Bob Dylan's Ballade

At the heart of Bob Dylan's 1975 song, "Tangled Up in Blue" (*Blood on the Tracks*: Dylan 1975; Dylan 2004, 329-47) is the image of medieval material made suddenly relevant in the present day. Among lyrics that wander widely throughout space and time, the action stops for a moment of transcendent timelessness:

> Then she opened up a book of poems and handed it to me
> Written by an Italian poet from the thirteenth century.
> And every one of them words rang true
> And glowed like burnin' coal
> Pourin' off of every page
> Like it was written in my soul from me to you
> Tangled up in Blue. (Dylan 2004, 332)[1]

This book of poems is not the only medievalist element of the song. In "Tangled Up in Blue," Bob Dylan engages with medievalism in two ways: first, through his play with tropes of courtly-love literature, as popularly understood, including imagery and specific references to medieval literary tradition in the lyrics, and second, through his use of a particular medieval musical form, the ballade. The second type of medievalism in this song, involving the lyrical and musical structure, is less easily noticed than the inclusion of a 13th-century Italian book of poems in the lyrics. Dylan structures "Tangled Up in Blue" in a form used by some troubadours, later named "ballade" in the French poetry and music of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Johnson 1991). A number of pop musicians in the 1970s included medieval references in their songs, through imagery in the lyrics, modal tunes, and "early music" instrumental choices, but these choices are on display, used to establish a mood or medieval flavor for listeners (Sweers 2005; Upton 2012). Dylan's use of medieval form is a subtle medievalism, one that reflects the composer's own private engagement with medieval material. Dylan exploits the possibilities of ballade form, exposing how its inherent qualities functions to structure an experience for listeners. The medieval elements in the lyrics demonstrate that Dylan's choice to use a medieval form was not accidental, that engaging with multiple dimensions of the idea of the past was part of his conception for the song.

"Tangled Up in Blue" is a strophic song, that is, the same melody with chordal accompaniment is repeated, here seven times, each time with new words that tell the next part of the story. The identification of ballade form has to do with internal repetition of music within the model strophe. There are two sections of melody, traditionally labelled "a" and "b" by musicologists, with the "a" section repeated: a a b. The lower-case letters indicate that none of the words repeat from strophe to strophe, but there is actually one exception: the last line of the "b" section is a refrain. The complete form can be represented: a a bR In a medieval ballade the two repetitions of "a" would be equal in length, for both words and music, to the "b" section, and "Tangled Up in Blue" roughly follows the model: musically each "a" section is four bars long,

and the “b” section with refrain is either six and a half bars long (vocals) or nine and a half bars long (including the four-bar instrumental interlude that follows each strophe). In his fair-copy notebook, now at the Morgan Library (see below) Dylan copied the lyrics respecting the medieval model, with each “a” section written as a long-lined couplet, and the “b” section and refrain copied as four lines.

Besides the poetic structure, the melody of “Tangled Up in Blue” demonstrates its form. The “a” and “b” sections vary in range and melodic motion, with the “a” melody occupying a smaller range based on descending pitches, and the “b” melody using a higher and wider range, featuring ascending motion. Both sections end with the same pitch, in a kind of melodic rhyme. This unifying pitch helps the sections relate to each other in sound, allowing smooth transitions as one section follows another. Bob Dylan’s vocal performance style famously includes melodic variation and this song shows no exception, but the basic framework of the melody is easy to perceive. I will discuss this melody using modern solfège syllables—*Do re mi fa sol la ti do*—with emphasized pitches in boldface. For the “a” section of the song, the tune starts on the third step of the scale, *mi*, pauses on the second step, *re*, and finally descends to *do*:

Mi mi mi-re do **re** re re **mi** mi mi-re do **re**
Early one morning the sun was shining, I was laying in bed,

Mi mi mi re-do **re** re mi, la la **do** do la do
Wondering if she’d changed at all, if her hair was still red.

The second “a” section repeats this basic tune. In some verses Dylan sings the second “a” section starting a third higher, on the fifth step of the scale, *sol*, pausing on *fa* rather than *re*. But always, the shape of the melody here is: descending by step. In contrast, the “b” section melody explores the higher part of the song’s range: starting on *re*, the tune hops up to *sol*, then down a step to pause on *fa*. The next line repeats the first part of the melody, but then jumps even higher to the blue note a half step lower than *ti* (the “blue seventh,” Van der Merwe 1989, 172-77), descends back to pause, waiting, on *re*. Finally, the refrain hammers out *fa* before returning to the *mi-do* interval with which the song began:

Do **re** re re- re do re mi mi sol sol
And I was standin’ on the side of the road,

Sol sol-sol sol mi **fa**
Rain fallin’ on my shoes,

Re- re re re re mi sol
Heading out for the East Coast,

Sol **flat ti** sol flat ti sol flat-ti **mi-do re**
Lord knows I’ve paid some dues gettin’ through,

Fa-fa fa **mi do**
Tangled up in blue.

Observing how a modern master engages with a medieval form can illuminate how ballade form works, what the form makes possible, in ways that can send us back to genuinely medieval ballades with new understanding. In my survey of medieval music for undergraduates I have frequently used "Tangled Up in Blue" as an introduction to medieval song forms. Listening to a song in a language the students understand makes it easier for them to perceive words and music at the same time. Analyzing this song allows for a focus on how a composer uses form in writing a ballade. As each stanza of the modern ballade is followed by the next, listeners can sense how ballade structure allows for rhetoric and storytelling in the lyrics, with the sectional articulation offering moments of contrast, intensification, or continuation. Knowing that every stanza will end with the same refrain line allows listeners to anticipate how the lyrics in each stanza will eventually, inevitably come around to rhyming with the refrain. Once my students and I have discussed how repetition structures experience for a song in English, we can turn to a ballade by Guillaume de Machaut that is unfamiliar in its language—medieval French—and its musical style—French fourteenth-century counterpoint—to see what a medieval composer did with the same form.[2]

As well as a ballade in its form, Dylan's song is a ballad, a kind of narrative story-song he would have known from his engagement with English and American folk song. "Tangled Up in Blue" presents a story of love found, lost, and regained, a narrative proceeding through time and space even as the music of each strophe cycles back to the beginning over and over. The words contain several references, both allusive and concrete, to medieval literature, within a specifically American landscape. Dylan includes concrete details of place names and job descriptions, but he avoids naming any of the people involved in his story, using pronouns alone— I, she, he, them, and we— to carry his narration. In the discussion that follows, I will outline the story told by the song, identifying medieval elements in the lyrics and showing how Dylan uses the parallelism of the two "a" sections, and the contrast between the "a" and "b" sections to provide emphasis and structure in his lyrics.

The poem[3] opens with the words "early one morning," a kind of "once upon a time" setting typically found in English folksongs, as well as the setting of one genre of troubadour song, the *alba* or dawn song. But here the speaker is not out wandering: instead he is lying in bed. There are medieval poems that begin with the poet in bed, framing the fantasy that follows as a dream vision. rather than experiencing a medieval poet's dream vision. Dylan's speaker is awake, and his story is framed as his recalling of memories. He remembers a woman he knew in the past. Like a lady chosen for devotion and praise by a troubadour, she was of a higher social class than the speaker, and for that reason her parents didn't approve of him as a suitor. In this first stanza the two repetitions of the "a" music focus on the lady, while the "b" sections shifts, suddenly, to

him leaving that situation, and foretells a story of adventure— "Lord knows I paid some dues— to follow.

The second strophe begins with the pronoun "she." Strophic repetition suggests that this "she" is the same red-haired woman from the first strophe, but without confirming that assumption. While the lady of strophe one is young, still living with her parents, this second-strophe lady is a married woman, intent on leaving her husband. The poet in the first strophe was "heading out for the east coast" with his lady, but in the second strophe the poet and his married lover are driving from East to West, where they eventually "split up." Dylan uses the first "a" to tell us about the woman, and the second "a" to describe their journey together. In the "b" section the lovers split up: they walk away from each other, and the woman turns and prophesies that they will meet again.

Having travelled from west to east and back in the first two stanzas, the poet travels north and south in the third. Here, the two repetitions of "a" focus on him and his travails as a wandering workingman. His lady reappears in the "b" section" even though he has "seen a lot of women," his lady, still simply called "she," remains in his mind, and his love for her endures. Is this "she" the maiden, or the married lady, or both? Dylan doesn't say.

After summarizing his past travels in all four directions, stanzas four and five snap into a sharper focus, narrating in greater detail an encounter between the poet/speaker and a woman. Stanza 4 is at the center of the seven-stanza song, and it describes the central encounter. After all the repetitions of the pronoun "I" in stanza 3, stanza 4 shows the poet and the lady interacting, with "she" and "I" alternating line by line. Is this his high-born lady, now "working in a topless place"? Presumably this "she" is a performer, since he sees her "in the spotlight." He prepares to leave in the second "a", but she stops him, asking if she knows him. In the "b" section, he doesn't answer, "mutter[ing] something underneath [his] breath," when, in a move that echoes the gospel story of Mary Magdalen bathing Jesus' feet, she "ben[ds] down to tie the laces of [his] shoe," a moment of intimacy and stillness that makes him feel "uneasy."

In stanza 5 the lovers seem to have gone back to her place. Dylan alters his melody's rhythm here, signaling the change of scene. The lady acts as hostess, first offering him a pipe, presumably for smoking cannabis.[4] Then, in the second "a" she surprises him: she opens and hands him a book of poems "written by an Italian poet in the thirteenth century." The "b" section focuses our attention on the poems in the book, and the revelation they bring to the poet.

The last two strophes again work as a pair. Stanza 6 opens with "him" living with "them" on Montague Street (the second of only two specific place names in the song), perhaps the one in Brooklyn, or perhaps a name chosen for its Shakespearean associations. We don't know if this woman is the maiden, the divorcing lady, or the stripper (or all three?), and we also have no idea who her new man could be. At first the bohemian atmosphere is exciting: "there was music in the cafes at night/ and revolution in the air." But by the second "a" things have already gone

bad. By the "b" section, the poet, "I," is alone again, withdrawn, and he sets off again "like a bird that flew," an image that recalls the opening line of one of the most frequently anthologized troubadour songs, *Can vei la lauzeta* mover by the 12th-century troubadour Bernard de Ventadorn, coincidentally (or not) another poem of seven stanzas.

Strophe 7 sees him "going back again," referencing both return and repetition in a poem and song constructed of those two elements. Where the lady in strophe 6 was part of a "they," not including the speaker, now in strophe 7 he speaks of "we." He thinks of "all the people we used to know," and names two categories: "some are mathematicians/ some are carpenters' wives." He doesn't understand these people, and the final "b" section sees him "on the road" again, alone. The final sentiment of the song "we always did feel the same/ we just saw it from a different point of view" paradoxically combines unity and division.

The phrase "carpenter's wives" is particularly evocative. To a medievalist, the immediate association is with the Virgin Mary, whose embodiment of pure woman- and motherhood stood as an exemplar. But to a mid-20th century folksinger or folksong enthusiast, the phrase suggests a song known variously as "The House Carpenter" (in the US) or "The Demon Lover" (in the UK). This song tells the story of a woman who marries the carpenter but who later abandons him and her child(ren) when her first true love returns from sea. Americans learnt the song from the influential *Anthology of American Folk Music*, sung by Clarence Ashley (1895-1967) in a recording made in 1930. American folk singers who recorded this song in the 1960s include Jean Ritchie (1961), Joan Baez (1962), and Bob Dylan, whose 1961 studio recording wasn't released until 2013. In the British tradition the song is much older, and features the supernatural: the carpenter's wife's lover dies at sea and returns as a spirit to take her away. "The Daemon Lover" is Child ballad #243, with the earliest version a broadside published in 1657. Sir Walter Scott, who did so much to blur the folkloric and the medieval in the public imagination, included the poem in the fifth edition of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1812).[5] The folksong "Carpenter's wife" ties back to the married woman of verse 2, perhaps casting Dylan's narrator as the kind of spirit who lures women from their homes.

The one element common to all seven strophes is the refrain line, "Tangled up in blue." The words are straightforward but also enigmatic: we understand how people can be entangled, and that these entanglements can persist over time and space, but it's unclear, if evocative, what it might mean to be entangled with a color. Blue is the color of heaven, of the Virgin's mantle in paintings, but also the color of the musical "Blues," those lamenting lyrics of 20th century African-American music. Is blue sad? Is it hopeful? Both meanings are entangled.

The book of medieval Italian poems in strophe 5 seems to have been part of Dylan's conception of the song from a very early stage of composition. The "book of poems" is present in a draft version in the "Blue" notebook, one of Dylan's two working notebooks from this period, now housed in the Dylan archive at the University of Tulsa, OK.[6] On a page photographed for the New York Times in 2016 by Shane Brown,[7] we can see Dylan's work on the fifth strophe. At

the top of the page is a partial version, six lines, of the final verse, marked with a square bracket to the left of the stanza. Next comes part of strophe five: "thought you never would say hello" you said/ you thought I was the silent type; and then an unused lyric: "We were driving past the cemetery -- / every time I try – to renew -- / friendship" A horizontal line separates these four widely spaced lines from the stanza which follows. It reads:

She lit a burner [words crossed out] She offered me her pipe
Thought you'd never say hello she said you look like
the silent
There were many books all in a box, I opened one to see
Some writings by an Italian poet from the 13th Century
And every one of them poems rang true
It was like

Then she opened up a book of poems [crossed out] and handed it to me
Written by a Italian poet from the 13th Century
And --- every word of it rang true, [crossed out] and glowed like
burning coal
Pouring out from every page, like it was
written in my
soul

The lines from "There were many books…" to "It was like" are bracketed off with a curved line to the left, and Dylan seemingly rewrote the lines immediately, to have the woman opening a book rather than the speaker finding a book in a box: "Then she opened up a book of poems…"

Fragments follow: Just like you, it / [unclear] me and you / [Unclear] pouring / off the page / From me to you. Another horizontal line divides these words from what comes next, four lines that will eventually end up in the fourth strophe:

Later on when the crowd and I's about to do the same
She was standing there by the back of my chair
said to me what's yr name.
I made a joke, she didn't laugh but – face ["studied" added over the dash]
Admit – [unclear] a little uneasy

The notebook page shows Dylan trying out two versions describing the discovery of the poem, varying who found the book, "she" or "I." The image of discovering a medieval poem that seemed significant to the song's narrator explicitly connects the interactions between the narrator and the woman with something medieval, even if the particular nature of that significance is never identified or discussed.

The identity of the "Italian poet from the 13th century" has been of interest to both fans and scholars, but no definitive answer has been discovered. Timothy Hampton reads the entire *Blood on the Tracks* album as a riff on Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, itself modelled on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but he feels Dylan's "Italian poet" is Petrarch rather than Dante (Hampton 2013). He writes:

> "But "Tangled up in Blue" resonates yet more deeply with the conventions of lyric in the Petrarchan mode. Most suggestive, for my purposes, is that the song contains an explicit reference to Petrarch. As the singer meets his lost love down in Louisiana, she gives him a book of poems, "written by an Italian poet from the thirteenth century." Dylan's chronology is, characteristically, a bit wobbly, since Petrarch died in 1374, and some listeners have taken this as a reference to Dante. However, when questioned later in an interview about the "Italian poet" Dylan slyly answered, "Plutarch. Is that his name?"[8]

While Hampton describes the reference as "explicit" that is a bit of special pleading, as no specific poet is ever named.

Even if the specific poet remains unidentified, what the image of the book of poems, whose "words rang true and glowed like burning coals," accomplishes here is to emphasize the point that something from the past can be intensely meaningful in the present. This concern with the past is especially important for this song, which Dylan described in a 1985 interview as coming from a desire to "defy time" (Heylin 2001, 370):

> "I was trying to be somebody in the present time, while conjuring up a lot of past images…I wanted to defy time, so that the story took place in the present and the past at the same time. When you look at a painting, you can see any part of it, or see all of it together. I wanted that song to be like a painting."

Past and present are jumbled together within the song's narrative, as well as connecting with a history outside the lifetimes of both speaker and listeners. Poetry can be a vehicle for the recording and recreating of emotion, and Dylan's point here emphasizes how something from the past can speak to a reader in the present. This is, quite frankly, magical: the dead can tell us about ourselves, even from so distant a time as the 13th century.

It is not possible to determine how Dylan learned about medieval literature, but it is worth noting that medieval imagery he chose was circulating in popular culture. The medieval elements in Dylan's lyrics are among those available to non-specialists through the kinds of chivalric and courtly medieval stories rewritten for children or portrayed in films, and discussed for general readers following the 19th century burst of medievalist interest. The knight errant or wandering minstrel out adventuring, devoted to a lady of higher social stature, even if she is married, devotion to the Virgin Mary: these are elements familiar to readers of Arthurian stories, Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820), and Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*.[9] Additionally, the traditional songs—Child

ballads and the like—that were a big part of the 1950s and 60s folk music revival echoed medieval storytelling with their tales of noblemen seducing young peasant women, as in the medieval *pastourelle*, wandering minstrels, ghosts, journeys, and true love.

While the specific details included in the lyrics make the medieval inspiration of this song visible, the overall medievalism of Dylan's use of ballade form works behind the scene through the use of sectional repetition that structures the listener's experience. Musicological discussions of song forms have tended to be taxonomies, identifying the particular repetition pattern or harmonic structure at work in a single verse, without considering how repetitions of that verse play out in performance (Page 1993, 187; Upton 2013, 104-5). A new focus on listening and experience allows for greater awareness of how songs produce their effects.

Musical form uses repetition of musical material to allow listeners to recognize, anticipate, and predict the unspooling of music in time. While songs can be through-composed, that is, with music that follows the words without repetition, most songs consist of sections of music that repeat in some pattern. Repetition of some musical material also makes it possible for the appearance of new musical material to surprise listeners. Some "Classical" musical forms, blur the lines between formal sections, but song forms, involving words, usually consist of the wholesale repetition of discrete sections of music. Song forms work with what I call the play of similarity and difference, in that they combine the delight of hearing something one recognizes with the delight of hearing something new. Every song form based on repetition balances these two motivations, simultaneously producing different kinds of pleasure. The listener's experience of the song will involve memory of what was already heard, along with expectation of what will come next (Upton 2013, 102-4). Dylan may have wanted to "defy time" by writing songs that could function similarly to paintings, that is, apprehensible all at once, but songs must always proceed through time, one thing after another.

On *Blood on the Tracks*, Dylan uses five different song forms among the album's ten songs. The assortment of many song forms on the album makes listening to the album as a whole sparkle with variety, even for a collection featuring the same singer with limited instrumental textures. The simplest repetition pattern is strophic form, in which a musical setting is repeated, with different words, for as many verses as are necessary. Simple strophic form is familiar nowadays from hymns, and also from folk-songs. On *Blood on the Tracks*, the songs "Simple Twist of Fate," "You're a Big Girl Now," "If You See Her, Say Hello," "Shelter from the Storm," and "Buckets of Rain" are all strophic in form, with no other musical repetition within the strophes. With strophic form, the repetition of the musical strophe forges a connection between the verses in a way that is perfect for telling stories in song. As listeners learn the shape of the repeating musical strophe, it becomes possible for them to anticipate how the lyrics of each verse will follow the shape of the melody.

The next most simple kind of musical form alternates two different sections of music, for example a verse and chorus. What makes a section a chorus is the repetition of words as well as

music. Verse-chorus form is good for group singing, in that a soloist can sing new words in different verses with the larger group joining in on the repeating chorus. Two of Dylan's most famous early songs use verse-chorus form: "Mr. Tambourine Man" of 1963 and "Like a Rolling Stone" of 1965. These songs belong to Dylan's time inside the folk revival, in which communal singing was both expected and welcomed. On *Blood on the Tracks*, the song "Idiot Wind" uses verse-and-chorus format, but with double verses: the two sections of music alternate verse-verse-chorus four times overall. When a song with this form is sung by a soloist, as on a recording, the chorus section works as a kind of large-scale refrain, allowing listeners to understand the words of the chorus as a summary of the verses already heard, or a commentary on the verses, as well as hearing the chorus as predicting the meaning of the verses to come. In "Idiot Wind" the scathing harshness of the chorus provides a commentary on the narration of seemingly random incidents in the verses. As he doesn't need to prepare for listeners singing along, Dylan can vary some of the words of the chorus, using the strength of the incipit "Idiot wind" to provide coherence among the different iterations.

Strophic song form and verse-chorus song form predate the 20th century. One popular song form associated with Tin Pan Alley in the first half of the twentieth century was an expansion of the older verse-chorus form called AABA form or 32-bar song form. Here the chorus becomes the whole song, with a little contrasting section of its own; the verse may survive as an introduction. A well-known example of a "standard" song that uses this form is "Over the Rainbow" from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), words by Yip Harburg music by Harold Arlen. This form continued to be used in the rock and roll era, for example in songs like "That'll Be the Day" (1958) by Buddy Holly, "All I Have to Do is Dream" (1958) by the Everly Brothers, and "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," by the Brill Building songwriting team Gerry Goffin and Carole King (Covach 2005). A number of Beatles songs use this form, including "Love Me Do" (1963), "Please Please Me" (1963), "I Saw Her Standing There" (1963) "A Hard Day's Night" (1964), and "Yesterday" (1965), while many others vary the form in a variety of ways (Covach 2006). On *Blood on the Tracks*, the song "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go" uses a pattern derived from this form, alternating a repeating verse with two contrasting bridges: verse, verse, verse, bridge, verse, bridge, verse (AAABACA).

A group of related forms originating in the blues play a huge role in the history of rock and roll. In these form, individual verses are structured by chord patterns that repeats for each verse (Van der Merwe 1989). In one widespread iteration, 12-bar blues, the verse's chord pattern coordinates with three lines of lyrics, with three segments of four bars each creating the 12-bar verse. Here the first line of the lyrics is repeated, and then followed by a different line, creating the lyric structure a a b. The first and second repeat of the "a" lyrics use the same melodic material, but are distinguished aurally by being sung over different chords. On *Blood on the Tracks*, the five verses of "Meet Me in the Morning" are in 12-bar blues form. The form of the 12-bar blues resembles that of medieval ballade, but the two differ in three significant ways: (1) musically, medieval ballades don't favor any particular harmonic structure; (2) structurally, the

three sections of a blues verse are all the same length, while the "a" section of a ballade is half the length of the "b" section, so that the two "a" sections equal the "b" section in length; and (3) while blues verses repeat the first and second lines of lyrics, the only lyric that repeats in a ballade stanza is the refrain used as the last line of each verse. Blues listeners hear the first verse, repeated with different chords for emphasis and comprehension, while the third line is a surprise, either extending or contradicting the first line's meaning.

"Tangled Up in Blue" is not the first song for which Dylan employed ballade form; that honor falls to "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright" from Dylan's second LP, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963). Written and recorded in 1962, when Dylan was 21, this song's four strophes are tightly constructed: each "a" section contains two lines of poetry, while the "b" section with integrated refrain consists of four lines. Dylan based his song on one performed by folksinger Paul Clayton, who based his "Who's going to buy you ribbons when I'm gone" (single, b/w Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," Monument Records, 1959), itself based on an earlier, anonymous, song "Who's going to buy your chickens when I'm gone."[10] Clayton's song and its model use simple four-line/two couplet strophes, without a hint of Dylan's "b" section or any concluding refrain line. I wonder if any medieval poetry expert or enthusiast pointed out the formal identification, or if Dylan discovered it himself. Dylan wrote a number of songs with refrain lines whose strophes experiment with different patterns of internal repetition, but he didn't return to the exact ballade form until he was working on songs for what became *Blood on the Tracks*.

Besides "Tangled Up in Blue," one other song on *Blood on the Tracks* uses ballade form: "Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts," published as the second song on Side Two. This song is a rollicking tale of love and murder, featuring powerful men, beautiful women, mysterious rogues, gambling, liquor, cabaret, power, deceit, and even murder in a late 19th or early 20th century "Wild West" setting. Beyond its formal structure, there is nothing medieval whatsoever in this song. Evidence for Dylan's process in composing the two ballades comes from his fair copy notebook, now held at the Morgan library (MA 6201), in which "Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts" is copied first, and "Tangled Up in Blue is copied second.[11] This notebook contains mostly finished lyrics for seventeen songs (with "Idiot Wind" rewritten twice), eight of which later appeared on *Blood on the Tracks*.[12] Did Dylan write "Lily," recognize or remember the form he was using to be a medieval one, and then write "Tangled Up in Blue" including medieval images in the lyrics to match the medieval form?

In some ways it doesn't matter whether or not Dylan knew he was using a medieval song form. The song sounds modern in its lyrics, its composition, and its recorded execution. Dylan's performance style and the song's arrangement has varied over the 40+ years he's been performing the song live,[14] and Dylan has revised the lyrics as well over the years, even changing the book of poems in the fifth verse to a Bible: "opened up the Bible and started quoting it to me … Jeremiah Chapters One to Thirty-Three" (Heylin 2010, 26). But the ballade structure remains, a form related to but distinct from other song forms employed by Dylan and

his fellow contemporary troubadours, allowing modern listeners the chance to experience a medieval unfolding of song.

[1] Bob Dylan, "Tangled Up in Blue," *Blood on the Tracks* (Columbia, 1975). On the recording of the album, see Gill and Odegard 2004. For discussions of each song, see Heylin 2010, 17-55.

[2] I play "Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient" sung by Gothic Voices dir. Christopher Page, *The Mirror of Narcissus* (Hyperion, 1987), a performance which emphasizes the refrain line. For a discussion of form in a 15th century ballade, "Resveilliés vous" by Guillaume Du Fay, see Upton 2013, 106-113.

[3] The complete lyrics can be found on Dylan's website:
http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/tangled-blue/

[4] For years I heard this line as her offering him a *plate*, due to Dylan's idiosynchratic pronounciation. The rhyme "pipe/type" corrects my misperception.

[5] Child 1882-1896 "243. The Dæmon Lover" can be seen online:
https://archive.org/details/englishandscopt204chiluoft/page/360
A four-part study of the song's history, with musical links, was published online by *Sing Out!* magazine: Bigger 2012. Bigger notes the link with "Tangled Up in Blue" in the third part of his study.

[6] In the Dylan archive the notebook is currently catalogued as "Small Notebook Number 6," Box 99, Folder 6, and the page under discussion is page 13 (recto).

[7] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/arts/music/bob-dylans-secret-archive.html

[8] Hampton's footnote credits the interview quotation to the website *Expecting Rain*, expectingrain.com/dok/who/who.html.

[9] Dylan was eleven in 1952 when MGM's film of *Ivanhoe*, in glorious Technicolor produced by Pandro S. Berman, directed by Richard Thorpe, and starring Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Fontaine, Robert Taylor, and George Sanders was released. An English translation of *De amore* was published in 1941 and reprinted in paperback in 1969.

[10] On Paul Clayton (1931-1967) see Coltman 2008. Clayton was an academically-trained folksong collector as well as a performer, and he recorded 19 albums of traditional American folksongs, one EP, and seven singles. Clayton and Dylan met in 1961. The two artists' publishing companies sued each other over Dylan's "plagiarism" of Clayton's song; the lawsuits were settled out of court. The 1923 publication of "Who gon bring you chickens" is available online: https://bringyouchickens.wordpress.com/2014/02/20/eight-negro-songs-from-beford-co-virginia/

[11] The George Hecksher Collection, the Morgan Library & Museum, MA 6201. The Morgan library published a photograph of the first page of this notebook on Facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/morganlibrary/photos/a.430241821182/10156541556031183/?type=1&theater.

[12] The two songs on *Blood on the Tracks* whose lyrics were not copied in the Red Notebook are "Meet Me in the Morning" and "Buckets of Rain," the first and last songs on Side Two of the finished album.

[13] Clinton Heylin also thinks the notebook reflects the order of composition. Heylin 2001, 370.

[14] The online audio journal Aquarium Drunkard provides links to five different live performances of the song, dating from 1976 to 2017: https://aquariumdrunkard.com/2018/09/25/different-points-of-view-dylans-tangled-up-in-blue/

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