n' roll," a term used as early as 1951 by Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed, grew out of the Negro musical heritage of rhythm and blues and the country and western music of a segment of white society. It appeared as a separate popular form in 1954, with Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock," and found its hero, Elvis Presley, in 1955. Before this time the popular music had become so languid and soupy that the young people could no longer dance to it, and jazz headed farther out in its appeal to the intellect. In retrospect, rock 'n' roll, characterized by heavy primitive beat and loud electronic support of lyrical voids, was an inevitable product of the electronic generation. At the time, though, there were a variety of explanations for its appearance. Birmingham champions of white supremacy decried it as part of a Negro plot against the South. Asa E. Carter, whom Time identified as the "self-appointed leader of the North Alabama Citizens Council," said, "rock and roll is the basic, heavy-beat music of Negroes. It appeals to the base in man, brings out
animalism and vulgarity." Of course, if "animalism and vulgarity" can be interpreted as soul, his description is fairly accurate. Some psychologists felt that rock 'n' roll's deepest appeal was to the teen-agers' need to belong, and it was observed that "the results bear passing resemblance to Hitler mass meetings." According to music historian John Rublowsky, "Critics dismissed the genre as musical dross, convinced that its primitive rhythms, wailing singing styles, and melodic simplicity could never sustain prolonged interest--even among teenagers." Many parents believed that the rhythmic tumult was foisted off on their children as music by enterprising recording companies. But that rock 'n' roll was actually adopted by the youth as their own music is revealed by the fact that the taste makers and manipulators fought it all through its early development. "They capitulated only when they realized that their old stock in trade no longer had a market."

Through the electronic media, rock 'n' roll established an audience across regional, racial, and ethnic boundaries and broke down distinctions in musical tastes. Elvis

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1"Yeh-heh-heh-hes, Baby: Rock 'n' Roll" (author not given) *Time*, LXVII (June 18, 1956), 54.
2Ibid.
4Ibid., p. 100.
Presley, who "came out of country and western with a liberal admixture of rhythm and blues and something of the gospel spirit," produced "a new synthesis that was so potent that millions of teenagers . . . hailed it as the voice of their generation."\(^5\) Elvis' "Heartbreak Hotel" was number one on all three lists—country and western, rhythm and blues, and popular. Thus rock 'n' roll became the musical expression of the transistor generation.

For the most part, the lyrics of these songs were simplifications of the fundamental boy-meets-girl syndrome. Some, like those written by Chuck Berry, were of pure energy and motion, in which rock bands "were goin' like a hurrican!" and "the folks dancin' got all shook up." School was endured period by period until the final bell signaled release for rock 'n' roll dancing. Another aspect of the lyrics was the nonsense words—"sha da da da," "yeh yeh yeh," and "yip yip yip"—which for many of the older generation characterized all the songs. Obviously the primary purpose of the typical rock 'n' roll song of the fifties was "to convey mood, not meaning."\(^6\) In his article defending rock 'n' roll as characteristic of a folk genre, Carl I. Belz says:

> A standard and often cited quality of traditional folk music is the hypnotic power of the individual

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 102.

song. In other words, one listens to, or sings, the song as an experience of feeling, rather than intellectualizing the words as any kind of end in themselves . . . . The lyrics of rock 'n' roll are then experienced not for the way in which they make reasonable sense, not for their intellectual insights into the problems of the human condition, but as part of an experience in the here and now, something which often wraps the listener, the dancer, or the performer within an aura of feeling— that accepts the music rather than trying to make sense out of it in intellectual terms. As the mind gives way to such enchanting rhythms, so must this kind of experiential phenomenon be considered hypnotic.7

But at the peak of the rock 'n' roll era there were songs that suggested the widening generation gap and an undercurrent of protest against the Establishment. "Yakety Yak" is considered by Richard Goldstein to be the great grandfather of Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues." (See Figure 1.) Even Chuck Berry lashed out with

Yeah, I'm doing all right in school,
They ain't said I've broke no rule,
I ain't never been in Dutch,
I don't browse around too much;
Don't bother me, leave me alone,
Anyway I'm almost grown.

I don't run around with no mob,
I got myself a little job.
I'm gonna buy myself a little car,
I'll drive my girl in the park;
Don't bother me, leave me alone,
Anyway I'm almost grown.

And the frustration of the youth culture was expressed in a number of songs before the overt protest movement of the

YAKETY YAK

Take out the papers and the trash
Or you don't get no spending cash.
If you don't scrub that kitchen floor
You ain't gonna rock and roll no more.
Yakety-yak
Don't talk back.

Just finish cleaning up your room,
Let's see the dust fly with that broom.
Get all the garbage out of sight,
Or you don't go out Friday night.
Yakety-yak
Don't talk back.

You just put on your coat and hat,
And walk yourself to the laundromat.
And when you finish doing that,
Bring in the dog and put out the cat.
Yakety-yak
Don't talk back.

Don't you give me no dirty looks,
Your father's hip, he knows what cooks.
Just tell your hoodlum friend outside,
You ain't got time to take a ride.
Yakety-yak
Don't talk back.

Yakety-yak
Yakety-yak

--Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller

SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES

Get sick get well
Hang around an ink well
Ring bell hard to tell
If anything is goin' to sell
Try hard, get barred
Get back, write braille
Join the army, if you fail
Look out kid, you're gonna get hit
But users, cheaters
Six time losers
Hang around the theatres
Girl by the whirlpool
Lookin' for a new fool
Don't follow leaders
Watch the parkin' meters.

Ah, get born, keep warm
Short pants, romance, learn to dance
Get dressed, get blessed
Try to be a success
Please her, please him, buy gifts
Don't steal, don't lift
Twenty years of schoolin'
And they put you on the day shift
Look out kid, they keep it all hid
Better jump down a manhole
Light yourself a candle, don't wear sandals
Try to avoid the scandals
Don't wanna be a bum
You better chew gum
The pump don't work
'Cause the Vandals took the handles.

--Bob Dylan

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Fig. 1--Comparison of "Yakety Yak" and "Subterranean Homesick Blues"
sixties. "That's Life (That's Tough)" tells of situations of impasse confronted by teen-agers every day:

When things go wrong, this always happens to me,
I never get no answers or sympathy.
They just say,
"Oh oh that's tough."

One time in school I failed in history.
Said to the teacher, "Why'd this happen to me?
It couldn't be my fault."
But just to cheer up she said,
"Oh oh that's tough."

What's tough?
Life.
What's life?
A magazine.
How much does it cost?
It costs twenty cents.
I only got a nickel.
Oh oh that's tough.

And then I got a call from Uncle Sam.
Went into town to see the draft board man.
I thought if I told him of all my luck,
He'd just say,
"Oh oh that's tough."

Is that all you're gonna say to me?
That's tough.
Won't anybody even listen to me?
That's tough.
You're all against me--all of you!
That's tough.
Why don't you say somethin' else?
That's tough.

Thus rock 'n' roll became not only a physical release for emotions through music, but also a lyrical and emphatic expression of many of the concerns of the youth culture. When these concerns began to encompass social and political problems in the rock lyrics of the sixties, there was a danger that the message of the song would be negated by the
music or dissipated by the audience's reaction to it. In an *Atlantic Monthly* article Jeremy Larner observed:

> Rock 'n' roll is always doing two things at once. If it seems to be encouraging riot and destruction, note that it is dissipating riotous and destructive impulses before they can be turned into action.8

After the peak year of 1957, when forty of the top sixty songs were classified as rock 'n' roll, the movement began waning, and, by 1959, rock record sales had dropped 30 per cent. But two other movements were in progress on the popular level that were to affect rock of the sixties significantly. First, there was a growing popularity of a few showmen folksingers like Harry Belafonte and the Kingston Trio, who made a hit of "Tom Dooley" in 1958. For the youth culture of the fifties, these television stars were a first exposure to the folk revival that Pete Seeger and friends of the magazine *Sing Out!* had nurtured through the rock-'n'-roll decade. The other significant movement was the widespread formation of rock groups, as indicated by the boom in guitar sales during the early sixties. The teen-agers who were in the basement, back yard, and garage studying the rock-'n'-roll stars of the fifties were to become the performers of the new rock in the next decade.

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8Jeremy Larner, "What Do They Get From Rock 'n' Roll?," *Atlantic*, CCXIV (August, 1964), 47.
CHAPTER III

TOPICAL SONG MOVEMENT: EMERGENCE OF THE SONGWRITER-PERFORMER

During the early sixties the generation that had grown up on rock 'n' roll was in college. By then the folk revival chronicled and sanctioned by Sing Out!, which doubled its subscription in 1960, was beginning to reach these young people extensively. Folksong clubs, hootenannies, and folk festivals became common fare on college campuses from Berkeley to Columbia. FM radio stations that played nothing but folk began popping up all over the country. For the first time in the history of American popular music, protest songs were at the top of the charts. Peter, Paul, and Mary made a hit of Pete Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," and their version of Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" had an unprecedented sale of 320,000 copies in one week. A climax was reached at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival when an audience of 46,000, mostly college students, was entertained by both the popular performers--Peter, Paul, and Mary; Bob Dylan; Joan Baez; and the Smothers Brothers--and the traditional folksingers--Frank Proffitt, Horton Barker, Doc Watson, Jean Ritchie, and the Clancy Brothers.
At first it appears to be an almost inexplicable phenomenon that the "teeny-boppers" of the fifties should have suddenly joined the latest folk revival. But according to musicologist Arnold Shaw,

rock 'n' roll prepared the ground for the folk craze. Lacking the beauty and poetry of folk song, it embodied its ebullient rhythms, its simple, angular harmonies and its stark, primitive melodies. Moreover it permitted teenagers to discharge their feelings of conflict with the older generation and led them to seek new values through folk music.¹

Some have suggested that the trend was a part of the do-it-yourself craze. The youth were tired of being sung to and were now discovering a voice of their own. One popular magazine proposed that the folksinging provided the students with a sense of togetherness and helped them channel their feelings against a "brutal and threatening world."²

At first the ethnic purists resented this new influx of "folkniks," who in many cases made inappropriate improvisations upon the traditional songs that had been collected earlier in the century and later popularized by folksingers like Pete Seeger and Burl Ives. Some believed that the real American folk music was limited to that which came from isolated cultures and told simply of the pioneering

¹Arnold Shaw, "Gitars [sic], Folk Songs and Halls of Ivy," Harper's, CCXXIX (November, 1964), 36.

spirit, hard work, disappointments, and common experiences of the rural life. Furthermore, the only true folksingers were those who had grown up in such cultures and sang the songs learned at "mother's knee" in the tradition of Leadbelly, Cisco Houston, and Doc Watson. The conflict between the purists and the new-wave infiltration came to a head at the 1963 Winter Meeting of the New York Folklore Society. Ben A. Botkin quoted Pete Seeger as having said that the initial folksong revival had begun in the thirties "with professors digging up the bones of folksongs and transferring them from one grave to another." Then Oscar Brand followed this with the contention that recent compositions by one person could certainly meet the demands of a folksong, whereas a banal song collected as folk music, e.g., "Home on the Range," might have no more quality of poetry than Tin Pan Alley products. On another occasion Brand said, "The youth of today, torn by the insecurity and general immorality of the times have turned to the stability and the simplicity implicit in traditional songs."

Once the youth had identified with the folksong revival, the next step was to give musical expression to contemporary concerns. This expression came in the forms of freedom

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4Ibid., p. 92.

5Shaw, "Gitars [sic], Folk Songs and Halls of Ivy," p. 38.
songs from the South and topical songs from the North. As Time noted, "Instead of keening over the poor old cowpoke who died in the streets of Laredo," they were suddenly "singing with hot-eyed fervor about police dogs and racial murder."6

A leading personality in the freedom-song movement of the South was the white folksinger Guy Carawan, who with his wife Candie collected and spread the songs that grew out of the civil rights activities. While at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, Carawan added beat to Zilphia Horton's "We Shall Overcome," used among the tobacco workers on strike in the forties, and first taught the song to a group of the 1960 sit-in leaders. He was later responsible for collecting additional verses and making it the theme song of the civil rights movement. Realizing the twofold influence of singing freedom songs—to bolster the spirits of the demonstrators and to disarm policemen and bystanders of their hostilities—Carawan began conducting conferences for song leaders. In Nashville, Raleigh, Atlanta, and at Highlander, he re-introduced and encouraged the singing of such songs as "Oh Freedom," "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," "We Are Soldiers," and "We Shall Not be Moved." To these songs, drawn from traditional

6"They Hear America Singing" (author not given), Time, LXXXII (July 19, 1963), 53.
hymns and spirituals, were added parodies of popular rhythms and blues contributed by the Nashville Quartet of the American Baptist Theological Seminary. Little Willie John's "You Better Leave my Little Kitten Alone" became:

You'd better leave segregation alone
Because they love segregation
Like a hound dog loves a bone, a bone.

Well, I went down to the dime store
to get some eats.
They put me in jail when I sat
on them folk's seats.

And Hank Snow's "Moving On" was revised to form a narrative about the personified Jim Crow:

Well, I thought they was jiving about Jim Crow's gone
But I went down to his house and he sure wasn't home
He's moving on (keep moving on)
Old Jim Crow's been here but now he's moving on.

Another song with rock 'n' roll beat--"Dog, Dog"--told of two dogs, one black and one white, that could get along together. Finally, a small miscellany of songs was imported from the North, including a couple of revised union songs and a handful of newly-adapted folksongs. But until the Atlanta "Sing for Freedom" in May of 1964, there was little contact or exchange of songs between folksingers of the North and freedom-song leaders of the South.

8Ibid., p. 99.
However, the civil rights movement itself had a tremendous influence upon the youth all across the country. By the end of 1960, news coverage of the sit-in's was "putting an end to student apathy." \(^9\) Young people began sympathy picketing against the chain stores that were discriminating in their Southern branches. Shocked out of their lethargy, the students had an increased willingness to think, and their demand to be free to listen to anyone brought a powerful civil liberties movement to the campus. Finally the void of a generation without a cause was filled. And the spokesman was the young songwriter who was sparked by disillusionment and anger. Josh Dunson describes him as one who has gone through the hardship of rejecting the values of his parents and those he had considered infallible during childhood. His rejections of segregation, war and exploitation often grows into a conviction that none of the older people knew what they were doing when they made or tried to remake the world. He has little faith in their organizations even when their goals may have been and still are similar.\(^{10}\)

These young minstrels produced a wealth of topical songs during the sixties—a decade which may prove to be one of folk music's most valuable and productive eras.

Of course, America has experienced many topical song movements, but never did this protest form have as

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 31.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., pp. 47-48.
widespread popular acceptance as the topical songs produced from 1961 through 1965. While their teen-age and pre-teen-age brothers and sisters were being "sent" by the Beatles, the college youth were giving expression to concerns ranging from the absurdity of war to the death of Marilyn Monroe. According to one of the leading topical songwriters, Phil Ochs, "In the fifties young people had a rebellion without a cause. In the sixties we have so many causes we don't know what to sing, write, or just do something about first."11

Perhaps the two most influential personalities for this new outburst of song were Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. These respected folk fathers had established a precedent for topical songs as early as the thirties, when "Oakie" Woody Guthrie was roaming across the country lamenting the plight of the common man as a result of the Depression; and Seeger, a Harvard dropout, was singing with The Almanacs. Both of these singers had their traditional roots in the song movement of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)--the organization producing the largest number of topical songs before the civil rights freedom movement of the sixties. It was in the personality and artistry of Woody Guthrie that most of the young songwriters found a model. His rambler life-style inspired many of the young

people of the sixties to hitchhike across country with knapsack and guitar. Supposedly, it was to see his hospitalized idol that Bob Dylan made his pilgrimage to New York. And in "Song to Woody" he expressed the respect that many of his fellows felt:

Hey, Woody Guthrie, but I know that you know,
All the things that I'm a-sayin' and
a-many times more,
I'm a-singin' you the song, but
I can't sing enough
'Cause there's not many men that done
the things that you've done.

I'm a-leavin' tomorrow, but I could leave today,
Somewhere down the road some day;
The ver' last thing that I'd want to do
Is to say I've been hittin' some hard travellin'
too.

Even Dylan's early singing style--complete with harmonica suspended from his neck--was patterned after that of Woody Guthrie.

But because of Guthrie's illness during the fifties, it was left to Pete Seeger to span generations with a popular topical song tradition. He maintained interest in material of social significance through college appearances and with his Gazette albums for Folkways records, based on the idea of song as living newspaper. Then by 1959, he was supported by the increasingly popular Sing Out!, with its "Folk Process" column; by the publication of The Bosses Song Book, giving songwriters a potential place to publish; and finally by the appearance of an unknown who gained popularity as a singer of his own topical songs--Bill McAdoo. As Seeger
continued to give concerts, he always included some of the new topical material. And his "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" and the "Hammer Song"--pleas for peace and freedom, respectively--helped pave the way for Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," a song that treated both themes.

Like Pete Seeger, the leading songwriter-performers of the sixties came from college campuses. But unlike their predecessor, they were not out to endorse a world system or even an organization. Instead, they sang of their disgust with the values of the preceding generation. Reflective of a youth culture that had experienced wartime, impending war, and early adolescent disillusionment, the young writers' dreams of the future were nightmares of nuclear destruction, a revolution's betrayal, and a selling out. Although burdened with the concerns of world affairs, these under-aged youths felt that they had no influence upon the tide of events. Thus it is not surprising that Phil Ochs' fatalistic "There But for Fortune" became so popular when sung by Joan Baez:

Show me a country where bombs had to fall,
Show me the ruins of the buildings once so tall,
And I'll show you a young land with so many reasons why,
There but for fortune go you, or I.

Perhaps the most distinctive quality of the new wave of topical songs is their subtlety. The rhetorical question replaces the outright accusation in earlier topical songs.
About war Dylan asks:

How many times must the cannon balls fly
before they're forever banned?

And of civil rights:

How many years can some people exist
before they're allowed to be free?

Rather than condemn callousness, he only asks the question:

How many times can a man turn his head
pretending he just doesn't see?

Similar poetic subtlety is found in Tom Paxton's protest
against military service in "The Willing Conscript." In
this song a naive draftee implores his sergeant instructor:

Now there are several lessons that I haven't
mastered yet,
I haven't got the hang of how to use the bayonet,
If he doesn't die at once, sir, am I to stick
him with it more?
Oh, I hope you will be patient,
For I've never killed before.

"And in one quick flash you get the dehumanization, the
sheer horror, and obscenity, of war."\(^1\)\(^2\) The American-
Indian singer Buffy Sainte-Marie astutely puts the blame
for war upon the "Universal Soldier":

He's five foot two and he's six feet four.
He fights with missiles and with spears,
He's all of thirty-one and he's only
seventeen.
He's been a soldier for a thousand years.

\[^1\]Gordon Friesen, "Something New Has Been Added," Sing
And he's fighting for Canada, he's fighting
for France,
He's fighting for the U.S.A.
And he's fighting for the Russians and he's
fighting for Japan,
And he thinks we'll put an end to war that
way.

He's the Universal Soldier and he really is
to blame,
His orders come from faraway no more,
They come from him and you and me
And brothers, can't you see
This is not the way we put an end to war.

Thus the songwriter confesses guilt along with all mankind.
But frequently satirical humor is used to attack a straw
man. In "Draft Dodger Rag" Phil Ochs satirizes the one who
isn't opposed to war but simply to his own involvement in
it:

I'm just a typical American boy from a
typical American town,
I believe in God and Senator Dodd and in
keeping Castro down.
And when it came my time to serve I knew
better dead than red.
But when I got to my old draft board,
Buddy, this is what I said,

"Sarge, I'm only eighteen, I got a ruptured
spleen
And I always carry a purse,
I got eyes like a bat
And my feet are flat,
My asthma's getting worse
Oh, think of my career
My sweet-heart dear,
My poor old invalid aunt
Besides I ain't no fool, I'm going to school,
And I'm working in a defense plant."

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"I hate Chou En-lai and I hope he dies, 
But one thing you gotta see: 
That someone's gotta go over there 
And that someone isn't me. 
So I wish you well 
Sarge, give 'em hell, 
Yeah, kill me 'thousand or so. 
And if you ever get a war 
Without blood and gore 
Well, I'll be the first to go."

Perhaps one of the most healthy signs is the songwriter's ability to laugh at his own culture, as in this 1964 parody on "Little Boxes":

See, the beatniks in the Village 
See, the beatniks on Macdougal St. 
See, the beatniks in the Village 
And they all look just the same.

There's a tall one and a short one, 
and a white one and a Negro one. 
And they all go to the Village, 
and they all look just the same, 
And the boys all wear dungarees, 
and the girls all wear sandals, 
And they're all non-conformists, 
and they all dress just the same.

And they go to the university 
and they major in philosophy, 
And they're all deep thinkers, 
and they all think the same, 
And they all read their Sartre, 
and they all read their Kierkegaard, 
And they all talk about it, 
but they all sound the same. 
And they all like folk music 
and they dig Woody Guthrie, 
And just like Bob Dylan, 
they all sound the same.

--Burt Siegel

The variety of subject matter of the topical songs is revealed by the titles: "Ira Hayes"--Peter La Farge's
attack upon America's treatment of Indians; "Who Killed Norma Jean?"--a ballad that accuses the nation of murder; "Lou Marsh"--Phil Ochs's elegy for the New York Youth Board worker who was killed while attempting to prevent a gang war; and "The Thresher"--a tale of tragedy at sea that ends with hope for a day "When ships are all designed to sail/ Together peacefully." These and innumerable others like them appeared in the pages of *Sing Out!* and the more recently-founded publication, *Broadside* (1962). The songs, mainly written by youths in their twenties, revealed the sensitive social conscience of a generation that, having been protected from physical and financial hardship in a middle-class society, perhaps felt slighted or left out. Now these young people sought to take upon themselves the trials of others. Participating in civil rights demonstrations during the summers of 1963 and 1964 became as popular among the youths as beach parties and surfing. It was a privilege to be thrown into jail for the cause, and there was always the possibility of a twentieth-century "red badge of courage" as a result of police brutality. At times the college youth apparently created a cause for the sake of becoming involved in an issue, as in the free speech activities at Berkeley.

By 1965, some of the folksingers were undergoing yet another disillusionment experienced by their generation.
They began to realize that although their songs received popular acclaim and had record-breaking sales, the real movements upon which these songs were based were not marketable. According to Josh Dunson,

If anything, when the words are listened to and when the people who write the songs or who are the movements approach their goals, the great movers of mass communications shudder and take sniper shots at the songwriters as Newsweek did at Bob Dylan when he used his national prominence to attack the blacklist.13

Then one writer-performer perceived that the musical style of the topical song was anachronistic to the generation that grew up on rock 'n' roll. This songwriter-performer was Bob Dylan.

CHAPTER IV

FOLK ROCK: FOLKLORE OF THE YOUTH CULTURE

The formal transition from topical song to folk rock as the popular expression of the youth culture can be dated to the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, when Dylan emerged halfway through the final night's concert with an electric guitar and a rock band to demonstrate the new form that had already begun to find its way into the Top Forty charts. Reactions to the "new Dylan" were mixed. He was cheered by those who had probably felt slightly disoriented toward the traditional folksong musical style that had interrupted their rock-'n'-roll heritage for the past few years. He was booed and later ostracized in print by many of the purists. One of these purists, Irwin Silber, who castigated Dylan in an epistle that appeared in the November 1964 Sing Out!, had just a few years earlier justified the new wave of topical songs this way:

Young people are trying to find a way of expressing themselves. There is a rejection of the vacuum of ideas which Tin Pan Alley has foisted for many years. As a result, they have turned to many other sources, one of which is the folk tradition. But they are not satisfied, as a personal expression, to take this tradition and have it speak for
themselves, because it is not their own...
       ... So they want to change it to fit their tempo and spirit.

He went on to suggest that this was as it should be, since such innovation revealed independence and a readiness to think for oneself.

Actually there was nothing revolutionary about the synthesizing of topical lyrics and rock 'n' roll music. The Beat poets used their heritage of jazz to back up their readings. And even more recently, many of the Negro song leaders involved in the Southern civil rights movement drew upon the music of gospel songs and rhythm and blues for the new freedom songs. So in folk rock, the young generation found a pure expression of its own cultural group. The music has the big beat and amplification that grow out of the urban and electronic age of which the youth are a part. It serves as both a fulfillment of a need, musically or otherwise, and as a cultural force. Although the Beatles played an important role in keeping rock popular, the lyrics of the new rock are more pertinent to a generation of revolutionaries. Instead of meekly saying, "I wanna hold your hand," the lyrics of folk rock demand, "I wanna change the world."2

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2 "Message Time: Rock 'n' Roll" (author not given), Time, LXXXVI (September 17, 1965), 102.
The music of the new expression is itself a synthesized form. It assimilates urban and country blues, gospel, ricky-tick good-time, Tin Pan Alley, and country and western; the sounds and rhythms of Africa, the Middle East, and India; the baroque trumpet, the madrigal, and the Gregorian Chant; and finally the future electronic music and noise collages of musique concrète.\(^3\) Music critic John Rublowsky sees the rock form as a radical break with tradition in that it has evolved a whole new vocabulary of performance techniques. The voice, he points out for example, is exploited "in totally novel and unexpected ways, raising the glissando, speech, and falsetto to a new level of expressiveness."\(^4\) By drawing upon rock 'n' roll, the music of folk rock has as its source the most potent liberating force in popular music. And it possesses a drive and impetus that demands a hearing for the lyrics.

At first the new sound was simply added to some of Dylan's earlier songs. "Subterranean Homesick Blues" was one of the first to acquire the heavy electronic beat. Then rock groups improvised upon other of his works—"It Ain't Me, Babe" by The Turtles and "Mr. Tambourine Man," by The Byrds. The latter group received Dylan's sanction in a

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\(^4\)Rublowsky, Popular Music, p. 108.
rare personal appearance with them. After this initial popularizing movement, Dylan came out with his biggest folk rock hit, "Like a Rolling Stone." For many young people who had not been immediately involved with the folk movement nor known the "early Dylan," this song was their introduction to the songwriter-performer who was so greatly to influence the American rock scene throughout the second half of the sixties.

Having learned the poetic possibilities of popular music from their experience with the folk song, the writers of folk rock have entered into a realm of expression far removed from the nonsense syllables and one-dimensional lyrics which characterized much of the song output of the fifties. These songwriters--poets in the truest sense--realize that use of the music of a contemporary culture is the most effective means of being heard. Their work is in the oral tradition of Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, and the Beat poets. The language is fundamentally a simple one--the illiterate or semi-literate language of the streets. However, according to Rubowsky, the most important contribution of folk-rock lies in its lyric content and treatment. Eschewing the "June-Moon" cliches of the traditional Tin Pan Alley song, folk-rock brings lyrics of remarkable sensitivity and perception to contemporary popular music.\(^5\)

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 106.
The truth of this observation is exemplified by Bob Lind's perhaps emotionally naive, but lyrically sophisticated "Elusive Butterfly":

You might wake up some morning,
To the sound of something moving
Past your window in the wind.
And if you're quick enough to rise,
You'll catch the fleeting glimpse
Of someone's fading shadow.

Don't be concerned, it will not harm you.
It's only me pursuing something I'm not sure of.
Across my dream, with nets of wonder,
I chase the bright elusive butterfly of love.

Out on the new horizon,
You may see the floating motion
Of a distant pair of wings.
And if the sleep has left your ears,
You might hear footsteps
Running through an open meadow.

You might have heard my footsteps
Echo softly in the distance
Through the canyons of your mind.
I might have even called your name
As I ran searching after
Something to believe in.

You might have seen me running
Through the long abandoned ruins
Of the dreams you left behind.
If you remember something there
That glided past you followed
Close by heavy breathing,

Don't be concerned, it will not harm you.
It's only me pursuing something I'm not sure of.
Across my dream, with nets of wonder,
I chase the bright elusive butterfly of love.

Phil Ochs summed up the effectiveness of the music and poetry of folk rock when he said,
Both of them are extremely important because they manage to communicate reality with such an abundance of beauty, soul, and entertainment that they plant themselves in your mind, never to leave.

The songwriter-performers of folk rock have amazingly similar backgrounds. Those who had been a part of the topical song revival were in their mid-twenties by 1965, and those whose first musical expressions would be in the new folk-rock form—Paul Simon and Janis Ian—were still in their teens. Of the older group, all have had some experience as students of a university, ranging from Bob Dylan's one semester at the University of Minnesota to Len Chandler's having received a master's degree from Columbia. Today more of the youth than ever before are attending college, and apparently they are demanding of their performers at least some exposure to the campus. Modern composers of folk rock draw upon the subject matter and poetic styles of writers that are generally limited to the college curriculum—Brecht, Sartre, Lorca, and others included in Joan Baez's *Baptism*. In this manner the performer communicates to his collegiate-folk audience. Even the sex idol of heavy rock, Jim Morrison of The Doors, received his master's degree in film study at Berkeley. As for musical background, most of the performers had an early exposure to blues and country

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and western; but as part of the rock 'n' roll generation, all would admit, along with Joan Baez, that rock formed their earliest musical experience. Another common influence appears to be in the person of Woody Guthrie. Tom Paxton tells of being first introduced to folksong through some Guthrie and Pete and Peggy Seeger records he heard while attending the University of Oklahoma.\(^7\) Len Chandler and Peter La Farge had similar exposures to folksong through Woody Guthrie. Paxton later testified that it was Guthrie who taught the topical writers to stand up and sing out about contemporary issues.\(^8\) Of course, the influence of the dying folksinger upon Dylan and Dylan's early attempt to imitate his stylistic father made him another of "Woody's children." Finally, all of these performers were immediately involved in the civil rights movement, both through the songs they wrote and through participation in some of the demonstrations.

Not only are these experiences common among the songwriter-performers, but, to a large extent, they reflect the experiences of and influences upon the entire generation. Consequently, these writers and those who immediately succeed them qualify as performers for a distinct folk

\(^7\)Friesen, "Something New Has Been Added," p. 19.
\(^8\)Ibid., p. 16.
group—the youth culture. And a near prototype of the lifestyle, behavior, and attitudes of this culture is Bob Dylan.

Dylan contends that he is not the voice of the generation of today's youth, because "I'm not in their generation!" But actually the attitude expressed in this statement and other attempts to rebel against or deny his conventional parentage—change of name and frequent runaways—clearly identify him with the youth of the sixties. Although he emerged as the first performer since Elvis to reach the top of the various music charts, the lyrics of his early songs give expression to the concerns of American young people—war, racism, corruption, social pressures, hypocrisy, and injustice. But as David DeTurk observes,

He was not merely another Woody Guthrie come to be the singing conscience of his embroiled generation . . . . But because of his youth, his pertinent moral vision, and the wispy but classic myth already woven around him, he was most of all a kind of folk Holden Caufield, modern Huck Finn (complete with cap), Emerson's boy in the parlor . . . . In short he was the American folk scene's wise child of radical innocence protesting what at the time seemed to be radical evils threatening him and his kind from the high-school teenager to Izzy Young.

That he has continued to keep in touch with his young audience is revealed by his timely disillusionment with


political protest and the civil rights cause—an about-face in subject interest that occurred well before his dramatic shift in musical style. In his January 1964 album, The Times They Are A-Changin', he sings a "Restless Farewell" not to the whole public scene, but to his frequently attacked and misunderstood involvement in the protest movement. The next album, Another Side of Bob Dylan, reveals in title and song selection that the "new Dylan" is "younger now than then," and all he really wants to do is "be friends with you."

Like Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan has been a synthesizer of music forms. He assimilates the blues styles of Big Joe Williams, Leadbelly, and Lightnin' Hopkins; the country and western of Hank Williams; the rock 'n' roll of Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly; and the characteristic techniques of Jimmie Rodgers, Jack Elliot, and, of course, Woody Guthrie. Apparently the later Beatle influence upon Dylan's style has been minimal. According to Josh Dunson's evaluation of Another Side of Bob Dylan soon after its release,

He wants to reach more Americans by using many of the melodic phrases of the Beatles . . . . But in using the Beatles as his source, Dylan denies the heart of their music which is the rhythm-and-blues records sold in the American Negro communities. The Beatles have taken the surface structure of rhythm and blues, and Dylan, in taking over the Beatles, makes the music just one step further away from the real stuff, just one shade thinner.\footnote{Dunson, Freedom in the Air, p. 84.}
Characteristic of the traditional folk singer, Dylan borrows not only the styles of others but draws upon the wealth of melodies that are a part of his conscious and subconscious repertory. The melody of his most popular topical song, "Blowin' in the Wind," was recognized by Pete Seeger as "an imaginative reworking of 'No More Auction Block.'" Other recognizable borrowings are

"With God on Our Side" from "Patriot Game" by Dominic Behan

"Bob Dylan's Dream" from "Lord Franklin"

"Ballad of Hollis Brown" from "Pretty Polly"

"Fare Thee Well" from "The Leaving of Liverpool"

"Masters of War" from "Nottamun Town"

"Restless Farewell" from "Little Moses"

"Ballad of Donald White" from "The Ballad of Peter Amberson" (Bonnie Dobson's version).

Dylan once told Gil Turner that his songs "exist all by themselves, just waiting for someone to write them down. If I didn't do it, somebody else would." This Michelangelo concept of his art relates him to that great inspirational spirit of the romanticist. But more realistically it suggests that he is a singer of the commonplace

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12 Ribakive, _Folk-Rock_, p. 83.
13 _Ibid._
14 _Ibid._, p. 82.
ideas that make up the philosophy of the youth culture that he represents. It is in the lyric statement of these ideas that the artistry of Dylan is most obvious. Some of his early works are not only good songs, but according to Mike Seeger, "are virtually folk in identity."15 "Ballad of Hollis Brown" is a classic example of Dylan's mastery of the ballad form. In the first six stanzas he tells of the plight of a poverty-ridden Midwestern farmer in a style strikingly comparable to some of Guthrie's songs of the Depression. Then he slows the narrative pace to focus upon the tragic end:

7 Way out in the wilderness
   A cold coyote calls.
   Way out in the wilderness
   A cold coyote calls.
   Your eyes fix on a shot-gun
   That's hangin' on the wall.

8 Your brain is a bleedin'
   And your legs can't seem to stand.
   Your brain is a bleedin'
   And your legs can't seem to stand.
   Your eyes fix on the shot-gun
   That you're holdin' in your hand.

9 There's seven breezes a blowin'
   All around the cabin door.
   There's seven breezes a blowin'
   All around the cabin door.
   Seven shots sing out
   Like the ocean's pounding roar.

10 There's seven people dead
   On a South Dakota farm.

There's seven people dead
On a South Dakota farm.
Somewhere in the distance
There's seven new people born.

To give a vivid impression of the scene of the desperate farmer contemplating the massacre of his family, Dylan uses a variation of incremental repetition in stanzas seven and eight. Then the poet tactfully spares the audience from witnessing the bloodshed by shifting the point of view to outside the cabin, where seven shots are heard from within. The message of the song is implied in the subtle suggestion that unless conditions change, the same tragedy will fall upon the "seven new people born."

Another of his early compositions which a number of critics acclaim as sheer poetry is "A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall." For this ballad, Dylan uses the basic structure of "Lord Randal" to focus upon a variety of contemporary social evils. The strength of the song lies in the almost inexhaustible series of parallel metaphors:

I saw a new born baby with wild wolves all around it,
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it,
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin',
I saw a white ladder all covered with water,
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken,
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children . . . .

Through these one-line poetic flashes, Dylan presents the world which the youth feel they have inherited. It is a naively one-sided view to be sure, but by metaphorically clothing certain dramatic current events—including civil
rights activities and the self-inflicted burning of a priestess in Saigon--Dylan has succeeded in giving these events a timeless and universal quality. The juxtaposed contrasts--one person starves while many people laugh and a clown cries in an alley--emphasize the imbalance and injustice that the idealism-oriented youth are hasty to detect in the older generation. Certainly the solution suggested by the song is so idealistic as to be ineffectual:

And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it,  
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it,  
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin',  
But I'll know my song well before I start singin'.

In other of his early protest songs, the solution is more emphatically stated. And perhaps typical of the rebellious youth getting the upper hand in world affairs, Bob Dylan bellows out vengeance upon the old order. In "Masters of War" he takes a narrow, pre-World-War-I view of the evil manufacturers of munitions. His final wish upon those who "build the big bombs" is:

And I hope that you die  
And your death'll come soon  
I will follow your casket  
On a pale afternoon  
And I'll watch while you're lowered  
Down to your death bed  
And I'll stand o'er your grave  
Till I'm sure that you're dead.

Apparently when his message is so vengefully direct, the poetic quality of his expression begins to break down.
However, in another song that gloats over the hopelessness of the conquered old order, "When the Ship Comes In," the poetic quality established in the first verse is maintained throughout:

Oh the time will come up
When the winds will stop
And the breeze will cease to be breathin'
Like the stillness in the wind
'Fore the hurricane begins
The hour WHEN THE SHIP COMES IN.

Oh the seas will split
And the ship will hit
And the shore-line sands will be shaking
Then the tide will sound
And the wind will pound
And the morning will be breaking.

The song has been compared to "Jenny's Dream" from Weill and Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*. But whereas the embittered attitude expressed in Brecht's lyrics can be excused as the fantasy of an insane prostitute wishing death upon all her enemies, Dylan pronounces his unwavering judgment in the tone of the Old Testament Jehovah:

Oh the foes will rise
With sleep still in their eyes
And they'll jerk from their beds and think they're dreamin'
But they'll pinch themselves and squeal
And know that it's for real
The hour when the ship comes in

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Then they'll raise their hands
Sayin' we'll meet all your demands
But we'll shout from the bow your days
are numbered
And like Pharoah's triumph
They'll be drowned in the tide
And like Goliath they'll be conquered.

In "The Times They Are A-Changin'" Dylan identifies
the enemies of the new order as writers, critics, senators,
and congressmen, and then he points an accusing finger at
parents:

Come mothers and fathers,
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand.
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is
Rapidly a-gin'
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.

Thus he voices a deep concern of the youth folk for whom he
performs. No longer is he attacking the politician or
"redneck" caricatured in so many topical songs. In these
lines a defiant child, obsessed with a generation gap that
cannot be spanned, orders stereotyped parents out of the
way because of their lack of understanding. By making the
freedom theme immediately pertinent to the youth culture,
Dylan has provided the rallying song of the movement for
the rights of youth. The attitude expressed suggests that
the young people learned little from their involvement with
the civil rights movement. Theirs is not a slow revolution
through love, but a storming of the Bastille of adult
authority and values. In contrast to this new surge for the autonomy of a generation, Chuck Berry's plea not to be bothered in "Almost Grown" is an obsequious petition. Dylan's demand prepares the way for such a direct assertion of the culture as Peter Townshend's "My Generation":

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People try to put us down
Just because we get around.
Things they do look awful cold
Hope I die before I get old.

This is my generation, baby.

Why don't you all f-f-f-fade away
Don't try to dig what we all say
I'm not trying to cause a big sensation
I'm just talking 'bout my generation.

This is my generation, baby,
My generation.
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These lyrics are accentuated in a live performance of The Who by the destruction of instruments, frenzied feedback, and ritualistic body gestures--all suggestive of the folk performer's creation and control of a microcosm.

Another of Dylan's songs, "It's All Right, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," attempts to clarify the alienation that has been caused by the generation gap. Here the performer re-creates the frustration of youth in a world they never made:

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Advertising signs that con you
Into thinking you're the one
That can do what's never been done
That can win, what's never been won
Meantime life outside goes on
All around you
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You lose yourself, you reappear
You suddenly find you got nothin' to fear
Alone you stand, with nobody near
When a trembling distant voice unclear
Startles your sleeping ears to hear
That somebody thinks
They really found you

A question in your nerves is lit
Yet you know there is no answer fit
to satisfy.
Insure you not to quit
To keep it in your mind and not fergit
That it is not he or she or them or it
That you belong to
Although the masters make the rules
Of the wise men and the fools
I got nothing, ma
To live up to.

And Josh Dunson calls this "his most important song since
'Hattie Carrol,'" an early ballad that told of racial
injustice.17

Having made the transition from political protest to
youth protest, Dylan in his "trapeze-artist" style turned
within to the personal experiences of loneliness, the
parting of a lover, the betrayed friendship, or recollections
from childhood and early ramblings. His political and, to
some extent, social withdrawal resulted in an introspection
that a few years later might have suggested the use of
drugs. A few critics contend that "Mr. Tambourine Man" is
at least a reference to a drug pusher.18 The last stanza

17Josh Dunson, "Topical Singers," Sing Out! (March,
1965), p. 75.

p. 58.
of this song has a dreamlike quality reminiscent of "Kubla Khan," which, according to its author, was conceived as the result of a drug experience:

Then take me disappearin' through the smoke rings of my mind
Down the foggy ruins of time,
   far past the frozen leaves
The haunted, frightened trees
   out to the windy beach
Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow
Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky
   with one hand wavin' free
Silhouetted by the sea,
circled by the circus sands
With all memory and fate
   driven deep beneath the waves
Let me forget about today until tomorrow.

Although the song was adopted as the anthem of the early hippie sub-culture, Dylan, though alienated from the popular folk artists, felt no identity with this new group of liberals. Instead, he continued producing works that relate personal and interpersonal experiences in mature poetic expression. The best of these lyrics are contained in the albums *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited*. Paul Nelson considers the latter "one of the two or three greatest folk-music albums ever made," and of its influence he says:

Bob Dylan has exploded . . . the entire city folk-music scene into the incredibly rich fields of modern poetry, literature, and philosophy; that he did it with his own personal blend of popular-music style, rock-and-roll, is all the more joyful and remarkable. He has, in effect, dragged folk-music, perhaps by the nape of the neck, into areas
it never dreamed existed, and enriched both it and himself a thousandfold by the journey. With "Subterranean Homesick Blues," "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Gates of Eden," "Ballad of a Thin Man," and "Desolation Row"—all written and produced before the Beatles had graduated from the "she-loves-you-yeah-yeah-yeah" stage—Dylan established serious poetry as the lyrical expression of the folk-rock style he had previously introduced.

If Bob Dylan may be regarded "a generational Everyman," he certainly can be considered the pace-setter in rock from his appearance with the Butterfield Blues Band at Newport in July of 1965, until his serious motorcycle accident in August, 1966. His works include two themes that David DeTurk calls the basic themes of folksong—freedom and survival—and two others that are an important part of traditional folk expression—motion and personal or interpersonal experience. And much of today's folk rock can be categorized under these headings.

As the performers of the youth culture add to the lore of folk rock, they sing of the basic immediate concerns of the culture. Characteristic of a minority group deprived


of franchise, the first concern of youth is freedom--
liberation from the arbitrary authority of the
Establishment. The messages of the early songs range from
the very serious political defiance expressed in Phil Ochs'
"I Ain't Marchin' Anymore" to the burlesque "Home of the
Brave," which defends the male's right to wear long hair.
But the more recent rock lyrics reflect less concern with
political freedom than with inner liberty--"free from hang-
ups, from authority, and most of all from obligation."22
Because the affluent youth have reached maturity with so
few responsibilities, they scorn the traditional middle-
class ambitions for financial security and respectability.
Instead, complete personal freedom is a primary objective.
In "The 59th Street Bridge Song," a twentieth century version
of Pippa's optimistic lyrics, Paul Simon celebrates this
freedom:

Slow down
You move too fast.
You got to make the morning last.
Just kickin' down the cobble stones,
Lookin' for fun and feelin' Groovy.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Got no deeds to do,
No promises to keep.
I'm dappled and drowsy and ready to sleep.
Let the morningtime drop all its petals on me.
Life, I love you.
All is Groovy.

For Arlo Guthrie, son of the famous folksinger, individual freedom and happiness is found in "doin' your thing":

I don't want a pickle,
Just want to ride on my motorsickle,
And I don't want to tickle,
'Cause I'd rather ride on my motorsickle.
And I don't want to die,
Just want to ride on my motor--cle.

But the ideal existence is the uninhibited and irresponsible life of The Jefferson Airplane's "Lather," who at the age of thirty,

still finds it a nice thing to do
To lie about nude in the sand
Drawing pictures of mountains that
look like bumps
And thrashing the air with his hands.

The lyrics imply that his activities are no more absurd than those of his respected friends Howard C. Green, whose sole responsibility is to fill a "leather chair" at the bank, and Sgt. Dow Jones, who commands "his very own tank."

The survival theme is treated from the youth's point of view in P.F. Sloan's "Eve of Destruction." This song, which became a Barry McGuire hit, reveals a rather naive concept of world affairs, but it obviously expresses the views of the high-school graduate:

You're old enough to kill,
But not for votin'.
You don't believe in war,
But what's that gun you're totin'? 

The possibility of world annihilation, a concern which the youth culture has grown up with, is restated in the simple
terms of the culture's understanding of nuclear warfare:

Can't ya feel the fears
I'm feelin' today?
If the button is pushed,
There's no runnin' away.
There'll be no one to save,
With the world in the grave.

The song provides no new information, but simply restates in his own terms the world view of the young person and thereby reestablishes his identity. Whereas Dylan's early composition on the subject of survival, "With God on Our Side," ends with a profound theological problem--"Whether Judas Iscariot/Had God on his side"--Sloan simply reiterates the end-of-the-world prophecy. But that "Eve of Destruction" is a popular expression of the youth is indicated by the unsuccessful attempt of radio stations to make a counter hit of "The Dawn of Correction," which presents a contrasting optimistic view:

There are buttons to push
In two mighty nations,
But who's crazy enough
To risk annihilation?
The buttons are there
To insure negotiation.
So don't be afraid, boy,
It's our only salvation.

The rejection of these lyrics by the youth reveals the absurdity of contradicting or arguing the beliefs expressed in a culture's folklore.

The survival theme is extended by Stephen Stills of The Buffalo Springfield, who suggests, in "For What It's Worth," that there are physical and emotional threats
to one's existence everywhere in contemporary society:

There's something happening here.
What it is ain't exactly clear.
There's a man with a gun over there,
Telling me I've got to beware.
It's time we stop, children,
What's that sound?
Everybody look what's going down.

...    ...

Paranoia strikes deep,
Into your life it will creep.
It starts when you're always afraid,
Step out of line, the Man come
And take you away.
You better stop, etc.

This song, composed after a 1966 youth riot on the Sunset Strip, can be interpreted as a "statement on the nature of hip resistance."23 Within these topical rock lyrics there is a sound warning to activists in the youth revolution: "Nobody's right if everybody's wrong." The beat of the music, which is very conducive to dance, provides an outlet for emotions; and the message counsels "dignified passivity based on a faith in the inevitability of change."24 Thus the song pacifies the youth audience in much the same way that blues pacify the Negro audience. Even the nominative of address at the end of each stanza relates to the bluesman's reference to his audience.

24Ibid.
The figure of the "ramblin' man" has always been an important one in American folklore. The traveling minstrels of the last century left a history of the Westward Movement in song. The tradition of songs of motion was revived in this century when, as a result of the Depression, many families were broken up and forced onto the roads to find new means of support. Rambling men like Woody Guthrie, Jimmie Rodgers, and Jack Elliot sang of the hard times, the hoboes, the outlaws, the uprooted rural families, and the sorrows of their own traveling experiences. But they also had words of praise for their country and its socialistic accomplishments. In his classic "This Land Is Your Land," Guthrie saw a great nation with adequate resources for a great society. Today another songwriter, Paul Simon, tells in "America" of his roamings across the country, not to look at America, but "to look for America." Having lost touch with the earth, he is confined to the narrow world of a Greyhound bus, where cigarettes and games distract him from his search. Finally forced out of boredom to look at the scenery, he becomes introspective as he views the moon rising over an open field. His search ends with the realization of universal loneliness of man in contemporary society and the meaningless motion that has left the youth of this country looking for a lost America.
In the new urban rock, the motion theme is treated through songs that tell of the routine and frequently frustrating activities of life in the big city. The frantic pace of the youth in this environment is re-created by the words, music, and recorded street sounds of John Sebastian's "Summer in the City":

Hot town,
Summer in the city.
Back o' my neck gettin' dirty and gritty.

Been down
Isn't it a pity;
 Doesn't seem to be a shadow in the city.

All around
People lookin' half-dead,
Walkin' on the sidewalk hotter than a matchhead.

But at night it's a different world.
Go out and find a girl.
Come on, come on and dance all night;
Despite the heat, it'll be all right.

And babe,
Don't you know it's a pity
That the days can't be like the nights
In the summer in the city.

Cool town
Evening in the city
Dressed so fine and lookin' so pretty.

Cool cat,
Lookin' for a kitty;
Gonna look in every corner of the city.
Til I'm wheezin' like a bus stop
Running up the stairs
Gonna meet you on the rooftop.

A total performance of this song, which because of sound effects is limited to the recording, immerses the audience
in a threatening environment controlled by the performer. The idiom—"babe," "cool cat," "kitty"—is that of the youth culture, borrowed from American Negro culture.

Songs that deal with the writer's introspective view and interpersonal experiences—themes so closely related as to be often combined in a single composition—have long dominated the popular music market. But never have the lyrics of American popular music attained the degree of poetic expression common to folk rock. Many of these works, stripped of their musical support, can stand the test of literary analysis. A number of young poets realize that if their words are to reach the generation for whom they write, the electronic media must be employed. Perhaps the best example of the poet turned songwriter is the Canadian author Leonard Cohen. His mystifying "Suzanne" became a popular hit among young people who had never even heard of his books of poems. The lyrics demonstrate the level of sophistication reached by contemporary rock songwriters dealing with interpersonal relations—a theme that has always invited clichés in popular music.

Suzanne takes you down
To her place near the river.
You can hear the boats go by,
You can stay the night beside her.
And you know that she's half-crazy
But that's why you want to be there,
And she feeds you tea and oranges
That come all the way from China,
And just when you mean to tell her
That you have no love to give her,
Then she gets you on her wave-length
And she lets the river answer
That you've always been her lover.

And you want to travel with her,
And you want to travel blind,
And you know that she can trust you
'Cause you've touched her perfect body
With your mind.

Suzanne takes your hand
And she leads you to the river.
She is wearing rags and feathers
From Salvation Army counters,
And the sun pours down like honey
On our lady of the harbor;
And she shows you where to look
Among the garbage and the flowers.
There are heroes in the seaweed,
There are children in the morning,
They are leaning out for love,
And they will lean that way forever
While Suzanne, she holds the mirror.

In spite of the obscure allusions that sound like lines from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the youth readily accepted this work into their lore, identifying Suzanne as a hippie goddess or a modern Virgin Mary. Furthermore, the second verse of the song (omitted here) supports the youth's view of Christ as an ideal human being rather than a god. Finally, the song emphasizes the value that the affluent young put upon poverty as a way to wisdom.

The honesty in treating the interpersonal experience in today's songs greatly contrasts the teasing "why-not-take-all-of-me" and "makin'-whoopee" tunes of the thirties and forties. A particularly fine example of contemporary
lyrics that quite simply and honestly reveals the attitude of the postwar generation toward the interpersonal relationship is "Angel of the Morning":

There'll be no strings to bind your hands,  
Not if my love can't bind your heart.  
And there's no need to take a stand,  
For it was I who chose to start.  
I see no reason to take me home.  
I'm old enough to face the dawn.

Just call me "Angel of the Morning," Angel.  
Just touch my cheek before you leave me, Baby.  
Just call me "Angel of the Morning," Angel.  
Then slowly turn away from me.

Maybe the sun's light will be dim  
And it won't matter anyhow.  
If morning's echo says we've sinned,  
Then it was what I wanted now.  
And if we're victims of the night,  
I won't be blinded by the light.

The song reflects youths' emphasis upon the here and now as well as their rebellion against legal ties that might hold two people together without love. There is also disregard for the judgment of an arbitrary authority that would condemn a natural expression of love. Thus the lyrics extend beyond the experience of a particular couple and comment upon an inhibited society. This same approach is taken more directly in Janis Ian's "Society's Child"—a song that tells of society's role in dictating racial attitudes.

Folk rock is clearly an expression of the entire way of life of the youth culture of the fifties and sixties. The lyrics are intimately linked with the psychology and general world view—Weltanschauung—of the contemporary
American adolescent. Consequently this popular music ful-
fills Dave Van Ronk's sociological definition of folk
music. But there are several other phenomena of the total
rock movement which relate it to the folk tradition--the
jargon, the process of transmission, the performance, and
the festival.

Much has been said about the sophistication of the
poetic expression to be found in folk rock. And it could
be expected that a better-educated and more knowledgeable
culture than any before it in American history would demand
a more literary style for its popular lore. But for the
most part, the words of the songs are in the conventional,
esoteric vocabulary of the youth. This in-group vocabulary
is particularly important in works that deal with the social
taboo's of sex and drugs. Just as Negro bluesmen allude to
sex in the terms "easy rider," "jelly roll," "driller," and
"roll dough," so the young songwriters of folk rock use
"light my fire," "straight shooter," and "sock it to me" to
get questionable subject matter past the censors. And since
marijuana and drug usage plays an increasingly important
role in youth culture, the terms "blow your mind," "turn
on," "mellow yellow," "Acapulco gold," and "feed your head"
have become part of the camouflage jargon of contemporary

\[25\] DeTurk and Poulin, Jr., editors, The American Folk
Scene, p. 20.
rock. "In a sense," says Richard Goldstein, "this awareness of jargon is one sign of a repressed culture. But it has also provided teenagers with a solid sense of their own identity . . . ."26 This group identity within the electronic-rock generation is also established by the youths' ability to hear distorted lines woven into the instrumentation of the music. The classic example of this distortion technique is the Beatles' repetition of "everybody smoke pot" at the end of "I am the Walrus." Jim Morrison of The Doors frequently employs a yell ("The End") or a controlled laugh ("Five to One") to insinuate a sensual experience.

As a result of universal access to television, radio, or phonograph there has been a revival of the oral tradition in transmitting the folksongs of rock. Whereas another generation learned the words to songs through magazines of the Hit-Parade type, today's youth frequently hear a song and are singing their own variation before they ever see the lyrics in print. Affluence has enabled many young people to form well-equipped rock groups that play the role of performer for local audiences. Through innovations on established styles, new sounds are developed and, in some cases, these become a part of the mainstream of the culture's expression. Never in this century has the folk

phenomenon of local performer and audience been so widespread as during the folk-rock era. Nor has there ever been the immediate contact of such a large cultural group with its big performers as is made possible through the electronic media.

The performances themselves are in the tradition of the folk performance, which provides pleasure, release, and catharsis apart from the real world. Having provided a relief from tension, many performers intentionally introduce into the controlled environment forces that threaten. Since the police pose a threat to young people, modern rock performers prefer to have the law represented at concerts in order to create a situation in which the audience can feel superior to this threat. For example, at a Dallas appearance of The Jefferson Airplane in the summer of 1968, Grace Slick knelt on the edge of the stage and sang "White Rabbit" to one of the policemen lined up across the front of the auditorium. The officer was visibly embarrassed by this song, which compares Alice's adventures to an LSD "trip," and the crowd of young people was obviously pleased. Jim Morrison generally makes a special effort to disrupt the decorum of his police guard. If by the end of a performance the police between the stage and the audience have maintained some semblance of dignity, he lunges over their heads into the first row of seats. Another stage ritual adopted by a number of performers to demonstrate
superiority to electronic equipment—a threat-symbol to the computer-aged generation—is the destruction of instruments at the end of a show.

Within the folk tradition, the festival or carnival is an extension of the performance, during which time a world apart from reality can be established to give participants a sense of the endurance of their culture. Both the 1966 Newport Folk Festival and the Monterey International Pop Music Festival of 1967 were cultural microcosms of the youth. Not only was there continuous involvement with the lore through major performances and small group participation, but there was also considerable evidence of the development of folk art and handicraft, as well as the establishment of folk identity through dress and ritual. The symbolic role of dress was particularly obvious at the Newport Festival, where the youth who had turned to folk rock generally wore the flamboyant styles of Carnaby Street, in contrast to the rather drab denim and cotton prints of the folk without electricity. At the Monterey Festival Jimi Hendrix's performance suggested a folk ritual as he went through the gestures of love-making with his equipment, climaxed by the ejaculation of lighter fluid onto his burning guitar. The week-long outdoor love-in reflected the values of individual

27 DeTurk and Poulin, Jr., editors, The American Folk Scene, p. 17.
and sexual freedom enhanced by the lyrics of folk rock. So memorable was the Monterey Pop Festival that the program and activities became part of the lore of rock in The Animals' "Monterey." And through Pennebaker's film, *Monterey Pop*, the youth across the nation have participated in the festival vicariously.

Thus the folk and rock genres synthesized by Bob Dylan at the Newport Festival of 1965 have developed into a functional folklore that both influences the life-style of the youth culture and reflects the values of this cultural group.
An entire generation of middle-class American youth, given cultural unity through the electronic media, has developed a folklore based upon a common musical heritage of rock 'n' roll. As a result of immediate or vicarious involvement with the civil rights movement, members of this cultural group were exposed to or actually participated in the greatest revival of topical songs in this century. Through the synthesized style of Bob Dylan, the poetic expression of topical lyrics was joined to the Big Beat sound of rock to produce the esoteric music of the electronic generation--folk rock. The affluence of the youth culture enables well-equipped peer-group performers to interpret the lore to local audiences and thereby establish leadership prestige. Although the lore of folk rock draws heavily upon the jargon of the cultural group for whom it is composed, the lyrics frequently reflect the sophistication of the well-educated youth of the sixties. The development of the songwriter-performer as a common figure has encouraged members of the folk to contribute to the lore. Full participation of the cultural group is encouraged through the institutions of the dance, imaginative
dress, handicraft and psychedelic art, ritualistic performances, and the music festival. The life-styles of the performers and the lyrics of the songs influence the tastes, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of the American youth culture.

The most significant influence of rock 'n' roll in the development of the musical folklore of the youth culture was its synthesizing of styles. Rather than a cataclysmic break with all traditional popular music, rock 'n' roll actually broke down barriers dividing the various categories of music—blues, gospel, country and western, jazz, and rhythm and blues. This early synthesizing process set a precedent for the later amalgamation of more diverse forms—baroque, Indian ragas, ricky-tick good-time, and electronic. The use of special effects in recording rock 'n' roll introduced the idea of the studio itself as a performing instrument providing an appropriate means of expression for the electric generation. In McLuhan terminology, the medium became the message; in terms of folklore, the performance became readily accessible to the audience and provided immediate rather than occasional release of tension. Furthermore, through the electronic media, the audience was in closer contact with its performers. Consequently, the performers were able to influence a vast cultural group as was never before possible. The predominant performer of the rock 'n' roll era, Elvis Presley, became
the rebel-figure and sex-symbol for a potentially rebellious adolescent culture and thereby established a model for future performers within this group.

The lyrics of rock 'n' roll reflect the folk needs and interests of the youth culture in its early adolescence. Songs that focus upon parental conflict, modes of dress, dances, automobiles, motorcycles, beach parties, and surfing are as common as those that treat the traditional love theme of popular music. Although they might be interpreted as typical complaints of young people of any time, songs like "Yakety Yak" and "Almost Grown" suggest the beginnings of the cultural revolution that has been given full expression in the rock lyrics of the sixties. The lyrics of rock also incorporate the idiom of young people, providing a folklore in the esoteric language of the youth culture. Even the nonsense words have become a characteristic element of rock expression and a means of camouflaging subject matter that is taboo in the adult society with which the youth culture coexists.

Although it was not until the sixties that the songwriter-performer became a common figure in youth society, toward the end of the fifties the affluent youth were able to produce an unprecedented number of performing groups on the local level. As a result, the culture could more easily participate in the performance of its lore. And the means of participation--a variety of innovative dances for
one person—encouraged the complete involvement of the
total group. Through improvisation, the performers and
the participants had the opportunity to add to the total
folklore of their culture.

A large segment of the youth culture entered college
during the early sixties and became involved in two related
movements—Negro civil rights activities and the revival of
folksong. Through the mass media, most of the college stu-
dents had witnessed the early sit-in's and nonviolent pro-
test of the Southern Negro. Much of what the youth had
seen on television news coverage began to shape their
social conscience. Idealistically oriented, they con-
sidered the civil rights movement a simple issue of good
versus evil. And the protest of the Negro was directed
against the same authority figure that oppressed the youth
culture—the white adult. Responding to the folksong
revival led by popular performers like The Kingston Trio,
Harry Belafonte, and Peter, Paul, and Mary, the young
people became involved in the song movement that had been
nurtured through the fifties by Pete Seeger and traditional
ethnic folk performers. Exposure to topical songs of the
thirties and forties induced the youth to give musical
expression to their own social concerns of the sixties.
The unprecedented output and popularity of topical songs
from 1961 to 1965 gave prestige to a number of young song-
writer-performers—Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton,
Len Chandler, and Peter La Farge—as well as a multitude of "folkniks" across the nation. Most of these songs dealt with political and social events that reflected the world view of the youth culture from an electronic media environment. But the music, which generally consisted of a plain guitar accompaniment, lacked the impact and demand for total involvement that characterized rock 'n' roll. Consequently, when Bob Dylan added amplified electrical instrumentation to his works, in much the same way as the Negro freedom-song leaders had given rhythm-and-blues and gospel beat to their lyrics, he produced a genre that satisfied the folk-expression needs of his generation.

The songwriter-performer figure emerged from the topical song era as the embittered rebel-spokesman for his culture. With the development of rock in the sixties, he also assumed the role of sex-idol as established by Elvis Presley. But whereas a Presley performance merely suggested intimacy with a "nice boy," the contemporary performers like Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison vicariously involve the audience in a sexual experience through uninhibited pantomime supported by orgastic sound amplification. These performances reflect both the values and the fears of the youth culture and provide a release of tension and a feeling of superiority to environmental threats, thus fulfilling the psychological function of folklore.
The unique quality of the folk-rock genre introduced by Bob Dylan is the literary sophistication of the lyrics. Acclaimed "the first poet of mass media"\(^1\) by Ralph Gleason and "the most important poetic voice"\(^2\) of the early sixties by Robert Shelton, Dylan has given popular expression to the well-educated youth culture. Songs like "A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall," "Mr. Tambourine Man," and "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" reveal in both subject matter and imagery that Dylan has produced lyric and narrative poetry unprecedented in American popular music. Furthermore, he has revived the bardic tradition and established the electronic media as the means for other serious poets to communicate to an entire cultural group.

The contemporary American songwriter-performers of folk rock--Paul Simon, Sonny Bono, John Sebastian, John Phillips, Janis Ian, Jim Morrison, and Jimi Hendrix--continue to produce compositions that through improvisation by local groups are incorporated into the lore of the youth culture. The folk process of songwriting has become an integral part of the culture as local performers introduce new lore which occasionally reaches an extensive audience through a single recording. The celebrated performers of

\(^1\) DeTurk and Poulis, Jr., editors, The American Folk Scene, p. 274.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 275.
folk rock frequently draw from the lore of rock 'n' roll or the works of their contemporaries and improvise upon these to keep the folklore alive.

Finally, the songs of folk rock serve not only as entertainment and an expression of the world view of the youth culture, but also as a means of maintaining unity within the group and individual identity with the folk. Most of the works are esoteric restatements of the values and mores of middle-class American youth of the sixties. Acceptance or rejection of this folk literature on the part of an individual determines to a large extent his standing with his peers. However, because of the idealism, honesty, and even humor which underlies much of this environmental lore, it probably does provide the youth with "an inborn moral tradition"\(^3\) as asserted by the fifty-nine-year-old director of Folkways Records, Moses Asch.

\(^3\)"Folk and the Rock" (author not given), *Newsweek*, LXVI (September 20, 1965), 90.
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