Postmodern Narrative Strategies in Todd Haynes's Biopic I'm Not There

Komar, Karla-Tea

UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Karla-Tea Komar

Postmodern Narrative Strategies in Todd Haynes's Biopic *I'm Not There*

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the M.A.in English Language and Literature and Croatian language and literature at the University of Rijeka

Supervisor:

Antonija Primorac, PhD

Rijeka, June 2021

Abstract

The present thesis aims to analyse the narrative strategies used by director Todd Haynes in his Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* (2007). The strategies examined are intertextuality, pastiche, and fragmentation, all of them typical of postmodernism. The opening chapter focuses on the theoretical underpinning of the thesis and thus provides an overview of postmodernism, its historical background, and its artistic forms with emphasis on the postmodern biopic genre. The following chapters introduce the postmodern narrative strategies employed by Haynes, presenting its definitions and purposes, and offering examples in the wider context of postmodern cinema. The analytical chapters of the thesis apply this theoretical framework to Todd Haynes's biopic *I'm Not There* with the aim of exploring the connection between narrative strategies and the theme of fragmented identity. The thesis concludes that Haynes's postmodern approach to the biopic genre results in the deconstruction of traditional representation of truth as a single, unified, linear narrative, and the related ideas of historical accuracy in the portrayal of the biopic's subject, opening up the film's portrayal of Dylan to multiple interpretations.

Key words: postmodernism, narrative strategies, intertextuality, pastiche, fragmentation, postmodern biopic, fragmented identity, Todd Haynes, *I'm Not There*

TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction

This thesis closely examines Todd Haynes's employment of postmodern narrative strategies in *I'm Not There*, his 2007 biopic about Bob Dylan. Todd Haynes is an American filmmaker known for his experimental cinema, which includes three specific film genres: New Queer Cinema, Woman's Picture, and Musical Biopics. It is precisely his musical biopics that will be discussed in more detail here with *I'm Not There* as the central focus. Because of his experimentation, deconstruction, and utilisation of postmodern narrative strategies in the biopics, Haynes has renewed and re-consolidated the genre more than any other director. The postmodern narrative strategies that Haynes uses in *I'm Not There* with the intention of constructing Dylan's identity are namely intertextuality, pastiche and fragmentation.

In order to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for this thesis, the first section will focus on the term *postmodernism*. First, the term and its historical context will be introduced by outlining their use in general literary and film theory. In doing so, the thesis will refer to some of the postmodern literary critics, specifically Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Linda Hutcheon, Jean-François Lyotard and Terry Eagleton. The development of postmodernism as an art form and as a source of narrative styles in postmodern biopics will be outlined through a brief analysis of some of the most prominent contemporary film examples such as *Ed Wood* (1994) and *Man on the Moon* (1999).

The second section introduces intertextuality, pastiche, and fragmentation as key postmodern narrative strategies. Each strategy will be defined with reference to the relevant postmodern critics, and their purposes will be explained and later illustrated with postmodern narratives, specifically postmodern films, and biopics.

The purpose of the third section is to explore the narrative strategies in the context of Todd Haynes's biopic *I'm Not There*. Before examining these strategies, the author and his cinematic work will be briefly introduced along with the summary of the movie in question.

The final section explores the connection between the narrative strategies and the topic of fragmented identity as the ultimate aim of the thesis. Here, the focus will be on the postmodern conception of identity as fragmented both in general, and in the context of the movie.

1. Postmodernism: some issues

1.1. Definition and historical background

According to Milne, postmodernism defines the era after World War II (1939–45) as a reaction to principles of modernism. If modernism is characterised by "works [that] are aesthetically radical, [and] contain striking technical innovation" ("Modernism", 145), then postmodernism is a reaction against these notions of originality. In comparison, postmodernism is generally characterised by playful approach to language, artistic expression merged with popular culture, including interest in politics and everyday life. In addition, unlike modernist general belief in metanarrative of science and human progress, postmodernism is deeply sceptical of any universal principle of truth and its "totalising imperative" ("Postmodernism", 185–186).

However, like the era, the *term* postmodernism is equally fragmentary and difficult to define, divided between adverse and favourable attitudes held by its critics. Its definition and meaning have been debated since the late 1950s, simultaneously considered a new historical period and a prolongation of modernism (Milne 615). The Spanish author Federico de Onis first used the term in the 1930s to suggest "a minor reaction to modernism" (Featherstone 7). Furthermore, British historian Arnold Toynbee used it in 1947 to specify a new period in the West in continuity with modernism, therefore "beginning in the late eighteenth century with the Age of Enlightenment" (Constable 1). By contrast, from 1950 onwards, the American poet Charles Olson used the term to indicate that postmodernism is a movement opposed to modernism, similarly to the American sociologist C. W. Mills who, in 1959, referred to postmodernism as the completely new, Fourth Epoch. Consequently, the term became popular in the 1960s as the new artistic and literary movement (Featherstone 7).

The solution to this dichotomy could be found by examining the meaning of the prefix "post". The most common interpretation of this prefix is its indication of a passage of time, a period that comes after and signifies a complete break from the prior. Many postmodernist critics, such as Jameson and Baudrillard, shared the same assumption that postmodernism marked the end of modernism. However, I would here agree with another postmodernist critic, Jean-François Lyotard whose interpretation of the term "post" went beyond the simple succession and chronology. For him, postmodernism was not a new age, but reaction and critique to some of the principles of modernism. More importantly, the reaction did not erupt from the outside, but within modernity itself (Lyotard 34). I would conclude from Lyotard's interpretation that "post" in postmodernism signifies the legacy of modernism. On the one hand, postmodernism challenges many aspects of modernism, but on the other, its influence comprises the basis of postmodern era, its theory and aesthetics. In other words, postmodernism could not have existed without modernism - "the 'post' is always with us" (Constable, 120).

Furthermore, with the intention of describing the essence of postmodernism and the postmodern, critics debate different categories, including identity, ethnicity, historicity, gender, the postmodern subject, the narrative, etc. (Çelik Norman 66). The discussion can be reduced to two opposing views presented by Catherine Constable in her book *Postmodernism and Film* (2015) where she divided postmodern aesthetic theories into nihilistic and affirmative - drawing on Nietzsche's terms in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The nihilistic model is held by Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson who consider postmodernism to be "utterly destructive of modernist aesthetics" devoid of any truth or value (Constable 74). This model challenges affirmative theory holding a positive stance on postmodern aesthetics led by Linda Hutcheon who claims the value and meaning are not lost but questioned and provoked (Ibid. 81-82).

Postmodern theorist and writer Jean Baudrillard centres his postmodern definition on two key terms; simulacra and hyperreality, which he developed in his most influential book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995). He points out that postmodernism is the age of simulacra existing in a hyperreal world in which authentic reality is replaced by an indefinite number of copies. In other words, in the postmodern era, what could be otherwise perceived as *real* is dramatically shaped and manipulated by the media (images, film, television, internet) blurring the lines between the real and the imaginary (Baudrillard 2). Therefore, reality "can be reproduced an indefinite number of times, it does not need to be rational, because it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance. In fact, it is no longer the real, because no imaginary envelopes anymore" (Ibid.). Ultimately, the truth has been replaced by simulacra and reality by the hyperreal.

Alternatively, Frederic Jameson, literary critic and Marxist theorist, bases his definition on mass production and late capitalism focussing on postmodern culture. In the treatise *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) he regards all postmodern art forms as commodification equating postmodern culture with consumerism and mass production, labelling it the ultimate phase of late capitalism (4). In the chapter "Nostalgia for the Present", he proposes the idea that the factual or the objective reality of a certain period is no longer existent (279–281). To put it in the contemporary context, the way we will perceive this upcoming period of the 2020s as the complete break from the 2010s is more likely a product of our perception of reality, based on the images presented to us by the mainstream media, rather than the actual reality (281).

These two nihilistic perspectives are challenged by the literary critic Linda Hutcheon with her own literary model of postmodernism. In *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), she disagrees with the former definitions of postmodernism which suggest that "[it] offers a value-free, de-

historicized quotation of past and that this is a most apt mode for culture like [American] culture that is oversaturated with images" (90). According to her, postmodernism is based on the contradiction between economic capitalism (repression of individual freedom) and cultural humanism (expression of the individual freedom of choice) (13). However, despite, or I would say because of this paradox, postmodernism aims to question and re-examine cultural construction of value and meaning. In doing so, it utilises various narrative strategies such as parody, citation, references, allusion, and pastiche, most of which are at the core of this thesis.

However, the central figure of postmodernism, often referred to as the father of postmodernism, is the literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) due to his numerous definitions and contributions to the development of postmodernism. In the book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) he explains his most notable definition of postmodernism, which represents the rejection of universal theories or metanarratives in favour of postmodern mininarratives (qtd. in Barry 87). According to him, "the Grand narratives of human perfection and progress are no longer valid" (Ibid.). In other words, those mainstream narratives which man created to understand and define his place in the world, whose ideologies lead to inevitable destruction (Lyotard's main example is Marxist theory) are now replaced with narratives of voices from the margins in celebration of their differences and diversity. Therefore, Lyotard defines the postmodern culture as "the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter of TV games" (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* 76). Ultimately, his definition highlights two distinct ideas. First, postmodernism is a highly sceptical movement that casts doubt

on all metanarratives (Ibid. xxiv). Second, postmodernism erupts within modernism therefore defying the boundaries of any linear chronology rewriting modernist aesthetics from within.

In addition, the Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton explains the distinction between the two concepts: postmodernism (culture) and postmodernity (historical period) in the foreword to his book *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1997) in the following words:

> Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. … Postmodernism is a style of culture which reflects something of [the] epochal change, in a depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' culture, as well as between art and everyday experience (Eagleton vii).

Eagleton's distinction remains one of the few stable elements in the definitions of postmodernism.

1.2. Postmodernism as an art form

Postmodern aesthetic style consists of multiple conflicting and contradictory tendencies such as the crisis of interpretation and instability of meaning, along with the fragmentary nature of knowledge, narrative construction, and identity. Its artistic forms gained popularity in the 70s and 80s, particularly in architecture, music, and visual art forms on account of being eclectic, referential, fragmentary, and playful (Sarup 132).

The central component of postmodernism, however, is the rejection of the divide between high and low art forms. One of the leading proponents of the breaking of the barrier was Andy Warhol who claimed that *low*, or pop/commercial art is of the same artistic value as the *high* art, the only difference is that it is not preferred by the wealthy ruling class (Storey 183). The breakdown of the barrier is obvious in the increasing interest in the products in popular culture such as pop music, comics, soap-operas, low-budget science fiction movies, or advertisements which were now regarded with "new seriousness" (Storey 184)..

Another principal trait of postmodern art is scepticism and the usage of strategies that disrupt the previous metanarratives. Accordingly, postmodern forms are oftentimes called anti-forms because, in their experimentation and rejection of fixed rules, they question all previous forms and the intellectual systems that created them. In doing so, postmodern art uses strategies such as irony, parody, and pastiche. Accordingly, literary theorist and writer Ihab Hassan states the following:

> Postmodernism veers towards open, playful, optative, disjunctive, displaced, or indeterminate forms, a discourse of fragments, an ideology of fracture, a will to unmaking, an invocation of silence veers towards all these and yet implies their very opposites, their antithetical realities. It is as if *Waiting for Godot* found an echo, if not an answer in *Superman* (qtd. in Rose 52).

Whereas the aesthetic style of modernity, generally speaking, implies universality, centrality, and homogeneity, postmodernism in art is seen as embracing decentralisation, heterogeneity, and deconstruction.

Jameson, on the other hand, considered this trajectory from modern to postmodern aesthetic as a narrative of decline. He traced the shift from modernism to postmodernism by comparing Vincent van Gogh's painting *A Pair of Boots* with Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes.* According to Jameson, van Gogh's painting depicts the "world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty" (7), thus representing the material reality. In contrast, Warhol's photograph of colourful women's shoes has no grounding in external reality, but in the images of advertisements. With no reference to reality the postmodern artwork represents "fundamental mutation in … the object world … [that] now become a set of texts or simulacra" (Ibid. 9). Warhol's work, in the true nature of postmodernism, is intertextual, reflexive, and according to Jameson it strips away "the external and colored surface of things … to reveal the deathly black and white substratum of the photographic negative [which] subtends them" (Ibid.). Jameson's famous analysis of Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* is employed to characterise the principal features of postmodern aesthetic style, specifically the shift in the representation of reality or in Jameson's words: "flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense" (Ibid.).

Jameson is also one of the leading postmodern theorists with broad definitions of postmodern aesthetics, which he consistently applies to postmodern film. He centres it on his theories of subjective reality of the past and the loss of history (Constable 62). In the context of the cinema, Jameson supposes that our understanding of the past is generated by films we watch. This notion leads him to define so-called nostalgia films that present us with reconstruction of images of the past and consequently effecting our understanding of history (Constable 62). He provides two examples for nostalgia films in *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991): Jonathan Demme's *Something Wild* (1986) and David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986). Both movies share the aesthetic of the 1980s and the characteristics of an artistic dark comedy thriller. Most

importantly, both films incorporate key elements of postmodern cinema; the lack of ideological centre and clear linear narrative, instead welcoming fragmentary chaos resembling everyday life (287).

Similarly, Norman K. Denzin uses *Blue Velvet* as a primary example in his discussion of postmodern culture in *Images of Postmodern Society* (1995). In particular, he notices the film's refusal to reveal its historical setting and its combining of images from distinct historical time periods: "This is a film which evokes, mocks, yet lends quasi-reverence for icons of the past, while it places them in the present" (Denzin 469). It does not intend to depict real-world issues, but to create artistic images evident by its motto "It's a strange world" (Booker x).

In relation to postmodern film, Booker takes Jameson's examination of van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* and Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*, adapting it to cinema-based comparison between Federico Fellini's *8½* (1963) and Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). However, unlike high modernism of van Gogh's painting, Booker positions Fellini's film on the edge between modernism and postmodernism. He uses the two contrasting films to demonstrate the "waning affect" in the context of postmodern cinema, specifically in the depiction of its central subjects (Booker 138). The protagonist of Fellini's semi-autobiographical film is an Italian filmmaker Guido Anselmi (Marcello Mastroianni) struggling with creative block and his personal life. Despite the inability to feel love, he seems to experience emotions both as a human and as an artist (Booker 33). In contrast to Anselmi, Burton's protagonist Edward Scissorhands "is almost entirely lacking in emotional depth, it is all surface" (Ibid.). Thus, the waning of affect here refers to the loss of *genuine* emotion and connection to the process of becoming surface. According to Booker, the tortured depiction of Fellini's protagonist represents the distinct pathology of the alienated modern subject. In contrast, the utter superficiality of Johnny Depp's portrayal of Edward

Scissorhands indicates that alienation is no longer possible for the postmodern subject (Ibid.). Furthermore, in his analysis of postmodern cinema, Booker offers additional criteria for the postmodern film; narrative fragmentation, nostalgia, specifically nostalgic soundtrack, referentiality, self-referentiality and pastiche. As a film about films, specifically filmmaking, Booker places Fellini's *8½* as a pivotal forerunner of a postmodern cinematic style (137), which is one of the reasons why Haynes uses it as a major part of his pastiche in *I'm Not There*.

Additional understanding of the postmodern film derives from the comparison between the two of its most notable examples, *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Blade Runner* (1982). Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* is a science fiction movie with the elements and the atmosphere of pessimism typical for *film noir*[1]. According to Harvey, in *Blade Runner*: "the chaos of signs, of competing significations and messages, suggests a condition of fragmentation and uncertainty at street level that emphasizes many of the facets of postmodern aesthetics" (Harvey 63). Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, on the other hand, is a parody of gangster thrillers, consisting of their typical characteristics: the diversity of styles and allusion, juxtaposition of the playful and the catastrophic, a casual approach to violence, fragmentary narrative, and freedom from fixed cinematic practices. Using Homi Bhabha's summary of postmodernism, this movie can be described as "a celebration of fragmentation, bricolage [and] pastiche" (Bhabha 238). In comparison, the former expresses a pessimistic outlook on an imaginary future while the latter gives a light-hearted pastiche of the recent past. However, both movies share the aesthetic of postmodern style distinguished by exploration of the marginal identities, pluralism of forms,

[1] (French: "dark film") style of filmmaking in the 1940s and 1950s Hollywood cinema characterised by elements such as cynical attitudes, flashbacks, stark lighting effects, intricate plots, and existentialist philosophy undertone (*Britannica*).

and a "deconstruction of the recent past in one case and of the imagined future in the other" (Çelik Norman 70).

Emerging in the 1980s, the postmodern cinema departed from the modernist aesthetic style grounded in enlightenment, industrial society, and faith in historical progress. Consequently, postmodern films reproduced anxiety and uncertainty that mirrors the general society. They embraced the death of the hero and the fragmented protagonists whose lives are central to the genre of postmodern biopics.

1.3. The postmodern biopic

The biopic or biographical film, which portrays the life of an individual, gained popularity in the Studio era of Hollywood filmmaking (approx. 1930s to 1960s). The classical Hollywood biopic has thus become the blueprint for the genre and emphasised the celebration of the "rise and fall" narrative of a "Great Man". Such biopics are the focus of George F. Custen's book *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (1992), one of the first to introduce the genre to academia. Studio era biopics depicted the lives of individuals through monochromatic "Hollywood view of history" and constructed a "highly conventional view of fame" (Custen 3). It is thus ironic how biopics were considered to promote individuality through a pattern that operated within "a mass-tailored contour of fame in which greatness is generic and difference has controllable boundaries" (21). Before the emergence of the postmodern biopic, such contradiction was depicted in Orson Welles's ground-breaking quasi-biopic *Citizen Kane* (1941) with its innovative approach to storytelling (multiple, nonlinear narrative, unreliable narrator) and its central character.

The postmodern biopic developed in the 21st century, as a product of the genre's experimentation and transformations after the Studio era. The exploration of contemporary biopic's trajectory is detailed in Dennis Bingham's comprehensive study *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* (2010), ranging from Lytton Strachey's written biographies (1879–1932) to Haynes's postmodern feature film *I'm Not There*. As a result, Bingham disputes Custen's claim that the biopic peaked in the Studio era, instead presenting the genre as dynamic and ever changing (Bingham 10). He also shifted the focus from the producer to the director whose role became central in contemporary cinema. This shift is particularly important because many directors started their careers as scholars themselves, including Todd Haynes who majored in semiotics. Furthermore, he points out that contemporary filmmakers are liberated from the codes of production and censorship guidelines of Hollywood studios (Bingham 17). Even though biopics are focused on "reality" and "true" events in a historical figure's life, they typically dramatise reality, therefore adding to their subject's mystification. The role of the biopic, as Bingham specifies, is not historical accuracy but entertainment that reveals the significance of its star persona and, most importantly, makes its audience think about their own society, culture, and identity (Bingham 10) - as will become evident in the analysis of *I'm Not There*. This assertion coincides with the postmodern aesthetic practice that tried to erase the barrier between the sign and the signifier, hence creating the world of Baudrillard's simulacra and hyperreality.

As a result, in the late 1960s and 1970s the biopic started to redefine the monumental concept of history, i.e., the classical's biopic fixation on the supremacy and greatness of the past, as well as exploring and embracing the strangeness of its protagonists. For example, Alex Cox's *Walker* (1987) uses parody to criticise the portrayal of history through the lenses of a "heroic" man in an attack on US militarism; Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio* (1986) employs queer politics in its

exploration of the artist's relationships with his models, while Maurice Pialat's *Van Gogh* (1991) focuses on the painter's final days dealing with personal relationships and declining mental health rather than his art and memorable life events (Vidal 14). These are some films that could be considered predecessors to the biopic that was considered too experimental to fit the genre's category, such as François Girard's *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* (1993), one of the 20th century biopics described as postmodern. The film atypically portrays the pianist in thirty-two mini episodes, which some critics even considered an "antibiopic" based on its innovative approach to the genre (Vidal 19).

A year later, Tim Burton's *Ed Wood* (1994) employed the postmodern notion of metatextuality and self-referentiality in its depiction of the eponymous notorious filmmaker played by Johnny Depp. Burton reveals Wood's attempts to construct his own identity in the movies he was making, while offering his subjective understanding of his identity. In doing so, Burton reshapes factual events and images, modelling them on his own personal experience of the subject's life, thus revisiting the history (Bingham 147). This method is the instance of Jameson's theory of subjective view of the past and the problematic nature of historical authenticity (284). Lyotard's rejection of metanarratives also applies to this biopic in its criticism of the traditional masculine stereotypes, which Wood explores in his own movies as well.

Another biopic subverting the genre is Milos Forman's *Man on the Moon* (1999) starring Jim Carrey as the late American entertainer and wrestler Andy Kaufman. While researching Kaufman's life for the movie, screenwriters found themselves in the space between fiction and reality, having realised the impossibility of knowing the real Andy: "No matter how much we

studied the material, we couldn't figure out the real Andy. Lynne[2] responded simply, yet provocatively. 'Guys, there is no real Andy.' And that was it. Lynne had given us the secret to the movie" (qtd. in Bingham 7). Consequently, the biopic abandons any basis in reality, along with the grand narrative of the "Great Man" as a visionary with a remarkable talent. Instead, it leaves the protagonist in charge of retelling his own story from the beginning, suggesting that Andy was in control of his own portrait in and outside the biopic. The filmmakers, along with the audience, are left with the possibility of forming their own opinions on the subject's life based only on the works they leave behind (Bingham 1–8). Todd Haynes had the same attitude in making his biopic about the equality elusive subject – Bob Dylan. Bingham even compares Haynes's biopic with *Citizen Kane* regarding the impact it had on the development of the genre, stating that *I'm Not There* "illustrates all the possibilities if not of cinema (what single film including *Citizen Kane*, can carry out that mandate?) then of the biopic" (381).

Specifically, *I'm Not There* is a *musical* biopic that expresses Haynes's disdain for the typical biopic formula found in many of its contemporaries, such as Taylor Hackford's *Ray* (2004) and James Mangold's *Walk the Line* (2005). While he does not name any titles, Haynes states:

> I do see that there is a kind of form that has become common to film that we now call the biopic, but I don't know that it has any relationship to reality or anything literal or historical. It seems to be a construct of the narrative form that has to find beats in a person's life to dramatize events of the life that corresponds to those moments of high and low and that have relationship to their work. They are usually required to expose a certain amount of private history or conflict with drugs or

[2] Lynne Margulies, woman whom Andy was in love and wrestled with.

> philandering or something, and then show how that gets recovered or resolved. So to me, it's a formula, almost more nakedly so than other film genres because whatever the life is has it fit in this one package (qtd. in Schlotterbeck 228–229).

In contrast, the postmodern musical biopic abandons any supposition about the possibility of truth in depicting the music artist. Jesse Schlotterbeck notes several contemporary biopics that borrow heavily from the musical genre and the postmodern aesthetic style evident in their musical performances: reflexivity, self-consciousness, citations, quotations, and parody. For example, Jake Kasdan's *Walk Hard: the Dewey Cox Story* (2007) is a parody of Johnny Cash and Ray Charles biopics, along with the overused tropes of musical biopics. Clear tendencies of postmodernism are further visible in Kevin Spacey's musical quasi-biopic *Beyond the Sea* (2004), a portrait of Bobby Darin. By starring in his own biopic and portraying the central character, Spacey explores storytelling, art, and identity, fictionalising the events and dividing "Bobby Darin", an alias, into various selves. Throughout the film Bobby interacts with his younger self, most notably on the movie set when older Darin asks the child actor, "So you're playing me?" while the boy replies, "I am you". The movie in a way foreshadows Todd Haynes's *I'm Not There* in which one of the multiple incarnations of Bob Dylan portrays an actor that plays another persona in the film's "biopic-within-the-biopic" sequence (Grochowski).

The postmodern biopic, especially the musical one, participates in and even encourages the mythmaking of their subjects, only being able to rely on other interpretations instead of factual historical evidence. The main sources in postmodern filmmaking are hence other texts (written, visual, and sonic), interviews, documentaries, music, television, and cinematic history (Spirou iv). As a result, filmmakers apply postmodern narrative strategies in their biopics, particularly intertextuality, pastiche, and fragmentation.

2. Postmodern narrative strategies

When discussing postmodern film making in the USA, what must be taken into consideration is the fact that postmodern narrative strategies are the product of the prevailing social, cultural, and aesthetic changes that took place during postmodernism. The horrors of the wars (World War II, the Vietnam War, the Cold War), which shaped the American history, were greatly criticised through narrative strategies such as parody, pastiche, metafiction, and intertextuality. These are some of the many postmodern narrative strategies that altered the roles of modernist fiction, blurred the line between imaginary and the real, creating the new outlook on everyday reality (Bharvad 8). In fact, postmodern plurality allows for an endless number of narrative strategies with unlimited possibilities, creating different ways of telling stories, with no existing fixtures and finalities.

2.1. Intertextuality

Although the theory and terminology of intertextuality are relatively new, the practice of interconnecting and referencing texts has been in literature and other works of art since classical times. For instance, mythological and historical references are traced in Greek, Latin and Roman records; the passages of *The New Testament* frequently quote from *The Old Testament*, as demonstrated by Fletcher in her book *Reading Revelation as Pastiche* (2017).

Julia Kristeva first developed and defined the term in her book *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) as "the transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another" (60). In *Word, Dialogue, and Novel* (1980), she notes that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (37). That is to say, texts are

constantly in a dialogue with each other, in different linguistic and cultural contexts, and through various forms and strategies.

Many postmodern authors such as Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes consider intertextuality an inevitable strategy because every new story refers to those previously written (Bharvad 5–6). Barthes insists on intertextual undetectability claiming that intertextual references are a "mirage of citations and that the quotations of which a text is made are anonymous, untraceable, and nevertheless already read" (Barthes 16). Alternatively, Eco's definition of intertextuality includes both implicit and explicit references to other texts, regardless of the degree of presence. For example, many recognise Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as an intertext in Michael Innes' *Hamlet, Revenge!* (1937) but disregard ever-present Shakespeare's quotes in a myriad of British detective novels. Such is Innes' *The Long Farewell* (1958), in which each major section starts with an epigraph from Shakespeare intending to merge the detective fiction with high British literature (Collins 49). Nevertheless, the most prominent instance of Echo's approach to intertextuality is *The Name of the Rose* (1983), a novel inspired by the traditions of detective fiction, thus combining two forms of discourse. In the centre of Eco's novel is the library, a perfect representation of intertextuality, the actual physical intersection of different texts. The significance of the library lies in the postmodern belief that all texts interact with one another (Collins 63). Apart from various definitions and different approaches, intertextuality is realised through many forms, namely adaptation, recycling, parody, simulation, and pastiche. With all its sub-techniques, intertextuality has become one of the key narrative strategies in postmodern narrative forms since it recycles the past events and presents them in a self-reflexive manner.

When it comes to intertextuality in cinema, specifically how film adapts its implicit and explicit intertexts, Hutcheon argues that postmodern cinema engages with "the politics of

representation, specifically the representation of the original and the originating subject as an artist: its dangers, its victims and its consequences" (115). She explores divergent strategies of interpretation elicited by the intertexts (Booker 5). What is more, Hutcheon bases her definitions of postmodern intertextuality and its sub-techniques on an affirmative postmodern aesthetic, which allows the audience to view postmodern films through different lenses (Constable 85). Similarly, Booker and Booker's article provides an alternative to the negative attitude on recycling as a postmodern form of intertextuality. It analyses recycled and intertextual references in circular narratives, such as the narrative and intertextuality in *Pulp Fiction*. The results indicate that the success of the scene relies upon the viewer's ability to trace the complex intertextual references across Tarantino's filmography (Brooker & Brooker 93–94).

Postmodern intertextuality is further notably used in De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974) and *Body Double* (1984). Booker's analysis of both movies puts in contrast the complex network of references to satiric music industry in *Phantom of the Paradise* and the "entirely superficial and even gratuitous" referentiality in *Body Double* (Booker 131). Booker traced the many intertextual references in *Phantom of the Paradise* and described it as "a complex postmodern intertextual and intergeneric stew" (Booker 63). In contrast, a series of references and allusions in the *Body Double* distract the viewers rather than explore broader themes, which he finds to be typical of intertextuality within postmodern films (Constable 69–70).

Intertextuality is also consistently employed in biographical narratives. Custen therefore proposes that they are likely to depend on "the almost hermetic systems of reference established in previous films" (111). Marcia Landy reconsiders Custen's approach to biopic filmmakers, stating that:

> The biopic does not spring de novo from the minds of studios, directors, writers, and actors but is sensitive to and dependent on existing cultural lore, which in turn is dynamic, assimilating changing social conditions . . . The biopic is a crude and stratified expression of motifs that are plundered from official history and memory as embedded in other literary forms, film genres, and artistic forms such as painting and music (151).

Furthermore, *music* is a particularly important intertext in musical biopics, given the profession of its subjects. Many of the musical tracks featured are written and performed by the artist portrayed, or they had a significant impact on their life and career. More importantly, many musical biopic filmmakers, such as Todd Haynes, believe that the only way the audience can truly know the artist – or at least attempt to know them – is through the music they left behind. Because of this outlook, there has been a considerable study of film soundtracks over the past decades, exploring the ways in which music is integrated into a visual narrative of the movie. For instance, in her research, Kassabian concluded that music communicates with all additional elements of the movie, such as other musical tracks, the narrative, visual imagery, dialogue and sound effects, as well as other references connected to the subject's life (11).

2.2. Pastiche

Pastiche is a form of intertextuality that combines and imitates previous genres and styles with the intention of creating a new narrative voice or commenting on their contemporary usage. Conversely, throughout history pastiche was predominantly viewed through negative lenses, commonly regarded as synonymous with “substandard” or “hotchpotch” due to its derivative

nature. Even though this analogy is not completely incorrect, it does not stand for the present-day understanding of pastiche in scholarly discourse nor disciplines such as music, literature, film, and cultural studies (Fletcher 49).

According to Fletcher, the term *pastiche* stems from two culinary terms: Italian *pasticcio* and French *pate*. Both terms refer to meals made from a mixture of different ingredients that create something new when brought together, but each remains recognisable. These are the origins of the first definition of pastiche in the context of art developed by French painter Roger De Piles in 1677. He used the term to describe a particular contemporary practice, where artists were blending different elements from famous paintings creating *new* compositions. These artworks were thus neither original because they imitated other artists, nor copies since the blended elements created something unprecedented. Furthermore, the practice became particularly prominent in 20th century French literature used by Marcel Proust whose style of writing combined authors and genres. Nevertheless, it was not until the rise of postmodernism that pastiche became a part of scholarly conversation, when it started being used in postmodern architecture, fusing classical with Modern elements (Fletcher 49–51).

However, pastiche was still deemed problematic as a practice that invalidates a notion of historicity and promotes depthlessness. This view is central to Frederic Jameson's understanding of pastiche as everything that is wrong with postmodernism. He argues that the loss of realistic perspective on history resulted in the psychic fragmentation of an individual subject who is thus unable to create a personal style and borrows from earlier works via pastiche (Fletcher 52). For him, postmodernism is a culture based on pastiche "in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible: all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 115).

This culture, he claims, also marks the end of parody, which is therefore replaced by pastiche, its "weaker" form (Jameson 17) because it lacks the critical, satirical, or comical tone.

It was not until the monographs by Ingeborg Hoesterey (2001) and Richard Dyer (2007), which primarily focussed on pastiche rather than comparing it to other intertextual forms, that pastiche's critical potential was reconsidered. The monographs offer examples and comprehensive case studies from architecture, film, music, advertising, sculpture, and painting, shifting the focus from definitions of pastiche to the practice of reading texts as a pastiche. More importantly, they have explained that it is because, and not despite its neutrality, that pastiche has the ability of textual critique (Fletcher 57).

Hoesterey's study *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature* (2001) concentrates on its combinatory nature and consolidates its complexity. She demonstrates how reading texts through pastiche can offer new perspectives on the subject at hand. According to her, texts that apply pastiche have "emancipatory potential" (Hoesterey 29) because of their "dialectical stance toward history" (25) and ability to reshape "cultural codifications that for centuries marginalised unconventional identities" (29). This approach suggests a new way of reading texts in which pastiche functions as a cultural critique, blending elements of high and low art, and positioning the audience above the creator, evoking Barthes' theory in *The Death of the Author* (1967) (Grochowski).

Alternatively, Dyer's monograph *Pastiche* (2007) focuses more on its imitative works. He adopts the Italian term *pasticcio* to indicate predominately combinatory works and the term *pastiche* for the largely imitative ones. Pastiche-as-imitation, according to Dyer, typically concerns itself with the imitation of the style and is more neutral in its evaluative function. Ultimately, he

defines pastiche as "fundamentally liberating, inherently 'queer' practice", a combination of diverse elements with richness and vitality, capable of creating a new dialogue with history that is not simply rooted in nostalgia - as Jameson argues (Dyer 20–21).

While Jameson sees pastiche as the expression of the logic of late capitalist society where information is the central commodity, proponents of pastiche demonstrate that its forms support cultural resistance. This view is particularly valuable in highly diverse societies because it allows minorities to gain confidence in expressing themselves through new cultural forms since dominant ones "do not speak for them" (Dyer 132). For instance, Susan Sontag examined the ways in which pastiche had been used by gay men, and illustrated how it allowed them, as a social minority, to create cultural forms in which they felt liberated to express themselves freely. Famously, the singer Boy George used the elements of pastiche that Sontag described as achieving mainstream success whilst celebrating his homosexuality. In her discussion on pastiche, Sontag, thus, emphasises agency, as well as pastiche's subversive and vibrant critical potential (McRobbie 19).

It becomes clear that pastiche characterises texts that are highly intertextual, eclectic, imitative, combined, multivocal and reader-engaging. The evocation of past genres or styles in highly imitative texts allows their readers to create their own relationship with the past from the perspective of their individual experiences. Reading a text as a pastiche leads the reader to re-approach the past and re-evaluate a historical situation (Fletcher 61).

Subsequently, pastiche became one of the key features of postmodern film in the late 20th century due to the growing trend of borrowing styles, motifs, and material from previous films (Booker 90). Notable examples are Brian De Palma's various imitations of Alfred Hitchcock's filmography, Gus Van Sant's complete remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and comprehensive

pastiche in the Coen brothers' *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001). Apart from referencing films and other cultural forms of the past, postmodern cinema uses pastiche in films, where the main objective of representation is filmmaking, displaying a high level of reflexivity. Some instances are *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), *The Player* (1992), *Timecode* (2000), *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) and *Ed Wood* (1994) (Booker xx) with Fellini's *8½* (1963) as the key predecessor (Booker 137). Even though these films do employ Jameson's view of pastiche as an exercise of nostalgia, they also allow for a new instance of postmodern creativity and dialogue with the past (Booker xx).

Another prestigious example of pastiche, along with parody, is David Lynch's "nostalgia film" *Blue Velvet* (1986). The film is a pastiche of the American *film noir*, alluding also to such films as Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), Lumiere brothers' *L'Arroseur Arrose* (1896) and the music in Edward's *Experiment in Terror* (1962). Lynch achieves pastiche by blending two contrasting cinematic styles: traditional Hollywood and experimental avant-garde. The famous opening sequence starts with an idyllic, tranquil portrait of a typical American suburb which suddenly transforms into the dark nightmare version of the same as the camera pans inside the grass. Such cinematic experimentation allowed Lynch to reveal the horrors that lurk underneath the surface of the American suburbia, which makes the role of pastiche greater than simple imitation of retro-styles (Harries 7).

2.3. Fragmentation

When it comes to the narrative strategy of fragmentation it would be useful to decipher the difference between modern and postmodern view on its function and meaning. In his book

Beginning Theory (1995), Peter Barry compares the use of fragments in postmodern literature to the one in the modern. He notes that in modern literary works "there is a tone of pessimism, and despair about the world which finds its appropriate representation in . . . 'fractured' art forms" (84). However, in postmodernism "fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief" (Ibid.) That is to say, "the modernist laments fragmentation while postmodernism celebrates it" (Ibid.).

Similarly, Theo d'Haen reflects on the contrast between modern unity and postmodern fragmentation using the example of collage in both modernism and postmodernism. He argues that modern collage suggests unity and synchronicity, while postmodern represents division and dispersion. D'Haen notices the "obstinate refusal of postmodern fragments to 'come together'" and states that in modernist texts "the unilinear functionalism of the work guarantees the possibility of a coherent reading emerging from the text itself" while "postmodern works do not offer . . . 'univalent' meanings" (222).

Fragmentation and plurality in postmodernism are products of mass culture and aim to deconstruct metanarratives of history, society, literature, and art, thus finding alternatives in mininarratives. Instead of conforming to one final centre, fragmented fiction creates multiple narrative foci with endless possibilities (Bharvad 2–3). Fragmented narration, free of the given structure, is open-ended, which allows for multiple endings and creativity of the author to shine through. It encourages detailed analysis, questioning and even criticism of the problems raised in the novels; however, it never tries to give solutions. As a result, readers are not passive recipients of the truth the author wants them to know but are instead engaged in solving those problems and answering the questions themselves (170). In addition, fragmented narrative deconstructs chronology, temporality, and cause-effect relations. It prefers to tell stories with a multi-angle

view, interwoven, with temporal and spatial distortion, therefore displaying itself on a deeper level (55–56).

In the context of the cinema, the German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1935) singles out film as "inherently fragmented" both in the structure and display (223). He bases his claim on the fact that film is a montage of separate scenes connected by a sequence of cuts that obstructs the sense of wholeness found in traditional art. It follows that the audiences, instead of admiration and awe, undergo a defamiliarisation accompanied by contemplative criticism that helps develop critical thinking and to question authority – in a way resembling Brechtian style. However, such concept of defamiliarization loses its effect in the context of postmodern films which, not only mimic, but celebrate the fragmentation of contemporary life in the age of Jameson's late capitalism (Booker 3). For example, at the beginning of Robert Altman's *The Player* (1992), studio's chief security officer Walter Stuckel (Fred Ward) criticises the fragmented style of editing in postmodern films as an influence of the frantic MTV-style music videos' editing. He remarks that ''the pictures they make now are all MTV: cut, cut, cut, cut. The opening shot of Welles's *Touch of Evil* was 6½ minutes long.'' However, MTV was one of the many popular fragmented forms in the late 20th century and, as expressed by Jameson in *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), indicated a more general aspect of postmodern culture (Booker 1). Indeed, fragmented film editing reaches all the way back to the 1920s when the Soviet director Dziga Vertov developed a new montage method *kino-glaz* ("film-eye") based on compiling fragmented images from everyday life, most famously in his experimental documentary *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) (Britannica). The fragmented editing continued to develop and by the early 1980s became a distinguished style in the films of the French New Wave (Booker 1). For instance, Jean-Luc Godard famously used jump

cuts in *Breathless* (1960), Francois Truffaut used quick cuts and fast zooms in *Jules et Jim* (1961), and Orson Welles manages to convey a sense of fragmentation and chaotic action in *Touch of Evil* (1958) even without using cuts. It can be concluded that the strategy of fragmentation in postmodern films logically developed from the previous montage techniques and increased its popularity with the emergence of MTV-style editing, which was designed to attract younger audiences to theatres (Booker 2–3).

3. Postmodern Narrative Strategies in *I'm not There*

3.1. The cinema of Todd Haynes

Todd Haynes, the contemporary American director, has been acclaimed for his postmodern film style, which involves a fragmented narrative structure, mixing of genres, representation of fluid identities, depiction of progressive topics and shattering of historical truth. Among his many influences and interests are experimental cinema, melodrama, musical biopics, celebrity, and fame as well as feminist and queer theory (Leyda ix). According to Haynes, he has become interested in experimental film during his high school and college years in the early 1980s when filmmakers started to experiment with strategies and subject matter. For instance, films started to combine approaches related to both documentary and fiction and shifted the focus from form and image to cultural and political issues. Haynes notes the following:

> Experimental films were beginning to incorporate narrative, genre and emotion, and that was something that definitely was a turning point for me, coming out of college in terms of what the future of counterproduction in film might look like. I remember feeling kinship when I went to see *Blue Velvet*. There was again a kind of incorporation of ironic positions around discarded generic styles, but without denying emotional access. There was a complicated, interesting, humorous, but definitely postmodern reassessment of emotion in various forms, whether filmic or musical (qtd. in. White 148).

His first film, a short project produced in high school, is titled *The Suicide* (1978). The film is an introduction to Haynes's portrayal of unstable, fragmented notions of identity, of a struggle to fit in. "I wasn't interested in telling heroic [stories]", Haynes states, but "stories about

artists and people who were rejecting solid, stable notions of identity and of privilege in the world. I think there's a curiosity in my films about subjects who gravitate toward various forms of self-destruction, at various levels of consciousness" (qtd. in. White 138). He directed his second short film *Assassins: A Film Concerning Rimbaud* (1985) at Brown University, where he majored in art and semiotics. Depicting the chaotic love between poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine, the film foreshadows Haynes's interest in Rimbaud who he will later reference in *I'm Not There*. The movie also marks the beginning of Haynes's approach to biopics as an experimental genre that does not offer objective truth:

> I felt at the beginning of my career with *Assassins* that you can't really give the audience the revolution, and you can't give them Rimbaud. You can show the possibilities and the conditions that make one's own personal revolt or one's own personal revolution necessary, but to completely provide some answer is depriving the viewer of finding it themselves and making it their own (ibid. 151).

Following through with this attitude, Haynes directed his third film; *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (1987), a short documentary-style biopic with a cast composed solely of Barbie dolls. The movie solidified Haynes's status as a promising director of experimental cinema. His first feature film, a multi-narrative *Poison* (1991) was inspired by the French novelist Jean Genet and combines several genres: documentary, sci-fi and prisoner love story critiquing the conventional understanding of homosexuality at the time (Leyda x). In *Dottie Gets Spanked* (1993), Haynes continues this critique in revealing the hypocrisy of "loving" nuclear families that reject queer sexualities (White 44).

Haynes's second full-length film *Safe* (1995) is simultaneously an intense study of suburbia and, similar to *Poison,* a metaphorical depiction of the AIDS epidemic. What is more, the opening is a pastiche of Fassbinder's *Chinese Roulette*, the German director's critique of the bourgeoisie (Sullivan). *Velvet Goldmine* (1998) is Haynes's second musical biopic, a celebration of fluid identities, styles and sexualities in the '70s and '80s glam-rock era. *Far from Heaven* (2001) is the last movie before *I'm Not There* and similarly to Dylan's biopic uses postmodern strategies of intertextuality and pastiche, drawing on Douglas Sirk's 1950s melodramas such as *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Imitation of Life* (1959), *Written on The Wind* (1956) and Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974). In the movie Haynes imitates cinematic styles, rich colour palette, topics of race, sexuality, and class of the 1950s films. He also revisits woman's film for the third time, after *Dottie* and *Safe,* and accomplishes his first box-office success being nominated for four Academy Awards (Leyda xii).

After this brief overview of his filmography, we could conclude that Todd Haynes's work exemplifies three kinds of films: New Queer Cinema, woman's picture, and musical biopics (Leyda ix). Regarding his experimentation with the musical biopic, Haynes has arguably done more to solidify the genre than any other director (Schlotterbeck 228). All three of the biopics combine "unconventional" and innovative approaches with some more traditional characteristics. In his pursuit to deconstruct traditional biopics, Haynes employs postmodern strategies of intertextuality, pastiche, and fragmentation, combining them still with the biopic genre's conventions to portray its central musical figure. However, Haynes's protagonists are not coherent or easily explained; in contrast, they are portrayed in an elusive and provisional way. In fact, Helen Darby argues that it is a failure of representation that describes these three biopics (331). Consequently, Haynes's take on the genre may be compared to Freud's observation:

"Whoever becomes a biographer takes on the obligation to lie, to cover up, to be hypocritical, to whitewash and even to conceal his lack of understanding; for biographical truth cannot be had, and if one did have it, one could not use it" (qtd. in Schlotterbeck 229).

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story signifies the beginning of his musical biopic career portraying the 1970s pop singer Karen Carpenter, who tragically died of anorexia nervosa. The short TV film is a parody of a celebrity docudrama where Haynes uses Barbie Dolls instead of actors. This decision, says Haynes, was a result of wanting to see whether dolls could generate the same emotional connection as real actors do (Leyda 157). However, I find that it was the original songs that communicated those emotional reactions and made the audience realise the impact of becoming a teenage pop star overnight, constantly criticised for her appearance.

His film *Velvet Goldmine*, on the other hand, reconstructs the rock biopics depicting characters that resemble Marc Bolan, Iggy Pop, and David Bowie (Schlotterbeck 228). In doing so, it returns to the theme of queer sexuality in the context of the liberating sexual revolution of the seventies and depicts media's representation of the same. Haynes's rejection of an all-encompassing objective truth leads to the portrayal of gay male identity in the movie as constructed and performative, partly given and partly made. Such notions comply with the postmodern refusal of historical objectivity, which suggests that categories of race, gender and sexuality are artificial concepts created by historical metanarratives. *Velvet Goldmine* pioneers the intertextual technique he largely uses in *I'm Not There*, with references to the works of Oscar Wilde. Furthermore, it uses the quasi-biographical concept of *Citizen Kane* with the journalist who gathers information about its subject from other people's memories and testimonies. Consequently, there is no possibility of finding the truth rendering the individual fragmented. This sense of mystery and plurality is brought to the next level in *I'm Not There* (Darby 336).

My favourite quote about *I'm Not There* describes the movie as "an intricate dream realm filled with songs and allusions, a Dylanological Tardis the maverick star's fictional regeneration in parallel universes" (White 92). In other words, *I'm Not There* divides the persona of Bob Dylan in seven fragments, portrayed by six different actors and through six distinct cinematic styles, taking the reconstruction of the traditional biopic to the new extreme. As stated in the opening credits, this inventive and imaginative biopic is "inspired by the music and many lives of Bob Dylan" from the 1960s to the early 1970s, thus incorporating cultural and historical references of the time period. Richard Gere, Cate Blanchett, Ben Whishaw, Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, and Marcus Carl Franklin each play an aspect of Dylan's persona arranged by period, music, and interest, without any actor portraying the 'real' Bob Dylan. Bale embodies two Dylan personae – 1960s folk singer (Jack Rollins) and 1980s born again Christian (Pastor John); Ledger (Robbie Clark) plays a movie star famous for portraying Jack Rollins in the biopic-within-the-biopic *Grain of Sand*; Franklin (Woody) depicts an African American boy influenced by Dylan's idol Woody Guthrie; Blanchett (Jude Quinn) is an androgynous electric Dylan of the Sixties; Gere (Billy the Kid) portrays a folk hero on the run, and Wishaw (Arthur) Dylan's interest in Arthur Rimbaud (Spirou 213).

By creating this multi-layered perspective on Bob Dylan, *I'm Not There* leaves the question "Who Dylan really is?" unanswered and open to interpretation. Consequently, the audience gets a better insight into their own relationship with memory and history than into the musical star because each viewer will shape him based on their own experiences and ideas about Dylan. In fact, I believe this movie should not be approached with the intention of discovering the truth behind the name "Bob Dylan", but with the aim to explore the remarkable creativity of Haynes's filmography with the sense of freedom that comes from not having to know the "truth".

Apart from exploring the power of popular music and the nature of the self, the film is filled with cinematic and Dylan-related references thanks to the postmodern strategies of intertextuality and pastiche. Furthermore, the film does not follow chronology using both temporal and spatial fragmentation, which defies conventional senses of film narration. Haynes's employment of these strategies is examined in detail in the following sections.

3.2. Intertextuality in *I'm Not There*

The main source of intertextuality in *I'm Not There* is Bob Dylan himself. Despite his absence, as implied by the title, Dylan is present everywhere in this film - through his music recordings, non-music works (poems, jacket notes, quotes from interviews, and press conferences), as well as his cinematic and photographic representation (Grochowski). Such portrayal suggests that Haynes is more interested in Dylan's *art* than in the portrayal of his "real" life. However, the array of quotations and references to major events in his life and historical period of the 1960s acknowledges the existence of a documentary element (Gross).

The movie starts with a point-of-view vignette from backstage at a concert, which imitates D.A. Pennebaker's *cinéma verité*[3] documentary *Dont*[4] *Look Back* (1967), about Dylan's 1965 British tour. We follow what is presumably one of Dylan's personae heading towards the stage, where we finally discover that the noise is coming from the screaming fans (00:58-01:24). We get a glimpse of a large American flag behind the band (01:18), which Dylan fans will recognize as a reference to the Paris concert on his 1966 World Tour when he famously went electric. Dylan used

[3] French: "truth cinema"; film movement of the 1960s aiming to capture "real life" (*Britannica*).
[4] Apostrophe is deliberately omitted.

the flag as a stage prop during the Paris concert, which Clinton Heylin, among others, sees as an anticipated protest against a hostile crowd and, more importantly, a provocation due to USA's involvement in the Vietnam War (Heylin 167).

The moment we get to the stage we leave the 1965 world of Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* and enter Dylan's 1972 documentary *Eat the Document* which he directed himself. The film follows his infamous 1966 World Tour and uses a fragmentary nonlinear approach to narrative, chronology and identity. Within this one-minute-opening sequence, Haynes manages to combine references to Dylan's 1965 British tour and the 1966 Paris concert by applying the styles of both *Dont Look Back* and *Eat the Document*. Even though it is tempting for Dylan fans to take this sequence as a depiction of biographical and empirical events, where the American flag signifies spatiality and temporality, it soon becomes clear that the film is a playful and deceitful blend of fact and fiction (D'Cruz 317).

The opening sequence cuts to a shot with the same persona briefly riding a motorcycle until it crashes offscreen, an allusion to Dylan's famous motorcycle accident after the 1966 World Tour, which according to Dylan mythology, made him withdraw from the public eye (01:25). The film jumps to another shot of the same persona, this time laying on a morgue slab (01:37). While two doctors perform an autopsy, a voice-over narrator, referencing Dylan's words, introduces a significant theme of the film: how the public tends to "devour" famous people thinking they know them, without understanding that such identity is deceitful and ultimately unknowable (D'Cruz 318).

The 1966 tour and motorcycle accident mark essential moments in Dylan's life and are two of the most interesting events to biographical filmmakers. For instance, Martin Scorsese's

documentary *No Direction Home* (2005) uses Dylan's *Eat the Document* for the live footage of the 1966 tour and chronicles Dylan's life until the motorcycle crash of the same year. After the accident, Dylan reinvented himself by renouncing several different musical styles and public personae and produced a series of records with The Band inspired by American rural traditions, or the "old, weird America". Greil Marcus applies this term in his 1997 book *Invisible Republic*, republished in 2001 as *The Old, Weird America: The World of Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* to describe the American traditions that inspired Dylan and The Band's *Basement Tapes*. For him, "the old, weird America" represents a conflicted ghostly community characterized by oddballs and eccentrics who acknowledge the contradictions of the American flag. The ghosts and spectres of this "invisible" community inhabit Dylan's imaginative world of *Basement Tapes* as well as Haynes's film (Marcus, *Invisible Republic* 87). The *Basement Tapes* period is unmistakably referenced in Billy the "Lone Gun" sequence, a character who also alludes to Dylan's role in Sam Peckinpah's film *Pat Garratt and Billy the Kid* (1973) (D'Cruz 324–25).

What is more, among the original recordings from the five-disc *Basement Tapes* is the titular song "I'm Not There" written in 1967 and known only in bootleg form until Haynes's film, released as part of the soundtrack album. According to Greil Marcus, the song is one of the most fascinating and enigmatic in Dylan's oeuvre, recorded only once and never sung again (Marcus, *Invisible Republic* 155). In *Invisible Republic* Marcus interprets the song as the portrayal of a troubled community that asks, "if America even exists" (Ibid. 204). He also powerfully describes the experience of listening to the song:

> The song is a trance, a waking dream, a whirlpool, a 'closing vortex,' as on the last page of *Moby-Dick*. … Very quickly the listener is drawn into the sickly embrace of the music, its wash of half-heard, half-formed words and the increasing bitterness

> and despair behind them. Just as quickly, the sense that music of this particular nature has no reason to end, a sense that this music can have no real exit, come into focus and fades away; for this music a sense of time is almost vulgar (Ibid. 198).

In its essence, the song carries three notions of being "out of time". The notion of timelessness, where past, present, and future collide. Further, it conveys the notion of being untimely, i.e., ahead of one's time, oneself, and others, but at the same time being ill-timed, delivered in a tone that no listener can appreciate (D'Cruz 325–26). Ultimately, the song evokes the feeling of failure and absence; a failure to articulate the words properly (some words Dylan sings are literally "not there") and the absence of a man who should be but is not there. The sense of being "untimely" and "out of time" lies in Dylan's trance-like delivery and absence of his lyrical "I" in the following lines: "And I'm also hesitating by temptation lest it runs / Which it don't follow me / But I'm not there, I'm gone" (qtd. in D'Cruz 326). The fact that Haynes uses this hidden song shows that he is interested in its thematic value and its cryptic nature. The song and the film tell us that the "I" is absent and frequently changing without giving us the answer where and who it truly is (Ibid.).

For Greil Marcus music is finite and never changing, unlike the context that surrounds it. The same approach applies to Haynes's biopic: "the music is the anchor and everything else is moving around it" (qtd. in Leyda 139). According to Haynes, music is an inseparable part of Bob Dylan, therefore the key inspiration and the most extensive source of intertextuality for the film. Like any remarkable Dylan song, *I'm Not There* is full of references and allusions to Dylan's life and work, serving as a reminder of Dylan's fabricated identity presented by the media, this time, in the form of a feature film. Dylan officially approved his recording and songs allowing Haynes to use his "originals" and numerous covers in the film (Spirou 215). Haynes also incorporated the

songs as an element of cohesion for the film's fragmentary structure using Dylan's voice as an imperative asset to carry the audience. He also did not want any actor to lip-sync to Dylan, instead he applied covers by various artists, which created an opportunity for his music to live on. Likewise, Haynes made comprehensive collections of songs based on each Dylan personae and envisioned each narrative as an adaptation of the matching album period (Marcus).

The song that introduces the film is "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again" from Dylan's 1966 album *Blonde on Blonde*. The song follows Arthur's statement "song is something that walks by itself" implying that it speaks for itself without the need for any external analysis or search for the meaning that is simply not there (2:28). The song plays during the opening credits over images of the 1960s New York streets, subway, and the passengers. The scenery gradually transforms into an open rural landscape, a complete contrast to the urban scene. The pastoral scenery is where both Billy and Woody make their first appearance, with Billy waking up on a train and Woody running towards it across picturesque green fields (02:30-05:00). Not only does the Dylan song introduce the film, but also connects the two locations and narratives (Spirou 215–16). The Woody narrative, on its own, is an adaptation of Dylan's 1962 debut *Bob Dylan* album, a collection of traditional folk covers, clear imitation of Dylan's folk hero Woody Guthrie. The Billy narrative, on the other hand, adapts *Pat Garett and Billy The Kid*'s soundtrack from 1973, as well as an adaptation of the previously depicted *Basement Tapes* (Ibid. 225).

The narrative of Jack Rollins, the embodiment of Dylan's folk hero persona, is an adaptation of his socially conscious record, *The Times They Are a-Changin'* (1964), including major songs from his second record, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963). Upon Rollins' return later in the film as Pastor John, the narrative becomes an adaptation of Dylan's "born-again"

Christian phase in the late seventies, illustrated in the film by Dylan's song "Saved "from the 1980. (Grochowski).

Unlike all the musical personae in the film, Robbie Clark is an actor who plays Jack Rollins in a "biopic-within-a-biopic" of Rollins's life. Robbie's "simulacrum" narrative is an adaptation of Dylan's "star of electricity"[5] persona and several records starting with *Blonde on Blonde*, released in 1966 with "Visions of Johanna" as the segment's introductory song. In addition, it makes a visual reference to the famous cover of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* with Dylan and his then girlfriend, Rotolo, walking in the snow and a passing reference to *John Wesley Harding*, from 1968 (Ibid.). Robbie's narrative is an allusion to rise and fall of Dylan's relationship with his first wife, Sarah (Claire in the film), soundtracked by Dylan's most intimate songs, particularly "Visons of Johanna". The song nostalgically reflects on their faded relationship with the lyrics: "Ain't it just like the night to play tricks when you're tryin' to be so quiet? / We sit here stranded, though we're all doin' our best to deny it" (24:48-25:20) (Spirou, 232). The section concludes with his two "divorce" and more confessional records, *Blood on the Tracks* and *Desire*, both from 1975. To further highlight their separation, Haynes extensively uses the album's seemingly most vitriolic and unforgiving song, "Idiot Wind". In fact, he uses *The Bootleg Series* version for two important reasons: first, with this version of the song, which is more bitter and self-blaming, Haynes portrays a more profound version of their relationship; second, Haynes demonstrates his attention to detail and taste when it comes to the selection of the soundtrack (Danks).

The Jude Quinn narrative is an adaptation of Dylan's two 1965 landmark albums, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Bringing it All Back Home*. The latter one is an underlying text in the Arthur

[5] The "star of electricity" references Dylan's mid-1960s look characterised by his dark sunglasses, leather jacket and Godardian striped crew-necked shirt (e.g., worn by Jean Seberg in *Breathless*) (Spirou, 232).

Rimbaud section, mainly composed of quotes from the album's jacket notes, such as "I accept chaos. I am not sure whether it accepts me" (qtd. in Grochowski). However, the central song in Jude's segment is "Ballad of a Thin Man" from *Highway 61 Revisited,* offering a good insight into Dylan's late-sixties persona and the management of his celebrity status, which he is determined to control. In the opening line of the song, "You walk into the room / with a pencil in your hand […] try so hard but you don't understand;" Dylan addresses the critic who is trying to evaluate his work, thus subverting the usual critic-artist power dynamic. Dylan's refusal to indulge the critics' attempt to understand his music is established in two exchanges with the press in the 1960s. The first one was in 1963 after the Newsweek reporter revealed that most of Dylan's past is a myth. However, since Dylan never based his celebrity on fact and accuracy, the damage had not been done. Dylan defended his strong individual relationship to his music and insisted on literary interpretation of his work instead of factual coverage. Dylan's rejection of journalistic assessment is found in a note addressed to *Mr. Magazine*. The address is a literary counterpart to "Ballad of a Thin Man" written in the "11 Outlined Epitaphs" of the album liner notes for *The Times They Are A-Changin* (Schlotterbeck 235). Dylan writes the following:

> [T]he town I was born in holds no memories … mine is of another story for I don't care to be made an oddball bouncing past reporter's pens co-operating with questions aimed at eyes that want to see … I don't like to be stuck in paint staring out at cavity minds who gobble chocolate candy bars (32).

Dylan's second altercation with the press is found in *cinéma verité* documentary *Dont Look Back* (1967), where the most famous scene demonstrates a dramatic conflict between Dylan and *Time* magazine interviewer. Dylan questions the magazine's validity as an unbiased source, aiming to position the artist and his song above the critic by turning the focus to the interviewer. Dylan

effectively portrays both alterations in “Ballad of a Thin Man” by carefully choosing the tone of his voice. For instance, he sarcastically laughs while singing, “you try so hard but you don’t understand,” and condescendingly stretches the last words of the chorus - “Something is happening here but you don’t know what it is, do you, Mister Jones?” (qtd. in Schlotterbeck 236). Despite knowing that the song can be meaningful, Dylan chooses to remain elusive and incomprehensible, both in his persona and music (Ibid. 237).

Because of their complementary themes, Haynes’s *I’m Not There* logically features the “Ballad of a Thin Man” and even contains a sequence with a music video to illustrate the song's meaning. In the film’s two-part sequence, Jude Quinn clashes with Keenan Jones who embodies the characteristic of both “Mister Jones” and the *Time* magazine reporter from *Dont Look Back*. The first part of the sequence sees Jones trying to interview Dylan (1:04:55-1:08:07) who persistently refuses to be pinned down as a folk hero or a protest singer, saying, “I’m just a storyteller man, that’s all I am” (1:05:18). He also alludes to a possibility that his folk singer persona could be nothing but a phase or “jumping into scene and [doing] it better than anyone else” (1:05:48). However, Haynes “wanted there to be an equal duel between the two characters” (qtd. in Leyda 135) and provided Jones with Dylan’s song lyrics to retort. He compares Dylan’s inability to give straight answers to the insincerity of his protest songs, to which Dylan responds that he is, “No more sincere than you are. You just want me to say what you want me to say.” He cleverly switches their roles, asking Jones, “What do you care, if I care or don’t care, what’s it to you?” (1:05:37).

The unsuccessful interview is followed by “Ballad of a Thin Man” music video, illustrating more vividly the usual power dynamic between the critic and celebrity (1:08-14-1:13:57). The music video features a louder and less subtle cover of the song, accompanied by a surreal sequence.

Mr Jones walks into a restroom encountering multiple versions of himself, symbolising the breakdown of his confidence caused by Quinn's retorts. He proceeds to encounter Quinn performing on stage and confronts a surreal nightmarish sequence that crumbles his sense of authority. Quinn turns into a caged circus performer and before the critic has a chance to process what is happening, he finds himself in the cage instead of Quinn. Quinn offers him a microphone implying what Dylan says in his lyrics, "Here is your throat back, thanks for the loan". Haynes here expresses Dylan's frustration with critics' tendency to speak for an artist and to demand an explanation for their art: "You're a cow, give me some milk or else go home! […] There ought to be a law against you coming around. You should be made to wear earphones" (Ibid. 237). What essentially lies at the heart of these sequences is Dylan's refusal to be reduced to a commercial product, to be restricted in the portrayal of his life or songs. Instead, *I'm Not There* uses flexible subjectivity that is simultaneously burdened and liberated by existing outside the norm (Ibid. 237–9).

Towards the end of the film, Haynes introduces what is, in his opinion, one the most beautiful love songs, Dylan's "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands". Interestingly, it is part of Dylan's most urban, witty, and poetically free record *Blonde on Blonde*, yet it is one of his most pained songs, "summoning up a long carnival past". Jude Quinn parallels the song at the end in his final soliloquy (qtd. in White 157). He quotes Dylan's words from another interview from the mid-60s speaking about the difference between folk and traditional music:

> Traditional music is mathematical music. It's based on hexagrams. It comes about from legends, Bibles, plagues, and it revolves around vegetables and death. There's nobody that's going to kill traditional music. All those songs about roses growing out of people's brains and lovers who are really geese that turn into angels – they're

> not going to die. They're not folk music songs, they're political songs, they're already dead (2:03:35-2:03:56).

Dylan's words can help us understand his love for traditional music, but also continuity between this music and Dylan's shifting, timeless persona (Danks).

Apart from Dylan's music, the film's intertextuality refers to his written poetry. Seemingly, *I'm Not There* begins with Bob Dylan's "death" after Jude Quinn's motorcycle crash. Quinn now lies dead on a mortuary trolley while the voice-over by Kris Kristofferson utters, "There he lay: poet, prophet, outlaw, fake, star of electricity, nailed by a Peeping Tom who would soon discover . . . even the ghost was more than one person". The narrator proceeds to intone; "A devouring public can now share the remains of his sickness," as the scalpel cuts through the corpse (01:37-01:54). The voice-over mediation on his death is a reference to two epitaphs Dylan wrote for himself in *Tarantula* (1971), a collection of poetry written in 1966 (the year of Jude's death and Dylan's crash) (White 92). Dylan once again refers to ghosts as his key image and writes:

> here lies bob dylan / demolished by Vienna politeness— / which will now claim to have invented him / the cool people can / now write Fugues about him / & Cupid can now kick over his kerosene lamp— / bob dylan—killed by a discarded Oedipus / who / turned around / to investigate a ghost / & discovered that / the ghost too / was more than one person (102).

Dylan's poetry collection is referenced in another scene within the Jude section. It begins with Jude watching a television program "Culture Beat" whose presenter Mr Jones reveals to the public the "truth" behind Jude's fabricated background and his real name - Aaron Jacob Edelstein. Jude is shown in a close-up contemplating the reportage whilst Arthur's voiceover states: "Never

create anything. People will misinterpret it. They will chain you and follow you for the rest of your life." The scene cuts to the close-up of a giant spider crawling across a white screen to Jude sitting on the floor typing the lines to his book "Tarantula" (1:29:32-1:31:26). Despite being "unmasked" on national television and encouraged by Arthur's voice to create nothing, Jude gets inspired to write even more, the decision I interpreted as another form of protest in the face of those who wish to label and confine his creativity.

The now recurring motif of tarantula crawling across the white screen appears a few more times in Jude's sequence, this time before Allen Ginsberg (David Cross) reads the excerpt from the chapter "On the Tarantulas" in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Behold the hole of the tarantula. Revenge sits black on your back. And wherever you bite black scabs grow. … For that man to be delivered from revenge, that for me is the highest hope"[6] (1:30:34-1:31:42). For Nietzsche, tarantulas symbolise "preachers of equality" whose fight for "justice" is nothing but a vengeance in disguise and profoundly anti-human in spirit (Nietzsche 76). What I concluded form Nietzsche's lines is that essentially there is a dark side to everything, specifically to Jude Quinn in the context of the film. To me, tarantula foreshadows Jude's gradual descent from fame into chaos of drugs and alcohol, "The Shadow" of the "Peeping Tom" looming over his head, catching up to him and ultimately revealing the masked identity he hides behind.

The biopic references the most memorable incidents from Dylan's life - his speech before the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, shocking his audience by going electric and his infamous "Judas" concert in Manchester. By looking more closely at Haynes's interpretations of such events, we learn more about his critical intention. Both the "going electric" and "Judas"

[6] Cf. "Look here, this is the hole of the tarantula! Do you want to see the tarantula itself? Its web hangs here; touch it, make it tremble" (Nietzsche, 76).

moments lean more firmly on fiction than the usual documentation. For instance, Haynes dramatises Dylan and the band's electric performance by taking machine guns out of their guitar cases and blasting at the audience (45:45) (Grochowski). The scene also references Greil Marcus' description of the event: "Dylan and [electric lead guitarist] Mike Bloomfield in particular…[take] their cues straight from High Noon, or the one-on-one shootouts that throughout their teenage years opened and closed almost every episode of Gunsmoke…" (Greil 11–12).

Similarly, Haynes references the moment at the Manchester concert when somebody from the crowd called him "Judas!" implying that his new electric sound is an act of "selling out". Dylan wittily replied to the accusation, "I don't believe you," and "You're a liar" whilst proceeding to strum his guitar and instructing the band to play even louder. In Haynes's interpretation, however, the moment led to a conflict causing the band to retreat from the stage in fear. Both examples rely more on the legend than the factual account of events (1:13:22-1:13:57) (Danks).

3.3. Pastiche in *I'm Not There*

Considering Richard Dyer's understanding of pastiche as a strategy concerned with the imitation and combination, *I'm Not There* is inclined towards the latter, which Dyer refers to as pasticcio. *I'm Not There* is a work constructed from numerous musical and cinematic quotations that provide a specific intellectual stimulation. Apart from Dylan's life and music, Haynes uses references to an impressive number of cinematic styles, genres, and countries. Haynes's pastiche consists of *cinéma verité*, conventional documentaries, Hollywood-based biopics, European art cinema, late-Vietnam-era Westerns, televised hearings of the McCarthy era, and some elements of a more personal biopic with a character narrating their own story (Grochowski). The prevailing

sources of references are films of Gus Van Sant, Jean-Luc Godard, Federico Fellini, and Richard Lester. Stylistically, the film also draws from Dylan documentaries such as Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home* (2005), D.A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* (1967) and Dylan's own *Eat the Document* (1972) (Spirou 212).

Each of the six narratives is filmed in one of the mentioned cinematic styles, all emerging from the sixties to early seventies cinema traditions and various forms of avant-garde filmmaking (Leyda 152). Those films were overflowing with new ideas, words, allusions, references, humour, poetry, philosophy, and politics, reflecting the variety of style in Dylan's music of the time. Keeping this connection between the cinematic styles and Dylan's music in mind, Haynes explained his cinematic approach:

> All I was really focused on was trying to find a narrative and cinematic parallel to what Dylan did to popular music in his era ... I knew from the onset that I would fail, ultimately, because the Sixties were such an extraordinary time – there was a receptivity and openness to experimental ideas ... The popularity that marked Dylan's life, and ultimately propelled him to keep doing more weird stuff – it would be a real miracle for someone to experience today (qtd. in Marcus 54).

Woody's narrative follows a young African American boy, thus referencing two major influences on Dylan's early career: his youthful admiration for Woody Guthrie, illustrated by his name, and his African American music roots, indicated by the casting choice. Here, Haynes quotes instances of what he describes as "leftist studio filmmaking," such as *A Face in the Crowd* (1957, Elia Kazan) and *Bound for Glory* (1976, Hal Ashby) (Macdonald 168). The year is 1959, and Woody is running across a broad landscape towards a passing locomotive, hopping into a boxcar

where he meets two hobos (4:35). He falls into a conversation about his musical influences and search for authenticity, presented in flashbacks. The green, yellow, and red pastoral tones of the countryside evoke Haskell Wexler's cinematography in *Bound for Glory* (4:30; 2:07:13), not unintentionally a biopic of Woody Guthrie (Hanley).

The dialogue between Woody and hobos is, on the other hand, most explicitly cited from *A Face in the Crowd*, with Woody quoting lines from the charismatic protagonist Lonesome Rhodes (Andy Griffith). Rhodes is a folk singer who uses his stardom for personal gain, thus portraying the negative side of celebrityhood, a theme also explored in *I'm Not There*. For instance, when Woody says, "It's lonesome roads we shall walk" (9:23), he is seemingly referring to Lonesome Rhodes and Dylan's song *Paths of Victory* (Smith) starting with the lyrics, "Trails of troubles / Roads of battles / Paths of victory / We shall walk".

Another film referenced is the *film noir Nightmare Alley* (1947, Edmund Goulding), specifically in the flashback when Woody recounts about becoming a circus performer and foreshadows the multi-layered relationship between the next several Dylan's personae and the mass media (8:21-8:50) (Grochowski). After the drifters try to steal his guitar, Woody jumps off the boxcar into the river where he finds himself in a monochromatic nightmarish fantasy, resembling the hallucination sequence in *Odd Man Out* (1947, Carol Reed) (White 101). The scene also parallels Gary Cooper's nightmare sequence in *Meet John Doe* (1941, Frank Capra), a dramatic comedy about a homeless man who gains recognition by deceiving politicians but is later forced to unmask himself (21:35-22:26). The motif of unmasking is also present in the culmination of *A Face in the Crowd*, as well as in each narrative sequence of *I'm Not There* (Hanley). Overall, the underwater segment is a short montage of Woody's life, Hayne's homage to 1930s and 1940s

Hollywood and a reference to Dylan's lyrics "I'll let you be in my dream if you'll let me be in yours" in the intro of *Talkin' World War III Blues* (qtd. in Darby 342).

The sequence where a Liberal white Southern family briefly adopts Woody is filmed mimicking the style of Douglas Sirk's suburban 1950s films, which is simultaneously a reference to Hayne's own *Far from Heaven* (2002), a pastiche of Sirk's filmography (35:55-38:40). This scene, which visually adopts the era of repressed Fifties could thus be interpreted as Hayne's criticism of a liberating Sixties metanarrative, which seems not be as liberating as the mythologies would have it (Hanley).

Dylan's next persona, the protest singer Jack Rollins, resembles Ramblin' Jack Elliot, another of his musical heroes. The first part of Jack's narrative is shot in the style of Scorsese's documentary *No Direction Home*, which in turn extensively adopted documentary footage from previous documentaries about Dylan, *Dont Look Back* and *Eat the Document* (Ibid.). As a result, the sequence is shot in a documentary-style format featuring archival footage of Rollins and a collection of interviews with his associates – fans, friends and fellow musicians speaking to the camera, adding to the film's destabilising effect (Spirou 227).

The documentary fragments also feature a fictional biopic *Grain of Sand*[7], a film within a film in search for authenticity shot in "16-millimeter black and white, using old Kodak film stock" (Sullivan). The fictional biopic ends with Rollins walking away from fame before his return twenty years later as "Pastor John" whose sequence imitates documentary *Say Amen, Somebody* (1982,

[7] A reference to Dylan's song "Every Grain of Sand" from the album *Shot of Love* (1981) (Spirou, 231).

George T. Nierenberg) about the development and influence of gospel music. Rollins's fame will be transferred later onto the actor playing Rollins, Robbie Clark, the next Dylan persona (Hanley).

The narrative of the movie star Robbie Clark and his wife Claire is cinematically represented in the softened colour palette of Jean-Luc Godard's mid-1960s French New Wave films. The scene where Robbie and Claire buy a motorcycle (32:33) is reminiscent of *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) and *Weekend* (1967), whereas the overhead shots of Claire cooking and cleaning are evoked from *La Chinoise* (1967) and *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (1967) (22:55). In addition, Michael G. Smith observes the parallel between the shot in which the camera circulates the faces of a statue during the *Visions of Johanna* sequence and the multiple shots of Greek sculptures in *Le Mépris* (1963) (27:05) (Smith). Later, Robbie's voiceover monologue, specifically at the premiere of his film *Grain of Sand*, is a near-verbatim quote from *Masculin Féminin* (1966) (34:45). This section also commits to narrative devices from Godard's playbook such as voiceover-narration, inter-titles, unmotivated camera movement (camera zooms in on a stationary character), disorienting jump cuts, unbalanced framing, breaking of the fourth wall, and extensive quoting (Hanley).

Haynes essentially uses Godard's cinematographic strategies to narrate Robbie and Claire's relationship, from their first meeting and falling in love until the ending of their marriage. Their meeting sequence at the café is particularly reminiscent of the *Masculin Féminin* which follows the couple Madeleine and Paul (Chantal Goya and Jean-Pierre Léaud) through "15 Specific Events" as the subtitle suggests (Grochowski). Robbie's voiceover narrator contextualises the scene at the café where the use of mirrors particularly accentuates Godard's disorienting editing style to confuse the audience and place the characters off-centre. For instance, when the camera is positioned from Robbie's point of view, the audience only sees Claire's reflection in the mirror

from the corner of the film's frame, which gives the impression of realism, in effect creating a sense of voyeurism, the strategy of Godard's films (28-37-30:40) (Spirou 235).

Apart from editing, the café scene partially quotes dialogue from *Masculin Féminin* during Robbie and Claire's conversation. In their first encounter, Claire asks Robbie what the centre of his world is. Robbie is slightly surprised by the question but responds with "Well, I'm 22. I guess I would say, me" (29:57-30:00). Claire reluctantly agrees but suggests that there are other, more important things (Wilkins 21).

Similarly, in *Masculin Féminin*, Madeleine asks Paul the same question, to which he replies "love," and Madeline admits that she would have said "me." This sequence allows the viewer to follow Robbie and Claire's relationship development and compare the French and American juxtaposition of masculinity/femininity during the 1960s. More importantly, the scene foreshadows the failure of their relationship in portraying Robbie's persona as a selfish young man, the centre of his own world (Spirou 235). Haynes once again quotes *Masculin Féminin* during the premiere of *Grain of Sand*, nearing the collapse of their marriage (Wilkins 21). Robbie's narrator articulates Claire's disappointment in the film and their relationship (34:55-35:08).

Commenting on the similarities between Godard and Dylan when it comes to shifting styles, Haynes specified they also share a contradictory relationship towards women in the 1960s. The treatment of female characters in early Godard films is poetic and aesthetically pleasing, but at the same time tarnished by the male prerogative. Women were excluded from the political discourse and left to discuss more personal existential subject matters that were not given the same importance. There have been examples in Dylan's music when his portrayal of women has been questioned/questionable, which is for instance evoked in *I'm Not There* when Robbie states that

women can never be poets (1:23:21). However, in the movie *2 or 3 Things I know About Her* there is an instance of female empowerment where she directly speaks to the camera, which Haynes directly quotes. As a result, Haynes simultaneously critiques some instances of women's portrayal and gives Claire the last word in her letter to Robbie.[8]

> Because relations are always ambiguous and they continually fail to communicate Because I continue to blame myself even when I'm not to blame. Because each feeling has made me more remote from myself, from my babies and from you [Robbie] - scene cuts to Claire speaking to the camera - For all these reasons, and many more still unknown, I must listen. I must look around more than ever. I must leave (1:50:15-1:50:53).

Furthermore, two additional scenes that involve Claire reference elements from earlier films. First is a shot of Claire surrounded by outsized abstract artwork looming on the walls. The scene continues with a black-and-white montage, an allusion to the statue shots of Godard's *Contempt* with the camera rotating around an ancient female figure. The multimedia darkness involving the outsized artwork, female artist's troubled introspection and the gruesome 1960s footage of the Watergate-era Nixon and Vietnam, are comparable to Haynes's own *Superstar* (24:45-25:30) (White 99).

In the second scene, Claire is seen setting aside her relationship troubles and focussing on her children serving them breakfast and chatting about the upcoming trip (23:04-23:50). The scene is a portrayal of the ironical lines in *Superstar*: "Few could leave the supermarket without buying

[8] See: "Todd Haynes Talks I'm Not There - Part I", 8 Oct. 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-OXkP_GiNE&ab_channel=muckster. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.

more than they intended and the kitchen, often the centre of the home, contained an ever-expanding variety of foods. Home life in America connoted the cosy kitchen, food preparation, and mealtime". Despite being unhappily married, Claire finds safety and strength in her roles as an artist and a mother which will later empower her to leave their broken home (1:50:53) (White 100).

The representation of Godard's cinema is not restricted to Robbie's narrative, but placed throughout the film. The quote, "A view of the world belonging to one generation" appears as an intertitle in three different narrative sections followed by a diegetic sound of gunshots, a clear reference to *Masculin Féminin* (e.g., 35:07-35:159). The same offscreen gunshots are heard when all six personae are initially presented at the beginning of the biopic (2:20) (Spirou 236). Godard's devices are also visible in the biopic's commitment to postmodern narrative strategies (pastiche, allusion, quotation), including the "reflection on the multiplicity of identity and illusion of a coherent self" (Gross).

The Rimbaud scenes are an obvious homage to the French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud, Dylan's poetic influence. Haynes describes the Arthur narrative as black-and-white "experimental minimalism" (Macdonald 64) but edited as an interrogation scene in an overexposed style of the black-and-white documentary *Point of Order* (1964, Emile de Antonio), about the "unmasking of Senator Joseph McCarthy". Positioned in front of diegetically situated interrogators, Arthur answers quoting Dylan's press conferences/interview, *Bringing it all Back Home* jacket notes and adaptation of his prose poem "Seven Simple Rules for Life in Hiding" – a playful contemplation about responding to the mass-media (Grochowski).

Rimbaud seems to be directly addressing the camera and aiming his responses more at the viewer than at his diegetic interrogator. Haynes previously used this effect in *Superstar: The Karen*

Carpenter Story, *Poison*, and *Velvet Goldmine* to enhance the relationship between the camera, audience and offscreen characters. Similarly, Haynes references another of his films, a short graduation work *Assassins* (1985) that also features Arthur Rimbaud. Contrasted with a 1985 portrait reminiscent of Edie Sedgwick in Andy Warhol's 1960s *Screen Test*, 2007 Arthur's sour temper becomes pronounced (White 96).

The Jude section evokes instances of 1960s monochromatic filmmaking: Fellini-esque European art cinema, mainly *8½* (1963) and the U.S. *verité* documentary introduced by D.A. Pennebaker, particularly his work in *Dont Look Back* (1967) (Ibid. 93). *Dont Look Back* is referenced thematically in a couple of instances: when Jude Quinn reads a hyperbolic article about himself in newspaper and laughs in response, "God, I'm glad I'm not me!" (54:20), directly quoting Dylan's words (Wilkins 1). Other instances are Jude's altercation with the *Time* magazine reporter Mr Jones and the appearance of Beat poet and Dylan's friend Allen Ginsberg (played by David Cross), who makes a cameo in Pennebaker's documentary (Grochowski).

Haynes recalled he had originally pictured the Jude sequence resembling the style of Pennebaker's *cinéma verité*, however he wanted to create the cinematic equivalent to Dylan's music of the late 1965 and 1966. The flamboyant and imaginative records of the time, such as *Highway 61* and *Blonde on Blonde* are stylistically in complete contrast to social realism of the documentary genre. As a result, Haynes shot the sequence in the black-and-white style of Fellini's *8½*, a film whose baroque-urban aesthetic and cult celebrity became the perfect counterpart to Dylan's music and the biopic's overall theme (Leyda 168).

Federico Fellini's filmmaking style is renowned for its combination of reality, memory, dreams, and fantasy, as well as his interest in Jungian psychoanalysis, which interprets dreams as

a vital part of human individuality – not a symptom of a disease like Freud's. In *8½*, Fellini creates an amalgam of dream and reality in an introspective exploration of being a filmmaker continuously questioned by the critics about the meaning and truth behind his constantly-changing art. Fellini's film portrays how dreams influence reality and the filming process of its protagonist, Guido Anselmi (Spirou 247–48).

Similarly, Haynes uses Fellini's stylistic strategy to illustrate Dylan's artistic process and imagination, paying homage to *8½* in two distinct scenes. The first one is the entire garden party sequence, where Jude is sitting on an elongated white chair (1:00:40), exact replicas of those in *8½*. Besides the chairs, Fellini-like style adds to the dream-like atmosphere adding to the effect of blurring the line between reality and fantasy. The imaginative state is particularly heightened when Jude seems to hear Coco's voice coming from the nearby gardens and decides to follow her until she disappears (1:01:23-1:03:14). Coco (Michelle Williams) resembles Edie Sedgwick whom Dylan might have had a relationship with. The Fellini-inspired garden party emphasises all the uncertainties surrounding Dylan's life, particularly regarding certain relationships (Ibid. 249).

The second scene is reminiscent of a dream sequence in *8½* which sees a man freely floating, ascending into the sky like a human balloon until he notices a rope attached to his ankle. Similarly, *I'm Not There* sees Jude lying on the floor exhausted from overworking before the scene cuts to him floating in the air attached to a rope tied around his ankle. Dylan's song "I'm Not There" starts to play while Arthur's voice-over asserts "the only truly natural things are dreams; which nature cannot touch with decay" (1:59:23-1:59:30). The purpose of the dream sequence is for Jude to confront and accept himself through his personal dream-state as opposed to seeing himself from the perspective of a collective public/fans (Spirou 248–49).

This time in a Warhol style, there is another party sequence which sees Quinn, alone and intoxicated, surrounded by claustrophobic white-cube walls. The background suddenly transforms into a screen with yet another crawling tarantula resembling a nightmare (1:40:35). Apart from biographical reference to Dylan's poetry collection, the spider motif is a nod to Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1967), a film exploring the theme of identity, where the line between dream and reality is blurred once again (Wilkins 16). *Persona* begins with a prologue with a projector screening discontinuous series of images (one of them of a spider) creating a strange, eery effect. I would say that Bergman here plays with the strategy of metafiction to remind the audience that they are watching a film, a set of projected representations on a screen. Similarly, Haynes's Bob Dylan is nothing but a collection of fabricated identities, a construct of popular culture images – Baudrillard's simulacrum. Therefore, I see the projection of a giant tarantula as a symbol of Jude's unstable fragmented identity whose boundaries between fiction and reality are obscured beyond recognition.

The highly allegorical Billy section embraces the long-focus lenses, recurrent zooms, freeze frame shots, and earthy colour palette affiliated with the 1960s and 1970s "hippy westerns", such as *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971, Robert Altman) and *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973, Sam Peckinpah) (Danks 26). Haynes was particularly drawn to the new type of camera in those revisionist Westerns "reinvented by the counterculture and given a kind of new outlaw, antihero authenticity and . . . often accompanied by contemporary music"[9].

[9]See: "Todd Haynes Talks I'm Not There - Part II", 8 Oct. 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXXIWvsz9vA&ab_channel=muckster. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.

The western genre is connected to Dylan's traditional music roots and American folklore, as well as his actual involvement in the western *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid,* for which he composed the soundtrack and played the character fittingly named Alias. The film also co-stars *I'm Not There*'s narrator, Kris Kristofferson, thus offering yet another level of referencing (Hanley 10). In contrast to Kristofferson, who played "The Kid" at the age of 36, *I'm Not There*'s Billy is nearly sixty, wearier and more tormented by the visions of war that literally infiltrate the film's frame (Wilkins 8).

Billy is an outlaw hiding in the basement of an old, weird American town called "Riddle," allegorically escaping from the press and the public who wanted to put boundaries on his creative freedom at the time. One such character is Pat Garrett (another reference to Peckinpah's film), a sheriff returning to Riddle searching for Billy who hides out under a clown-mask. In addition, the scene where The Brass Band singer Jim James wears a whiteface mask and performs "Goin' to Acapulco" (1:34:42) is taken from the opening of *Renaldo & Clara* (1978, Bob Dylan), starring Bob Dylan, Sara Dylan, and Joan Baez (Ibid. 11).

The visual aesthetic of the brightly coloured countryside in Billy's narrative is connected to Woody's at the beginning of the film. Those same landscape shots appear in *Eat the Document*, another Dylan production. The camera pans on the trains passing through the green fields, reminiscent of the landscape in the Woody and Billy narratives. The same cinematography is applied in *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), a film by Gus Van Sant who shares the New Queer Cinema origins with Todd Haynes (Spirou 224).

Haynes's strategy of pastiche creates a narrative that is both intellectual and effective; it preserves history and feeling, thus allowing spectators to feel connected to the past and recognise

themselves as historical beings (Dyer 180). Such is Dyer's definition of pastiche "who states that it demonstrates that self-consciousness and emotional expression can co-exist, healing one of the great rifts in western aesthetics and allowing us to contemplate the possibility of feeling historically" (Ibid. 4).

Haynes's pastiche also has a critical connotation in relation to Dylan and the sexism in some of the 1960s films (*Masculin Féminin, Petulia, 8 ½, Darling...*), which corresponds to some of Dylan's lyrics. Likewise, it critiques and highlights the film's structure to illustrate the impossibility of telling a narrative ridden of cultural context in which it is made. When writing about the strategy of pastiche in *Far from Heaven*, James Morrison noted that the narrative "has been filtered through cultural references rather than being reconstructed in some 'direct way'" (4).

3.4. Fragmentation in *I'm Not There*

In the synopsis Haynes submitted to Dylan and his management to obtain the rights to the film, Haynes descriptively presents the biopic's fragmented structure:

> If a film were to exist in which the breadth and flux of a creative life could be experienced, a film that could open up as opposed to consolidating what we think we already know walking in, it could never be within the tidy arc of a master narrative. The structure of such a film would have to be a fractured one, with numerous openings and a multitude of voices, with its prime strategy being one of refraction, not condensation. Imagine a film splintered between seven separate faces —old men, young men, women, children— each standing in for spaces in a single life (qtd. in Sullivan).

In the pitch, Haynes describes the postmodern narrative; fractured, multiple and splintered, opposing its traditional forms and linear conception of history. His biopic is not a tidy metanarrative, but displays six separate stories, prismatic and interwoven, cross-spatio-temporal and achronological (Muldoon 57). The fractured narratives, themes, styles, and characters that follow a non-linear conception of history disrupt the traditional Hollywood approach to the biopic genre. The stories and characters, along with a discontinuous stream of references, overlap and mirror each other creating an impressive cinematic kaleidoscope (Wilkins 13).

Such a structure is an influence of Jean-Luc Godard's anti-narratives characterised by refraining from "just about anything resembling a conventional storyline, narrative or plot" (Brown 7). The reason behind this type of filmmaking is to create an emotional distance from the storyline, characters/relationships to highlight the underlying issues of the era related to politics, gender, society, and the like. Similarly, Haynes's biopic avoids the narrative of legend making (Dylan did not want to be a legend), drawing from Godard and various other texts, creating an incohesive stream of references to deconstruct the traditional biopic genre. The primary source of inspiration for Godard's 1960s film aesthetic is playwright Bertolt Brecht (Sterritt 65) whose term "Verfremdungseffekt" (distancing effect) stands for alienating the audience (Brecht 99). Haynes even references Brecht in a short scene in which Robbie and Claire attend a Brechtian play (33:45-34:00), which serves as a self-reflexive reminder that this biopic is symbolic and partly detached from reality. Haynes employs a narrative strategy of fragmentation to question the possibility of authenticity, to defy the possibility of any reliable representation and temptation of interpretation (Spirou 235–6).

One of the most common distancing affects Godard uses in his movies is intertitle or text-on-screen technique. Oftentimes the intertitles in his movies will coincide with characters'

dialogue, introduce the upcoming sequence or explain the previous one. For instance, in *Masculin Féminin* Godard uses intertitle "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola" between chapters that essentially became the film's most famous quotation. Critics consider it to be a representative of the Sixties youth culture from the pop music aspect. Interestingly, *Masculin Féminin* might be the first major movie containing a reference to Bob Dylan asking the same unanswerable question, "Who's he?"[10]. Similarly, Haynes uses the quote "A view of the world belonging to one generation" in the three segments signalling the transition between the sequences. Accompanied by abrupt off-screen gunshots, the intertitles disturb the audience's emotional engagement in the storylines. Here, the text is disconnected from any narrative element and merely symbolises the 1960s from the perspective of one generation (Spirou 244).

Another strategy for disrupting the narrative and distancing the viewer from the primacy of the storyline is the film's visual aesthetic. *I'm Not There*'s sequences are both monochromatic and in colour, thus creating more mythical and fragmented personas and enabling the audience to objectively engage with the *mise-en-scène*. One noticeable example is the black and white opening sequence containing imagery of Greenwich Village in New York that shortly transforms into a contrasting colourful rural location (2:18-4:43). Throughout the film colour appears in bright shades of brown, green, yellow, and red in both urban and rural sequences. Such palette is inspired by Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), especially in the rural landscape in the Woody and Billy sequences (Spirou 217).

[10] Bob Dylan is mentioned when one of the characters (Paul's friend Robert) reads a newspaper article about him. However, Paul has never heard of Dylan whom Robert describes as a "Vietnik" (a blend of "Vietnam" and "beatnik").

Despite being separate and fragmented, the sequences in the biopic continually leak into each other establishing a unique mirroring structure: the significant scenes at the beginning reflect the ones at the ending. For instance, the film begins and ends with a motorcycle crash. In addition, it sees Woody hopping a freight train at the beginning and Billy doing the same at the end (Smith). The fictive documentary about the life and music of Jack Rollins, 1960s folk singer near the beginning resumes with the Pastor John sequence near the ending. The portrayal of the beginning of the relationship and love between Robbie and Claire in the first half of their sequence shifts to the failing of the same in the second half, especially mirrored in the two sex scenes between the couple, one in each half. Another peculiar symmetry worthy of mention is at the beginning when Gorgeous George, a famous wrestler, tells Woody "Secrets are for keeping" (8:47), mirroring Billy's line to his friend Homer, "God save the secrets" (2:01:06), at the end (Hanley 12). Furthermore, in Jude's sequence, two concerts intersect the narrative highlighting the conflict between the musician and his fans, one where he machine guns the audience and the other where the crowd runs him off the stage by shouting "Judas" (Hanley 12).

In addition, a few more subtle symmetries are found in Woody's and Billy's narratives. For instance, the drifters that Woody meets in the boxcar at the beginning of the film reappear later in the scene before Woody goes to visit dying Guthrie in hospital. The parallel cleverly implies that the flashbacks to adventurous stories Woody told the drifters about playing the blues with Old Man Arvin, the frightening confrontation with the hostile drifters, the whale who swallowed him and charming the rich white family, are mere fabrications. Woody also tells Mrs Arvin that he was raised in Stockton, California, which is later revealed to be the place where the Getaway Church is in the Pastor John narrative. Another instance is Billy waking up in three separate scenes:

first at the beginning on a train, second towards the end when his dog starts barking and lastly at the end, again on the train where he finds Woody's guitar (Smith).

One prominent example of the blurring of the barriers between separate narratives is the sequence that starts with Billy heading for the town Riddle. As he looks towards the horizon, the cover of the "All Along the Watchtower" fades in the background and the scene abruptly cuts to the archival footage of the Vietnam war. However, the zoom-out reveals that the explosions are not in Billy's line of vision but are coming from Claire's TV screen in Robbie's section (1:17:20-1:18:10). Claire also appears in Woody's nightmare sequence, standing in front of a glass wall at the bottom of the river, in which Woody got swallowed by a whale. She wakes up in Godardian modernist *mise-en-scène* and the 1960s Vietnam War era (22:22-22:55). Marcia Landy describes these examples of intercutting and mirroring narratives in *I'm Not There* as a "daring exercise in experimenting with narrative forms and styles that self-consciously address and enact the dilemma and possibility of storytelling in the contemporary world" (Landy, "Storytelling and Information in Todd Haynes's Films" 7).

To further illustrate Haynes's interactive and reflective narrative strategy, it is important to mention the biopic's leading transition from compulsive liar or "fake" Woody to authentic "outlaw" Billy inhabiting the folk music world of the weird, old America. The story arc mirrors Dylan's own transformation from Woody Guthrie imitator to an authentic musical artist (Smith). However, this conversion is ironic and reflects Haynes's remark when he cites Greil Marcus, that "the origins of American folklore … [is in] a series of masks, of adopting guises and personas, not as the validation of some authentic core about 'who we are'" (Feinstein 38). The biopic ends where it started, in the boxcar of a passing train where Billy finds Woody's guitar, indicated by the now

faded inscription, “this machine kills fascists” - a nod to the real Woody Guthrie (2:06:57). The reference also suggests that the film’s narration is circular (Hanley 13).

In support of the circular narration, Haynes employs the motif of death in the beginning and end of *I’m Not There*. Death manifests itself in the opening sequence with Jude laid on the morgue slab and later in the casket while the diegetic narrator ambiguously explains the circumstances of Jude’s death saying that he was “nailed by a peeping Tom”. In the scene before, Jude is seen riding a motorcycle in the long shot during the opening title credits. The same shot appears near the end accompanied by the close-up revealing the crashed motorcycle and Jude’s body lying next to it in the near forest (2:02:20-2:02:55). However, Jude does not actually die, appearing in the scene right after the crash riding in the back seat of a limousine. Without the real explanation of the death scene at the beginning or revelation of the “killers” or “peeping Tom’s” real identity, the film’s structure is rendered incoherent, open to interpretations. Alternatively, the film ends at the beginning, in the boxcar where Woody’s story began and Billy’s ended, thus, creating a full circle (DeAngelis 590).

While commenting on the biopic’s fragmented structure, Haynes says that despite the rather confusing interaction between the narratives, each is still introduced in a linear framework that starts with the youngest Dylan (Woody) and ends with the oldest (Billy) - with some interactions in between. In fact, Michael G, Smith has proposed that the film resembles a following structure: “1) Woody 2) Jack Rollins 3) Robbie’s marriage 4) Jude 5) Robbie’s divorce 6) Pastor John 7) Billy” (Smith). A similar chronology is presented in an interlude at the end with six personae’s headshots in a quick-fire sequence followed by the sound of gunfire (2:05:31).

For Haynes, fragmented narration is true to real life; simultaneously going forward and backwards, interacting with previous phases in our lives when we occupied different attitudes and personas. These phases may be separate, but they are consistent, both in life and Haynes's film[11]. Therefore, Billy's narrative echoes a large portion of the second half of Robbie's; his broken marriage to Claire almost being a cause of Billy's isolation and exile. Particularly, when Billy comes down the hill heading for his town the audience sees Robbie coming home to an empty house from his shoot, both being alone (1:18:33-1:19:05). The repercussions that life brings are particularly portrayed in Jude's story where the "freewheeling" spirit of the first half begins to subside and starts to gain a darker shadow, taking a form of tarantula (Leyda 145).

Next to overlapping and circular chronology, *I'm Not There* disrupts the traditional biopic's treatment of time. Through temporal disruptions, Haynes ultimately illuminates Dylan's ever-changing career, whose relationship with time is far from thoroughly causal and linear. One of the aspects of the film's temporal disjunction is the application of anachronisms, especially in the two seemingly most contrasting yet most closely connected incarnations of Dylan, Woody and Billy. In these sequences we encounter Dylan who is both outside his time and an embodiment of American traditional music. Dylan even offers his view on the importance and relevance of traditional music at the end of the movie in Jude's soliloquy (Danks).

Woody embodies Dylan who is out of time, speaking and singing about experiences ahead of his age. At the dinner scene Mrs Arvin expresses this inconsistency: "[I]t's 1959 and this boy's singing songs about the boxcar? Hmm, what a boxcar gonna mean to him? Right here, we got race

[11] See: "Todd Haynes Talks I'm Not There - Part I", 8 Oct. 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-OXkP_GiNE&ab_channel=muckster. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.

riots, folks with no food. Why ain't he out there singing about that?" She then kindly advises him to "live [his] own time" (12:35). Woody's ambiguous response leaves open the possibility of his comprehending the message behind the advice, yet at the same time not understanding what the concept of his *own time* truly means. However, Woody is both aware that he lives in 1959, indicated by his reference to Elvis Presley's music, and that he is not Woody Guthrie, which becomes clear when he visits the real Guthrie at the nursing home/hospital (DeAngelis 586–87).

Furthermore, Billy's narrative is also marked by numerous anachronisms, one of them referencing Pat Garrett's plan to open a large six-lane motorway that would run through the town centre (1:20:25). Such construction is, of course, extremely improbable given the lack of such highways in rural America at the beginning of the 20th century (DeAngelis 587). Another instance of chronological inconsistency happens in relation to Dylan's albums and his personae in the movie. For instance, Billy's story is placed at the end, even though the record associated with the period (*Basement Tapes* [1967]) came before the one accompanying Robbie's narrative (*Blood on the Tracks* [1975]) (Hanley 12). Likewise, anachronisms occur through the cross-temporal encounter between Billy and Woody, who is dressed up as Charlie Chaplin[12], on the streets of Riddle (1:28:30) and after Billy leaves the town driven in the car approximately 50 years ahead of its time (1:58:16). Such temporal subversions enable Haynes's narrative to describe the way Dylan remains "out of time". The carnivalesque sequence located in the Riddle with Woody and Billy also represents fictive stories Dylan created for his own past as well as a series of connections between various musical styles, personae and times throughout his career (Ibid. 587).

[12] Haynes originally planned to have one more Dylan persona resembling Charlie Chaplin. (See: "Todd Haynes Talks I'm Not There - Part I", 8 Oct. 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-OXkP_GiNE&ab_channel=muckster. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.)

Another means of temporal disruption is Haynes's manipulation of the montage sequences. Typically, montage sequences serve as temporal condensation illustrating the gradual or sudden rise-to-fame or fall-from-grace narrative of the central subject. In musical biopics specifically, the central subject's songs are commonly used to organise the montage sequences. In the case of *I'm Not There*, Haynes uses Dylan's songs to both diffuse and arrange the film's time, but also to reconstruct and disrupt the narrative meaning. Such montage sequence is present within Robbie's story, consisting of songs, cinema, and television. The montage traces the rise and fall of Robbie and Claire's relationship accompanied by Dylan's song "Visions of Johanna", which speaks of "memory, absence, and loss" - and televised broadcasting of the aftermath of Vietnam War. The Kennedy assassination indicates their first meeting while Nixon's 1973 Address announcing the ending of the war symbolises the ending of their marriage. Robbie's offscreen narrator describes it as "the longest running war in television history – the same war that hung like a shadow over the same nine years of [Claire's] marriage" (25:08-25:21). This analysis suggests that Robbie and Claire's marriage resembles a war, full of conflicts and disagreements echoing the conceptual metaphor "love is war". However, it simultaneously implies that it is nothing like a war since the televised footage of senseless violence and destruction demonstrates that its consequences are far greater than the ones of a failed romantic relationship. (DeAngelis 588).

The final instance of Haynes's disruption of narrative time is the use of flashbacks and their subversive nature. An extensive and intricate example is the flashback occurring during the Billy sequence later in the film. The shot of Billy looking over the broad green landscape on the Missouri hills in the 1870s interacts with the scenes of the Vietnam War with the sound of rock music gradually increasing in volume. The slow zooming-out shot reveals that the source of the war footage and soundtrack is the television screen from another time and space – the late 1960s where

Claire watches the Vietnam War news and Robbie leaves their bedroom. Another scene of war violence subsequently follows and returns to the originating Billy narrative with the sound of explosions, now indicating the construction of the new motorway initiated by Pat Garett (1:17:22-1:18:30). Some critics have suggested that the flashbacks signify Billy's memory of the Vietnam War but that is chronologically impossible since it arises at least six decades after his time. Even though the sequences are connected through the soundtrack and war imagery, such fragmented narrative subverts the primacy of chronological time and space (DeAngelis 589).

The other flashback similarly links two separate narratives, this time Billy and Jude's, through characters Pat Garret and Mr Jones. Nearing the end of Billy's narrative Pat Garrett arrives in the town square of Riddle and confronts angry citizens concerned with the construction of a major motorway. One of them is Billy who appears masked in the scene in front of Pat Garrett, the man who is determined to reveal his real identity of a fugitive. The camera zooms in on Garret's face intensely staring at Billy, then cuts to a close-up of Mr Jones, the journalist whose sole purpose is to "unmask" Jude's identity and who is intriguingly portrayed by the same actor (Bruce Greenwood). Jones is in a limousine staring at the camera from a back seat window, the same one Jude stormed out of after being interviewed. Jones raises the window and camera returns to the same shot of Pat Garrett gazing back at Billy (1:57:40-1:57:47). Even though the flashback hints that Garrett and Jones are the same person, this instance of cross-character memory is impossible since Pat Garrett cannot remember himself as another Keenan Jones and vice versa. In fact, the diegetic impossibility emphasises the biopic's motif of absence and rejection of traditional notions of reality (DeAngelis 589). In addition, even though the characters might not be the same, to me as a viewer they are connected by the motif of unmasking, by the same mission – to expose Billy and Jude for who they truly are; a fugitive and a fraud. They are the films two main antagonists

symbolising the public, the "Peeping Toms", the haunting tarantula crawling across the screen foreshadowing Dylan's inevitable identity crises.

Haynes's employment of fragmented narrative and nonlinear temporality gives preference to the symbolical narration of reality, history, and identity. He refuses to fall under totalisation of subjectivity and truth or attach any fixed meanings to his film. Instead, *I'm not There* expresses time and subjectivity from the post-structuralist perspective, articulated by Jude at the end of the film, partially quoting from Dylan: "Mystery is a traditional fact. Chaos clocks and watermelons. Meaninglessness is holy" (2:04:07) (Darby 344). At its core, the biopic epitomizes the experience of listening to a song, with the power of taking you away on a fictional journey through "time and relative dimensions in space". Haynes wanted to take his audience to a time when Dylan went electric or became a born-again Christian, "in that moment when it was new and dangerous and different". "You have to do a kind of trick to get people back to where Dylan did what he did or Mozart did what he did" (qtd. in Sullivan).

Ultimately, Haynes's fragmented and multiple approach to the narrative along with the non-linear temporality comes from an examination of Dylan's songs and the formal experiments he made in his music. Haynes notes that "there are tons of literate, poetic, philosophical or political passages in [his] music and the phrases that jump right out and speak to your life. But they're not necessarily coherent in the way a story is. I don't understand all the references in his lyrics, but that doesn't keep me from feeling like I can fully partake of his music" (qtd. in Leyda 151).

Dylan's interest in time travel, especially on the *Blood on the Tracks* record, comes from the time when he was studying with painter Norman Raeben in the mid-70s (Cartwright). Raeben believed that the canvas was a place where multiple narratives can coexist, along with

representation and mere quality of matter and paint. This idea inspired Dylan to play with temporal experiences, narrative subjects and different stories, even within a single song, yet all the pieces coming together create a different cohesion and meaning. For instance, in a song "Tangled up in Blue" Dylan will reminisce about a woman at one moment and talk about the revolution and slavery at the next, quoting from Rimbaud and Verlaine the whole time (Leyda 150). Dylan's influence on the narrative is perfectly summarised at the end of the film when Billy quotes from Dylan himself: "It's like you got yesterday, today and tomorrow, all in the same room. There's no telling what can happen" (2:07:00-2:07:15).

4. Postmodern identity

According to Frederic Jameson, fragmented narrative of postmodern texts is strongly influenced by the "psychic fragmentation" of the contemporary individual subject. For him, the psychic fragmentation, i.e., inconsistency between thought and action, is the fundamental indicator of postmodern condition and the loss of temporal continuity (Booker xviii). Such unstable identity is the result of unprecedented radical changes that happened over such a short time in the postmodern era caused by the terrors of war. Accordingly, unified, centred, and stable individual of the modern era transforms itself into the postmodern subject with no fixed, essential, or permanent identity, prone to change at any given time. Jameson draws upon the psychopathology of schizophrenia and applies Lacan's clinical definition of the same. However, Jameson does not use the term as diagnosis, rather as a description and an aesthetic strategy characteristic of postmodern narration and art (Jameson 26).

Alternatively, Stuart Hall has spoken about the postmodern decentred identity in a much brighter light. Hall believes that, as a person of colour, postmodern fragmented consciousness, although divided, enables him to finally solidify his place in the postmodern world. In Hall's words, "now that, in the postmodern age, you all feel so dispersed I become centred. This is coming home with a vengeance" (qtd. in McRobbie 26).

As a result, there are two distinct perspectives concerning the postmodern fragmentation of identity. One is associated with Jameson who nostalgically looks back on a unified and centred individual capable of changing the status quo, as opposed to the postmodern subject whom Jameson describes as a "broken fractured shadow of a man" (qtd. in McRobbie 26). The other is

held by Hall who sees the unfixed, fragmented identity as an adaptation to the changing times and reflection of the historical context of marginalised groups (Ibid.).

The fragmented subject is thus the protagonist of postmodern narratives whose identity crisis highlights the author's fascination with the depiction of truth and historical facts. What is more, postmodern fiction celebrates the multiplicity of reality and identity, fragmentation of truth, doubt and anxiety.

According to Booker, in the postmodern cinema, the fragmented subject described by Jameson can be traced back to Woody Allen's fictional documentary (mockumentary) *Zelig* (1983). The title character, played by Allen himself, has the chameleon-like ability to mimic every person he meets. This peculiar talent comes from Zelig's desperate attempt to fit in and be liked, even at the cost of losing his own real self. Instead, he is bereft of any authenticity, hypocritically advising others to "be themselves". Zelig embodies the postmodern belief that any sense of stable or unique identity represents a fundamental form of conformism (Booker 34).

Postmodern identity is particularly depicted in experimental biopics that criticize and question traditional views of representation by deconstructing their central subjects. As a result, they create new awareness of how the narrative represents reality and how the audience receives such interpretation. For instance, the interpretation of the postmodern identity as fluid and adaptable is applied to Tim Burton's depiction of Ed Wood, as an individual and as an actor/filmmaker. Struggling to sustain a coherent identity, Wood is constantly trying to attain a stable representation of himself through his movies, but the prevailing theme of cross-dressing undermines his attempts (Custen 153–64). In contrast, Burton's portrayal of Ed Wood celebrates the unstable parts of his identity, a typical depiction in the context of postmodern experimental

biopic. However, unlike Zelig or Wood, "Bob Dylan" is not trying to pursue a stable sense of self to fit in established societal standards. On the contrary, he is deliberately rejecting the stability of self to preserve the freedom of nonconformity, as will be shown in the following chapter.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that experimental musical biopics invite the audience to (re)consider the identity of its subject through the connection between narrative and musical elements. What is more, they employ all the previous representations of their figure to reflect the role that society and media play in the creation of their character, without truly knowing the person behind the fame (Spirou 265).

Ultimately, the portrayal and celebration of unfixed multiple identity in *I'm Not There* is accomplished through the employment of postmodern narrative strategies central to this thesis, fragmentation, intertextuality, and pastiche. The relationship between narrative strategies and instability of identity, along with the postmodern celebration of, not only fragmented, but absent character, is discussed in the following final chapter.

4.1. Fragmented identity in *I'm Not There*

Bob Dylan is everyone and Bob Dylan is no one, the film trailer suggests. Through the portrayal of six different actors the audience sees him as young and old, male and female, god-fearing and godless, black and white. Each symbolizes Dylan's influences, musical history, and his place in American mythology (Asava 2). Woody "the fake", represents Dylan's appropriation of African American Blues, his unknown childhood and interest in Woody Guthrie. Arthur Rimbaud, "the poet" is a clear reference to the French symbolist poet's influence on Dylan and their shared ideal of subjective artistic creation. Jack Rollins, "the prophet" resembles Dylan's

protest singer persona of the late 1970s and early 1980s who later becomes Pastor John, referencing Dylan's born-again Christian phase. Robbie Clark, "the star of electricity" represents Dylan's family life and ambivalent relationship to fame. Billy the Kid, "the outlaw" references Dylan's *Basement Tapes* phase. Finally, Jude Quinn embodies androgynous electric 1965 Dylan, his most legendary albums and D.A. Pennebaker's documentary, *Dont Look Back* (Schlotterbeck 227–28).

Each part of the opening sequence portrays the central subject as fragmented, both present and absent. The opening shot of an unknown figure heading towards the stage suggests presence (the crowd is cheering him on) and absence (we do not see his face). He is an empty signifier who will later be filled and pieced together from recognisable intertextual references (D'Cruz 316).

Subsequent wide shots of the motorcycle scene coincide with several permutations of the film's title dominating the screen. The title transforms nine times before it reaches its final form whilst the motorcycle arrives at the opposite side of the frame (01:24-01:35):

I
I he
he
I'm he
I'm
I'm her
not her
not here
I'm not there.

This seven second title succession alludes to the existence and absence of the elusive "I" which intermittently goes from a man to a woman (he/her), from existence (I'm) to a void (not here). The title is, as mentioned before, named after Dylan's unreleased song in which he takes his

own elusive approach to the traditionally coherent identity. The utterance "I'm not there" leaves the audience with the questions but without any answers as to where the "I" is, neither in the song nor in the film (Ibid. 319).

Subsequently, the film's opening title sequence is followed by an aerial shot of Jude Quinn lying on the mortuary bed being prepared for the autopsy of his character. As the scalpel cuts to the flesh a voice over narrator introduces the six personae: "There he lay: poet, prophet, outlaw, fake, star of electricity. Nailed by a peeping Tom, who would soon discover: even the ghost was more than one person". Each named personality accompanies the corresponding image of the actor playing Dylan, introduced in a series of abrupt cuts paired with diegetic gunshots (Wilkins 3). All these strategies celebrate Dylan's understanding and control over his celebrityhood, illustrated in "Ballad of a Thin Man" and clashing with Keenan Jones in the Jude sequence. All that Dylan has offered to the public is a series of masks and disguises that hide from the "peeping Tom" who is trying to "nail him down" (Hamscha 105).

Later in the film, "Arthur Rimbaud" persona quotes the French poet who pioneered the idea of the decentred, split and transferable self by stating; "Je est un autre" (I is another). Inspired by Rimbaud, Dylan similarly writes in *Tarantula*: "it is not that there is no Receptive for anything written or acted in the first person - it is just that there is no Second Person" (Dylan, 134). Rimbaud and Dylan's quotes express the instability of both the "I" and "someone else", both being as authentic as the other. In other words, the "real" Bob Dylan is as much an appropriation as his six personae in *I'm Not There*. Subsequently, there is no "original" Bob Dylan, he is simply not there, a ghost, manifested only through forms of intertextuality and pastiche (Hamscha 107).

Apart from the absence of the "real" Bob Dylan, the actual biographical figure that is Arthur Rimbaud is likewise not present. Haynes's Arthur Rimbaud is not the 19th-century symbolist poet, but a fictional reincarnation of the film's subject who almost exclusively quotes Dylan's lyrics, poetry, and interview responses – most of which Rimbaud greatly influenced himself. In other words, Haynes replaced Rimbaud's original words with the ones they have influenced. Therefore, an original historical figure has been erased and replaced by a simulacrum, in a true nature of Baudrillard's take on postmodernism (Wilkins 5).

Similarly, Woody Guthrie in *I'm Not There* is not the Depression Era folk musician who inspired Dylan's early music career, but an eleven-year-old African American travelling folk storyteller from 1959. However, Haynes's Woody references the real Guthrie through the message "this machine kills fascists" written on his guitar and the visit to the ailing "Mr. Guthrie" in hospital – an allusion to Arthur Penn's *Alice's Restaurant* (1969) where Arlo Guthrie goes to visit his bedridden father, Woody. He also extensively quotes dialogue from Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) (19). For instance, in his first interaction with the travelling drifters he meets on the train, Woody spins tales about his experiences:

> You got hobos, nobos, gentlemen loafers. One or all-time losers. Call us what you will. Deep down, we're all getting ready to tuck our heads under our wings for sleep. We of the Pullman side-car and the sunburned thumb. We ain't kidding ourselves. It's a lonesome roads we shall walk (09:00-09:26).

This quote is a direct reference to the experiences that Kazan's Lonesome Rhodes retells in a radio interview:

> Whenever a bunch of fellas like us...outcasts, hobos, nobodies, gentlemen loafers... one time or all-time losers, call us what you want to... Whenever we get together, we tell funny stories... me and Beanie and the rest of these... hand-to-mouth tumbleweed boys like you see in here. If whisky don't get us, then women must... and it looks like... I'm never gonna cease... my wandering. But, deep down, when we get ready...to tuck our heads under our wings and go to sleep... we ain't kidding ourselves (qtd. in Wilkins 7).

Even though Haynes's Woody does not quote Kazan's lines verbatim, he does it in a manner that is extremely similar making it seem that his identity is constructed through incomplete recollections instead of perfect quotations of past texts. Woody, thus, represents Dylan's own fabrications about his childhood, a recycled identity pieced together by fragmented references to cinema and popular culture. Such interpretation resembles Baudrillard's and Jameson's "nihilistic" take on postmodern aesthetic of recycling as nothing but a copy of a copy disconnected from any resemblance to real history– a hologram devoid of value and depth. However, I would argue that their negative approach highly undervalues the aesthetic potential of postmodernist take on the biopic genre and the representation of its subject(s). Therefore, my interpretation of Haynes's approach to Dylan resembles Hutcheon's affirmative model which acknowledges a critical potential of the postmodern recycling strategy. In representing Woody as a collage of imperfectly recalled movie references Haynes criticises the possibility of an easy access to subject's identity through performance and cinematic iconography.

The Jack Rollins persona seemingly encapsulates Michael Kimmel's take on the concept of masculinity at the time, depicted in his book *Manhood in America* (1996). In the book, Kimmel describes an image of a struggling young man that resembles Dylan's pre-electric folk-singing

days, as seen in the Rollins persona. According to Kimmel, "for a young man seeking his fortune in such a free and mobile society, identity was no longer fixed, and there was no firm patriarchal lineage to ground a secure sense of himself as a man" (Kimmel 31). Jack is trying to solidify his identity by becoming a voice for the people, however he is still emotionally insecure and uncertain about mankind as illustrated in the documentary inside the biopic: "I get a lot of thoughts inside of me and most people they keep them all inside. I guess it's for them that I do what I do" (14:40-14:50); (Muldoon 63). Apart from showing Dylan's contradiction between being a countercultural icon and maintaining an intimate insecurity whilst performing his protest songs, Haynes quotes from Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home* to refute the possibility of revealing the true Dylan persona. In this section, the presenter promises access to the authentic "Jack Rollins"; however, that cannot transpire (Wilkins 18).

The impossibility of revealing the real subject of one's biopic to its audience is further illustrated in the Robbie Clark section. Robbie portrays both domestic Dylan and Jack Rollins in the film's fictional biopic *Grain of Sand*. Here, the narrator quotes from Godard's *Masculin Féminin* describing Claire's disappointment with the film and marriage with Robbie, stating; "The more they tried to make it youthful, the more the images on the screen seemed out of date. It wasn't the film they had dreamed, the film they have imagined and discussed. The film they each wanted to live". Referencing Godard, Haynes expresses the difficulty of representing the authenticity of life in contemporary cinema. The emotions may be sincere, but they are presented indirectly through other sources (Wilkins 20).

In addition, Robbie embodies another instance of masculinity, similar to Jack Rollins. Despite being emotionally and physically distant from his family life, and eventually left by his wife, Robbie was described as the emotional core of the film in the TV-Wire interview. Haynes

accomplishes this effect by employing an autobiographical style where Robbie is narrating his own sequence, speaking in a soothing, low tone voice. Similarly, as a character, he is mysterious and reserved, a complete contrast to the extravagant Jude persona in the following narrative. As a result, "the emotionality here is not revealed in the expressiveness of the man but in his inexpressiveness" (Muldoon 65). In the interview for TV-Wire[13] Ledger commented on Robbie's emotional (in)expressiveness: "the slice of the story that Charlotte [Claire] and I are in kind of chronicles Dylan's struggles with balancing his love life and his professional life. … It's kind of like a moment in time thing, less of a physical portrayal and more of just a tone". This version of Dylan's masculinity expresses itself in his inability to balance the roles of musician/star and father/husband (Muldoon 66).

Jude Quinn is an overtly recognisable electric Dylan that battles with the backlash from the public and the media. The casting of Cate Blanchett in that role not only parallels the complete shock of electric Dylan, but also reiterates the constructed nature of the biopic genre and identity that it tries to convey. With the same purpose, Haynes directly quotes dialogue and footage from Pennebaker's documentary *Dont Look Back* and places it in the fictionalised context of his biopic. By mimicking the performance of Dylan in Pennebaker's "behind the scenes" documentary Quinn, therefore, loses his originality and functions as a simulacrum of popular cultural images. Furthermore, Haynes plays with the instability of identity by blurring the boundaries between biography and fiction, quoting Fellini's poetic realism and Bergman's psychological drama *Persona* (1966) (Wilkins 5). Additionally, the construction of identity is articulated in Jude's response to the public's rejection of his electric persona. Before breaking the fourth wall and

[13] See: "I'm Not There - Heath Ledger (Bob Dylan) 1 on 1", 20 Nov. 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwYXUOH_g5E&ab_channel=EnzoGiobbe. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.

smiling at the camera Jude simply explains, "Everybody knows I'm not a folk singer" (2:05:15-1:05:30). Looking directly at the camera, without his/her? trademark Ray-Ban sunglasses and relaxed demeanour it seems as though the electric Dylan mask is removed revealing Cate Blanchett as an actor who inhabits a role (Wilkins 21).

A similar motif of wearing a mask is incorporated in the Billy section where the "outlaw" persona returns to his hometown Riddle during a Halloween festival. The narrator describes the town as follows: "No town ever loved Halloween quite as much as the town Riddle, so who a fella really was never really mattered". The Halloween theme references Dylan's statement during the 1964 concert in New York; "It's Halloween, I have my Bob Dylan mask on. I'm mask-erading" (qtd. in Wilkins 8). In his attempt to disguise his identity Billy tries to stay hidden as the costumed citizens alternatively address him as "Mr B" or "Mr Gladstone" (Ibid.) Ultimately, the multiplicity of the film's subject is solidified in Billy the Kid's final lines in the biopic's concluding moments: "I can change during the course of a day. When I wake I'm one person, when I go to sleep I know for certain I'm somebody else. I don't know who I am most of the time" (2:06:35-2:06:50).

Finally, after Dylan's six *doppelgängers* leave the screen, before the closing credits, the audience comes face to face with the "real" Dylan performing "Mr. Tambourine Man" in a documentary concert footage (2:07:21-2:08:40). This strategy of fictionalising a historical figure before finally revealing a documentary footage is a common contemporary poetic device of the biopic genre. Its function is to remind the audience that everything prior is fictional, in this case – the multiple representations of the biographical figure and events. Consequently, it stresses the biopic's inability to portray an authentic identity, at the same time encouraging the viewers to reconsider their own stance on the notion of identity and representation of history (Danks).

It can be concluded that Bob Dylan, the shapeshifter, mischief-maker, and continual source of bewilderment and regeneration, was the perfect subject for Todd Haynes's postmodern experimentation with the biopic genre, identity, and narrative strategies. In Pennebaker's documentary *Dont Look Back*, in one of his many interviews – depicted in the Jude sequence in Haynes's film (50:55-51:00) – Dylan was told that everybody knows the definition of people to which he responds, in his trademark elusive nature, "do we?" He is genuinely questioning the contemporary concepts of subjectivity (Darby 337). I believe that, as a creative person, Dylan has a hard time accepting the fixities of an established identity because he is interested in so many things: different genres of music, poetry, and art in general. To illustrate, Grail Marcus once poetically described him as "Charlie Chaplin, James Dean and Lenny Bruce in talk and gesture, Woody Guthrie and the French symbolists in writing" and "as he sang and wrote he was the slave on the auction block, the whore chained to her bed, a questioning youth, an old man looking back in sorrow and regret" (*Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* 19). In addition, Haynes recalls reading biographies about Dylan in preparation for the film: "you hear the testimony of people saying that they hung out with him in August of '63, and then in November of '63 he was a different person. Like he had shape-shifted right in front of their eyes". (qtd. in Leyda 138). Ultimately, Dylan represents for me the freedom to change, reinvent, and better oneself, as an artist and an individual – the freedom that we all need at certain phases in our lives.

Conclusion

The theoretical part of this thesis outlined the definitions and historical background of postmodernism revealing various, even contradictory, perspectives on the meaning and purpose of postmodernism. The two key contradictions were presented in the form of nihilistic model affiliated with Baudrillard and Jameson, and affirmative model associated with Hutcheon. This thesis was inclined to the latter view, suggesting that postmodernist aesthetic is more than mere commodification of art by revealing its potential to be original, self-reflexive, critical, and deconstructive.

Likewise, the thesis proposes that postmodern aesthetic has contributed to the creation of new artistic styles, particularly in the visual art forms, such as television and film. One film genre that has been affected in a particularly interesting way by postmodern transformations and experimentation is the biopic. Postmodern biopics apply postmodern narrative strategies to deconstruct the authenticity of historical interpretation; specifically, intertextuality, pastiche, and fragmentation, which were outlined and exemplified in subsequent chapters.

In the practical part of the thesis the same narrative strategies were applied to Todd Haynes's Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* after a brief overview of Haynes's filmography. The main source of Haynes's intertextuality was Dylan himself, namely his music, poems, interview quotes and major life events. The pastiche in the film consists of various cinematic styles all originating from the sixties and early seventies cinema traditions as well as avant-garde filmmaking. Haynes's pastiche is both nostalgic and intellectual, allowing the audience to reconnect to the past, and re-evaluate it in the contemporary context. The strategy of fragmentation

manifests itself in the film through circular and mirroring narration and distorted temporality in the form of anachronisms, montage sequences and flashbacks.

Ultimately, the aim of this thesis was to examine the ways that Todd Haynes uses postmodern narrative strategies of intertextuality, pastiche, and fragmentation in the biopic *I'm Not There* with the intention of deconstructing the genre and the received notions about Bob Dylan himself. Throughout the thesis's analysis, it was shown that Haynes's experimental biopic aims to re-evaluate the traditional concepts of history, representation, and interpretation. By casting six distinct actors to play Bob Dylan, Haynes presented the central subject as fragmented, multiple, unfixed, forever changing and ultimately not there. Instead, Dylan is present as a text; through references to his life and artistic works, along with numerous cinematic styles arranged in the form of six fragmented vignettes. As a result, Haynes has allowed his audience to form their own relationship with Dylan and the concept of identity *per se*, free from the notion of one true identity.

Bibliography

Books:

1. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995.
2. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Paris, Editions de Seuil, 1970.
3. Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser, Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 2000.
4. Benjamin, Walter. ‘‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.’’ *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn, 219–51. New York, Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1955.
5. Bhabha, H. *The Location of Culture*. London, Routledge, 1994.
6. Bingham, Dennis. *Whose Lives Are They Anyway?: The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2010.
7. Booker, M. Keith. *Postmodern Hollywood: What's New in Film and Why It Makes Us Feel So Strange*. Westport, Connecticut London, Praeger, 2007.
8. Brecht, B. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. USA, Hill and Wang, 1964.
9. Brooker, P., Brooker, W. *Postmodern After-Images: A Reader in Film, Television and Video*. London, Arnold, 1997.
10. Collins, James M. *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism*. Great Britain, Routledge, 1989.
11. Constable, Catherine. *Postmodernism and Film: Rethinking Hollywood's Aesthetics*. London, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015.

12. Custen, G. F. *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*. New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1992.
13. Denzin, Norman K. *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema*. London, Sage, 1995.
14. Dyer, R. *Pastiche*. New York, Routledge, 2007.
15. Dylan, Bob. *Tarantula*. 1971; reprint, London, Harper Perennial, 2005.
16. ---. "Liner Notes" as cited in Glass, "Buying In, Selling Out." *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, Columbia CS 8905, LP, 1964, 32.
17. Eagleton, Terry. *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1997.
18. Featherstone, Mike. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. 2nd ed., London, Sage Publications, 2007.
19. Fletcher, Michelle. *Reading Revelation as Pastiche: Imitating the Past*. Google Books ed., Vol. 571, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
20. Haen, Theo d'. ''Postmodernism in American Fiction and Art.'' In *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. Douwe Fokkema and Hans Bertens, 211–31. Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1986.
21. Hall, S. "Minimal Selves", in *Identity*, ICA Documents 6, ed. Lisa Appignanesi, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987.
22. Hamscha, Susanne. "The Ghost of Bob Dylan: Spectrality and Performance in I'm Not There." *Refractions of Bob Dylan Cultural Appropriations of an American Icon*, edited by Eugen Banauch, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015, pp. 98–111.
23. Harries, D. *Film Parody*. London, BFI Publishing, 2000.

24. Harvey, D. “Time and Space in the Postmodern Cinema.” *Postmodern After-Images: A Reader in Film, Television, and Video*, edited by P. Brooker & W. Brooker, London, Arnold, 1997, pp. 43–69.
25. Heylin, Clinton. *Dylan, The Biography: Behind the Shades*. London, Penguin, 1991.
26. Hoesterey, I. *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature*. Indiana UniversityPress, 2001.
27. Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London, Routledge, 1989.
28. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991.
29. Kassabian, A. *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*. New York, Routledge, 2000.
30. Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America*. New York, Oxford U.P., 2006.
31. Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. by Margaret Waller. Intro. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.
32. ---. “Word, Dialogue and Novel.” *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 35–61.
33. Landy, Marcia. *Cinematic Uses of the Past*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
34. ---. “Storytelling and Information in Todd Haynes’s Films.” *The Cinema of Todd Haynes: All That Heaven Allows*, edited by James Morrison, UK, Wallflower Press, 2007, pp. 7–24.
35. Leyda, Julia, editor. *Todd Haynes: Interviews*. University Press of Mississippi, 2014.

36. Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1991.

37. ---. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

38. Marcus, Greil. *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*. New York, Holt and Company, 1997.

39. McRobbie, Angela. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London, Routledge, 1994.

40. Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1959.

41. Milne, Ira Mark, editor. *Literary Movements for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Literary Movements*. 2nd ed., e-book, vol. 2, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009.

42. "Modernism." *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2006, p. 145.

43. Morrison, James. "Introduction." *The Cinema of Todd Haynes: All That Heaven Allows*. Ed. James Morrison. London, UK, Wallflower Press, 2007. 1-6.

44. Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On the Tarantulas." *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 76–79.

45. "Postmodernism." *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2006, p. 185–187.

46. Rose, Margaret A. *The Post-Modern and the Post-Industrial: A Critical Analysis*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

47. Sarup, M. *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism & Postmodernism*. New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
48. Schlotterbeck, Jesse. "I'm Not There: Transcendent Thanatography." *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, edited by Tom Brown, Vidal Belén, Routledge, 2013, pp. 227–43, static1.squarespace.com/static/58bf24a6e3df28e544e1e848/t/59fd46bef9619a4291770819/1509770946048/IM_NOT_THERE.pdf.
49. Sterritt, D. *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
50. Storey, John. *Postmodernism. Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. 7th ed., Routledge, 2015.
51. Vidal, Belén. "Introduction: The Biopic and Its Critical Contexts." *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, edited by Tom Brown, Vidal Belén, 1st ed., Google Books ed., Routledge, 2013, pp. 1–32.
52. White, Rob. *Todd Haynes*. University of Illinois Press, 2013. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/book/21794.

Doctoral theses:

1. Bharvad, Rajeshbhai K. *Narrative Strategies in Postmodern Fiction*. Vadodara, The Maharaja Sayajirao University Baroda, 2016.
2. Spirou, P. *The Musical Biopic: Representing the Lives of Music Artists in 21st Century Cinema*. Sydney, Macquarie University, 2011.

Articles:

1. Asava, Zelie. “Multiculturalism and Morphing in I’m Not There.” *Wide Screen*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1–15, http://widescreenjournal.org.
2. Cartwright, Bert. “The Mysterious Norman Raeben.” *Wayback Machine*, 7 Oct. 2001, https://web.archive.org/web/20011007203741/http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/2667/raeben.htm.
3. Çelik Norman, S. “Postmodernist Film: A Cinematic Genre.” *Sinecine: Sinema Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2019, pp. 65–79. *DergiPark*, https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/703689.
4. Chumo, Peter N., II. “The Next Best Thing to a Time Machine: Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*.” *Post Script*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1996. Reprinted in *Quentin Tarantino: The Film Geek Files*, ed. Paul A. Woods, 75-88. London, Plexus, 2005.
5. Danks, Adrian. “‘… I’m Gone’; or Seven Characters in Search of an Exit: Some Reflections on Todd Haynes’s I’m Not There.” *Senses of Cinema*, Mar. 2008, www.sensesofcinema.com/2008/feature-articles/im-not-there.
6. Darby, Helen. “I’m Glad I’m Not Me: Subjective Dissolution, Schizoanalysis and Post-Structuralist Ethics in the Films of Todd Haynes.” *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013, pp. 330–47. *ResearchGate*, doi:10.3366/film.2013.0019.
7. D’Cruz, Carolyn, and Glenn D’Cruz. “Even the Ghost Was More Than One Person: Hauntology and Authenticity in Todd Haynes’s I’m Not There.” *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013, pp. 315–30. *ResearchGate*, doi:10.3366/film.2013.0018.

8. DeAngelis, Michael. “There and ‘Not There’: Todd Haynes and the Queering of Genre.” *Celebrity Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2017, pp. 578–92. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/19392397.2017.1370832.
9. Grochowski, Thomas. “Filled with Big Ideas, Images, and Distorted Facts: The Pastiche of Todd Haynes.” *Post Script*, 2017. *The Free Library*, www.thefreelibrary.com/FILLED+WITH+BIG+IDEAS%2c+IMAGES%2c+AND+DISTORTED+FACTS%3a+THE+PASTICHE+OF...-a0563836402.
10. Gross, Larry. “The Lives of Others.” *Film Comment Magazine*, 2007, www.filmcomment.com/article/the-lives-of-others-im-not-there.
11. Feinstein, Howard. “The Jigsaw Man.” *Filmmaker: The Magazine of Independent Film*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2007, pp. 34-39, https://filmmakermagazine.com/1089-the-jigsaw-man-by-howard-feinstein/.
12. Hanley, David. “Todd Haynes, I’m Not There and the Postmodern Biopic.” *Offscreen Magazine*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1-17, https://offscreen.com/view/todd-haynes-im-not-there-and-the-postmodern-biopic.
13. Kleinberg, Ethan. “Postmodernists Didn’t Go Far Enough.” *The Birth, Death, and Rebirth of Postmodernism*, et al., *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 14 June 2019, www.chronicle.com/article/the-birth-death-and-rebirth-of-postmodernism.
14. Marcus, Greil. “Bob Dylan Times Six: An Interview With ‘I’m Not There’ Director Todd Haynes.” *RollingStone*, 29 Nov. 2007, www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-news/bob-dylan-times-six-an-interview-with-im-not-there-director-todd-haynes-67251.

15. Muldoon, David. “The Postmodern Gender Divide in The Bob Dylan Biopic” I’m Not There.” *Miscelánea: a journal of English and American studies* 46, 2012, https://www.miscelaneajournal.net/index.php/misc/article/view/133/61.
16. Smith, Michael G. “Suppositions on a Film Concerning Dylan.” *White City Cinema*, 24 May 2011, whitecitycinema.com/2011/05/24/suppositions-on-a-film-concerning-dylan.
17. Sullivan, Robert. “This Is Not a Bob Dylan Movie.” *The New York Times Magazine*, 7 Aug. 2007, www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/magazine/07Haynes.html.
18. Wilkins, Kim. “‘I Don’t Know Who I Am Most of the Time’: Constructed Identity in Todd Haynes’s I’m Not There.” *Film Criticism*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1–26. *ResearchGate*, doi:10.3998/fc.13761232.0041.103.

Movie:

1. *I’m Not There*. Directed by Todd Haynes, co-written by Todd Haynes and Oren Moverman, Endgame Entertainment, 2007. *FMovies*, https://fmoviefree.net/film/im-not-there-2007/.

Songs:

1. Dylan, Bob. “I’m Not There.” *‘I’m not There’ Soundtrack album*. Columbia, 2007.
2. Dylan, Bob. “Paths of Victory.” *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1–3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961–1991*. Columbia Records, 1991.
3. Dylan, Bob. “Visions of Johanna.” *Blonde on Blonde*. Columbia, 1966.

Online sources:

1. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Dziga Vertov". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 8 Feb. 2021, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dziga-Vertov. Accessed 18 June 2021.
2. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Film noir". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Nov. 2019, https://www.britannica.com/art/film-noir. Accessed 2 Sept. 2020.
3. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Cinéma vérité". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 16 Nov. 2011, https://www.britannica.com/art/cinema-verite. Accessed 10 Sept. 2020.
4. www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-OXkP_GiNE&ab_channel=muckster. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.
5. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwYXUOH_g5E&ab_channel=EnzoGiobbe. Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.