**Bob on the Titanic, quoting Shakespeare (?)– Tempest**

*Tempest, 2012*

Bob started to give us long songs early on. Some were and are obvious masterpieces, like “Mr. Tambourine Man”, “Like a Rolling Stone” and “Desolation Row”. Some really don’t seem to have passed the test of time (such as “Ballad in Plain D” or “Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands”).

“Like a Rolling Stone” and “Desolation Row”, as long songs, have musical issues that help them along the way. The chorus of Rolling Stone is so powerful it just invites everyone to shout out “How does it feel?” The lyrics are so vicious it can still take one by surprise on listening to it again having not heard it for a while. “Mr. Tambourine Man” has its chorus, and its endlessly inventive lyrics. “Desolation Row” has its frightening opening – even more frightening when one realises it was true – and then image and metaphor piled upon image and metaphor.

And Tempest… well Tempest, which Dylan has never played in public, takes a song written by Seth Newton Mize (1901-1977) and adds new lyrics in between the originals. Dylan’s song is a direct copy of the Carter Family song “The Titanic”– a song that has been recorded by many country artists, although seemingly often without acknowledging Mize as the creator – probably because he simply wasn’t a very well known writer.

So what do we get?   The original opens with

*As the moon rose in glory,*  
*Drifting to the golden west,*  
*She told her sad, sad story:*  
*Sixteen hundred have gone to rest.*

Dylan opens with

*The pale moon rose in its glory*  
*Out on the western town*  
*She told a sad, sad story*  
*Of the great ship that went down*

And off we go.  But Dylan takes five verses to get to

*The watchman he lay dreaming*  
*As the ballroom dancers twirled*  
*He dreamed the Titanic was sinking*  
*Into the underworld*

whereas in the original the watchman comes in, in the second verse

*The watchman was lying down dreaming,*  
*Yes, dreaming a sad, sad dream;*  
*He dreamed the Titanic was sinking*  
*Far out on the deep blue sea.*

In the original song we get in verse three

*He woke and called the rich man,*  
*Told him to come to life;*  
*Told him to save his baby*  
*And also his darling wife.*

Whereas for Bob it is verse 23 when we get

*The rich man, Mr. Astor*  
*Kissed his darling wife*  
*He had no way of knowing*  
*Be the last trip of his life*

I won’t go on doing this comparison – you can of course work it out for yourself if you so wish but in essence what we seem to have is Dylan taking the original tune, and the original lyrics and then putting in loads of lyrics of his own in between.  And I find myself asking, “for what purpose?”

And my answer is, “I don’t really know.”

The album “Tempest” was published in 2012, a century after the sinking of the Titanic, between the 14th and 15th April 1912.

“The Tempest” is Shakespeare’s last comedy, written between 1610 and 1611

**BOB AND PLAGIARISM**

Responding to criticism that he plagiarised the work of other authors on his recent albums, Dylan told Rolling Stone: "Wussies and pussies complain about that stuff. It's an old thing – it's part of the tradition. It goes way back.”

"These are the same people that tried to pin the name Judas on me. Judas, the most hated name in human history! If you think you've been called a bad name, try to work your way out from under that. Yeah, and for what? For playing an electric guitar? As if that is in some kind of way equitable to betraying our Lord and delivering him up to be crucified. Fans who called me Judas can rot in hell”

Telling Dylan that "in folk and jazz, quotation is a rich and enriching tradition" but that some critics feel he has failed to cite his sources, the singer responded to Rolling Stone: "Oh, yeah, in folk and jazz, quotation is a rich and enriching tradition. That certainly is true. It's true for everybody, but me. There are different rules for me.”