

My Back Pages

(The Byrds)

[Verse 1]

Crimson flames tied through my
years
Flowing high and mighty
trapped
Countless fire and flaming roads
Using ideas as my maps
"We'll meet on edges soon", said
I
Proud 'neath heated brow

[Refrain]

Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now

[Verse 2]

Half-wracked prejudice leaped
forth
"Rip down all hate", I screamed
Lies that life is black and white
Spoke from my skull, I dreamed
Romantic flanks of musketeers
Foundationed deep, somehow

[Refrain]

Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now

[Verse 3]

In a soldier's stance, I aimed my
hand
At the mongrel dogs who teach

Fearing not I'd become my
enemy
In the instant that I preach
Sisters fled by confusion boats
Mutiny from stern to bow

[Refrain]

Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now

[Solo]

[Refrain]

Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now

[Verse 4]

My guard stood hard when
abstract threats
Too noble to neglect
Deceived me into thinking
I had something to protect
Good and bad, I define these
terms
Quite clear, no doubt, somehow

[Refrain]

Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now

"My Back Pages" is a song written by Bob Dylan and included on his 1964 album *Another Side of Bob Dylan*. It is stylistically similar to his earlier folk protest songs and features Dylan's voice with an acoustic guitar accompaniment. However, its lyrics—in particular the refrain "Ah, but I was so much older then/I'm younger than that now"—have been interpreted as a rejection of Dylan's earlier personal and political idealism, illustrating his growing disillusionment with the 1960s' folk protest movement with which he was associated, and his desire to move in a new direction. Although Dylan wrote the song in 1964, he did not perform it live until 1988.

"My Back Pages" has been covered by artists as diverse as Keith Jarrett, the Byrds, the Ramones, the Nice, Steve Earle, and the Hollies. The Byrds' version, initially released on their 1967 album *Younger Than Yesterday*, was also issued as a single in 1967 and proved to be the band's last Top 40 hit in the U.S.

Bob Dylan wrote "My Back Pages" in 1964 as one of the last songs—perhaps the last song—composed for his *Another Side of Bob Dylan* album. He recorded it on June 9, 1964, under the working title of "Ancient Memories", the last song committed to tape for the album. The song was partly based on the traditional folk song "Young But Growing" and has a mournful melody similar to that of "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" from Dylan's previous album, *The Times They Are a-Changin'*. As with the other songs on *Another Side*, Dylan is the sole musician on "My Back Pages" and plays in a style similar to his previous protest songs, with a sneering, rough-edged voice and a hard-strumming acoustic guitar accompaniment.

In the song's lyrics, Dylan criticizes himself for having been certain that he knew everything and apologizes for his previous political preaching, noting that he has become his own enemy "in the instant that I preach." Dylan questions whether one can really distinguish between right and wrong, and even questions the desirability of the principle of equality. The lyrics also signal Dylan's disillusionment with the 1960s protest movement and his intention to abandon protest songwriting. The song effectively analogizes the protest movement to the establishment it is trying to overturn, concluding with the refrain:

Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now