



# Matrices of ‘Love and Theft’: Joan Baez Imitates Bob Dylan

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## Abstract

This article uses Joan Baez’s impersonations of Bob Dylan from the mid-1960s to the beginning of the twenty-first century as performances where multiple fields of complementary discourse converge. The article is organized in three parts. The first part addresses the musical details of Baez’s acts of mimicry and their uncanny ability to summon Dylan’s predecessors. The second considers mimicry in the context of identity, specifically race and asymmetrical power relations in the history of American popular music. The third and final section analyses her imitations in the context of gender and reproductive labour, focusing on the way various media have shaped her persona and her relationship to Dylan. The article engages critical theoretical work informed by psychoanalysis, post-colonial theory, and Marxist feminism.

## Introduction: ‘Two grand, Johnny’

Women are forced to work for capital through the individuals they ‘love’. Women’s love is in the end the confirmation of both men’s and their own negation as individuals. Nowadays, the only possible way of reproducing oneself or others, as individuals and not as commodities, is to dam this stream of capitalist ‘love’ – a ‘love’ which masks the macabre face of exploitation – and transform relationships between men and women, destroying men’s mediatory role as the representatives of state and capital in relation to women.<sup>1</sup>

I want to start this article with two different scenes from two separate Bob Dylan films. The first is from D. A. Pennebaker’s *Dont Look Back*, released in 1967, which captures some of Dylan’s UK tour in 1965. I am interested specifically in the scene where tour promoter Tito Burns and Dylan’s manager Albert Grossman barter with the BBC and Granada Studios over a Dylan exclusive. ‘Two grand, Johnny’ says Burns to the BBC. This moment is enthralling for Burns’s slick charisma, Grossman’s impassiveness, and the way the two men work smoke and mirrors to deceive the television centres into increasing their offers. What is particularly exciting is Dylan’s place in the exchange as a commodity whose value appears to need little explanation or qualification. ‘Just tell him [Stewart at Granada

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1 Leopaldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, ed. Jim Fleming, trans. Hilary Creek (Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 1995/1981), 28.

Studios] that this is the call he's been waiting for regarding *Bob Dylan*, and he'll be there like a shot', says Burns.<sup>2</sup> The second scene is from Martin Scorsese's 2005 documentary, *No Direction Home*. It is an interview with Joan Baez where she impersonates Dylan while recalling his response to her analysis of one of his songs. She mimics perfectly his voice, laugh, and mannerisms:

That's pretty fucking good. You know, a bunch of years from now, all these people, all these assholes, they're gonna be writing about all this shit I write. I don't know where the fuck it comes from, I don't know what the fuck it's about, and they're gonna write about what it's about.<sup>3</sup>

Both of these film scenes can be read as interrelated sites of exchange. In the first, Dylan-as-commodity is up for auction, his economic value is made clear ('Two grand, Johnny'). In the second, Baez conveys Dylan's awareness of his own cultural value; in 'a bunch of years from now' people will be writing about his work. Dylan's arrogance is striking in part because Baez was crucial to his success. Baez's success as a folk singer preceded Dylan's, with three gold-selling albums in the early 1960s and an appearance in November 1962 on the cover of *Time* magazine. As one of leading performers of the early 1960s folk revival, Baez facilitated Dylan's rise by introducing him to her audience. The way Dylan's voice emanates from Baez's body in her impersonation highlights the fact that Dylan's value as an economic and cultural commodity derives from his own abilities as an imitator and his reliance on others. Dylan is nested in Baez, and Dylan is known for his imitation of other singers – including Woody Guthrie, Robert Johnson, Leadbelly, Odetta, Frank Sinatra, Dave Van Ronk, Hank Williams, and others – not to mention his myriad poetic influences.<sup>4</sup> Baez's imitation of the imitator (Dylan) therefore elucidates slippages in property, persona, and identity that are redolent of – though certainly not identical to – Eric Lott's analyses of blackface minstrelsy insofar as they engage a complex discourse of 'love and theft'.<sup>5</sup>

Lott's central argument is that white opportunists 'imitated' Black culture as a way to satisfy two simultaneous 'needs'. The first is what Lott refers to as 'theft': to defile, profit, appropriate,

2 *Dont Look Back*, DVD, dir. D. A. Pennebaker (1967) (New York: Bertelsmann Music Group/Sony BMG Music Entertainment, 2006).

3 This scene from *No Direction Home* is currently available on YouTube: 'Joan Baez impersonating Bob Dylan', YouTube video, 25 October 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCyQ7GW8QFk>. See also *No Direction Home*, Prime Video (streaming online video), dir. Martin Scorsese (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Home Media Distribution, 2005).

4 For a more detailed discussion of Dylan's influences, see the chapter 'Traditions' in Keith Negus, *Bob Dylan* (London: Equinox, 2008), 72–97. Richard Elliott refers to similar lineages of Dylan's predecessors as comprising his 'memory theater' or points of stability in Dylan's otherwise fluid persona. See Elliott, 'The Same Distant Places: Bob Dylan's Poetics of Place and Displacement', *Popular Music and Society* 32/2 (2009), 250.

5 Eric Lott, 'Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy', *Representations*, 39 (1992). See also the essay by Daphne Brooks and Gayle Wald who point to the 'complex network' that traverses 'borders of space, time, race, place, and gender' in 'Women Do Dylan: The Aesthetics and Politics of Dylan Covers', in *Highway 61 Revisited: Bob Dylan's Road from Minnesota to the World*, ed. Colleen J. Sheehy and Thomas Swiss (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 183.

expropriate, and steal from Black men and Black culture. The second is what Lott refers to as 'love': to inhabit and get closer to Black men and Black culture in a way that was 'safe' or permissible for whites, and in a way that satisfied a complex of libidinal urges. It is important, I think, not to interpret Lott's 'love' as sentimental; from my own reading, Lott does not suggest a bi-directional, mutual affinity between white and Black Americans. Rather, 'love' in this context is attraction, fascination, fetishization, and a complex of desire and anxiety around miscegenation that is repeatedly stoked and repressed by the assertion of white supremacy. But while Lott analyses the theft of Black culture in nineteenth-century America as an expression of white-male homoerotic desire rooted in an anxiety about miscegenation, in our Dylan footage, the themes of 'love and theft' are animated rather differently. Baez thives a voice from Dylan and he in turn thives the voices of others; and the two musicians were at one time, if not lovers, then apparently friends. The two scenes thus invite us to consider the idea of exchange, a narrative of 'love and theft' that is undergirded by their histories as performers, their relationship to each other but also, and crucially, particular kinds of gendered and racial capital.

My aim in this article is therefore to use Baez's imitations of Dylan – and there are several – as performances, or sites, where multiple fields of complementary discourse converge. The article comprises three sections. The first addresses her acts of mimicry and their uncanny ability to summon distant bodies or the ghosts thereof. The second considers mimicry in the context of identity, specifically race and asymmetrical power relations in the history of American popular music. The third and final section analyses her imitations in the context of gender and reproductive labour, focusing on the way various media shaped Baez's persona and her relationship to Dylan. In addition to Lott's 'love and theft', this article pursues ideas developed by Judith Butler, Homi K. Bhabha, Leopaldina Fortunati, Brandon LaBelle, and several others; I use their work heuristically to examine the singing and impersonating mouth as a focal point in the circulation of economic and cultural capital, and as a performative chamber that narrates stories of gendered and racial power, and intimacy in popular music.

### 'Hearing a Voice I'd Known'<sup>6</sup>

My first encounter with Baez's vocal impersonations of Dylan was in *No Direction Home*. The richness of this impersonation is almost inexhaustible. It has the potential to animate seemingly endless debates about the uncanny, gender, authenticity, identity, 'love and theft', intimacy, friendship, performance, and listening. From Baez's recollection, Dylan knows his songs are good and he's aware of their potential cultural value. The words 'all these assholes' and the fact that said 'assholes' are writing indicate he's referring to cultural gatekeepers such as critics, journalists, and academics. Dylan is also recollected as having said, perhaps in false modesty, that he doesn't know where his songs come from nor what they mean – 'I don't know where the fuck it comes from, I don't know what the fuck it's about.'

6 This is a lyric from Joan Baez's song 'Diamonds and Rust', a song about a telephone conversation she had with Dylan in the mid-1970s.

On the question of origin, of where his songs 'come from', Baez's 'Dylan' obscures his musical and literary influences with an old-fashioned idea, that of the heroic creative genius whose ideas spring *ex nihilo*.<sup>7</sup> His apparent defensiveness here (a kind of 'I don't know, don't ask me') can be linked to the particular point in Dylan's career that Baez is recalling. The mid-1960s were for Dylan characterized by ambivalent feelings towards protest song and the urban folk revival, about being repeatedly asked about his role as 'spokesperson' or 'voice of a generation', and his turn at this time to increasingly opaque and surreal lyrics.<sup>8</sup> Such ambivalent feelings and his change in lyric style also partly explain his reluctance to discuss whether his songs are 'about' anything. And indeed, on this question of meaning, Dylan is in many respects right to say that he doesn't know what his songs are about; we've long since set aside the notion of a single authorial textual 'meaning' (even if/when the author has a specific 'meaning' in mind).<sup>9</sup>

For these three reasons, then – ambivalence about protest song and the folk scene, his new turn to lyric opaqueness, and the fact that meaning was always already up for grabs – we recognize and understand Dylan's derision of the idea that a song might be 'about' anything or 'from' anywhere. However, since Baez's impersonation is quite perfect, she undoes his eager disavowal of both origin and meaning by reminding us of the centrality of mimicry in the creative process. Musical works seldom emerge out of nowhere nor are they the work of a genius in isolation; rather, artists are embedded in creative networks and an artist's 'work' might be better understood in the context of multiple or distributed authorship. I shall return to this point towards the end of the article, since it relates in significant ways to the gendered politics of (creative) labour.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the interview in *No Direction Home*, Baez's impressions of Dylan extend to sung impersonations rather than just spoken ones, and these can be heard in her studio recordings and live performances. A notable imitation that appears on one of her solo albums is her

7 See, for example, Jason Toynbee, 'Music, Culture, and Creativity', in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). Paul Thompson makes a similar observation about the way songwriters describe their writing processes as often magical or elusive. See Paul Thompson and Philip McIntyre, *Creativity in the Recording Studio: Alternative Takes* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), esp. 124.

8 Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 80.

9 The classic text for this is Roland Barthes's essay 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text: Essays* (London: Fontana, 1990). See also Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

10 There are a number of ways we can see this. One is the 'art worlds', see Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012). We might also think of it in terms of David Brackett's references to a 'grand dialogue among participants in a particular genre or genres', which derives in part from Mikhail Bakhtin's work on creativity and genre. See Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 15; and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). Paul Thompson's 'creative systems' approach, which positions the songwriting in relation to the 'domain' and 'field', is also a useful model. See Thompson, *Creativity in the Recording Studio* and the work that influenced it, Philip McIntyre, 'Creativity and Cultural Production: A Study of Contemporary Western Popular Music Songwriting' (PhD diss., Macquarie University, 2004).

version of Dylan's 'Simple Twist of Fate' on her 1975 album *Diamonds & Rust*. In his review of this album in June 1975, Bob Woffinden at the *NME* wrote:

The argument against [this cover of 'Simple Twist of Fate'], of course, is that she has turned one of Dylan's most emotionally gripping songs of late into just another rock song, and it's a view with which I can sympathise. Especially as it's given added weight by the inclusion of Joan's party-piece – a fond but pointless imitation of Dylan's husky vocals; there's no doubt this gambit trivialises the song still further. It's even more redundant because Joan has also used the device (which she's used in performance for many years, and fair enough) on 'Passing Through' from The Earl Scruggs Revue's Anniversary Special – Volume One.<sup>11</sup>

What is interesting here is the way Woffinden describes Baez's imitation on 'Simple Twist of Fate' as her 'party-piece', as 'fond but pointless', and as something that 'trivialises' what he hears as one of Dylan's 'most emotionally gripping songs'. The phrase 'party-piece' suggests that her vocal imitation of Dylan is a trick or act that Baez quite regularly wheels out and, as we'll see, this is indeed the case. But as for 'fond but pointless' and 'trivialising', Woffinden is only half right. Furthermore, his dismissive review is typical of the kind of sexism that characterized rock criticism of the era. As we'll see later on, such sexism becomes more apparent in his discussion of other tracks on *Diamonds & Rust* and his references to Joni Mitchell.<sup>12</sup> Baez's decision to switch into Dylan's voice for the fourth verse of 'Simple Twist of Fate' does indeed poke fun at Dylan. The fourth verse beginning 'He woke up, the room was bare' is the starkest and most bachelor-ish of the six in the song. Unlike the other verses, there are few nouns, no extra characters, no lights or colours; it is just the narrator alone with his thoughts. The verse is stone cold in its affect and dismissive of the Other/her, too; he tells himself he doesn't care and feels only an 'emptiness' to which he just cannot 'relate'. Baez's vocal imitation in this context therefore comes as a mocking imposition, an intrusion on the narrator's brooding solitude. Baez is having fun where fun doesn't belong by stealing the stage ('theft') and diffusing the verse's introspective angst.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, then, Baez does 'trivialise' this verse if not the whole song. But I would query Woffinden's description of the imitation as both 'fond' and a 'party-piece'. Her imitation-as-intrusion is playful ('fond') but it's also a subtle critique of the lone bachelor and, by extension, the lone creator.

11 Bob Woffinden, 'Joan Baez – Diamonds and Rust', *New Musical Express*, 28 June 1975, <https://www.rocksofbackpages.com/Library/Article/joan-baez—diamonds-and-rust>.

12 I have written elsewhere in some detail about the kind of misogyny of the rock press in the 1960s and 1970s. See Mimi Haddon, 'Nico, Captain of Her Own Ship: Cultural Accreditation and Mid-60s Experimental Rock', in *What Goes On: The Velvet Underground and After*, ed. Sean Albiez and David Pattie (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming). See also Helen Reddington's work on rock critics as cultural gatekeepers in the 1970s, specifically regarding women in punk. Helen Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

13 It is interesting to reflect on this cover and imitation in the much wider context of public discourse and imagination. At the time of writing, note the way the anonymous authors of the Wikipedia page for *Diamonds and Rust* subtly but scathingly describe Baez's rather good imitation as someone 'attempting an impersonation of the song's composer', rather than simply 'doing'.

By imposing herself in the scene, she reminds us that musical creativity is dispersed and collective, embedded in social networks, and in personal connections.

This critique via imitation is evident in Baez's more recent performances. In live concerts from both 2009 and 2011, Baez sings a few lines from 'Don't Think Twice (It's Alright)' in Dylan's voice. But, like in 'Simple Twist of Fate', her choice of which verse to sing is marked. During a performance at Santa Monica Pier in July 2009, for example, the audience can be heard singing along with Baez to the lyrics from the final verse of 'Don't Think Twice (It's Alright)'. With Baez, the audience sings, 'So long honey babe / Where I'm bound, I can't tell', but they switch to excited – even nervous – laughter when Baez sings 'Goodbye's too good a word babe' in a thin, nasally Dylan.<sup>14</sup> That her impersonation of Dylan continues to the end of the song, intoning the words 'I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind' in *his* voice, is not without irony given the infamous dissolution of the Baez/Dylan relationship, some of which is captured rather painfully in Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back*. Indeed, it is difficult not to infer bitterness in Baez's decision to change voice at this particular moment in the song. Baez conjures Dylan in order to sing 'I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind' which can be heard as 'I ain't saying [Dylan] treated me unkind'. This is a bitterness or irony that the audience clearly 'gets', because they're laughing along, albeit nervously.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to Woffinden's review, then, Baez's impersonations of Dylan in studio recordings such as 'Simple Twist of Fate' and in live performances of recent years can be heard as more than simply 'party-pieces'. Rather, these imitations operate on a number of levels and they are intertextual insofar as they affirm the rootedness of popular musicians in networks where ideas, property, and emotions are shared, stolen, and stirred. Baez's imitations are striking because of: (1) her skills as an imitator and thus the shock of the uncanny, of hearing 'Dylan's voice' seemingly out of nowhere; (2) the way she highlights the eccentricity of Dylan's own singing style; (3) the way her imitation invites the audience to share the 'joke' of the cruel-seeming dissolution of the Baez/Dylan relationship; and (4) perhaps more profoundly, the idea that Baez is *resisting* Dylan in these performances, particularly his claim (as reanimated by her) that he doesn't know where his ideas 'come from'. Rather than position herself as a genius in isolation or disavow her influences, Baez's impersonations summon her social, artistic, and musical milieu by vocally summoning Dylan. Baez's music 'comes from' her, but it also comes from Dylan, from other musicians, from audiences, and it seems Baez does not view this network with the same kind of hostility or paranoia about

14 See the following videos: 'Don't Think Twice (it's alright) – Joan Baez imitates Bob Dylan's voice at 3min25 (28/09/2011)', YouTube video, 28 September 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pV0IEuXVIII>; and 'JOAN BAEZ – Don't Think Twice – Santa Monica Pier, July 9th 2009 DYLAN IMPRESSION', YouTube video, 20 July 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVHzYQYwnY4>.

15 Their response to her impersonation of Dylan during 'I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind' is similar to their knowing laughter during a 2014 performance of Baez's original composition 'Diamonds and Rust', a song about a mid-1970s phone conversation with Dylan. The crowd laugh with Baez when she changes the song's final line from the original 'I've already paid' to 'Well, I'll take the diamonds'. 'Joan Baez – Diamonds and Rust 2014', YouTube video, 4 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6g-7L2kPN0>.



encroachment ('theft') as Dylan's attitude towards 'all these assholes' and their 'writing about what it's about'.

Baez's imitations of Dylan appear to pre-date these performances, thus confirming Woffinden's observation that she imitated Dylan quite regularly. In what appears to be a performance from the early or mid-1960s, Baez impersonates Dylan by singing the first two lines of the Child ballad 'Mary Hamilton' in his voice. In this performance, we hear Baez say to the audience, 'I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll do Bobby Dylan singing Joan Baez, OK?' She then impersonates Dylan singing the opening of 'Mary Hamilton', a song that appears on her solo album *Joan Baez* (1960) and one that Dylan hasn't recorded. She sings the opening lines: 'Word is to the kitchen gone / And word is to the hall / And word is up to madam the Queen / And that's the worst of all.' The performance is striking for its resemblance to Dylan in terms of timbre, pronunciation, stress, phrasing, rhythm, and pitch. But it also summons more voices than those of just Dylan.

Baez imitates Dylan's nasal timbre and the pronunciation of certain vowels. The word 'word', for example, begins with a vowel sound that is more akin to the 'e' in 'well' or 'wed', and the word 'hall' becomes 'hal'. Baez also elongates vowels, particularly at the very beginning of the performance. And in fact, the elongation of the vowels in the words 'word', '-chen', and 'gone' is not dissimilar to the way Dylan elongates the vowels in his performance – or imitation of – Hank Williams's song 'So Lonesome I Could Cry' in *Dont Look Back*.<sup>16</sup> In addition to mimicking Dylan's timbre, pronunciation, and the approach to vowel length (which animates a broadly country-style sound perhaps taken from Williams), Baez mimics Dylan's characteristic way of phrasing, specifically his approach to timing and temporal flexibility. Where Baez's studio version of 'Mary Hamilton' is fingerpicked in semiquavers in 6/8, in her Dylan version, she retains the 6/8 time signature but strums quavers grouped in threes. This change from finger picking in semiquavers to downward strumming in quavers allows her to 'mess with' the song's rhythmic organization in the way that Dylan would. In her impersonation, she begins with a kind of pickup measure in a free 6/8 ('Word is to') then changes to steady-ish quavers grouped in threes for three bars ('the kitchen gone', etc.), but then at the words 'And word is up to madam the queen' she groups the quavers irregularly. Counting the quavers in the guitar accompaniment, Baez performs something that sounds more like  $5/8 + 4/8 + 2/8$  and then 6/8 to finish before repeatedly and speedily strumming the tonic chord at the end.<sup>17</sup> Like the extending of the vowel sounds discussed previously, such experimentation with metric irregularity is another Dylan

16 *Dont Look Back*, DVD, dir. D. A. Pennebaker. Dylan and Baez perform two songs by Hank Williams in a hotel room with Dylan's road buddy, Bob Neuwirth. They sing 'Lost Highway' and 'I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry'. Dylan (like Williams in his recordings) emphasizes the syllables on the downbeat and draws out the vowel sounds: 'Hear that lonesome whippoorwill/He sounds too blue to cry [sic].' But the effect sounds idiosyncratic to Dylan because, unlike Williams, Dylan doesn't swing. Where Williams swings the phrases by using the final quaver of the bar as a pickup into beat one of the next bar, Dylan sings the phrases in an unsyncopated way, landing squarely on beats one and three. The overall effect is more laboured, more 'Dylan'.

17 See the following clip on YouTube: 'Joan Baez While Waiting for Bob Dylan to Come on Stage', YouTube video, 17 March 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8egcy0DzM4I>.

characteristic that has its roots elsewhere. Dylan often created metrically irregular phrases that varied from one performance to the next in a way that was redolent of Dylan's country blues and old-time influences, such as those heard on the *Harry Smith Anthology of American Music*.<sup>18</sup> In this performance, Baez expertly mimics this metric irregularity and thus animates Dylan's predecessors in a way that suggests Dylan did know 'where the fuck' his music came from.

In addition to capturing these nuances of Dylan's vocal timbre, pronunciation, rhythm, and phrasing, Baez hones what Dylan does with melody and vocal style, particularly around the time of *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (1964). For example, in the first line of Baez's version of 'Mary Hamilton' on *Joan Baez*, she sings more or less one pitch per syllable (with the exception of the first 'to', which ascends, and 'and', which descends); her version is thus very sing-able. But in her impersonation of Dylan, the melody is more melismatic; she sweeps down in the first syllable 'word', which becomes conjoined in terms of both melody and enunciation with the 'is' that then shares its pitch with 'to'. Baez also incorporates Dylan's characteristic alternation between: (1) strongly accented words that are approached by upward slides in pitch (glissandi) and then left with downward slides, giving the effect of a kind of lapping, forward motion where the melodic pitches sound as though at the top of peaks; and (2) more stable pitches. The lapping glissando effect can be heard on the lyrics 'word', 'kit-chen', 'queen', 'that's', and 'worst', and the more stable pitches occur on the lyrics 'gone', 'hall', and 'all' – the vowels of which are all homogenized and sung so as to share the same 'a' sound. While Dylan may have borrowed his vowel elongation from Williams and country music, his very distinctive sweeps up to and down away from pitches (the peaks, hills, or laps in the pitch) are strongly redolent of the vocal style of the African American gospel/R&B artist Sister Rosetta Tharpe. A clear example of her employing this vocal technique can be heard on her performance of 'Can't No Grave Hold My Body Down' on her album *Gospel Train*, released on Mercury Records in 1956.<sup>19</sup> In addition to singing Dylan-style melismas and Tharpe-esque slides, Baez also copies Dylan's rushed, monotonous chant style at 'And word is up to madam the Queen', which is performed in a way that is redolent of 'A finger fired the trigger to his name', in the Dylan song 'Only a Pawn in their Game'.<sup>20</sup>

18 David Brackett, 'The Aesthetics of Failure: The Challenge of Collaboration in Bob Dylan's "She's Your Lover Now" (or, the "Pro-Musicology" of a Pop Song)', paper presented at the Society for American Music (SAM), New Orleans, LA, 22 March 2019. Dylan himself has also discussed his approach to rhythmic reorganization. See Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 145. See also Steven Rings, 'A Foreign Sound to Your Ear: Bob Dylan Performs "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)", 1964–2009', *Music Theory Online* 19/4 (2013), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.13.19.4/mto.13.19.4.rings.html>.

19 Listen, particularly, to the verses following the guitar solo, to the way she sings in verse three, 'But I don't want you to blow that trumpet, Gabriel' and in verse four, 'When that first, first trumpet sound, don't you know I'm gonna get up, get up off the ground'. Much later performances by Dylan demonstrate this emulation of Tharpe even more clearly. Compare, for example, Tharpe's 'Can't No Grave' to Dylan's 'Long and Wasted Years' (2012).

20 Negus borrows the idea of a 'chant' melody from the work of Richard Middleton and hears chant-like melodies in Dylan songs such as 'It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)' and 'Like a Rolling Stone'. See Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 139–40. See also Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990).



In his meditation on Dylan's melodies, Keith Negus suggests that Dylan has 'very sing-able and memorable melodies' that are capable of drawing an audience in 'using the well-developed rhetoric of the popular song form'. Elsewhere, Negus provides evidence of audiences singing along to Dylan songs, thus supporting this idea that his songs are indeed very sing-able.<sup>21</sup> But while it might be possible to sing *along* with Dylan and his use of the established rhetoric of popular song, it is really quite difficult to sing *like* Dylan. One can sing the melodies in Dylan songs but capturing his nuances of pitch, timbre, and metre is difficult. Indeed, reflecting on these melodic idiosyncrasies, Negus suggests that 'Dylan's various vocal inflections, bluesy slides, microtonal shifts of pitch, and irregular rhythms and phrasing' make his songs difficult to notate or transcribe.<sup>22</sup> But could we hear Baez's imitations, her performances as Dylan as both a transcription and an analysis? Her 'Bobby-Dylan-singing-Joan-Baez' (i.e., her performance of Dylan singing 'Mary Hamilton') isn't of course notated, but it is a transcription in the way a folk or jazz musician might transcribe (i.e., learn but not notate or write down) an entire tune or an improvisation by a virtuosic soloist.

In her performances as Dylan, Baez's voice excites us since we recognize it as Dylan. Dylan's body is implied and yet it doesn't appear; Baez has a way of rendering him simultaneously present and absent. It is the very in-between-ness of Baez-as-Dylan, as neither presence nor absence, that animates Baez's subtle critique and elevates her impersonations to a form of analysis that poses puzzling questions. To paraphrase Brandon LaBelle, not only do her impersonations 'promise' Dylan or 'haunt' us the listeners with his presence,<sup>23</sup> but Baez creates a kind of aural, funhouse-hall-of-mirrors effect: she is Baez 'doing' Dylan who in turn is 'doing' country and African American styles. Her imitations are analytic because they draw our attention to the fact that Dylan's irregular singing style is unusual but not totally inimitable and because, as Aldon Lynn Nielsen notes, Dylan's 'affectations' are not his own, '[t]hey are not the idiosyncratic vocal inflections for which he has been alternately praised and damned; rather they seem drawn from a persistent repertoire of white stylings of blackness that were common currency on the folk circuit then'.<sup>24</sup>

It seems significant, too, that Baez should choose 'Mary Hamilton' in order to play at being Dylan, since this is not an 'original' composition but rather a folk song/Child ballad with pointed gender relations. 'Mary Hamilton' is the tale of a chambermaid who is publicly hung for bearing and then drowning the king's illegitimate child. In Baez's performance of the song on *Joan Baez*, Mary Hamilton travels to her fate (the gallows) in white robes, as the

21 Keith Negus, 'Living, Breathing Songs: Singing Along with Bob Dylan', *Oral Tradition* 22/1 (2007), 71–3. See also Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 153.

22 Negus, 'Living, Breathing Songs', 74.

23 Brandon LaBelle, *The Lexicon of the Mouth: Poetics and Politics of Voice and the Oral Imaginary* (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 6. The full quotation is: the mouth 'promises a subject; it excites or haunts a listener to recognize in the voice a "someone." An implicit body on the way toward an explicit drama: the anticipation or expectation every voice instigates, that of a figure soon to appear – someone I may hope for, or that might also dread, or one that I may not even understand.'

24 Aldon Lynn Nielsen, 'Crow Jane Approximately: Bob Dylan's Black Masque', in *Highway 61 Revisited: Bob Dylan's Road from Minnesota to the World*, ed. Colleen J. Sheehy and Thomas Swiss (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 188.

virginal bride, a figure of innocence. The townswomen weep and cry out in sympathy, 'Alack and alas for thee', and Mary Hamilton laments that her dedication to and work for the queen (washing her feet, tying gold in her hair) has brought her no protection or pardon. Enter the king in the final moments, who arrives to offer some kind of (perhaps temporary) pardon, only to be dismissed from the gallows by Hamilton herself when she sings to him: 'For if you'd a mind to save my life / You'd never have shamed me here.' As a tale about the exploitation of women's labour and the female body, and about Mary's impossible double bind (as someone shamed for bearing and/or shamed for murdering her child), 'Mary Hamilton' fits well, if uncomfortably, in our analysis of Baez's textual relationship to Dylan, and the commodity-exchange of musical artistry. Baez's imitations of Dylan – in speech, in 'Simple Twist of Fate', in 'Don't Think Twice', and in 'Mary Hamilton' – are not simply acts of mimicry or 'party-pieces' but they're analyses insofar as Baez brings to life Dylan's (perhaps jokingly or anxiously disavowed) predecessors, she foregrounds the embeddedness of creative work in collective labour and relationships, and, obliquely via 'Mary Hamilton', she draws our attention to the historical gender inequities, the disposability of women and the inconsequentiality of their labour, and the fact our heroine pays for the crimes of the king. It is ironic, in fact, that Dylan failed to hear the politics in this song, once chiding Baez for '[s]till singing about Mary Hamilton' rather than 'steppin' out' and directly into the protest struggle.<sup>25</sup>

### Matrilineal Lineages of 'Love and Theft'

If Baez's impersonations of Dylan are analyses of his abilities as an imitator and of the collective work of music, they are also analyses of the junction where the ever-vanishing impression of presence (or identity) meets the circulation of capital and commodities; the junction of ontology and materialism, if you will. We can unlock this idea by engaging two complementary discourses: on the one hand, a Butlerian approach, which contemplates the elusiveness of origins and originality; and, on the other, the racial politics of mimicry in popular music. According to friends, biographers, scholars, and Dylan himself, Dylan was a talented imitator. Dylan's friend the Irish folk singer Liam Clancy compared him to blotting paper: 'He soaked everything up. He had this immense curiosity; he was totally blank, and ready to suck up everything that came within his range.'<sup>26</sup> Reflecting on his acquisition of an established musical rhetoric, Dylan comes to similar conclusions, describing himself as someone who 'had a very agile mind' and who 'could learn a song by hearing it maybe once or twice'.<sup>27</sup>

Using a Butlerian frame to interrogate Dylan's imitative abilities, we begin to feel the effect of the instability of his artistic persona, which has long been the intrigue of journalists and scholars,<sup>28</sup> and its place in a continuum of ever-receding origins. As Butler writes:

25 Ellen Willis, 'Dylan', in *Out of the Vinyl Deeps: Ellen Willis on Rock Music*, ed. Nona Willis Aronowitz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 8. Originally published in *Cheetah*, 1967.

26 Clancy quoted in Clinton Heylin, *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades, the Biography – Take Two* (London: Penguin, 2001) 73.

27 See also *No Direction Home*, Prime Video, dir. Martin Scorsese.

28 Willis, 'Dylan', 1–21. For an example of some more recent work on this, see Sara Martínez, 'Bob Dylan's Iconic Performativity and Performance in 1960s American Culture', paper presented at 'Crosstown Traffic: Popular Music

'imitation' carries the meaning of 'derivative' or 'secondary', a copy of an origin which is itself the ground of all copies, but which is itself a copy of nothing. Logically, this notion of an 'origin' is suspect, for how can something operate as an origin if there is no secondary consequences which retrospectively confirm the originality of that origin?<sup>29</sup>

Put simply, and repurposed for Baez/Dylan: Baez ('secondary') imitates Dylan ('origin') who in turn is/was imitating country, blues, old-time, and R&B musicians as well as Beat Generation poets, symbolists, and the macabre lyrics of Child ballads and songs on the *Harry Smith Anthology* ('origins') to create songs and voices of apparently obscure origin – 'I don't know where the fuck it comes from.'<sup>30</sup> In other words, Baez is a 'secondary consequence' that 'retrospectively confirms' Dylan as origin, who in turn is a secondary consequence that confirms the Tharpe, Williams, Guthrie, blues, old-time, and Beat poets as origins, and so on and so forth to an ever-vanishing point of origin. Butler suggests therefore, 'imitation does not copy that which is prior, but produces and *inverts* the very terms of priority and derivativeness'.<sup>31</sup> Again, more simply, origin is an effect of (or is contingent on) imitation.

But this is just one puzzle Baez presents in her imitation of Dylan and, I should clarify, Butler's questioning of origins is part of her much larger project that aims to trouble the priority of heterosexuality and the characterization of homosexuality as a poor imitation of heterosexuality. So, we might also say that where origins demand to be troubled in order to destabilize hierarchies, they also demand to be reinstated in order to recognize the work of the disempowered. Thus as a counterpoint to Butler, we might understand Baez's imitations and the entanglements of origin and originality in light of Lott's 'love and theft' in his work on American blackface minstrelsy,<sup>32</sup> Homi K. Bhabha's exploration of mimicry as an in-between space of resistance in the context of colonial relations, and Matthew D. Morrison's more recent proposal of 'Blacksound', a concept and methodology that:

seeks not to erase other ethnic and racial groups from the process of popular music making in the United States, but rather to put blackness – as the aesthetic basis of

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Theory and Practice', International Association for the Study of Popular Music UK and Ireland, University of Huddersfield, 3–5 September 2018.

29 Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), 313.

30 Janet Gezari and Charles Hartman go so far as to suggest Dylan even imitates himself. See Janet Gezari and Charles Hartman, 'Dylan's Covers', *Southwest Review*, 95/1 and 2 (2010), 155. See also Bob Dylan, *Chronicles Volume One* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

31 Butler, 'Imitation', 313.

32 Lott, 'Love and Theft', 23. It is important to note some counter arguments against and some modifications to Lott's analysis, which can be read in Matthew D. Morrison, 'Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72/3 (2019); and Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). It should be noted as well that Lott's is a different kind of 'love' from that referred to in Fortunati's quote in the epigraph, which I return to towards the end of the article.

American popular music since its founding in blackface – at the center of considering what is at stake as varied communities engage in popular music making on their own terms and in relation to one another within society's complex and often unequal structures.<sup>33</sup>

A well-known depiction of Dylan as an index of others is Todd Haynes's 2007 film *I'm Not There*, where different actors depict different Dylans.<sup>34</sup> That two of these Dylans are played by an African American boy (Marcus Carl Franklin) and white woman (Cate Blanchett), and some of the soundtrack's covers are sung by white women, animates both race and gender impersonation in Dylan's bricolage persona, and in some respects brings us back to Baez – Dylan is (or can be) a woman. It is worth noting, furthermore, that the Dylan Blanchett performs in *I'm Not There* (he of the 1965 UK tour, known as 'Jude Quinn' in the film) was described at the time by the singer Marianne Faithful as 'so typically young America' and as someone whose '[e]very other word is "man," just like in the James Baldwin books'.<sup>35</sup> Faithful's allusion to Baldwin suggests Blanchett's – and therefore Baez's – performance of mid-1960s Dylan is not only gender drag but also an assumption of his minstrelsy. But while Haynes casts a Black boy and white women in the role(s) of Dylan, no Black men or women play Dylan, and no Black women perform on the film's majority-white soundtrack.<sup>36</sup> This is significant to the extent that Dylan and other writers acknowledge his borrowing from African American women, just as we heard Baez doing Tharpe-via-Dylan in the preceding example.<sup>37</sup>

Drawing more from LaBelle, we might therefore hear Baez's imitations of Dylan and, by association, her (mimetic) mouth as a performative chamber that: 'delivers an epistemology founded on processes and experiences of ingestion and incorporation, emanation and expulsion, attachment and loss: a series of knowledge paths defined by this orifice and its generative and volatile movements'.<sup>38</sup> The specific 'epistemology' Baez's mouth delivers in her imitation of Dylan takes us from the world of their friendship and the act of borrowing all the way to Lott's 'love and theft'. Baez assumes Dylan's body or voice, which itself has assumed the voices of multiple others through process of 'ingestion and incorporation, emanation and expulsion, attachment and loss'. In addition to thinking of the mouth in this way, with its unique

33 Morrison, 'Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse', 783.

34 Kim Wilkins, "'I don't know who I am most of the time': Constructed Identity in Todd Haynes' *I'm Not There*", *Film Criticism* 41/1 (February 2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/fc.13761232.0041.103>.

35 See Keith Altham, 'Marianne Faithful: Marianne Meets Dylan And Baez', *New Musical Express*, 14 May 1965, [www.rocksbackpages.com](http://www.rocksbackpages.com).

36 The soundtrack is almost exclusively white in its performing personnel with the exception of Richie Havens who performs 'Tombstone Blues' and Franklin who sings 'When the Ship Comes In'. Most of the artists appear to belong to the indie-rock/alternative category, which raises interesting questions about the retroactive generic categorization of Dylan in the early twenty-first century. However, according to Yaffe, Haynes considered casting Beyoncé as the sixth Dylan, such was his awareness of Dylan's 'affinity for' Black American female vocalists. See David Yaffe, 'Tangled Up in Keys: Why Does Bob Dylan Namecheck Alicia Keys in his New Song?' *Slate*, 11 August 2006, <https://slate.com/culture/2006/08/what-does-bob-dylan-want-with-alicia-keys.html>.

37 See, for example, Negus's discussion of the blues in *Bob Dylan*, 75–82.

38 LaBelle, *Lexicon of the Mouth*, 7.

'knowledge paths' and its discourse of 'ingestion and incorporation', LaBelle also suggests the mouth 'may figure alongside considerations of the gendered or racial body, as a performative chamber fully wed to identity and its social conditioning'.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Baez's imitation of Dylan delivers an epistemology with histories of asymmetrical race and gender relations as its core or even at its 'origin'. Her impersonation delineates the attachment to and loss of sounds shared privately (in the context of their relationship), but also the 'love and theft' of what Morrison refers to as the 'Blacksound' at the foundation of American popular music.<sup>40</sup>

I suggest, then, Baez's imitations invite us to consider not only mimicry and gender relations but also what Farah Jasmine Griffin refers to as the (Black) 'matrilineal lineages' in Dylan's work in a way that momentarily troubles the ever-vanishing notion of 'origin' as an effect of imitation in Butler's terms. This is one of multiple ways we can engage the specifically Black matrilineal lineage (or 'origin') in Dylan via his connection to Tharpe but also Odetta – one of several black women's voices missing from Haynes's film.<sup>41</sup> According to Dylan biographer Clinton Heylin, Dylan 'attributed his conversion' from rock 'n' roll to folk to Odetta:

a classically trained singer who began singing in Broadway productions in the late forties before arriving at her real roots in 1956 with her powerful debut for the Tradition label, *Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues*. Whatever the immediate significance of his new name, the metamorphosis into 'Bob Dylan' began with the purchase of the first Tradition album by this husky full-throated maitresse of folk.<sup>42</sup>

One of the most obvious examples of Dylan's debt to Odetta is the similarity between Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind' (1963) and 'No More Auction Block', which was recorded by Odetta during a performance at Carnegie Hall in 1960. Dylan recorded a performance of 'No More Auction Block', as heard on *The Bootleg Series, Vol 1*, which strengthens the idea Dylan borrowed from Odetta.<sup>43</sup> But not only does this debt to Odetta reinforce the idea that Blacksound underscores Dylan's music but also, more pointedly, 'No More Auction Block' explicitly invokes slavery.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the connotations of 'No More Auction Block' root Dylan's music in the originary moment of American popular music: chattel slavery, and the theft- and imitation of Black art by the white performer. The parallel or connection

39 LaBelle, *Lexicon of the Mouth*, 2.

40 Morrison, 'Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse', 783.

41 Indeed, as Yaffe writes in 2006 ('Tangled Up in Keys'): 'Dylan has long worshipped at the shrine of the black female voice, a source of musical inspiration, erotic obsession, and even religious conversion.' This quotation appears also in Brooks and Wald, 'Women Do Dylan', 171 and 177.

42 Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 32–3. Dylan says in *No Direction Home* that he was interested in what he refers to Odetta's 'Tex-Mex' style of guitar playing. Brooks and Wald suggest Dylan might be thinking of Odetta's rendition of the song 'Water Boy', see Brooks and Wald, 'Women Do Dylan', 176. See *No Direction Home*, Prime Video, dir. Martin Scorsese.

43 The song was also performed by Paul Robeson. See Gezari and Hartman, 'Dylan Covers', 155; and Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 91–2.

44 Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 92. See also Oliver Trager, *Keys to the Rain: The Definitive Bob Dylan Encyclopaedia* (New York: Billboard Books, 2004).

between this particular instance of Blacksound in popular music and slavery as an originary site is striking and worth considering: the auction block is a platform that whites (i.e., property holders) can use to come into the possession of Black people (as property); 'No More Auction Block' is a text through which a white singer can possess or ingest Black music. To draw from the work of Saidiya Hartman, this history invites us to consider the 'pleasure engendered by the embrace of [African American] pain' in the context of empathic identification; that is, the pleasure of the white performer who inhabits the song of the auction block, but does not embody its legacy. This is especially the case since, if I may paraphrase Hartman, the very effect of song can be to dissipate and dissimulate the terrors of slavery. And indeed, we have evidence of this as shown earlier: Heylin's suggestion that Odetta 'arrived at her real roots' in the mid-1950s when she abandoned classical singing and Broadway in favour of ballads and blues seems not only to essentialize Odetta's musical practice and overlook histories of Black art song and Broadway but also appears to insist that Black performers should repeat and return to spectacles of suffering in musical form, in the form of the blues music and spirituals in this instance.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, a 'love and theft'-type discourse underpins Dylan's relationship to Black music insofar as it echoes through Dylan's imitation of Black singers such as Odetta ('love'), and his eventual and resulting economic and cultural value depicted by the BBC-Granada auction in *Dont Look Back* ('theft').<sup>46</sup> Baez's mimicry thus engages the very fact that both she and Dylan are mimics (like all musicians) and his economic and cultural value ('Two grand, Johnny') owes in part to African American female voices and to the originary auction block. It is for this additional reason that her impersonations might be understood as a mode of transcription, analysis, and an allusion to matrilineal lineages. Furthermore, the material conditions of slavery and the realities of racial oppression reinstate the importance of 'origin' in a way that troubles Butler's upending thereof. Processes of artistic legitimation as well as material and symbolic valorization are supported by and have roots in histories of gender and racial inequality.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Baez's imitation of Dylan raises the puzzling meeting point of the unequal valorization of historical (musical) labour and the material relations of gender and race, as well as the ontological impossibility or vanishing point of an origin. In the context of the Baez/Dylan conundrum, furthermore, this act of mimicry does some important things to identity.<sup>48</sup> Since she assumes 'Bob Dylan' in performance, she rearticulates or even, as Bhabha suggests, 'menaces', the whole notion of his identity and alienates it from its essence. In throwing Dylan

45 See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20–1. See also Morrison's discussion of Hartman's rebuttal to Lott's 'love and theft' in his article, 'Blacksound', 802–3.

46 Indeed, Dylan's 2001 album *Love and Theft* may have been inspired by Lott's book. See also Negus on Dylan's self-conscious acknowledgement 'that [his] songs had been source via an activity signalled in the title'. Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 94.

47 Daphne A. Brooks, "'This Voice Which is Not One": Amy Winehouse Sings the Ballad of Sonic Blue(s)face Culture', *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 20/1 (2010), 41.

48 Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October* (Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis) 28 (1984), 126–9, 131.



back at Dylan (origin as an effect of imitation), Baez troubles his identity by illuminating the following: that mimicry is essential to musical performance and musical creation, and thus essences (or even origins) are illusory. And yet origin stories have a politics and power relation. Artistic and musical accomplishment must therefore co-exist with and is born of this complex matrix of power.<sup>49</sup>

### Matrices, Matriarchs, and the Politics of Reproduction

As I suggested previously, there are a number of ways of analysing the creative process in music as collaborative and distributed. With reference to the 'creative systems' model employed by Paul Thompson,<sup>50</sup> we might understand Dylan's songwriting 'domain' as something that is populated by myriad imitations and influences, so much so that his lyrics participate in the folk-lyric tradition as new configurations of familiar images or phrases.<sup>51</sup> We know from documentary evidence that Dylan's 'domain acquisition' (his accumulation of this knowledge about songwriting and popular song) owes largely to his appetite for listening to music.<sup>52</sup> To take this further, the idea of 'domain acquisition' (and those very words) evokes a striking parallel to Bhabha's theorization of colonialism and the acts of mimicry performed by the colonized. In other words, imitation can be considered a mode of 'domain acquisition', and the ingestion and repetition of somebody else's performance highlight the move-ability, malleability, non-essence, and fragility of both identity and creative work, as well as the power relations and kinds of subjugation discussed previously.

But as Thompson and McIntyre note, the idea of the 'field' in the creative system model is just as integral to a musician's work as the 'domain'. The field is a necessary space that is populated by interlocutors who have the capacity to influence the domain. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writes:

No matter how gifted a person is, he or she has no chance to achieve anything creative unless the right conditions are provided by the field . . . it is possible to single out seven major elements in the social milieu that help make creative contributions possible: training, expectations, resources, recognition, hope, opportunity and reward. Some of these are direct responsibilities of the field, others depend on the broader social system.<sup>53</sup>

49 I am thinking here of this sentence from Judith A. Peraino who, writing in response to Jack Halberstam's essay on the Canadian electronic group Lesbians on Ecstasy, suggests: 'To say that the principal effect of a drag queen impersonating Marilyn Monroe is to call into question the integrity of Marilyn Monroe as the original not only diminishes the accomplishments of both actors but also denies the subversive and productive potential of such a performance in terms of time itself; that is, how "queer performance" exceeds time.' Judith Ann Peraino, 'Listening to Gender: A Response to Judith Halberstam', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 11 (2007), 60.

50 Thompson and McIntyre, *Creativity in the Recording Studio*.

51 See specifically Greil Marcus, 'The Old, Weird America', in *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (London: Picador, 1997). For more on the intertextuality of Dylan's lyrics and the way they draw on myriad genres, see Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 72–97.

52 *No Direction Home*, Prime Video, dir. Martin Scorsese.

53 Paul Thompson and Philip McIntyre, 'Rethinking Creative Practice in Record Production and Studio Recording Education: Addressing the Field', *Journal on the Art of Record Production* 8 (December 2013), n.p., <https://www.>

It is this 'social system' or, indeed, the whole idea of 'socialisation' in the field that I am most interested in for this final section, and I wonder if we can in fact re-frame what these authors refer to as the 'field' and conceive of it as more of a matrix. The liminal zone of *repetition and difference* that is occupied by our succession of performers (Dylan, Baez, Williams, Tharpe, Odetta, etc.) and that produces Dylan's non-essential 'identity' (and perhaps all popular music identities) might be thought of as a network of artists whose ideas and material pass back and forth, between and across. That this network is characterized by ongoing processes of repetition and difference is furthermore elucidated with recordings such as *Odetta Sings Dylan* (1965) where Odetta covers Dylan, and the continued reworking, revising, reinvention, plagiarism, and 'theft' at the heart of the folk music tradition.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, creativity in the folk revival specifically was grounded in social networks. The acquisition of skills, knowledge, and repertoire in this scene was based directly on the recordings of other musicians. Dave Van Ronk said of the *Anthology of American Music*, for example, which comprised songs performed by country blues and so-called hillbilly musicians from the 1920s and 1930s, that it was like the 'bible' to the Greenwich Village folk scene and that all participants know all the words to every song.<sup>55</sup>

But I am interested in thinking of the field as more of a 'matrix' specifically to account first for its complexity, second for its implied power dynamics, and third for the word's etymological link to the mother and the womb. The creative matrix might thus be understood not only as a complex of culture, history, and sociality but also as a heuristic device that as scholars we can employ in order to consider physical intimacy, nurture, and care work (that is often both gendered and racialized) as part of the creative process. This creative matrix (or mother) might be gendered in function, furthermore, but need not always imply a heteronormative or hetero-reproductive mode of relations.

To go back to Baez's imitation of Dylan, then, and to see it through the lens of an originary or even maternal matrix, we might say that a good or uncanny imitation requires not only skills as a mimic, which Baez has,<sup>56</sup> but also intimacy. To imitate somebody well requires a good ear (for listening), familiarity (with the mannerisms of a particular person), and an ability to pay attention to detail. All of these qualities – listening, familiarity, and attention – suggest not only respect and support but also encompass literal and emotional closeness. Following the 'knowledge path' delivered by Baez through imitation, then, we wend our way towards a story of 'love and theft' and originary Blacksound but – via the kind of break in the fourth wall that imitation enacts – we also peer into the Baez/Dylan relationship.

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[arpjournal.com/asarpwp/rethinking-creative-practice-in-record-production-and-studio-recording-education-addressing-the-field/](http://arpjournal.com/asarpwp/rethinking-creative-practice-in-record-production-and-studio-recording-education-addressing-the-field/). See also Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 330.

54 I am paraphrasing the ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger as printed in Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 95.

55 Van Ronk quoted in Marcus, 'The Old, Weird America', 88.

56 In *Positively 4th Street*, David Hajdu notes how, from a young age, Baez had 'a quick, sassy wit and a knack for imitating voices'. Indeed, Baez's own career started by impersonating Debbie Green and taking ideas from Harvard student Richard Zaffron. See Hajdu *Positively 4th Street: The Lives and Times of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Mimi Baez Fariña, and Richard Fariña* (New York: Picador, 2011), esp. 5 and 17–18.

Her impression in the interview ('That's pretty fucking good') functions as an aural flashback to their relationship of the early mid-1960s and, as 'ingestion and incorporation', it implies processes of care ('attachment and loss') at the fraught juncture of labour and freewill. All this is in addition to problematizing the essence of Dylan and summoning the ghosts in the hall of mirrors.

There are different documents we can turn to get a sense of Baez's relationship to and with Dylan. These include, but certainly aren't limited to, biographies of both musicians, particularly David Hajdu's *Positively 4th Street* and Baez's autobiography *And a Voice to Sing With*,<sup>57</sup> as well as first-hand accounts from their peers, and in songs and films that include Scorsese's more recent semi-fictionalized account of the Rolling Thunder Revue and Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back*. This last film is well known for its depiction of Dylan's poor treatment of Baez and her representation as a kind of nuisance or hanger-on. Scenes that are particularly cruel include comments from Dylan's road buddy and fellow musician Bob Neuwirth, who tells Baez she 'fagged out a long time ago', makes fun of her appearance, and jokes with Dylan that 'she has one of those see-through blouses where you don't even wanna'. In other scenes, Baez seems to deliberately assume the role of nuisance and hanger-on. On a car journey with Dylan and John Mayall, dressed in an awkward-looking cowboy hat, Baez bitterly sings lines from 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue' with a curled lip and snarl.<sup>58</sup> The tension in these scenes is supported by an anecdote told by Marianne Faithful to the *NME* when she met Baez, Dylan, and their entourage in May 1965. According to Faithful, Baez 'insisted on singing her high vibrato version of "Here Comes the Night" and "Go Now," which Dylan complained about. He hates her voice and tells her so. At one point he held up a bottle as she sang a high note, and drawled, "Break that!" She just laughed.'<sup>59</sup>

It is striking that Dylan attacks Baez's voice here and, we might infer, its power and its capacity to make its (unwanted) presence known as we heard in 'Simple Twist of Fate'. Indeed, as we'll see, Baez's voice and body become the locus of a more sustained project to contain Baez's artistry even outside the context of Dylan. About these experiences on the UK tour in 1965, Baez herself has said: 'The tour in England was hell. There's not really much else to say' and 'It was really demoralising and I was letting myself be demoralized by him not asking me on stage with him. It was just a very unhappy time.'<sup>60</sup> And Dylan's cruelty or, more generously, his awkwardness in *Dont Look Back* is all the more striking given the role that Baez played in facilitating his career, which she alludes to when she says she was disappointed that he was 'not asking [her] on stage with him'.

Her role as facilitator in Dylan's career is well documented in Hajdu's *Positively 4th Street*, which describes how Baez would often give her own concerts over to Dylan, much to the disappointment of the audience.<sup>61</sup> In fact, what emerges from Hajdu's depiction of the pair is an

57 Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street*; Joan Baez, *And a Voice to Sing With: A Memoir* (New York: Summit Books, 1987).

58 *Dont Look Back*, DVD, dir. D. A. Pennebaker.

59 See Altham, 'Marianne Faithful'. We hear Baez sing 'Here Comes the Night' with near-glass-shattering effect in a dressing room in *Dont Look Back*, DVD, dir. D. A. Pennebaker.

60 See Baez in *How Sweet the Sound*, Prime Video (streaming online video), co-dir. Joe Berlinger (2009).

61 See Dylan at Monterey in Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street*, 159–60.

image of Dylan as an opportunist and of Baez as someone willing to listen, nurture, and support. Several of Hajdu's portraits of the young Dylan wandering into the Village emphasize his insecurity, his waif-like-ness, and they are often quite unflattering.<sup>62</sup> According to Hajdu, the writer and musician Richard Fariña once said to Dylan: 'what you need to do, man, is hook up with Joan Baez' and 'you need somebody like her to do your songs. She's your ticket, man. All you need to do, man, is start screwing Joan Baez.'<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the singer-songwriter Paul Simon told Keith Altham (features editor at *NME*) in July 1965 that Joan Baez was 'probably the only folk singer to have happened naturally' and that Dylan's success could be attributed to Grossman's publicity work but also, 'Dylan made sure he got with the right people. People like Joan Baez. I remember Joan took him on a concert in Forest Hills. He sang two numbers at the end of the concert and got booed off stage.'<sup>64</sup>

We can therefore use this biographical information and these stories from Faithful and Simon to put pressure on the power dynamics of the creative matrix and to open debates about Csikszentmihalyi's notion of 'socialization' in the production of music. What emerges when we apply such pressure is an important connection between Dylan-the-waif (as painted by Hajdu) or the opportunist (as encouraged by Fariña and noted by Simon) and what Baez herself describes as her 'mother' instincts towards Dylan. She says in *No Direction Home*, for example, that 'Bob looked like a ragamuffin, probably one of the things I found so appealing about him. He'd bring out the mother instinct in a woman who thought her mother instinct was dead.'<sup>65</sup> For Baez, this mother instinct is connected to her role as facilitator:

He would come out on the stage and people didn't want to hear that. I mean, they were there to hear the pristine little Virgin Mary, and then she had one song and out he came. And I was like Miss Dove saying, 'Now you listen.' It didn't take long before people got it, that he was pretty damn special.<sup>66</sup>

In this extract she mocks herself as a kind of kindergarten teacher (Miss Dove), perhaps with reference to the 1955 film *Good Morning, Miss Dove*. She also alludes to the public perception of her as the doting mother (the Virgin Mary) who is willing to sacrifice both herself and her music for a greater cause, notably the Civil Rights and anti-war movements in which she was an active participant.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, early music press commentaries on Baez's music suggest the

62 One particularly unflattering scene is the visit to Revere Beach in 1961 with Richard Fariña and friends. At this moment before his career took off Dylan was pale, shy, emaciated looking and certainly not holding court, but rather looking at his shoes and unable to join the conversation with Fariña, Eric von Schmidt, and Carolyn Hester. See Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street*, 85.

63 Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street*, 100.

64 See Keith Altham, 'Two Views on Baez, by Paul Simon and Dana Gillespie', *New Musical Express*, 30 July 1965, [www.rocksbackpages.com](http://www.rocksbackpages.com).

65 *No Direction Home*, Prime Video, dir. Martin Scorsese. See also Baez quoted in Hajdu: 'I wanted to mother him, and he seemed to want it and need it. He seemed so helpless.' Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street*, 161.

66 *No Direction Home*, Prime Video, dir. Martin Scorsese.

67 Jane A. Bernstein, "'Thanks for My Weapons in Battle – My Voice and the Desire to Use It.'" Women and Protest Music in the Americas', in *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004).

figure of the Virgin Mary – a benevolent, bare-footed woman in modest dress.<sup>68</sup> When we first 'meet' Baez in Scorsese's *No Direction Home*, she's dressed in white, performing the song 'Virgin Mary', and thus stabilising and reinforcing this image of her as pure and mother-like.<sup>69</sup> Notably, this is a song that was recorded by Odetta and several times by Carolyn Hester, on whose third album Dylan played harmonica in 1961 for Columbia Records in what is widely considered to be his first 'big break'.<sup>70</sup> The image of Baez as the Virgin Mary is thus a powerful one that has recurred since the beginning of her career at least up until Scorsese's *No Direction Home*. It owes in part to her modest appearance (no makeup, bare feet), her repertoire ('Virgin Mary'), her role as leader in song and non-violent protest in the Civil Rights movement, and the clear and penetrating timbre of her voice, which is almost without the noise or 'interferences' of the body in song (i.e., the rough sound of the throat). We are reminded, too, of Mary Hamilton, who's labour and dedication brought her no pardon as she was taken to the gallows in her 'robes of white'. And finally, the image of Baez as the 'pristine Virgin Mary' has the capacity to cite other women including Odetta (the origin of the conversion to folk) and Hester (another facilitator in Dylan's recording career).

Baez's roles as both the Virgin Mary and Miss Dove can be related to my larger argument about the creative matrix in two ways: first, in the context of the Baez/Dylan relationship; and second, in the much broader, more foundational context of Blacksound. Looking first at the Baez/Dylan relationship: in mid-September 1963, Dylan stayed with Baez at Carmel Heights on the west coast of the United States and, according to Hajdu, 'Their daily life was constructed around Bob, so he could write' and 'Though a model for independent women, Joan seemed to feel obligated to assume a subordinate role, supporting her man, at home.' Baez cooked, made coffee, provided wine, and Hajdu writes, 'In Joan, Bob found unqualified support for his literary experimentation.'<sup>71</sup>

But Baez was not the only woman who has been described as a mother figure to Dylan. Prior to meeting Baez, several other women and friends supported him, and the figure of the mother appears in descriptions of these people as well. According to Heylin, Dylan's girlfriend from his teenage years, Bonnie Beecher, took Dylan 'under her wing', and Beecher says, 'No one would let him even play for dinner. I ended up shoplifting for him, stealing food from my sorority house.'<sup>72</sup> Such was the mothering that Dylan received from different women that, according to Heylin, it 'became something of a running joke among his male friends in Minneapolis'. 'During his first few months in New York, Dylan made considerable use of the maternal instincts he seemed to engender in otherwise sane women', a skill that he had

68 'Folk Singing: Sybil with Guitar', in *The Pop, Rock and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, Third Edition, ed. David Brackett (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

69 *No Direction Home*, Prime Video, dir. Martin Scorsese.

70 Dylan also played harmonica for Victoria Spivey in 1962 on a record with Big Joe Williams. See Yaffe, 'Tangled Up'.

71 Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street*, 181–5. Baez says something similar herself in the Rolling Thunder Revue. In a scene where she is talking to Dylan at the bar, Baez says: 'I used to see you write like ticker tape. I used to feed you salad and red wine while you wrote like ticker tape.' See *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese*, dir. Martin Scorsese (New York: Grey Water Park Productions; Sikelia Productions, 2019. Netflix).

72 Beecher quoted in Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 36–7.

refined in Minneapolis.<sup>73</sup> According to Clancy, 'Dylan had this image of the lost waif, and all the girls wanted to mother him – he made out like a bandit!'<sup>74</sup> Heylin tells us of the different people supporting Dylan and his musical endeavours despite the fact that Dylan seldom tuned his guitar in the early days and audience members often walked out of his gigs.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, even prior to Baez, it seems Dylan had a knack of securing mother-like figures willing to steal for him, look after him, and provide an audience for him, whether that was by lending their own ear(s) or persuading the ears of others like Baez's 'Miss Dove'. It seems yet more significant that some of Dylan's 'mothers' and girlfriends had links to or relationships with folk music, the music to which he converted after hearing Odetta. Both Baez and Beecher were folk music enthusiasts as were some of Dylan's other female friends, such as Ellen Baker and Carla Rotolo, sister of Suze (his girlfriend on the cover of *The Freewheelin'*, 1963). Baker's father had an extensive folk music record collection that Dylan explored and Rotolo worked for anthropologist-musicologist Alan Lomax. According to Heylin, 'Carla was more of a fan of Dylan's music than her sister. She regularly sang his praises to [Robert] Shelton and, along with Sybil Weinberger, tried to tout Dylan's crude audition tape around the record labels.'<sup>76</sup> Dylan has since recognized the importance of Lomax but failed to mention Carla in the formation of his artistic identity, in his 'domain acquisition', and her role in the 'field' or matrix: 'Through the years Dylan has continued to acknowledge the debt he owed to Lomax, if not Carla, only recently referring to Alan as "one of those who unlocked the secrets of this kind of music."<sup>77</sup> But in Rotolo's words: 'He spent most of his time listening to my records, days and nights.'<sup>78</sup>

Taken together, then, we might think of Beecher, Baker, the Rotolo sisters, and the Baez sisters (Joan and Mimi) as systems of nurturing or, indeed, matrices that contributed to Dylan's 'domain acquisition' insofar as they helped to facilitate Dylan's socialization into the 'field' – they stole for him, cooked for him, touted his tape around, introduced him to others, and lent record collections (i.e., their cultural capital).<sup>79</sup> Such systems of nurture allowed Dylan to further his social status as a performer and also to learn the mechanisms and criteria for him to be afforded the status of creator and artist.

But we can deepen this analysis yet further. The facilitating role played by these women, particularly Baez who gave him her audience, is important for the way it links to discourses on different kinds of labour and the value thereof.<sup>80</sup> Listening – doing it oneself and encouraging others to do so, like 'Miss Dove' – is an action that sits at the intersection between

73 Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 37 and 61.

74 Clancy quoted in Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 62.

75 Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 71–2.

76 Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 78.

77 Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 78.

78 Rotolo quoted in Heylin, *Bob Dylan*, 81.

79 While I have picked out the female contributors to Dylan's nurturing, we might also think of these matrix roles as *gendered in function*, rather than identity or biology.

80 Another good example from this era of popular music is the relationship between Leonard Cohen and Marianne Ihlen as explored in the film *Marianne and Leonard: Words of Love*, dir. Nick Broomfield, British Broadcasting Corporation, UK, Television, BBC, 2019. Last aired 20 December 2019, BBC2.



friendship and labour, labour and freewill, and at the complex juncture of 'care'. Baez's skills as both listener and (music) analyst are illuminated in her imitations of Dylan. As I suggested, good imitations require an ability to listen to and for detail, and borrowing from LaBelle, we might think of imitations as 'ingestion and incorporation, emanation and expulsion'. They are also an analysis – or performance – of the 'attachment and loss' of friendship (or a relationship) as well as an analysis of the 'attachment and loss' of a particular moment in their music-making careers. In assuming his voice, Baez assumes a proximity to him and her imitation enacts closeness or intimacy. Since she is speaking *in his voice* or he is speaking *from her body*, her performance makes the two individuals momentarily unindividuated and, in turn, redolent of the hall of mirrors effect. A similar process is mobilized in Daphne A. Brooks and Gayle Wald's analysis of Odetta's covers of Dylan on *Odetta Sings Dylan* of 1965 as a 'kiss': 'Dylan's words on Odetta's tongue and in Odetta's mouth. His songs passing through her body with each exhalation.'<sup>81</sup>

Baez's appearance as both the Virgin Mary and the mimic extend beyond that particular performing and personal relationship with Dylan, and this next and final example effectively draws attention to what soon appears to be a rather asphyxiating discourse of motherhood and desexualization for and around Baez, and importantly brings us back to questions of race. In 1980, Baez appeared as a celebrity guest on an episode of the family-friendly puppet television programme the *Muppet Show* where she performed some imitations (of Marlon Brando and a questionable impersonation of Gandhi) and her original composition 'Honest Lullaby' from her 1979 album of the same name.<sup>82</sup> Dressed (perhaps by the programme's production team) in a kind of *Little House on the Prairie* outfit with floral dress and apron, she performs 'Honest Lullaby' to a muppet who is going to sleep. Notably, her performance of the song starts at the second verse, 'Yellow, brown, and black and white / Our Father bless us all tonight.' Choosing to begin singing here rather than at the start of the song ensures that the lyric content is family friendly because the first verse has the most sexual lyrics. Thus, since there is no first verse, there are no references to painted lips, padded bras, and 'vernal equinoxes' hidden in faded jeans. But not all sexual content is banished. Baez retains the lines about '[lusting] after football heroes' and preserving her virginity. Thus the song's worldliness jars with the lullaby genre in a way that suggests a kind of ambivalence about motherhood – she was after all, before Dylan, a woman whose mother instinct was 'dead'. Overall, however, Baez appears in this scene from the *Muppet Show* as a benevolent mother figure, desexualized both by the way she is dressed and in the censoring of the song's first verse. The song maintains its coming-of-age narrative but skips over the some of the teenage years, and Baez's references to both racial equality and God reinforce her status as one of several 'mothers' of the Civil Rights movement.

This *Muppet Show* performance of 'Honest Lullaby' is thus noteworthy for two reasons. First, the framing of Baez as a 'mother', specifically in the context of Civil Rights, raises an

81 Brooks and Wald, 'Women Do Dylan', 177–9.

82 Henson, Jim, creator, *The Muppet Show*, television series. Borehamwood, UK: ATV Elstree, 1976–81. First aired 14 December 1980.

interesting comparison between the kind of racialized maternal work Baez performs and that which is performed by African American female singers. Second, the *Muppet Show* appearance is in many ways a culmination of a sustained and complex process of fixing Baez's position as a desexualized mother figure that overshadows her agency as a creator and innovator. I elaborate on this suggestion towards the very end. But first, regarding the first issue, it is interesting to consider Baez's work as a pacifist 'school-marm' of the Civil Rights movement<sup>83</sup> in light of what Griffin writes about Black female singers in the context of US memorial events and spectacle. Griffin draws our attention to the symbolic significance of the Black female voice in American culture, specifically how Black female singers often perform the role of mother, of healer, and of unifier. She notes how Black women's voices are used to symbolize coming-together-ness and equality at major events such as sports games, and yet these women (and the communities they are supposed to represent) do not have access to the privileges that white Americans have. Griffin writes that 'the spectacle of [the singing Black woman] invokes a figure that can make no claims on the family unity', and she is a person who 'heals and nurtures [the family] but has no rights or privileges within it – more mammy than mother'.<sup>84</sup> The Black female voice is thus strategically deployed to provide an impression or illusion of equality that belies the daily racial injustices experienced by African Americans in the United States.

But unlike the female Blacksound of the Civil Rights movement – Marian Anderson, Mahalia Jackson, Odetta, Abbey Lincoln, Nina Simone, and Mavis Staples (a former lover of Dylan) – Baez's 'mothering' is such that she may have had access to the privileges that white Americans have, although this is perhaps another ambivalence given her Mexican American background.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the absence of body in Baez's voice in some ways makes her the antithesis of what Griffin notes about Simone; where Simone at times 'embodies' a song and does not deny her body 'in an effort to mimic an out-of-body spiritual transcendence', Baez's timbre has no audible body.<sup>86</sup> Two racialized stories of symbolic motherhood thus emerge: first, what Griffin refers to as the 'matrilineal lineage of the Black woman's voice as 'source' or origin (we think of Tharpe and Odetta discussed previously);<sup>87</sup> and second, Baez as the timbrally 'pristine' white (passing) Virgin Mary. Indeed, the other performances such as the *Muppet Show* add to this description in complex ways. Baez also sings her 1971 hit, 'The Night they Drove Old Dixie Down' (originally recorded by the Band), with its

83 Alan Smith, 'It's School-Marm Joan Baez Now!', *New Musical Express*, 13 August 1965, [www.rocksbackpages.com](http://www.rocksbackpages.com).

84 Farah Jasmine Griffin, 'When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Women's Vocality', in *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 104.

85 Baez's own experiences of racism trouble the binary here. For example, an uncredited writer at *Record Mirror* writing on 5 June 1965 notes that 'The neighbours glowered at Joan's dusky skin and yelled "Niggers."' See uncredited writer, 'Joan Baez, Carolyn Hester: Two Queens of Folk', *Record Mirror*, 5 June 1965, [www.rocksbackpages.com](http://www.rocksbackpages.com). It is worth noting here, too, that a number of these artists covered Dylan, including Lincoln, Odetta, Simone, and Staples. For analyses of these performances see Brooks and Wald, 'Women Do Dylan'. See also Roberta Flack's recording of 'Just Like a Woman'.

86 Griffin, 'When Malindy Sings', 109.

87 Griffin, 'When Malindy Sings', 117–18.

allusions to nostalgia and perhaps even sympathy for the Confederacy, and 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken' is a song associated with both Black and white gospel singers.

Further underscoring such discursive binaries in Dylan's matrilineal lineage is the problematic elision of blackness with sexuality and whiteness with a lack thereof. With specific reference to the kind of minstrelsy performed by white British blues performer Mick Jagger, Judith Ann Peraino argues, 'As we have seen with Elvis (or, indeed, not seen), [the] question of colorations – of "being" white but "having" blackness – is foundational to the discourse of early rock 'n' roll, and it was foundational to the Rolling Stones nearly a decade later.'<sup>88</sup> On the distinction between 'having' and 'being' here, Peraino is referring to ideas derived from psychoanalytic and postcolonial theory. In the public imagination – or, indeed, the white hetero-patriarchy – the Black figure inhabits a paradoxical position of 'extreme sexual potency' (as both threat and desire, Lott's definition of fetishistic 'love') and 'feminization or castration' (Lott's 'theft') by the very nature of having been fixed, subjugated and contained, and rendered without agency in this very fantasy.<sup>89</sup> Thus, 'having' and 'being' in Peraino's analysis refer to the idea of 'having' blackness as a kind of power and cultural cachet, but 'being' Black as a position of disempowerment. The white blues masquerade of Elvis, Jagger, and possibly even Dylan (although his relation to blackness is more remote than the other two) takes the best of both worlds; they 'have' cultural blackness but they don't experience the disempowerment of 'being' Black.<sup>90</sup>

But the discourse around Baez creates an image of someone who 'has' neither sexuality nor Dylan's (masculine) 'blackness'. Note the way an undeniable theme of desexualization of runs throughout all the materials I have unearthed on Baez: Mary Hamilton is both punished and used for sex, the Virgin Mary hasn't had sex, Neuwirth and Dylan don't want to see through Baez's see-through blouse, Baez is 'Miss Dove' and dismissed as a pacifist 'school marm' by journalists, and the *Muppet Show* casts her in the role of mother and cuts the sexual lyrics from the opening of 'Honest Lullaby'. Baez's casting as 'mother' seems ambivalent, even thrust upon her – her mother instinct was 'dead' after all. The sense of a 'dead' or ambivalent motherhood is heard in one of the most bizarre songs on Baez's *Diamonds & Rust*, 'Children and All That Jazz'. In the review discussed previously, in which Woffinden questioned Baez's

88 Judith A. Peraino, 'Mick Jagger as Mother', *Social Text* 33/3 (September 2015), 85–6.

89 Peraino, 'Mick Jagger as Mother', 85–6.

90 There is another Dylan impersonation that is worth noting here, particularly in light of Peraino's analysis of Jagger and the notion of having phallic power or being the phallus. In series one, episode one of the UK television series *Spitting Image* that used latex puppets and vocal impersonations to satirize public figures of the time, the composer Philip Pope performs a Dylan impersonation as the voice behind his puppet likeness. Like Baez, Pope effectively captures Dylan's unusual phrasing, nuances of pitch, and rhythmic organization, and he moves deftly between a mid-1960s Dylan voice and the slightly different voice we hear on Dylan's *Nashville Skyline* from 1969. But in addition to satirizing Dylan's voice and trivializing his skill at moving between protest, surrealism, and Black vernacular in his lyrics, the puppet makers also comment on this distinction between 'having' the phallus (power) and 'being' the phallus (disempowered). The makers have not only exaggerated the size of Dylan's nose but also sculpted it in such a way that it resembles a circumcised penis. The programme's Dylan satire is thus both antisemitic and a 'joke' about Dylan being – rather than having – a cock. See Peter Fluck, Roger Law, and Martin Lambie-Nairn, *Spitting Image*, Central Independent Television, first broadcast 26 February 1984, ITV.

'fond but pointless' imitation, the same critic writes disparagingly about this particular song. He suggests that it belongs to 'that nauseating genre of superior Women's Institute songs which sounds its most sublime expression in Joni Mitchell's *Ladies of the Canyon*. It's mostly a list of names and anecdotes about kids that mothers exchange with each other.'<sup>91</sup> Baez herself has said that the lyrics are more or less meaningless, and that the song was rather an opportunity to feature the improvisation work of jazz pianist Hampton Hawes.<sup>92</sup>

And so what does this protracted desexualization of Baez and her role as (ambivalent) mother do in the context of the debate around musical creativity and in relation to the creative system, its domain and field or matrix? In many ways, this ambivalent motherhood and desexualization distracts from her agency as a creator and innovator. Not only is Baez's value as 'woman' questioned (Dylan and Neuwirth don't to want to see through her see-through blouse) but also she has not met an important demand of rock criticism – the writing one's own songs. In an interview with the *NME* in the same year as the UK tour, in August 1965, Baez talks to Alan Smith about this very issue, focusing specifically her voice. Baez describes her voice as something that 'enables [her] to sing some of the songs that Bobby Dylan has written. I can't write music myself – which is too bad – but I've just enough brains to know that what I write isn't good. That's why I sing a lot of Bobby's songs.'<sup>93</sup> This self-deprecating statement is in many ways an example of the extent to which Baez was complicit through her own (aesthetic) choices in the creation of this Virgin Mary persona, one she laughs at as an older woman looking back (at 'the pristine little Virgin Mary'). Her comments to the *NME* prioritize creating from scratch and assume that interpreting someone else's material is perhaps less important and/or inferior. But as we have seen, the distinction between creating and mimicry is not exactly clear, and all songs and performances might be considered 'archives' of particular material – aesthetic and affective relations that are not simply depository in nature but 'dispositive' for production.<sup>94</sup> Baez therefore authors through mimicry as much as she authors work that seemingly springs *ex nihilo*.

The protracted desexualization of Baez and her role as ambivalent mother also draws our attention to the variety of unequal roles in the creative system, regarding domain acquisition and the matrix. Women such as Baez not only create music but also perform reproductive labour in order to nurture, support, and sustain the creative musical labour of others. Baez's imitations therefore engage questions of reproduction, 'reproductive work', or even a feminist economics – that is, 'the complex of activities and relations by which our life and labor are daily reconstituted'.<sup>95</sup> Writing in the mid-1980s in her work on housework and female-associated labour, Leopaldina Fortunati suggests that the relationship between

91 Woffinden, 'Joan Baez – Diamonds and Rust'.

92 Baez explains the origins of the song here, 'JOAN BAEZ Goes Jazz: Children and All That Jazz – 1975. Features Hampton Hawes', YouTube video, 10 May 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhrGLlgqtW0>. I am grateful to John David Rhodes for drawing my attention to this song.

93 See Smith, 'It's School-Marm Joan Baez Now!'.

94 Jairo Moreno, 'Imperial Aurality: Jazz, the Archive, and the U.S. Empire', in *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, ed. Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 139.

95 Silvia Federici, *Revolution Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), 5.

production and reproduction might be understood 'as a photograph printed back to front, as mirror image of the process of commodity production'. In other words (and in Marxist-influenced and patriarchal terms for now), the male worker's capacity for work (or labour-power) is daily reconstituted by the female houseworker's labour, which takes both material (e.g., cooking, ironing, bedmaking) and non-material (e.g., affection, sex) forms.<sup>96</sup> One of the aims of this article, then, is to highlight the varied roles in Dylan's 'field' of interlocutors or, indeed, facilitators, and to think of Baez's imitation of Dylan as an analysis – or staging of – the power dynamics in their (or indeed any) creative relationship.

Fortunati's 'photograph printed back to front' can be applied in an interesting way to the Baez/Dylan case. If we thus paraphrase: 'What image does the process [of facilitation] conjure up? As has already been said, it presents itself as a photograph printed back to front, as mirror image of the process of [creativity].'<sup>97</sup> In Fortunati's terms, then, Baez produces for her own reproduction as an individual: she was more successful than Dylan at first and has a successful solo career as a songwriter and performer. But she also produces or produced for his reproduction as someone capable of producing commodities of high economic and cultural value: she gave Dylan her audience, listened to his songs, sang with him, and cooked for him while he wrote.

I am interested, then, in denaturalizing some of Baez's labour as listener, carer, and facilitator in order to understand this as being part of the creative matrix. This suggestion is perhaps unusual for two reasons. First, the idea of denaturalizing something such as 'care' and repositioning it as labour and as part of the creative system challenges our assumptions and idealizations about things such as 'love' and motherhood.<sup>98</sup> Second, mothers have historically been maligned in rock discourse. Indeed, the distance between the idea of the mother and the idea of rock music is so great that Norma Coates describes the words 'moms and rock' as 'a commonsense, oxymoronic juxtaposition' and the 'common sense message delivered is that moms protect from rock; they do not themselves rock'.<sup>99</sup> It is not only mothers but also related characters and roles in reproductive labour such as the figure of the 'housewife', maligned in historic music press discourse as anathema to the greatness anti-commercial rock music.<sup>100</sup>

But crucially, thinking more about the role of 'care' and socialization in the creative system or matrix is one of several ways to unlock women's and differently gendered contributions to histories of music, to the constitution of the canon, and even alternative ways of 'knowing' and

96 Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*, 69.

97 Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*, 69. The original quotation is: 'What image does the process of production and reproduction of labor-power conjure up? As has already been said, it presents itself as a photograph printed back to front, as mirror image of the process of commodity production.'

98 Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*, 75.

99 Norma Coates, "Mom Rock?" Media Representations of "Mothers Who Rock", in *Rock On!: Women, Ageing, and Popular Music*, ed. Ros Jennings and Abigail Gardner (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

100 David Brackett, 'Improvisation and Value in Rock, 1966', *Journal of the Society for American Music* 14/2 (2020), 217.

doing music.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the figure of the romantic artist – the ramblin', gamblin' Guthrie-style bum, the 'vagabond' or the macho folk persona whose metaphorical home is the road<sup>102</sup> – is easily and productively unravelled with attention to the complexity and the inequality that comprises the creative matrix. Understanding artistic artefacts as not only networked but also the products of (hidden) nurture, stability, facilitation, and exploitation could present ways to think through the variously gendered and racialized economies of popular music.

Thus, in the first instance, Baez/Dylan offers a productive example of the way female-associated labour undergirds the spectre of white-male originality. But, going further, there's something specific and unique about Baez's acts of direct and knowing mimicry as it maps onto an intimate, real-life relationship.<sup>103</sup> Baez's imitations of Dylan are more than simply a thesis on the importance of influence, copying or even exploitation to acquire musical 'chops' or public acclaim (as in the case of somebody such as Elvis and Big Mama Thornton, for example). Rather, her imitations are tears in the fabric that usually separates public musical personae from their private spheres. When we listen to Baez imitate Dylan, it's as though we're eavesdropping on (our fantasy of) their private relationship.

The 'creative matrix' might thus be used as a heuristic tool to analyse popular music's intimacies as they pertain specifically to gender and unequal power relations. As a mode of analysis, the matrix attends not only to gendered or racialized power imbalances but also to certain intimacies as forms of musicking, which can include domesticity, listening, sex, and parenting.<sup>104</sup> The matrix, in this context, thus takes into account the social, cultural, and historical conditions regarding the 'birth' of a musical work while crucially encouraging us to feel around the limits of what constitutes specifically musical labour. What is so striking and productive about Baez/Dylan is that she (Baez) puts music and au/oral exchange at the centre of their particular intimacy.

### Conclusion: Creative Matrices, or 'a photograph printed back to front'

As I indicated at the beginning, the origins of this article were Baez's imitations of Dylan, but I was also interested in LaBelle's work *The Lexicon of the Mouth* and in lines of inquiry that might prompt new avenues for analysis, unlock debates about the power dynamics of creative matrices, and dismantle and disperse the monolithic male creator. From LaBelle, I was interested in two interconnected proposals: (1) that 'the acoustical' can be 'a specific paradigm, a type of *knowledge structure* from which understandings of social life, bodily identities, and

101 A similar approach can be found in recent jazz studies. I am thinking specifically of Lisa Barg's article on composer, arranger, and trombonist Melba Liston. See Barg, 'Taking Care of Music: Gender, Arranging, and Collaboration in the Weston-Liston Partnership', *Black Music Research Journal* 34/1 (2014). See also Vanessa Blais-Tremblay, "'Where You Are Accepted, You Blossom': Toward Care Ethics in Jazz Historiography', *Jazz & Culture* 2 (2019).

102 Willis, 'Dylan', 8–9. See also Elliott's discussion of the vagabond and Dylan's reinvention of himself in Elliott, 'Same Distant Places', 255–7.

103 I am using the word 'intimate' here not necessarily to refer to sex but rather to account for physical proximity, literal closeness, care, and cohabitation.

104 I've taken the term 'musicking' from Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).



cultural practices can be considered and brought into dialogue' (my emphasis); and (2) the idea that there is such a thing as a 'listening subject'.<sup>105</sup> While musicology, popular music studies, and sound studies certainly engage the acoustical as a type of knowledge structure, I was interested in a potentially unique kind of knowledge structure produced or associated with the role or position of listener, with the listening subject. Baez's imitations of Dylan are about listening, and the knowledge structure she produces is one that engages themes of friendship, history, attachment, and loss. Her imitations invite us to consider the economy of creativity, of what passes through, to, and from the mouth and ears, and of listening as agency and listening as a reproductive act, rather than listening as a passive activity. Her impressions of Dylan analyse and stage the power dynamics in their creative relationship, and they draw our attention to the fact that Dylan and Baez were both imitators: the words she recalls or performs, and her adeptness at reanimating them as he would, highlight aspects of property, persona, and identity.

While we know that Dylan borrowed from many other musicians, many of whom were African American, and we know from biographical sources that Baez was a facilitator, her impressions are unique as analyses because they bring these two discourses together, as well as provoking an uncanny effect of identity and temporal slippage. I posit Baez's impression of Dylan as analyses because they ask important (implicit) questions. But Baez's imitations also necessarily engage popular music's originary site of primitive accumulation. The circulation (or exchange) of popular songs and culture is via the 'performative chamber' of the mouth, which as LaBelle writes is 'a cavity by which to capture additional voices'<sup>106</sup> and as Lott details in *Love and Theft* is a cavity that the white performer uses to profit from fantasies about blackness.<sup>107</sup> Black 'voices' or Blacksound are stolen for the minstrel show from a place of white supremacist avarice, longing, and lust. Baez re-captures Dylan's many borrowed voices (which include Black and minstrel repertoire), and asserts her role in the matrix, alongside others, as an originary facilitator of his career.

I will close with two scenes from two Bob Dylan films. Coming back to the scene in *Dont Look Back* with Burns and Grossman, we understand the auctioning of Dylan to the highest bidder (BBC or Granada), and his value-as-commodity and his cultural status as something that is contingent on matrices of power that involves not only Baez as mother but also a matrilineal lineage of Blacksound. We can turn as well to Scorsese's more recent account of the Rolling Thunder Revue, and specifically the part of the tour when Baez not only impersonates Dylan vocally but also physically, in appearance and mannerisms. She assumes his clothes, physical features, gestures, and voice, and describes both the experience and the privilege:

105 LaBelle, *Lexicon of the Mouth*, iii.

106 LaBelle, *Lexicon of the Mouth*, 12. Full quotation: "The mouth not only shapes the voice but also fills it in; it is a cavity by which to capture additional voices, to put them on the tongue, supplying us with the potentiality to reshape, impersonate, sample, and reconstruct who we can be."

107 Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 61–2.

One time I got all dressed up as Bob, which I would do periodically. Put these little beard markings all over and then have a moustache on, and then I put his hat on and some white face. I walked over when nobody was really paying attention, and I'd *be* Bob. And there was this table of like food and catering and coffee, and Louie was there and I said [mimicking Dylan], 'hey, so gimme some coffee.' And people got me some coffee like that! 'Do you want this? Do you want this? Do you want milk? Do you want sugar?' And I just had a cigarette in my hand going like that [pretends to smoke], and they treated me the way they treated Bob. 'Do you want this? Do you want that? What can we do?' It was amazing. It was amazing. Until I said something like [in her own voice], 'Oh for Christ's sake, Louie.'<sup>108</sup>

By dressing up as 'Dylan' on the Rolling Thunder Revue (complete with white face paint) Baez inhabits and has access to special treatment and to the deference of others; she is able to experience what it is like to have his value. Like her other imitations of Dylan across her career, she not only inhabits and experiences his value but she analyses it, too. Baez's 'theft' of Dylan's voice not only asserts the extent to which she 'loved' him into existence – in Fortunati's terms – but also conjures the other actors and hidden voices and the often-unequal roles they have played in the creative matrix, while illuminating the underexplored musical 'work' of listening and intimacy.

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108 See *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese*, dir. Martin Scorsese. The name Louie here is perhaps Louie Kemp, a long-time friend of Dylan and producer of the Rolling Thunder Revue. According to a writer at the *NME*, this is a routine that Baez did live, too. See Miles, 'Joanie Returns as Bobby: Joan Baez at the Hammersmith Odeon, London', *New Musical Express*, 7 January 1978, [www.rockedbackpages](http://www.rockedbackpages).

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