

WHY THE ARTS & HUMANITIES MATTER :: HOW TO GET INTERTEXTUALLY {RE}ENTANGLED IN THE DUSTY SWEATBOX BLUES (THE ORIGINAL TITLE OF DYLAN'S 'TANGLED UP IN BLUE' : )

In a 'Rolling Stone' InterView with Jonathan Cott, LeoNard BernStein eXpands on Aristotle's insistence that all people by Nature desire to know in the folloWing(fed) terms: "Even though I can't prove it, deep in my heArt I know that every person, without eXception, is born with the love of learning . . . We live in a world & an age in which the Humanities -- the study of the best that the mind has created in Art, Music, Writing, & Performance -- are being asked to justify their eXistence, are losing funding, or in danger of doing so. At the same time, those Arts seem more Vital than ever in terms of what they can teach us about how to live meaningful lives & what it means to be human." In this conTeXt, we would do well to heed Elie Wiesel's timely warning that "The opposite of love is not hate but indifference" (From a speech Wiesel delivered at the White House on April 19th, 1985, on the occasion of his being awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, as cited in his aptly titled 'Pilgrimage to the Kingdom of Night,' which is included in Wiesel's core-curricular "From the Kingdom of Memory," 1990). Otherwise, we risk Reaping the WhirlWind to 'echo' Bob Dylan in his prophetic mōde that An Idiot Wind's A'Gonna Blow. (ThInk of it as my own 'Bootleg Dylanology in the Basement' phase : ) To invoke our Tangled-Up-In-Blue Bard/TrouBADour yet again, Those who were there swear that ReVelaTion & ReVolution were in the air . . .

According to Hector Berliōz, a 19th-Century ReVolutionary in his own chosen medium, "Music & Love are the two Wings of the Soul." Feel Free to substitute your own central passion for the composer of "Symphonie Fantastique"(in the Radical year of 1830)'s predilection for Music. Not the least of Dylan's concerns is what he terms the "Mass Monster," by which he means "The Beast that wants to make everybody the same" (See the Toby Creswell 'Rolling Stone' InterView with Dylan on January 16th, 1986). For which clearly Apocalyptic condition the Rx is to be increasingly discerning & {re}learning how to think for ourselves. This is of course where the Active Imagination & Creative Engagement enter the picture, & being aware, for instance -- to 'echo' Dylan yet again -- of a certain 'poet of the 13th Century' (the consensus being that the poet in question is Dante -- yet another ReVolutionary -- & the poem his epochal "La Vita Nuova." To bring this ongoing Humanitarian Crisis yet further up to date, in his watershed "Art Is Life: Icons & Iconoclasts, Visionaries & Vigilantes, & FIashes of Hope in the Night," 2022, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Jerry Saltz claims that the art scene in America has "Leaped off the {bloody} tracks," this being "what a paradigm shift looks like," especially now that complacency has {purportedly} been "buried in the rubble." Saltz goes on to cite Theodor Adorno's {in}famous observation that "Poetry after Auschwitz . . . has become impossible." So how does one factor an undeniable post-WWII Masterpiece like Paul Celan's 'Todesfuge/Death Fugue' into this still-unfolding equation? In other words, if you care about Art in whatever idiom, be prepared to be not infrequently sHELLshocked &/or SURprised. "Your gōlden hair Margarete / your Ashen hair Shulamite."

Intimations from other Dylanesque sources :: 1) "I want to run, I want to hide / I want to tear down the walls / that hold me inside" (Bono of U2); 2) "I believe everything we dream / can come to pass through our Union / we can turn the world around / we can turn the eARTh's ReVolution / we have the Power . . ." (From Patti Smith's 'People Have the Power'); 3) "Haven't seen you in quite a while / I was down in the hold, just killin' time . . . / we broke the bread, we drank the wine / Everybody haVin' a good time / eXcept you. / You were talKin' about the End of the World" (Bono, composed while travellin' through Ukraine during the Spring of 2022); 4) "The city's a flood, our love turns to rust / We're beaten & blown by the {Idiot} Wind . . . / In the Hurricane / Where the streets have no name" (Bono, from his "SURrender: 40 Songs, One Story," Knopf, NYC, 2022).