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1 Introduction

U2 are an Irish rock band that was founded in 1976 in Dublin by Larry Mullen junior, featuring Bono (Paul David Hewson) on vocals and guitar, The Edge (David Howell Evans) on guitar, Adam Clayton on bass, and Larry Mullen junior on drums. The then 14-year-old Larry Mullen junior pinned a note on the notice board of his school reading “musicians wanted,” and the members of what would become one of the world’s most successful rock bands gathered in Larry Mullen junior’s kitchen for their first rehearsal (U2, “U2”). Originally named *Feedback*, the band changed its name to *The Hype* and later to what it is today- *U2* (U2, “U2”). What started out as a school band with hobby musicians developed into one of the most influential rock bands that became renowned for their politically charged songs and their involvement in political and humanitarian campaigns.

Not only the band as a whole, but especially Bono is renowned for his commitment to political and humanitarian causes. Bono’s philanthropic work frequently strained his relationships with the other band members. In a 2005 interview, the singer admitted, “There was one point when I thought ‘I’m going to be thrown out of the band for this stuff’” (Luerssen 357). Nevertheless, up to the present, Bono frequently collaborates with leaders in government, religious institutions, the media or other celebrities to fight poverty and AIDS in third world countries (Luerssen 346–360). The musician also co-founded several institutions and campaigns, such as *DATA* (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa), the *ONE* campaign against poverty, and *Product RED* (Luerssen 347–56). Bono is viewed as the driving force behind U2’s philanthropic commitment, which includes collaborations with Amnesty International, Greenpeace, as well as Bono’s own campaigns (U2, “U2”). Among other projects, Bono and Adam Clayton sang on the Band Aid single “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” (Bono et al. 198–99), the band played at the 1985 Live Aid concert (U2, “U2”), and they supported Amnesty International’s Conspiracy of Hope tour to support human rights (Luerssen 347). In addition, the band members openly support or criticize the agenda of a diverse spectrum of political leaders and parties. In the 1980s, for example, the band campaigned against the Irish Republican Army (IRA) (Luerssen 345), and they made fun of George H. W. Bush at their Zoo TV tour in 1992 (348). On the other hand, the band also spoke out in support of political figures, such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Barack Obama, and U2 even performed at Obama’s first inauguration in 2009 (Luerssen 360). The band’s song lyrics are important media for voicing their worldviews and they function as vehicles of their social and political activism.

As Roy Shuker puts forward, song lyrics can be a vital means of raising awareness of economic, political, societal, and personal issues (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 188), which are all functions of song lyrics U2 frequently makes use of.

U2's political involvement started in their native country Ireland in 1978 at a protest against the Irish anti-contraception laws (Neuhold 21), and their third album "War" is the first of their works to feature song lyrics reflecting political events, above all, events of the Troubles. After that, numerous other songs dealing with Irish history followed. While over the years, the band has advocated for many different political and humanitarian causes, their political consciousness was originally fuelled by the political situation in their native country Ireland.

This thesis will investigate U2's sociopolitical agenda. It will shed light on the band's motivation and means of advocating social and political change through their song lyrics, with a particular focus on their various performance contexts. The thesis aims at illuminating how U2 reflects events of the past in politically charged songs and, therefore, rewrites the past. Furthermore, it aims at discovering how U2's song lyrics are used in various performance contexts to advocate for social and political change, i.e. to shape the present.

While there seem to be no differences between song lyrics and poetry on the page, there is one aspect in which they differ. While poetry can stand on its own as written text, song lyrics are generically linked to their performances, and, therefore, they cannot be fully understood without the context of their actualization (Eckstein 10). Roy Shuker also puts forward that popular music is best comprehensible in its "societal, economic, and political context" (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 3). In order to understand the sociopolitical function of song lyrics, it is vital to study them in their concrete manifestation as vocal performance by specific artists in a specific time and place. In the case of this thesis, this translates into studying U2's song lyrics in their performance contexts.

In his chapter on textual analysis of songs, Shuker advocates for an analysis of song lyrics and their musical realization as recordings (ch. 5). In the sample analysis provided, he first analyzes the song lyrics without regard to their recordings (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 82–87), and he then advocates that they should be put in the performance context of their recordings next (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 93). Thus, the analysis of lyrics in both media, written and oral, is carried out independently from one another. My thesis follows this practice and discusses U2's rock lyrics in a two-step approach, studying the lyrics as text first and then their manifestation as song. However, departing from Shuker's model, my thesis will not focus on recordings of the songs, but on live performances.

Since written poetry and ‘song poetry’ share all but one feature (Eckstein 10), this thesis will apply common terms and concepts originally designed for the study of written poetry to analyze song lyrics of U2. In addition, the thesis will apply tools from poetry performance studies for the analysis of the lyrics in their various performance contexts. For the discussion of the song lyrics as text, the thesis will apply a historicist approach. Close readings of selected parts of the lyrics will thus be conducted against the societal, political, and historical context reflected and evoked in the lyrics. As song lyrics are generically tied to, and best understood in, the context of their performances (Eckstein 10), I will also conduct “close listenings” (Bernstein 10) of selected U2 performances in relation to their performance contexts. The musical and vocal actualizations are highly dependent not only upon the situation and context in which they are performed, but also on the performing artists and their agenda. Hence, the thesis will additionally draw upon an author-oriented approach and discuss the song lyrics and performances in the light of the band’s concerns and interests, drawing on public statements and interviews. After all, through actualizations at different times and places and by different artists, song lyrics can be invested with new meanings and be interpreted in different ways. Most importantly, the analysis of song lyrics in their performance contexts is not merely an ‘ad-on’ to the analysis of song lyrics on the page, because what Charles Bernstein has remarked with regard to poetry in performance can also be said of song lyrics: Each performance of a poem, and, thus, song lyrics, leads to a new version of the same text with all versions being of equal value (Bernstein 8). Originally intended for one purpose and describing a certain situation, this is how messages encoded in song lyrics can be abstracted from the medium of the written text and be applied to a range of new contexts.

In the following, Chapter 2 will outline the major areas of research my thesis will draw upon for answering the research questions of how U2 advocates for social and political change and raises awareness of critical political and societal issues in their song lyrics and performances. This chapter will establish the theoretical framework for discussing the sociopolitical agenda of a rock band. It will briefly address the high/low culture distinction in literary scholarship and discuss reasons why song lyrics and their performances are a valuable resource in the cultural heritage discourse. In addition, it will introduce important terms, definitions, and concepts for discussing popular music culture. Chapter 2 will thus be bifocal: Firstly, it will discuss the analysis of song lyrics on the page, drawing on the research areas of poetry criticism and music studies. Secondly, it will establish a framework for the analysis of song lyrics in their performance context and, drawing on performance studies. With this double

focus I want to acknowledge that both media, writing and performance, are equally important for the analysis of songs.

An extensive analytical chapter focusing on song lyrics and their performances succeeds this chapter, and it will constitute the largest part of the thesis. This Chapter 3 will thematically focus on references to Ireland and discuss song lyrics referring to historical and political events in the band's native country in the light of Ireland's historical and political history, as well as specific performances of these songs. This Chapter 3 is divided into two parts: The first part discusses song lyrics reflecting on events of the Troubles in Ireland, and the second part then focuses on other social and political commitment in Ireland that is reflected in U2's lyrics. Furthermore, this 'Ireland' chapter will shed light on the song lyrics' repercussion in contemporary Irish culture and the specific positions embraced by U2.

The concluding chapter will then include a short discussion of the findings and recapitulate the most important aspects addressed in the thesis.

2 Analyzing Song Lyrics – A Binary Approach

Since the emergence of pop- rock culture in the nineteenth century, rock music has become increasingly important in the cultural heritage discourse. The emergence of mass production and mass consumption has led to a completely new lifestyle with consumerism as its new form of authority (Bennett 477). Nowadays, mass culture and consumerism play a vital role in shaping and creating identities (477). The emergence of mass media is also what made it possible to distribute rock songs and promote their underlying ideas and values globally (Cohen 584). Over time, rock musicians became as iconic as other important figures in politics, sports, or the film industry (Bennett and Janssen 476). In the 1960s, “[r]ock musicians were regarded as the key spokespeople of the counter-cultural movement,” and by now, their work is valued as having made “significant contributions to the development of the late 20th century at both the national and global level” (Bennett 467). Amidst these iconic rock musicians that shaped the world in the late 20th century are the members of U2.

2.1 Song Lyrics and Poetry

For centuries, the dichotomous division between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms has been evident in literary scholarship. Traditionally, the focus of literary discourse was firmly placed on ‘high’ art forms, and writing was regarded as the proper medium for poetry (Striff 12). The distinction between song lyrics and poetry ties in with the high/low culture dichotomy. While

‘classic’ poems are ascribed to the ‘high’ art end of the spectrum, song lyrics- which are generically tied to oral performance- are often viewed as inferior, particularly those of popular music. Traces of these cultural hierarchies can still be found in present-day literary scholarship (Novak, *Live Poetry* 9). Nevertheless, the dichotomy between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms has become increasingly blurred (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 4), and in recent years, the cultural value of song lyrics and popular culture has been more and more recognized. Popular music is now viewed as a “historical artifact” worthy of literary study, and exhibitions and museums on the topic have also emerged (Bennett and Walksman 6). Academia gradually began to realize the extent to which popular culture determines “the possibilities of our existence” (Grossberg 69), and popular music now has a large influence on the cultural heritage discourse (Bennett and Janssen 2).

While the value of both, song lyrics and poetry, is largely recognized today, one question that remains is whether the same criteria apply for the analysis of both media. Lars Eckstein, for example, puts forward that written poetry and song poetry share all but one significant feature (10): song lyrics are necessarily vocalized, while this is not necessarily the case with poetry (67). This implies that when it comes to the analysis of written lyrics without their musicalization, the same tools of analysis can be applied for both media. In their extensive guide on poetry analysis, Tom Furniss and Michael Bath similarly state that poetry and other discourses, such as song lyrics, plays, or speeches, basically share the same features and functions (14). The same stylistic and aural devices are used in poetry and song lyrics, and they both can put forward an artist’s political stance (14). One major difference between poetry and other forms of language they identify is a matter of layout, namely that poems are grouped into lines (145). Since this is also the case with song lyrics, they acknowledge them as a category of poetry (145). While Eckstein’s work centers on researching song lyrics, Furniss and Bath’s work addresses the topic of songs from a different angle, with the primary research focus being on poetry in the ‘traditional’ sense. Nevertheless, both works stress that song lyrics should be regarded as poetry, since they share the same features and can fulfill the same purposes of political persuasion. Therefore, methods and tools used for poetry analysis can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of song lyrics.

2.2 Analyzing Song Lyrics as Poetry on the Page

This section will focus on how song lyrics can be analyzed in their written form, i.e. if they are treated as written poetry and not put in their performance context. U2’s songs frequently draw upon historic or political events, and the band very often reflects on issues connected to

the Troubles in Ireland. Furniss and Bath's work *Reading Poetry* exemplifies that the form of a text and the textual strategies used by the authors are not arbitrary but deliberate and shape the reader's understanding of a text. Conducting a close reading of a text and analyzing the resources of language used provides insight into how the written text conveys meaning, and which words or textual strategies are used to articulate this meaning in a specific way (Furniss and Bath 11). In addition, an analysis of the interplay between a text's form and function allows for an understanding of how specific effects, such as emotional power or moral implications, are produced (11). Irony, for example, is often used to express political or social criticism (249), while the tone of a text can hold information about the author's attitude towards a statement or topic (242). If applied to U2's rock songs, this means a close reading of their lyrics yields insights into how U2's lyrics connect to the Troubles. In addition, this approach caters for an understanding of the band's stance towards, and opinion on, the political and social issues reflected in their song lyrics. Thus, this thesis will apply a close analysis of the lyrics with regard to structural and textual features in relation to their historical context.

The following section of this chapter will focus on establishing the framework for the analysis of song lyrics as written poetry. The two major areas of research this section will draw on are poetry criticism and studies of song lyrics from the field of musicology.

2.2.1 Terminology and the Question of Genre

U2's songs are regarded as rock music, with their songs featuring distinctive characteristics of that music genre. Providing a definition of what rock music actually is proves to be difficult, and terms in music studies on different musical genres are used differently by different scholars (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 3). Especially the terms 'rock' and 'pop' are frequently used interchangeably (Regev 34; Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 5). Nevertheless, pop music is generally connoted with being commercialized, while rock music is generally regarded as being more authentic (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 98). Most rock musicians reject pure consumerism and write and perform their songs themselves (Eckstein 60). Therefore, the topics and issues rock musicians reflect in their songs are actually their own concerns and beliefs rather than originating from someone else's pen. Rock music has also been described as being more serious than pop music. This question of seriousness relates to the topics reflected in the song lyrics. While pop songs are conventionally about love, sex, and desire (Eckstein 53), rock lyrics are often written in a rebellious spirit challenging social systems (59). This sociopolitical relevance of rock songs is

another characteristic of rock songs that is frequently stressed by scholars. Naturally, not all rock lyrics advocate for social and political change, but it is typical for rock musicians to aim at creating awareness of, and to advocate for, serious social and political issues (60). In this sense, U2 is a prime example of a rock music band. They act as singer-songwriters, writing their own songs and consequently also treating their own experiences and beliefs. They do reflect on serious topics in their songs and advocate for social and political change.

The section has already touched upon the functions and topics of rock lyrics. In the subsequent section, the topics reflected in rock lyrics and the purposes rock songs can fulfill will be discussed in more detail.

2.2.2 Genre and Thematic Analysis

Genre analysis and thematic analysis are crucial components of the analysis of poetry, as they shed light on the function and subject of a poem in its social contexts. Rock lyrics can be considered a genre not just with regard to musical features, but also with regard to their textual characteristics.

Many scholars promote the idea that song lyrics can function as a vehicle of social and political change (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 186; Bennett and Janssen 12; Cohen 590). Like no other genre, rock music is associated with a commitment to societal change (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 188), and the power to actually affect change is also attributed to rock music. Shuker puts forward that pop and rock music can cause a shift in peoples' thinking, and that it is this change in their cognitive mindset that ultimately leads to changes in society (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 187). The past has shown us that pop and rock music can be used successfully for making political movements more accessible, for voicing problems in society, and for drawing attention to injustices or oppression (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 187). This has been done at several levels, for example through song lyrics of individual artists or bands, but also through larger, often international, campaigns (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 188). Examples of famous protest songs range from Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," various interpretations of "We Shall Overcome," Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" to Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddamn" (Lynskey part 1). Well-known campaigns that made use of politically charged music include the UK Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament of the 1950s, the U2 civil rights movement in the 1960s, the Rock Against Racism campaign in the UK the 1970s and 80s, and the Live Aid Campaign in 1985 (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 188). U2 has experience in both, advocating for change individually, and being part of larger

international campaigns, such as the Live Aid Campaign in 1985 (U2, “U2”). Music that is played and used as part of an organization or movement is often referred to as “conscience rock” (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 192), the Live Aid Campaign being a typical example (*Understanding Popular Music Culture* 192).

Song lyrics can also be a means of rewriting the past and reflecting on past events, which is again something that U2 does in numerous of their songs. Bennett identifies one of the most important functions of songs as not merely rewriting what has happened, but as critically reflecting on past events (6). This is certainly the case with U2’s lyrics. What is more, the band rewrites the past to foster social change in the future. It is by critically reflecting on important sociopolitical events of the past that the band raises awareness and aims at changing people’s mindset in order to achieve societal changes.

An important aspect to keep in mind when discussing historical narratives in song lyrics is that the lyrics are written *after* the event took place. This is to say that a selection and ordering process takes place, and the songwriters choose which aspects of the events they regard as important (Harper-Scott and Samson 14). In addition, narratives in song lyrics are usually tied to personal experiences and written in an emotionalized way (Connell and Gibson 71). Therefore, song lyrics do not necessarily provide an accurate recapitulation of historical events, but they create a subjective memory of the past. While *history* is built on facts and generally regarded as dead and static, our *memories* of past events are unstable and living and can thus differ from person to person (Strong 420). Therefore, U2’s rock lyrics serve a double role in rewriting the past, since they simultaneously reflect on *history* and *memory*. Firstly, their lyrics narrate historical events whose circumstances are known in detail and recorded in history books. Secondly, their songs reflect on the band’s personal experiences in relation with these events, imbued with their own beliefs and emotions, which adds a biographical and emotional component to the lyrics. On the grounds of this typical connection of rock lyrics to personal experience, the historicist analysis I will conduct of U2’s lyrics will be complemented by an author-centered analysis.

2.2.3 Tools for Rock Lyrics Analysis as Written Medium

One of the traditional procedures of poetry analysis is ‘close reading,’ which entails scrutinizing the meaning inherent in the words and expressions used in a text. As discussed above, a close textual analysis of a text caters for an understanding how the words on the page articulate and express meaning in a specific way. Thus, my analysis of U2’s written lyrics includes a close reading of structural and textual features of the lyrics on the page, for

example voice, tone and figurative language, such as metaphor, metonymy or allegory. The terminology used in this textual analysis of U2's lyrics derives from Tom Furniss and Michael Barth's work *Reading Poetry: An Introduction*. While close reading caters for an understanding of how the resources of language are used to shape the reader's understanding of the text, the problem with this approach is that it does not draw connections to broader cultural phenomena (Bell, Harris, and Méchoulán 6). However, poetry, and especially song lyrics, are hard to analyze without their context, since the meaning is partly constituted by contextual factors (Eckstein 10). Therefore, the historical and cultural background of a poem should be considered (Furniss and Bath 16). Thus, for the discussion of song lyrics as written medium, I will conduct close readings of the lyrics, which will be complemented by a contextual analysis. Following Furniss's view that it is important to consider in how far a poem represents real-life events and relate these events to the experiences and emotions of human beings in the 'real world' (9), I will analyze the lyrics with regard to their historical, political, social, cultural, and geographical contexts. In addition, as U2 reflect on their personal experiences in relation to these events, imbued with their own beliefs and agendas, this analysis will also comprise biographical aspects. Therefore, an author-oriented approach that connects the themes of the lyrics to the personal beliefs and experiences of the band members is imperative.

As mentioned in the introduction, another important aspect that has to be taken into consideration when discussing song lyrics is that they are written to be performed. Similar to the importance of social, spatial, and historical context, songs cannot be fully understood without the context of their actualization (Eckstein 10). Therefore, the next section will discuss the analysis of song lyrics in their performance contexts in more detail.

2.3 Analyzing Song Lyrics in their Performance Contexts

The following section of the thesis introduces the theoretical framework for the discussion of U2's rock lyrics in their various performance contexts. It furthermore discusses tools for the analysis of song lyrics in their performance contexts, which requires different methods than for the analysis of written poetry (Eckstein 23).

Until recently, no 'road maps' were available for the analysis of song lyrics in their various performance contexts. While scholars in the field of music studies expressed interesting thoughts on what a discussion of song performances should include, their work was rather theoretical and did not provide concrete tools. In his work *Reading Song Lyrics*, Eckstein, for example, names three criteria as vital for analyzing song lyrics (38–40): the spatial or genre

context, which includes, among other criteria, information on setting, genre, audience, space, and organizational matters (38); the register then refers to stylistic devices and textual features, as well as the means by which communication takes place (39–40); finally, the “arena” denotes the interplay between spatial context and register (40). His work, however, is rather theoretical and does not provide concrete tools for the analysis of song lyrics. Today, there are ‘hands on’ approaches to the analysis of poetry performances. These methods suggested in poetry performance research for the analysis of poetry performances actually show considerable analogies to the tools used in music studies for the analysis of song lyrics in performance. Julia Novak’s work on live poetry (*Live Poetry*), for example, proposes similar tools for the analysis of live poetry as Roy Shuker does for the analysis of song lyrics in performance (*Understanding Popular Music Culture*). Some of the features both scholars suggest for an analysis are the vocal style – including pitch and timbre – as well as the rhythm and beat of a song (Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* 239–40; Novak, *Live Poetry* 238). Major differences between their works are that Novak brings performance space, body communication, and the relationship between performer and audience into play (*Live Poetry* 238), while Shuker focuses on musicological features, such as melody and harmony. An analysis of musicological features exceeds the framework of my thesis. In addition, Shuker’s tools are designed for the analysis of studio recordings, while Novak’s toolkit serves to analyze live performances. Since I will analyze live performances of U2 rather than studio recordings, I will draw on her toolkit, originally designed for the analysis of live poetry, in order to discuss song lyrics in performance.

2.3.1 Importance of Performance Context

The importance of analyzing lyrics in their performance context becomes evident from works in both research areas, music studies and performance poetry. Eckstein advocates that lyrics as written medium are “*meant to be sounded.*” He furthermore states that “[t]he art of lyrics is fundamentally, therefore, a ‘performance art’” (13). Another important factor why song lyrics should be analyzed in their various performance contexts is that the particular context of a particular performance can change the meaning and, thus, the interpretation of song lyrics (Connell and Gibson 72). Listening to a song in the car or going to a concert each entail a completely different style of the performance and of listening and interpreting it (72–73). In addition, there is also a social component to performances, since they encourage interaction between the performing artist and their audience and serve as an important platform for cultural exchange (Bernstein 22–23). In song lyrics in performance, interaction between

author/performer and audience is desirable and frequently takes place (Eckstein 52). This again points to the importance of the binary focus of this thesis on both, song lyrics as written poetry and song lyrics in their performance contexts. What is more is that all people attending a performance, for example a concert, have at least one mutual interest, namely attending such performances. Therefore, they are automatically all part of a social community.

The examples above indicate the importance of studying song lyrics in their concrete manifestation as vocal performances. For that purpose, terminology in the field of performance studies needs to be discussed, which will be done in the following sections.

2.3.2 Defining the Oral Mode

While there is a long tradition of poetry readings, there has been a severe lack of research on poetry performance, which led to insufficient attention to spoken word and to the importance of performance contexts (Bernstein 5). Only recently, literary research has stressed the importance of poetry performance studies, and the value that spoken word and poetry performances hold are more and more recognized (Perelman 202). Performances are independent from the written text and have to be regarded as a medium on its own and not as ‘ad-on’ to the written text (Bernstein 10). Bernstein argues that all occurrences of a poem in different media are of equal value (8), and that these different versions result in a “plural existence” of one text (9). This means that song lyrics can simultaneously exist in different realizations, with none being ‘more valuable’ than the other. Furthermore, this is to say that all different versions of a song, be it in the form of song lyrics, audio recordings, concert performances, rehearsals, or cover versions by different artists, have to be treated equally.

Important work has been done on poetry in performance, hence I will draw on concepts from the field of poetry performance research in order to demonstrate that many characteristics of poetry in its oral performance also apply to the vocalization of song lyrics. While poetry performance studies do not normally include the study of song lyrics, I will argue that oral performances of poetry share significant features with the vocalization of song lyrics, which is why many concepts from the study of poetry and its oral performance can be applied to the study of song lyrics.

In general, poetry can be conveyed in two different modes: written and spoken. Live poetry can be viewed as a spectrum that ranges from “flat” recitations of a text, to poetry readings, to performance poetry that embraces a “distinctive performance aesthetic” (*Live Poetry* 21). To recite means “to repeat or read aloud something memorized or prepared” (“Recite”), which suggests that recitations are static and do not add meaning to the previously written words on

the page. Bernstein distinguishes songs from recitation by referring to the former as “the transformation of language to sound, rather than the setting of language in sound” (19). Thus, the sounding of song lyrics (as songs) includes a transformational element, i.e. some change to the words on the page, which is why the vocalization of song lyrics cannot be seen as recitation.

With poetry readings this is somewhat different, because they are not as static and ‘flat’ as recitations. The act of reading includes “interpreting” or “performing” something (“Reading”), which suggests that readings of poetry are subject to the performer’s individual interpretation of the text, and, thus, the meaning of the words on the written page can change in poetry readings. In contrast to recitations of a text, readings seem to be more flexible, because they allow for an interpretation of the text and bring the performer’s individuality into play. However – although poetry readings allow for more interpretation than recitations – they do not acknowledge the full potential of the spoken word. The term ‘poetry reading’ suggests an inferiority of the spoken word, because it only describes the oral mode in terms of the written mode (Novak, *Live Poetry* 7). If this concept of ‘poetry readings’ were transferred to song lyrics, this would mean that the sounding of the lyrics as songs were described in terms of the lyrics on the page. Nevertheless, the vocalization of lyrics as songs adds new components to the text, such as tempo, pitch, or volume. These features are not present in the lyrics on the page, and they can also not be inferred from the written text. Thus, it makes no sense to describe the vocalization of lyrics as songs in terms of the written mode. One example that demonstrates that is two different musicians vocalizing the same song: They will have differing ideas of how the lyrics should be vocalized with regard to features, such as tempo, volume, or voice quality, which will result in two different versions of the song. This example demonstrates that the sounding of song lyrics reinvents the previously written text. This sort of reinvention of a text does not take place in readings of a text, but rather in performances of a text, as they include “reinterpretation and reinvention” thereof (Middleton 265), not seldom evoking intense emotions (262). Performances have a “constructive and experimentally constitutive force,” and they acknowledge the dynamic potential of the spoken word (Hobart and Kapferer 1). As can be seen from the example above, the vocalization of song lyrics shares this innovative and dynamic force with performances.

The discussion above indicates, that – if the concepts of poetry in its oral mode are transferred to the vocalization of song lyrics – the sounding of lyrics as songs shares its most significant features with performances of poetry.

2.3.3 Analogies between Song Performances and Live Poetry

Poetry performance studies can be regarded as a subtype of performance studies, because the focus is narrowed from studying performances of any kind of text to investigating performances of poetry. Similar to music studies, performance studies can be described as a borderline discipline that draws together ideas and concepts from many different fields of research (Striff 2–3). Among others, performance studies draws upon disciplines such as social sciences and theater studies (5). The term ‘performance’ is used by Striff in a very loose sense, for it includes anything from daily life to traditional theater performances (1). This broad definition even allows for the way we dress ourselves and how we prepare our food to be considered acts of performance (1). In the case of this thesis, a narrower definition of ‘performance’ applies, since it studies concrete and specific vocal manifestations of song lyrics. In addition, in order to call an act a *performance* act, an audience is necessary, because somebody always performs for someone who has to acknowledge the act as performance (2). Eckstein agrees with Striff that an important feature of performances is the interaction between performer and audience (35). This is also certainly the case with the performance of song lyrics.

As discussed above, song lyrics can be regarded as poetry and, thus, concepts from poetry performance studies can be applied to the study of song lyrics in their realization as performances. In her work, Novak uses for the term “live poetry” to denote performances of poetry in a live setting, to a live audience.¹ Live poetry is characterized by the “direct encounter and physical co-presence of poet-performer and audience” (Novak, “Performing the Poet” 360). This is to say that production and reception of the orally delivered text happen simultaneously (361). This thesis sets out to investigate U2’s song lyrics in their concrete manifestation as vocal performances in front of a live audience in different contexts, such as concerts or TV shows, rather than discussing professional CD studio recordings of the band’s songs. Although Novak’s term “live poetry” does originally not include live performances of songs, there are considerable analogies between song performances and live poetry, and, hence, they can partly be studied via the same methodology.

¹ Recordings of songs that are not performed in front of an audience, but that are written and recorded with the listeners in mind, do not fall in the category of live poetry. Rather, they can be described as what Novak identifies as “audio poetry” (*Live Poetry* 44).

2.3.4 Tools for Song Lyrics Analysis in their Performance Contexts

In the case of analyzing song lyrics on the page, close readings of the text are a standard procedure. Applied to the vocalization of a poem, the co-text of sound comes into play. Hence, close readings of written poetry translate into “close listenings” in performance (Bernstein 4). In order to understand what close listenings entail, it is vital to discuss the difference between ‘listening’ and ‘hearing,’ two concepts frequently confused with one another. Hearing is a physiological process, while listening is “an act of attunement” (Rasula 233). This means that while we can *hear* the sounds of a foreign language, we cannot *listen* to them, i.e. infer the meaning of the sounds (Bernstein 18; emphasis added). In general, two approaches are seen as vital for close listenings. Firstly, close listenings focus on sound, which is viewed as material, as the “constitutive” and primary element of performed poetry (18). In addition, the individuality of the performer has to be considered when conducting close listening (18), as different performers have, for example, different voice qualities and performance styles. Thus, it is crucial for a critical analysis to investigate how a poet performs and what performance style he or she has (18).

As mentioned earlier, a similar approach for the analysis of poetry that draws on Bernstein’s concept of close listening is provided by Novak (*Live Poetry*), and I will draw on her toolkit for the analysis of song lyrics in performance. She suggests an analysis in five basic steps.² Firstly, “[g]eneral information about the event,” such as the location, time, format or the participants of the event, should be provided. Secondly the “performance space” should be discussed. This entails investigating for which purpose the setting of the performance is usually used, where the performer and where the audience sit or stand, as well as sound and lighting. The most extensive part of the analysis of poetry performances is then the study of the poet’s performance itself. This includes researching the performer’s background, the artist’s position in the literary field, and what performance conventions s/he draws on. In addition, the audiotext and paratext of the performance should be analyzed. A discussion of rhythm, pitch, volume, articulation, timber and non-verbal utterances can be used to do this. Furthermore, the spoken performance can be looked at in relation to the written text. This comparison can reveal relationships between the written and spoken mode and yield insights into how the realization in different media can result in different meanings of the “same” text and, thus, different experiences. Another important factor for the analysis of poetry

² This following section draws from the recapitulation of the Novak’s toolkit on p.238-39. For a detailed account, view Novak *Live Poetry*.

performances is body communication, and in how far it helps the poet to interact with the audience or convey emotions or other information. The discussion of body communication can also reveal considerable information about both, the real author and fictive speaker. In addition, investigating the relationship between performer and audience in relation to both the actual and the fictive spatio-temporal situation is also a vital part of poetry performance analysis. Furthermore, characteristics of the audience, such as age, gender, ethnicity, or intra-audience communication, as well as the role of any other participants of the performance should be discussed.

Novak's work brings together trains of thoughts from scholars in the field of poetry and performance studies, and it shows close parallels to approaches for song analysis provided by scholars in the field of music studies, such as Eckstein. Thus, using Novak's toolkit is a suitable method for the analysis of song lyrics in their performance contexts. In order to analyze U2's rock lyrics in their various performance contexts, her method will be complemented by concepts introduced by other scholars.

2.3.5 Studying Live Poetry: Key Terms

The following section sets out to discuss key terms and characteristics of live poetry to the extent that they are shared by song performance. It will also investigate how these concepts from poetry performance research can be applied to song lyrics in performance.

2.3.5.1 Audiotext and Paratext

Two fundamental components of live poetry are "audiotext" and "paratext." The concept of "audiotext" refers to the "audible acoustic text of a poem," i.e. the text that can acoustically be heard, for example on audio recordings of poetry (Bernstein 12). In performance, a "disruption of the rationalizable patterns of sound," for example of rhyme, meter, alliteration, or assonance, takes place, and the text becomes more musical, which puts a new dynamic to the (previously written) text (13). This is not to say that the conventional system of prosodic analysis for poetry on the page, such as rhyme, meter, alliteration or assonance, is rendered insignificant in a performance context, but new features come into play that need to be discussed (13). In the context of song lyrics in performance, the audiotext describes the audible acoustic text of a song, i.e. the vocalization and musicalization of a song. Thus, the audiotext includes the instrumentation, the vocals, and any other speech or sound of the performance. A focus on the instrumentation would entail a musicological study of U2's songs, which exceeds the framework of this thesis. The instrumentation will only be

considered in some instances, if it conjures up a specific image or effect, such as when the drums are playing a military beat or when drumbeats are used to mimic gunshots. Otherwise, the focus will be on the effects musicians achieve with their voice and breath. In analogy to the audiotext in poetry performance research, through the vocalization of song lyrics, the static lyrics on the page become dynamic sound shapes. In the context of poetry studies, the concept of audiotext brings a new component into play, namely the acoustic. Since this acoustic dimension is not present in the written medium – for a discussion of the audiotext – different analytical methods than for written texts need to be derived. Similarly, Novak puts forward that conventional methods for analyzing literature prove insufficient for analyzing the audiotext of a poem (*Live Poetry* 71), and if applied to this thesis, the vocalization of song lyrics. As criteria for analyzing the audiotext of a poem, Bernstein names “intonation, pitch, tempos, accents [...] grain or timbre of voice, nonverbal face and body expressions or movements,” as well as “assonance, alliteration, and rhyme” (13). Bernstein transfers these criteria from the domain of music studies, which is why it is not surprising that similar criteria have been proposed by scholars in the field of music studies (c.f. Stein and Spillman). For the purpose of my thesis, I will transfer Bernstein’s criteria back to the discipline they were originally derived from.

In literary studies, “paratext” refers not to the text itself, but to everything that accompanies it. It can be “a certain number of verbal or other production, such as an author’s name, a title, a preface, illustrations. And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it” (Genette 1). If applied to song lyrics in performance, the paratext could be anything from the musicians’ names, their alias, the name of the album a song appeared on, stage introductions, or stage shows. In live poetry, the paratext can hold significant information about what the poet-performer thinks of poetry and how his or her work is best presented on stage (Novak, *Live Poetry* 144). It can furthermore help establish a relationship between performer and audience, or even be of promotional value for the work staged, for example if the author holds up the book of a poetry reading in order to increase sales (Novak, “Performing the Poet” 378). If put in the context of song performances, this means that the paratext can shed light on the singer-songwriter’s position in the music world. In addition, the above example of poet-performers holding up a book to promote their work translates into musicians holding up CDs, or presenting other merchandise products, such as t-shirts or caps.

In live poetry, the paratext is often improvised and usually occurs before the poem in order to explain, introduce or familiarize the audience with the text (Novak, *Live Poetry* 137–39). This

is also the case with song performances at rock concerts. U2, for example, regularly share personal information about themselves, introduce individual songs, explain parts of their lyrics or ask the audience questions (e.g. U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”). The paratext furthermore allows for a performance to be highly flexible, because through it, the artist and the audience can spontaneously react to something that happens at the performance (Novak, “Performing the Poet” 378). Again, this is something that musicians frequently make use of in their live performances, as will be seen in the analytical part of the thesis. In addition, the performer can draw attention and/or put the work in relation to specific events, which would not be possible without the paratext (378). U2 for example put their song “Sunday Bloody Sunday” in the context of a terrorist attack that happened in Ireland the same day as the band played a concert in Denver, Colorado (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”). In live poetry, and especially in performances of songs, the use of paratext is a common tool and is also frequently made use of by U2 in their performances.

2.3.5.2 Author and Performer

Another important characteristic of live poetry that is relevant in the context of this thesis is that the person performing is usually also the author of the text, which results in a double role of the artist who is then acting as “poet-performer” (Novak, *Live Poetry* 57). If the artist is acting as poet-performer, the audience gets the meaning of the text first hand from its author, and not from a performer merely interpreting somebody else’s words (Novak, “Performing the Poet” 365). This means that the audience will more likely believe information shared about the poet-performer or her/his texts, because the information is authentic, i.e. directly presented by the author her- or himself. With reference to song lyrics in performance, the two-fold role of author and performer is reflected in the term ‘singer-songwriter.’ As discussed earlier in this thesis, rock musicians frequently act as singer-songwriters, which is related to the issue of authenticity – that rock songs are seen as authentic work. In poetry performance research, the double role of poet-performer is also viewed to pique the audience’s interest in the performer her- or himself and to link the performance to the personality of the artist (Novak, “Performing the Poet” 365). Other scholars in the field, too, stress that performances can draw the audience’s attention to the personality of the performer. The performer’s character can be foregrounded to an extent where it overshadows the poem (Quartermain 219); it has been noted that text and author may even perceptually merge until they become inseparable from one another (Silliman 362). Critics often view this merging of author and text in a fairly negative and critical manner. However, the power of that merger

should not be underestimated when the performer advocates for a cause, because it makes her/his support for the cause authentic. With reference to song lyrics in performance, this means that the musicians personify their own written text to an extent where the lyrics become inextricably linked to their personalities. If the meaning of the lyrics becomes so tied to the person of the singer-songwriter, a biographical approach can help shed light on the meanings it accumulates in performance. Thus, biographical information on the performer is vital for the understanding of the performance.

2.3.5.3 Role of the Audience

Most insights from the field of poetry performance research with regard to the role of the audience can also be applied to the performance of songs. The audience is actually one of the most influential factors in performances, because it constitutes a performance's "raison d'être" (Novak, "Performing the Poet" 373). In contrast to classic theatre performances, people who attend poetry performances are not mere bystanders or listeners, but they are actively engaged and have specific functions to carry out (Striff 8). The audience of a performance is actively involved in the meaning-making process (Bernstein 10). It can influence a performance's quality and even be decisive for its success and effectiveness (Novak, *Live Poetry* 197). Intra-audience interaction is also a shaping factor of performances, because members of the audience can influence each other (Novak, "Performing the Poet" 374). Listeners' reactions to a performance tend to be homogeneous (373). So-called 'infectious' laughter, i.e. if one person starts to laugh other people are likely to follow, is a well-known phenomenon that exemplifies intra-audience interaction.

2.3.5.4 Relationship between Performer and Audience

What is also important for the analysis of performances is the relationship between performer and audience. Their co-presence results in a direct influence of the audience on the performer and vice versa (Novak, "Performing the Poet" 361). In the communication between performer and listener, four instances can be identified: the "real author," the "fictive speaker," the "real audience," and the "fictive addressee" (Novak, *Live Poetry* 177). Fig. 1 below visually represents the interplay between these instances. The lower half of the figure is basically also present in written poetry, the upper half then comes into play when a text is performed live.

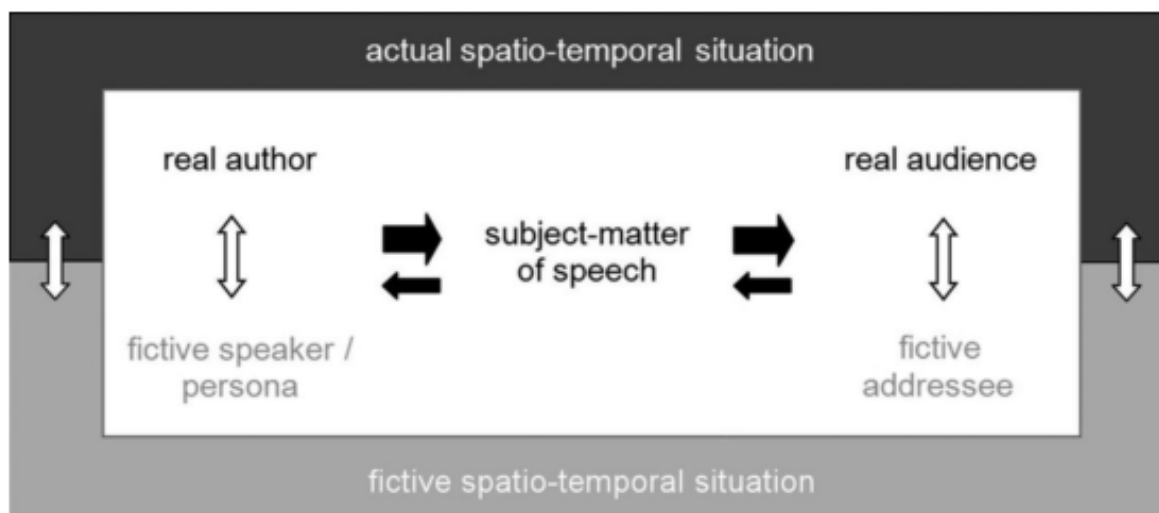


Fig. 1: "A Communication Model for Live Poetry" (Novak *Live Poetry* 177)

The real author and the real audience are situated in the actual real-life spatial and temporal context of the performance, the “actual spatio-temporal situation.” Both are physically present at the specific time and place at which the performance takes place. In the “fictive spatio-temporal situation,” the fictive speaker and fictive addressee are situated. They are not physically present as they are a function of the verbal text. In the context of this communication model, there are some devices that poet-performers deliberately use. Firstly, they can make the audience believe that their work is autobiographical by consciously using the connection between their person and the textual persona (Novak, “Performing the Poet” 370). This effect is amplified by a deliberate use of personal pronouns and if there is some shared experience, i.e. some biographical overlap between fictive speaker and real author (371). U2 frequently uses this technique to signal their personal relation to the topics addressed in their songs. Poet-performers can also draw on the relation between addressee and present audience, as well as between fictive and actual spatio-temporal context in a similar way, i.e. by using deictic strategies (375). The size of the arrows in fig. 1 above indicates that the poet is the main shaper of the performance and can be seen as having more influence on the audience than vice versa. This does not mean, however, that the audience’s significance should be ignored.

2.3.5.5 *Body Communication and Non-Verbal Sounds*

Other important factors for the communication between performer and audience that come into play in live poetry are non-verbal sounds and the performer’s “body communication,” i.e. how the body of a performer is involved in relation to the speech (Novak, *Live Poetry* 145). Body communication can help the performer to express what he or she wants to say, and,

thus, it is an important factor in the meaning-making process (Striff 9). It can even replace spoken words and act in their stead (Novak, *Live Poetry* 157). In addition, artists deliberately use non-verbal sounds to convey meaning and “to achieve specific effects” (80). At this point, it is important to mention again that the non-verbal sounds I examine are primarily vocal rather than instrumental, such as gasps, audible breaths, slurs or other non-verbal utterances that cannot be identified as words. Novak states that performers might interact with their audience through the use of body communication, which can be used to convey emotions (*Live Poetry* 152-53). In addition, a performer’s body communication can reveal considerable information about the personality of the speaker, who either acts as the real author, or the fictive speaker (155). For example, droopy shoulders can be characteristic for people who experienced an emotional burden, while an upright posture might signal confidence or resistance. Thus, as body communication and non-verbal sounds can shape the meaning of a poem, they should also be considered in an analysis of song lyrics in performance.

3 Analyzing U2’s Rock Lyrics

This following section will discuss selected rock lyrics of the band with respect to their cultural and political dimension. More specifically, it will focus on songs of U2 that reflect topics and events related to their native country Ireland. Furthermore, this chapter will also shed light on the song lyrics’ repercussion in contemporary Irish culture and the specific political positions embraced by U2. Thus, the band’s agenda will be discussed and related to the lyrics and performances of their songs. Drawing on the theoretical and methodological framework established in Chapter 2, the lyrics will be analyzed on the page first, as well as in some of their concrete manifestations as vocal performances.³

3.1 Denouncing the Troubles

As discussed earlier, U2 advocate for a number of different political and social causes, and the band heavily engages in activism in their home nation Ireland. A large part of their work focuses on denouncing the Troubles, i.e. the political and religious conflict in Northern Ireland. With their songs, the band advocate for peace in Ireland, and they want to raise awareness that peaceful resistance to violence and warfare is possible. In addition, while the lyrics are fuelled with historical events of the Troubles, the band has in various contexts

³ The lyrics of the songs discussed are attached in the appendix and will not be referenced separately in the running text.

expanded the meaning of their songs, which has rendered their message universal. This following section serves to identify exactly how U2 denounce the Troubles in their written lyrics, as well as in their performances of their songs. It will furthermore identify which means are used to expand and generalize the songs' meanings.

The Troubles were a religious and political conflict that has its roots in centuries of turmoil and escalated in the 20th century (Hayes and Campbell 9). Overly generalized, the conflict centered around the partition of Ireland from the UK and whether or not Ireland should be an independent nation, as well as the assignment of Northern Ireland (10). The two major parties fighting in this conflict were the Unionists, who supported the idea of Northern Ireland being part of the UK, and the Republicans, who fought for an independent Ireland (Fenney).

3.1.1 "Sunday Bloody Sunday"

The Song "Sunday Bloody Sunday" is the opening track of U2's third album "War" and was released in March 1983. The band's political interest manifested itself for the first time in this album, and "Sunday Bloody Sunday" – being its opening track – is the first song of the band to advocate for social and political change. Thus, it marks the starting point of their resistance against violence in Ireland. "Sunday Bloody Sunday" is regarded as U2's most overtly political work, and the lyrics describe the horrors felt by bystanders of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (Strokes).

As the title of the song, "Sunday Bloody Sunday," suggests, the politically charged lyrics are reflecting one of the events of the Troubles, namely the Bloody Sunday incident. In Irish history, there were actually two events that are now referred to as 'Bloody Sunday.' The first incident has its roots in the Easter Rising of 1916. Irish Republicans launched an unsuccessful uprising against the British rule in Ireland that resulted in the execution of several of their fraction's leaders and provoked the Anglo-Irish War of Independence of 1919-1921 (Healy ch. 1; Killeen 86–91). The Troubles were marked by guerilla attacks with vast civilian casualties. The violence escalated on 21 November 1920, which became known as the first Bloody Sunday of Irish history (Healy ch. 1). In an operation organized by Michael Collins, members of the original Irish Republican Army (original IRA) killed 14 British secret agents in Dublin in their sleep who were accountable for previous killings of members of the nationalist party Sinn Féin (Strokes; Healy ch. 1). Taking revenge, British forces – the infamous Black and Tans – and auxiliaries shot 12 innocent civilians and wounded dozens others at a Gaelic football match in Croke Park the same afternoon (Strokes).

After decades of political turmoil and instability, the incident was echoed in the Northern Ireland city Derry in 1972. In the late 1960s, the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICA) campaigning for civil rights in Northern Ireland was founded, and it began organizing several protests (Healy ch. 1). These protest marches were often banned by authorities, but the marchers chose to carry them out nevertheless (ch. 1). During a peaceful civil rights demonstration against internment in 1972 in Derry, the British army opened fire and shot 14 innocent civilians in full view of the public and the press (Hayes and Campbell 18–19). In addition to the dead, many more were injured and traumatized (18–19). What is particularly alarming about the course of action of the British army is that there had not been any reported riots, but the marchers protested peacefully. In addition, the shootings did not happen all at once, but they were also spread geographically (18–19). This suggests that it has not been *one* false decision by the British army, but that the authorities rather opened gunfire as a precaution to riots. The violence of this second Bloody Sunday triggered a series of attacks and bombings on the part of the IRA, especially in the year after the incident (20), and caused the political situation in Ireland to escalate (24).

To worsen the conflict, a report on the event cleared the British forces from all accountability, and only a later conducted report acknowledged their mistake (“Bloody Sunday (1972)”). In 2010, the then British prime minister David Cameron officially apologized for the actions of the British Army of that day and how the investigation was handled (“Bloody Sunday (1972)”). The second Bloody Sunday event is what is generally viewed to form the backdrop of U2’s song, as it was the cause of the escalation of the Troubles that were going on full force when the song was released in 1983. Bono himself stated that he thought about the second Bloody Sunday incident when writing the song (Bono et al. 164). Nevertheless, the first incident should not be disregarded, since both incidents highlight the atrocity of the Troubles, and both events included highly questionable authorial decisions that led to the tremendous civilian casualties and caused grief and sorrow to the Irish people.

3.1.1.1 *The Lyrics as Written Text*

In their lyrics of their song “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” U2 reflect on the violence of these events. In their opening line, disbelief over the events that were continually happening during the Troubles is expressed (Strokes). Although the first line reads “I can’t believe the news *today*” (emphasis added), there were two Bloody Sunday incidents in Irish history, and at the time the song was written, news of guerilla attacks were daily business in Northern Ireland. This suggests that “today” does not refer to any specific day, but that during the Troubles,

terrible acts of war were ubiquitous and happened everyday. In addition, apart from the song title and the reoccurring line “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” the content and meaning of the written text can be applied to any attack or war incident, and apart from that one line, there are no indications that the lyrics reflect one specific incident. This explains why the Bloody Sunday incidents are used as an allegory⁴ – the lyrics are fuelled by two *specific* incidents, but they describe the aftermath of *any* war incident. Reflecting on the topic of war creates an image of grief, sorrow, and emotional turmoil, and these feelings are caused not only by the Bloody Sunday incidents, but also by the events of the Troubles in general. Both Bloody Sunday incidents are characterized by harsh brutality, rash decisions and high civilian casualties, which are also characteristic for the guerilla warfare of the Troubles in general. Hence, the song is fuelled by the two specific incidents, but the message conveyed applies to all events of the Troubles. Therefore, the use of this allegory allows U2 to deliver a broader message, not only about their stance towards the events of the two Bloody Sundays, but also about their opinion on the warfare of the Troubles in general.

The lyrics describe what has happened as unbelievable and traumatizing, and by the repeated use of the personal pronoun “I,” U2 suggests that they too are victims of the political conflict or, at least, gravely affected by it. In addition, the first person pronoun hints that only one person speaks. The reader will probably imagine Bono speaking to them through the lyrics, as he is the front man and main singer of the band. Nevertheless, the song expresses concerns and interests close to the heart of all band members, and the song was released in the name of the band, which is why one can assume that not only Bono, but all band members as a collective speak to the addressee, i.e. the first person singular pronoun actually stands for ‘U2’ and not merely for Bono. Thus, this first line of the song already brings in the autobiographical connection between the Troubles and the band members. People living in Dublin at that time, such as the members of U2, were largely unaffected by the turmoil in the Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the band became more and more politically conscious previously to launching their third album “War.” Bono remembers that during the band’s “October” tour, several incidents occurred in Ireland that made it clear that the Republican

⁴ Following the definition provided by Chris Baldick in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, I refer to “allegory” as literary device that is used to express a parallel meaning that is hidden behind the visible meaning. I conceive allegories as metaphors that are extended in meaning to deliver a broader message and that establish a correspondence between two different meanings (Baldick).

movement in Ireland was becoming dangerous, and that it could not be supported any longer. In his own words, Bono stated that “[n]ationalism was turning ugly” (Bono et al. 161). Consequently, U2 started to think about what it meant to be Irish, whether they really believed in non-violence, and at what point it is justified to defend oneself and start taking action (162). Bono realized that he too was part of the political conflict that was raging in Northern Ireland, and he stated, “It was only when I realised that the Troubles hadn’t affected me that they began to affect me. The bombs may not go off in Dublin but they’re made here” (Strokes). Although not physically affected by the warfare, the massacres of the Troubles haunted U2, with the images of the events being imprinted on their minds. This is also reflected in the song’s second and third line, “I can’t close my eyes and make it go /away.” Thus, U2 decided to take action and write a song about the events of the Troubles advocating for political change.

Verse 2 laments the aftermath of the many attacks of the Troubles and points to what is truly left of the violence, namely traumatized people and children with no future. There are “[b]roken bottles under children’s feet” and “[b]odies strewn across the dead-end/ street.” The “broken bottles” the children stand on can be interpreted as symbol for a shattered nation, for lives in ruins as result of the warfare. Thus, instead of growing up in a healthy, stable environment, the children, i.e. the future generation, have to build their future and the future of their country on the ruins that the Troubles have left behind. It seems that the conflict has the strongest repercussion on children and young people, because they are the ones who have to live in the aftermath of the warfare. The /b/- alliteration in “broken bottles” additionally emphasizes the image of destruction that has been caused by the Troubles. In addition, the bodies are “strewn” across the street. The word refers to scattering items, for example litter, over a surface and thereby covering it (“Strew”). This suggests that a large number of people have been killed, with their bodies being scattered all over the streets as a result, similar to litter on the side of the road. By using the word “strew” in the context of “bodies,” the band likens worthless litter to dead people and, thus, suggest that the deaths of the people have been worthless. The fighting parties are apparently also regarding people’s lives as worthless, as they continuously kill civilians in the most atrocious ways. This is further emphasizes by the bodies lying in a “dead-end /street.” Dead-end streets lack an exit and dead ends describe situations that have no hope for progress (“Dead-End”). In the broader context of the Troubles, this means that U2 views the warfare and bloodshed as unnecessary and futile, which is revealed by the word choice of their lyrics.

The lyrics suggest that, if the bloodshed continues in the same manner, there will be nothing left but a traumatized nation without a future. Many lives have been lost, whole families have been torn apart, and the conflict has left deep emotional wounds on a whole nation. In Verse 3, U2 laments that “[t]he trenches dug within our hearts/ And mothers, children, brothers, sisters/ torn apart.” At the time of the release of the song, thousands of Irish people experienced emotional turmoil, because many families lost members as a result of the violent conflict. The Bridge of the song additionally evokes emotions of sadness, and simultaneously calls for change:

Wipe your tears from your eyes.
Wipe your tears away.
I'll wipe your tears away.
I'll wipe your tears away.
I'll wipe your bloodshot eyes.

In these lines, the use of the second person is indeterminate – it could be singular or plural. However, one could argue that the pronoun is disambiguated in performance, as the song is then performed in front of a crowd – addressing several people. Since song lyrics are written to be performed, and the song was released on a record to be purchased by a mass audience, it becomes clear that the second persona pronoun in these lines is probably addressing more than one person, and, thus, it is used in its plural form in the lyrics. Therefore, the pronoun hints that the band directly addresses several people, who apparently have “bloodshot eyes” from crying. That the eyes are tinged with blood suggests that the addressees have cried for a longer period of time. Naturally, ‘bloodshot’ may have other connotations than those of tears, such as having red eyes as a result of extreme fatigue. Nevertheless, since in the song the word is used in the context of crying, it seems valid to assume that the addressees’ bloodshot eyes are a result of crying. The anaphors and repetitions in the above lines makes it appear as if the addressees have cried not only once, but several times, and, thereby, they amplify the emotion of sadness. Who exactly the addressees are is somewhat ambiguous. It could be either all readers of the lyrics or, what is probably more likely if one considers the context in which the song was written, all people who have been affected by the conflict in Northern Ireland. Put into the context of the Troubles, this means that the people have not only suffered from, and cried over, the events of one incident, but over several different ones that all led to the emotional drain of hundreds of people.

In Verse 4, the band raises awareness that the war has left people not only emotionally drained, but also inured to the cruelty and violence, to an extent where the warfare has rendered them “immune” to the violence. On the day of the terrible news, “millions cry,” but

one day later, the majority goes back to their daily lives, and they “eat and drink” while others die. The lyrics suggest and criticize that violence and warfare have become part of the daily lives of the Irish population, and that they have become used to the pain.

The band sincerely wants to counteract this notion and change the future. The rhetorical question in Verse 3, “There’s many lost, but tell me who has / won?” hints that the people who died in the Troubles have actually died in vain. U2 poses the question of who was victorious in this conflict and for whom all the people have died. However, they do not provide an answer, which suggests that there *is* no answer to this question, i.e. there is no winner in this conflict. The fact that the band poses this rhetorical question knowing that there is no answer, suggests that the violence of the Troubles is unnecessary, because it cannot solve the underlying problem of the conflict.

With this song, U2 thus call for an end to the violence in Northern Ireland. The line “I won’t heed the battle call” in Verse 2 makes it clear that the band does not want to be part of the Troubles. They advocate for peaceful resistance against the warfare by not being part of the bloodshed. This is exemplified by the following lines of Verse 4: “The real battle just begun/ To claim the victory Jesus won.” Jesus advocated for compassion and peace, and, in the end, he died for his cause and defeated death. This suggests that U2, too, would rather die than participate in the violence, and that they advocate for peaceful resistance. Interestingly, the word “battle” is used in Verse 2 and 4, but in different contexts. The first mention refers to the violent battle between the Unionists and the Irish Republicans, while the second time the word is mentioned, it refers to peacefully resisting and, thereby, fighting the violence. The recurring rhetorical question “How long, how long must we sing this song” raises the question of how long the bloodshed will continue. “[T]his song” is a metaphor for the warfare of the Troubles in Ireland at that time and for the speaking out against it. Thus, the lyrics reflect the current state of the nation and want to raise awareness to the necessity of ending the conflict and fighting for peace. It furthermore becomes clear that U2 want to change the present situation, they want a different, peaceful future. Bono once explained, “What I was trying to say in the song is: there it is, in close-up. I’m sick of it. How long must it go on?” (Strokes).

In addition, the band does not only want to resist the violence on their own, but they want to motivate their readers/listeners to follow their example. The use of personal pronouns helps to establish a relationship between the band and the reader/listener. As mentioned above, the first person personal pronoun “I,” that is used six times in the song, suggests that U2 are also affected by the conflict and, thus, allows the reader/listener to relate to the band. The pronoun

“we” is also used several times, which additionally emphasizes that the band and their readers/listeners are a unity, that they all share the same fate – or, at least, that the readers/listeners are assumed to share the band’s sentiments and are thus drawn together as a community. “We” is also used in the recurring rhetorical question “How long must we sing this /song.” Thereby, U2 assumes that not only they themselves, but also their readers/listeners long for an end to the conflict. The imperative “Oh, let’s go” in the first Chorus then serves to motivate the reader/listener to take up resistance. Although used in its contracted form, the pronoun “us” suggests that the reader/listener does not have to stand up to the conflict alone, but the imperative is directed towards the collective. The lyrics of the Bridge then further call for action on the part of the addressees, who – as discussed above – are the people affected by the Troubles.

While the band advocates for political change, they seem to be aware that it will be a long road to peace. They realize that moving away from brutality and violence, and going back to the spirit of compassion instead, will not be an easy undertaking, which is exemplified by the line “The real battle *just begun*” (emphasis added). The use of the word “battle” furthermore suggests that the band is aware of the risks their protest against the Troubles might entail. This goes hand in hand with the lines “I won’t heed the battle call/ It puts my back up, puts my back up/ against the wall.” By not taking part in the warfare and distancing themselves from the conflict, i.e. by not “heed[ing] the battle call,” the band puts themselves in a dangerous position: Their backs are against a wall. This poses an analogy to the already discussed “dead-end street”: if one’s back is against the wall, one is cornered by an unfavorable situation with no room to retreat. The only way out is to either fight back or to die. In addition, “to put somebody up against the wall” can also refer to the execution of somebody. Especially in times of war, people or inmates in prisons were frequently asked to stand in line against a wall and were shot dead one after the other. Thus, by not participating in the violence, the band puts themselves in a dangerous position that they can only escape through a fight or through death. U2 choose to fight in the form of peaceful and non-violent resistance, as well as through publicly campaigning against violence.

The first line of the song originally strongly criticized the IRA, reading “Don’t talk to me about the rights of the IRA,” but was then changed to what it reads now (Bono et al. 164). U2 member Adam Clayton commented that by changing the first line, “[t]he viewpoint became very humane and non-sectarian, which is the only responsible way” (Strokes). Although having changed the lyrics, and, thus, not directly condemning the IRA, the band continued their campaigning against the Irish Republican Army on their first tour in the United States.

U2, and especially Bono, were determined to stop or prevent Irish people living in the United States, who constituted a considerable amount of their fans, to fund the IRA and support their cause (Luerssen 345). Their efforts aimed at making them see that their money could fund bombs responsible for killing countless innocent Irish civilians (145). This campaigning of U2 angered the IRA. The then leader of the largest Northern Irish party Sinn Féin publicly insulted Bono as “little shit” in an interview (145). What is interesting is that Bono stated that he would actually “love to see a united Ireland” (Strokes) – which technically puts him on the side of the IRA. Nevertheless, he condemns their violence involved in campaigning for a united Ireland. While Bono might agree with the cause of the IRA, he strongly condemns their way of trying to achieve it and, thus, advocated against them. Apart from Bono being insulted in an interview, the band received multiple insults and threats, and they even received a kidnapping threat (145–46). Despite the threats and hostility their campaigning brought on them, U2 continued to advocate for peaceful action against the violence in Northern Ireland.

As can be seen from the analysis of the lyrics, U2 deliberately use a set of specific textual strategies to bring their message across. The use of repetition and alliteration functions to emphasize U2’s viewpoint, and the unanswered rhetorical questions serve to exemplify the futility of the warfare and violence. Furthermore, by using personal pronouns and directly addressing their readers, U2 create a relationship with their readers in order to convince them of their cause to advocate against the Troubles. The song furthermore functions as memory of the past as it captions the state that Ireland was in during the Troubles, i.e. it rewrites the past by reflecting on real-life events, namely the Bloody Sunday incidents. Through reflecting on the effects that the turmoil had on the civilians and the nation and creating an image of destruction and hopelessness, the lyrics demonstrate the necessity of ending the conflict and reestablishing peace in Ireland. In their song, the band rewrites the past and, thereby, raises awareness to the disastrous social and political situation their home nation is in at the times the lyrics were written. In addition, this reflection of the state of affairs emphasizes the necessity of change in the future. The lyrics suggest that the band themselves will take action, and that they will also help others to stand up against the violence and warfare.

3.1.1.2 Performance Context

“Sunday Bloody Sunday” is one of U2’s most performed songs, and the band has played it live more than 600 times until today, resulting in a plurality of versions of the song. Upon its release, many fans of the band regarded the song as a rebel song. They interpreted it as a call for violent resistance against the British rule in Ireland and as a call to support the Republican

movement (Strokes). U2 disliked the idea and, thus, designed a stage setting with three white flags for their “War” tour (Bono et al. 170). The flags should symbolize peace for, and tolerance towards, all nations. Bono once stated, “The whole idea of U2 using a white flag on stage was to get away from the green, white and orange, To get away from the Stars and Stripes, To get away from the Union Jack...I mean I’d love to see a united Ireland but I don’t believe you can put a gun to someone’s head to make him see your way” (Strokes). At some performances, fans would even throw Irish flags on the stage. Bono would then rip off the orange and green parts until he was left with a white flag he would wave around (Bono et al. 161–62). Additionally, upon introducing the song “Sunday Bloody Sunday” on stage, Bono would declare that the song was not a rebel song in order to further emphasize that the band had had enough of violence and advocated for peaceful resistance (Luerssen 156).

One performance in particular should have a lasting memory on U2. The band was touring with their album “The Joshua Tree” in North America and played two concerts on consecutive evenings in Denver, Colorado. Bono remembers the performance of the song on Sunday, 8 November 1987, “It was the ultimate performance of the song. It was almost like the song was made real for the day, in a way that it was never going to be again. Anything else would be less than that” (Strokes).

U2’s 1987 concert tour took place in North America and Europe in support of their album “The Joshua Tree,” and the venues of the concerts were mostly big stadiums or arenas (U2, “U2”). The concert played on Sunday, 8 November 1987 in the McNichols Arena in Denver, was part of the last leg of the tour, and that day, the band played in front of 34,000 people (“The Joshua Tree Tour”). The set list of the concert consisted of 16 songs, and the encore comprising another eight songs. “Sunday Bloody Sunday” was played as 8th song of the regular set list (U2, “U2”). A recording of U2’s performance of 8 November 1987 shows them in full concert mode by the time “Sunday Bloody Sunday” was played, and both, performer and audience, were enthusiastic about the performances of the evening and fully engaged in the concert (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”). This is illustrated by Bono and the other band members jumping around on the stage and the crowd cheering and singing along (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”).

The performance space being an arena hosting a vast crowd, U2 played on a stage separated from the audience in space and height, as is typical for stadium concerts. In addition, the concert featured an extensive light and visual show. The camera shots of the accessible video

recordings of the concert, including the video used for this analysis, however, do not allow for a clear analysis thereof.

Most of the audience that night were regular fans of U2 (“The Joshua Tree Tour”). Since the band’s regular fan base in the United States consisted of many Irish-Americans that had their roots in Ireland, many participants of the concerts were somehow connected to the band’s native country and interested in the happenings there (Luerssen 145). Some fans even supported the Republican Movement in Ireland financially, which U2 tried to counteract vehemently (145).

The recording shows that, while the crowd still cheers about the previous song, Bono repeatedly runs his fingers through his hair, strolls around a little bit, and says: “Well here we are, the Irish in America,” which is followed by loud cheers from the audience (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”). He continues to talk about the fact that many people in the present audience are of Irish descent, with some having emigrated for economic reasons, and others fleeing from the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In the background, cheers and shouts from the audience are audible. Bono then states that some people flee the country because of the ongoing terrorism and, thereby, draws the audience’s attention to an attack in the Irish town Enniskillen that happened the same day, and the cheers from the audience ebb considerably. This can be interpreted as an expression of shock and speechlessness at the attack. What had happened in Enniskillen, although Bono does not explain it in his introduction to the song, was that mostly elderly people had gathered around the war memorial in the town center to commemorate British war dead (Fenney ch. 7; Strokes). At the memorial, the IRA detonated a bomb which killed 13 civilians and injured dozens others (Strokes). In his introductory statement, Bono calls the attack “a wild act of terrorism,” because of which “eleven people lie dead – many more injured, on a Sunday bloody Sunday” (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”). While Bono states the introduction in a clear, strong voice typical for his speech, he raises his voice when calling the attacks of the Troubles “wild acts of terrorism” and then continuously lowers his intonation until the last three words, “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” are uttered more silently, in a hoarse timbre. The raising in pitch expresses Bono’s outrage and disbelief over the attack, and the falling pitch and breathy timbre makes it appear as if he was choking with emotion.

After the emotional introduction, the band then starts playing the song. With regard to the attack happening on the same day the performance took place, the first line of the song, “I can’t believe the news today” (U2, “Sunday Bloody Sunday”), is put into a new context: it

can be taken literally. Furthermore, the attack happened on a Sunday and thus constitutes another ‘Bloody Sunday’ incident in Irish history, which makes the song title “Sunday Bloody Sunday” appear even more on point.

At the beginning of the performance, Bono’s body communication alternates between wounded and hurt, and confident. He changes from hunching his back and looking down on the stage (see fig. 2a), to a strong posture with direct eye contact to the audience, sometimes even with his chin slightly raised looking up at the sky (see fig. 2b). The change of posture reinforces the twofold message of the song: On the one hand, Bono’s body communication stresses that the political turmoil in Ireland has brought hatred and hurt to countless people, and it has wounded a whole nation. He crouches on the stage when singing about the status quo in Ireland in a calm voice with a slight vibration to it, which suggests emotionality. His strong, confident stance, on the other hand, relates to his wish that the people have to stand up and fight against the injustice and violence. He downright shouts, “How long, how long must we sing this song,” and looks up at the sky (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”).



Fig. 2a&b: Bono, (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”).

The second rhetorical question of “How long, how long must we sing this/ song” marks a radical change in tempo and volume (U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”). Before, Bono’s voice was lower in volume and breathier in timbre, which resulted in a heavy, lethargic tone lamenting the events of the Troubles. The band then picks up speed, paired with louder instrumentation, especially from the electric guitar and drums, and a rough timbre of Bono’s voice. Thus, the band appears to be buzzing with the energy of suppressed anger. Bono’s body communication also indicates that. Before, he was moving around slowly and calmly, and his facial expressions, too, changed more slowly. Now, he moves fast and jumps around the stage.

During a guitar solo without vocals from Bono, he walks to one end of the stage that is elevated and stands on its edge. The guitar begins to imitate what sounds like marching drums, and the lead singer starts to talk to the audience:

Now let me tell you something. I've had enough of Irish-Americans who haven't been back to their country in 20 or 30 years, come up to me and talk about the resistance of the revolution back home – and the glory of the revolution – and the glory of dying for the revolution. Fuck the revolution!

(U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”)

While Bono tells the audience that he has had enough of Irish people living abroad mindlessly cheering on and supporting the IRA, he raises his hand to chest-height, points his index finger to his chest, and moves it forcefully left to right – which resembles the cutting off of something – reinforcing that he does not want them involved in the Troubles (see fig. 2c). This constitutes a prime example of U2's efforts of stopping their Irish-



Fig. 2c: Bono

American fans to financially support the IRA in their cause, which they did at numerous of their stage performances, as mentioned above. In addition to the body movement, Bono raises his voice in pitch and volume when addressing the Irish-Americans in the audience, which gives his speech extra effort in order to convince the audience of his viewpoint. There is also a raise in pitch observable when Bono talks about the “glory” of the revolution. The vowels in “glory” and “dying” are particularly stressed, and the words are uttered in a higher pitch than the rest of the sentences, which gives it a mocking tone of irony suggesting that there is no glory in the revolution or dying for its cause. The last sentence is then shouted by Bono, with higher volume and a rising pitch, the word “fuck” being pronounced with particular effort paired with a stern facial expression. The response from the audience is immediate, as they shout and applaud in consent with Bono's outrage about the revolution and people getting involved in it. The singer then continues:

They don't talk about the glory of killing for the revolution. What's the glory in taking a man from his bed and gunning him down in front of his wife and his children? Where is the glory in that? Where is the glory in bombing a Remembrance Day parade of old-age pensioners, their medals taken out and polished up for the day? Where is the glory in that? To leave them dying or crippled for life - or dead.

(U2, “U2 Sunday Bloody Sunday, 1987 Avi.”)

Although not explicitly stated, the first two sentences most likely contain a reference to the first Bloody Sunday incident in 1920, where members of the original IRA killed British

undercover agents in their sleep. Bono's choice of words for describing how the spies were killed is particularly interesting: "gunning them down," suggests that the assassins did not only fire one deadly shot, but rather they opened gunfire on the men with several guns and did not stop firing until the undercover agents were dead. Thus, the singer emphasizes the cruelty involved in the crime. While Bono's introduction includes a reference to the Troubles and the attack that happened on the day of the concert in Enniskillen, it is only now that the singer provides the audience with more context. The reference to the attack in the Northern Irish town again emphasizes that victims of guerilla warfare of the IRA are mostly innocent civilians. The phrase "where is the glory" is repeated four times, and it is always elevated in pitch and volume, and, thus, it is more prominent and stands out from the rest of the sentences. Like before, the vowel in "glory" is extremely stressed, again resulting in a tone of irony. When Bono asks where the glory in the actions is, the articulatory parameters used in his speech result in a mocking tone and, thus, provide the answer to his rhetorical question, namely that there is no glory in warfare.



Fig. 2d&e: Bono

Unlike poetry in its written mode, live poetry allows for spontaneity, and in his performance Bono makes use of that. After his monologue, the singer encourages the audience to participate. He shouts, "No more!", into the microphone, then adds the imperative, "Sing!", and holds up the microphone while leaning towards the auditorium, hoping for the audience to respond (see fig. 2d&e). The participants comply with the singer's imperative and shout, "No more!". This interplay between Bono and the audience shouting happens five times, with the singer's voice cracking on one instance, because he puts so much strain and volume in his shouting. By connecting with the audience in this way, Bono encourages them not only to interact with him and actively shape the performance, but he also gets them to say that they want "no more" of the violence.

The rest of the performance is characterized by the band jumping around the stage, and especially Bono is constantly running around. The performance seems to have reached its end, which is indicated by Bono having sung the last line and then crouching on the stage, the instrumentation being reduced in tempo, and the lights going out. Unexpectedly, the drums and guitar pick up the beat again, and U2 starts to play the song anew. This marks a division

from the song in its written form, which is only possible in oral performance. The crowd seems elevated at the performance and, thus, the band seemingly spontaneously decides to start playing again. Bono then picks up the refrain of the song once more, and on the last “Sunday Bloody Sunday,” sinks to the floor while holding on to the microphone stand with his hands (see fig. 2f). He kneels down as if in prayer, concluding the performance with a



Fig. 2f: Bono

strong religious symbol of appealing to a higher god to end the brutality and violence that is the Troubles.

In summary, U2 deliberately used their performances of “Sunday Bloody Sunday” to advocate for peace and peaceful resistance against the Troubles. The manner in which the song was staged – namely with Bono strongly condemning on the IRA – made clear that the band had turned against the nationalism of their country. All this additional meaning could have hardly been conveyed on the printed page, through the song lyrics alone. U2’s performance of “Sunday Bloody Sunday” at their 1897 concert in Denver was spontaneously put into a new context of an attack of the Troubles that had happened the same day. The introductory paratext delivered by Bono, as well as his monologue in the middle the performance, reinforced the autobiographical connection of U2 to the song. In addition, the added paratext and the different contextualization of the song in relation to a recent terrorist attack resulted in a highly emotional performance of the song with spontaneous interaction between performer and audience. Bono’s voice action and body communication further emphasized the emotional component of the song and helped convey the meaning. Unlike written poetry, live performances allow for that kind of spontaneity and, as can be seen from the performance under investigation, add layers of meanings to song texts.

3.1.2 “Peace on Earth”

“Peace on Earth” is the eighth track on U2’s studio album “All That You Can’t Leave Behind” which was released on 30 October 2000. After their previous album “Pop” had received mixed reviews, “All That You Can’t Leave Behind” was celebrated as the band being back in their original form (U2, “U2”). “Peace on Earth” is the album’s most political song, and the lyrics reflect the Omagh bombing of 15 August 1998, which was the incident with the highest death toll of the Troubles (Fenney ch. 9).

After more than 30 years of attacks and warfare in Northern Ireland, a new British government that was dedicated to establishing peace in Northern Ireland was elected in 1997, and a ceasefire with the IRA was called (ch. 9). By 1998, peace in Northern Ireland seemed to be within reach, made possible by the Good Friday Agreement (ch. 9). This agreement between the British and Irish Governments and the political parties of Northern Ireland defined the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, as well as the relationship between Ireland and the UK (The Northern Ireland Office). The agreement particularly focused on civil and cultural rights, as well as policing and justice, and it also included the disarmament of the British army and the paramilitary forces that had been present in Ireland for more than 30 years during the Troubles (The Northern Ireland Office). A referendum on the Good Friday Agreement was held on 10 May 1998, and with the majority of the population voting ‘yes,’ the agreement was signed on Good Friday of 1998 and would become effective in December 1999 (“Good Friday Agreement”). The enforcement of the terms of this agreement is viewed as marking the end of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Nevertheless, frightened by the rapid change in their country, some political factions continued low-level violence despite the called ceasefire, and in August 1998, the bombing with the most civilian casualties of the Troubles happened in the city of Omagh (Fenney ch. 9). A group that split from the IRA, the Real IRA (RIRA), detonated a car bomb in the market center of Omagh on 15 August 1998, killing twenty-nine civilians and injuring more than 200 people (“BBC History: Omagh Bomb”). The attack was described as an “atrocious,” as it killed only civilians – among them many children – and the youngest victim was only 18 months old (“BBC History: Omagh Bomb”). Ironically, the 15 August 1998 was again a Sunday, and although this incident is not officially referred to as ‘Bloody Sunday,’ it literally was another bloody Sunday. After the attack, it was feared the Unionists, who supported the Good Friday Agreement, would strike back and, thus, jeopardize the peace process in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the political repercussion of the bombing remained peaceful. Despite yearlong investigations, until today, it is not completely clear who was responsible for the attack other than the ‘RIRA’ (“BBC History: Omagh Bomb”).

3.1.2.1 The Lyrics As Written Text

The lyrics to the song “Peace on Earth” were written by Bono on the evening of the day of the Omagh bombing. While he was watching the news on the attack and heard the names of the victims being called out on TV, he decided to write a song about it (Luerssen 340). U2 were

open supporters of the Good Friday Agreement, and the band intensively campaigned for a ‘yes’ vote on the referendum (Bono et al. 351–52). After the attack, Bono feared that the bombing could jeopardize the fragile peace process. The musician stated, “It was really a trauma for the entire nation, because not only was it the destruction of so many lives, it seemed it was a destruction of the peace process, which had been so painstakingly put together with sticky tape and glue and a lot of faith” (353). Bono remembers watching the news that evening in complete disbelief, and words were failing him over what had happened (353). “We couldn’t speak. Everyone in Ireland was in deep shock. When they read out the names of all the people who died on RTE, the country came to a complete standstill” (353). The song “Peace on Earth” is a direct reflection of Bono’s shock and disbelief that many other people throughout the country felt too (Luerssen 340). The musician channeled these emotions into the song, which becomes evident from the lyrics (340).

Interestingly, the song is about the Omagh bombing in *Ireland*, but it is titled “Peace on *Earth*” (emphasis added). This hints that the song has a more general, universal meaning. The lyrics indeed function as allegory: On the surface, they lament the situation in Ireland, but the theme of being fed up with the violence of warfare and longing for peace is applicable universally. As mentioned above, Bono wrote the lyrics to “Peace on Earth” single-handedly, but the song was released as the work of U2. Thus, the song can be seen as reflecting Bono’s own feelings on the day of the Omagh bombing, but the whole band supports his desperate call for peace. The repetition of the phrase “Peace on Earth” serves to exemplify the intensity of the band’s emotions, as it foregrounds the urgency of their call for peace.

The first two lines, “Heaven on Earth/ We need it now,” call for a change of the present situation in Ireland that is marked by warfare and violent attacks. ‘Heaven’ is often described as a paradise where virtues such as goodness, compassion, love, and faith are the highest values. Thus, “Heaven on Earth” is a symbol for a peaceful place without violence and warfare. Paired with the line “We need it now” makes the first two lines a call for peace. The song was written on the day of the Omagh bombing of 15 August 1998. Thus, if the lyrics are put into their historical context, “now” refers to the day of the attack and “we” to all people affected by the bombing. If one considers the bigger picture – the peace process in Northern Ireland – not only people in Northern Ireland, but all parties involved in the Good Friday Agreement might have been – or would potentially be – affected by the attack. Thus, while the pronoun “we” in line two also refers to all people affected by the Good Friday peace agreement. U2 have advocated for peace before, but the use of the temporal adverb “now”

stresses the urgency of establishing peace in their home country, which would affect a vast amount of people.

Line three of the lyrics reads “I am sick of all of this.” Therefore, Verse 1 puts forward that U2 are thoroughly tired and exasperated of the “pain” and “sorrow” the Troubles have brought on the people. The /s/- alliteration in “Sick of sorrow” creates a musical, rhythmical effect and stresses how exasperated the band is by the pain and grief the conflict has entailed. The last three lines of the verse are particularly negative, reading “Sick of hearing again and again/ That there’s gonna be/ Peace on Earth.” The words “again and again” suggest that peace was tangible not only once, but several times, and that some people continuously assert that peace is possible, and that factions again and again agreed to keep the peace. This relates to the real-life context of the Troubles. In the 1990s, Irish and British parties entered peace negotiations that were repeatedly broken off after different guerilla attacks in Ireland and the UK, only to be resumed and started anew shortly after (Fenney ch. 8). After the referendum on the Good Friday agreement, the peace process seemed to be finally successful, until yet another bomb went off in Omagh. Being “sick of” the assertion that peace is within reach, the last three lines of Verse 1 suggests that Bono has lost faith in establishing peace in Ireland, or anywhere in the world. Bono admittedly almost suffered a crisis of faith after the Omagh bombing, stating that “[i]t was hard to be a believer at that moment” (Bono et al. 353). Band member The Edge later even wanted to change the lyrics into “I’m sick of hearing again and again that there’s never gonna be peace on earth,” as he believed that the lines were too cynical otherwise, and he feared they could turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy (372). When the band performed the song at a telethon in US television to raise money for the victims of the 9/11 attack, they indeed changed the lyrics to what the Edge suggested (c.f. U2, “U2 - Peace On Earth/Walk On”). The chapter on “Peace on Earth” in its performance context analyzes this particular performance of the song. Bono countered the Edge’s argument by stating that he believed in being prepared for the worst and hoping for the best, which he does not consider being cynical but rather being hopeful and believing (Bono et al. 373). Thus, these last lines of Verse 1 are not intended in as negative a vein as they might appear on first sight. It appears as if at the root of Bono’s cynicism lies despair – and hence, a criticism of violence, which in turn *can* be read as an indictment to end the violence. Thus, while Bono is weary of the reaffirmation that peace on Earth is possible, he nevertheless believes in the possibility, and he believes in never giving up fighting for peace.

Verse 2 offers a glimpse into Bono’s past, and the musician stated, “I tried to bring it back to growing up on Cedarwood Road and *my own* violence” (Bono et al. 372, emphasis added).

The verse reads: “Where I grew up/ There weren’t many trees/ Where there was we’d tear them down/ And use them on our enemies.” The first line hints that Bono is talking about his childhood. The meaning of the next line is somewhat ambiguous. It could be meant literally, although on Cedarwood Road where Bono grew up, there are a high number of trees that, considering their height, have already been there when Bono lived on that street. This becomes evident from the satellite pictures in fig. 3 below. Thus, a figurative meaning is more likely, with “trees” functioning as a symbol. Children often climb up trees to have a good view of their surroundings, or they use them as refuge from difficult situations. Thus, “trees” could function as symbol for refuge and escape. Trees are furthermore symbols for the pleasure of nature, and they provide shade and protection from heat or rain. In any case, trees have mostly positive connotations. Bono, however, did not shy away from precarious



Fig. 3: Satellite Pictures of Bono's Childhood Home (“10 Cedarwood Rd”)

situations, but that he rather stroke back and “used them on [his] enemies.” In his youth, the singer actually resorted frequently to violence and aggression, for example to fight off bullies, or to pay back one of his teachers (Luerssen 4–5). That he would not fell the trees but “tear them down” further emphasizes this inclination to aggression of young Bono. In addition, the /w/-alliteration in “Where there was we’d tear them down,” and the /o/- alliteration “on our” makes the lines rhythmical, and results in the reader reading them in a regular, fast beat that resembles a chant. Paired with the strength and force required for tearing down trees, this further emphasizes young Bono’s tendency for violent behavior. Thus, it seems as if Bono is familiar with the practice of resorting to violence in order to solve conflicts. Nevertheless, he has made the experience that fighting violence with violence is futile and will render him into what he despised and tried to fight in the first place. This is reflected in the form of aphorisms in the next the lines: “They say what you mock/ Will surely overtake you/ And you become a monster/ So the monster will not break you.” If put into the context of the Troubles, it seems as if Bono could relate to the urge to fight like with like, but that he discovered that fighting violence with violence is futile, and, thus, the singer now advocates for peaceful resistance

against the conflict. Thus, it seems as if he wants other people to learn from his own mistakes and show them that there is another way to fight for peace.

The topic of resisting someone by using the same means as s/he uses, which – in the case of the Troubles – is fighting violence with violence, is again taken up in the Bridge of the lyrics that reads, “It has already gone too far/ Who said that if you go in hard/ You won’t get hurt.” As discussed above, Bono has made the experience for himself that resorting to fighting violence with violence is futile, which is also the general truth put forward by the aphorisms in Verse 2. This gives the following rhetorical question a mocking tone: “Who said that if you go in hard/ You won’t get hurt”? This aphorism can be interpreted in two different ways: Either no one says that it is true that “if you go in hard you won’t get hurt,” or – if someone says it – s/he has too little knowledge or authority to be listened to. Either way, it would seem unwise to “go in hard,” as nobody can guarantee that going in full-force prevents the “hurt,” which – in the case of the Troubles – manifested itself in countless deaths and the trauma, grief, and sorrow of a whole nation.

In Chorus 1, Bono then asks, “Jesus could you take the time/ To throw a drowning man a line”? With this sentence, Bono directs an apostrophe to Jesus in the form of a question. The fact that Bono is praying, and thereby appealing to a ‘higher spirit,’ implies that he feels helpless and does not know how to act or react. Regarding the real-life context, this is exactly how the musician felt when watching the news on the Omagh bombing, and he said that he was at a loss for words, because he was in “deep shock” (Luerssen 353). Hence, the only option he had left was to pray to some higher being, in this case Jesus. To formulate his question, Bono uses the modal verb “could,” which is often used in polite requests (“Could”), and, thus, he very politely asks Jesus to help him. The idiom “take the time” means to “attempt” or “make an effort to do something” (“Take the Time”). This gives the question a mocking tone, since Bono politely asks Jesus if he can at least *make an effort*, or *attempt* to help him. This mocking tone hints that Jesus *could* actually make an effort, but will not do so. The phrase “drowning man” is probably a metaphor for Bono’s faith. It is not the musician who is drowning and, thus, dying, but his faith. As discussed above, he is losing faith in the Northern Irish peace process, and he almost suffers a religious crisis as a result of the Omagh attack. Hence, he prays to Jesus to “throw [him] a line.” In combination with the phrase “drowning man,” what is meant is probably a lifeline. Again, this is not to be taken literally, but a lifeline is something to hold on to prevent dying. If put into real-life context, this means that Bono is losing his faith in peace, and, in order to restore it, he prays to Jesus to offer him a glimpse of hope that peace on Earth is indeed possible. Another possible meaning of “line”

in this context is the following: Bono has been rendered speechless by the Omagh bombing, but he nevertheless writes a song about it. Thus, he is a *song-writer* asking for a line, which means that the apostrophe directed at Jesus could also be a call for inspiration on the song and on how to advocate for peace through the lyrics.

Bono being at a loss for words and doubting whether peace in Ireland is possible is also taken up later in the lyrics, in the second Chorus: “Jesus this song you wrote/ The words are sticking in my throat.” Jesus’s “song” is probably a metonymy for what he preached. He advocated for peace, love, compassion, and equality of all people, and he called upon others to follow his example. Bono, however, cannot do so, as “[t]he words are sticking in [his] throat.” This line suggests that he is at a loss for words, and that he cannot advocate for peace, as he doubts whether peace is at all possible. In addition, the phrase “sticking in my throat” adds an emotional component to the lyrics. Being unable to speak because of a dry, tight throat is also an indication of experiencing intense emotions, for example holding back tears. Thus, Bono cannot speak up for peace because, on the one hand, he doubts whether it is possible, and, on the other hand, he literally cannot speak, as he is fighting back tears and, thus, has a dry and tight throat. While the violence of the Troubles has rendered the singer allegedly speechless, he manages to express his intense emotions in the form of lyrics. Bono explicitly states in the lyrics that he cannot speak, but he nevertheless masters the strength to speak up. This antithesis between Bono being in emotional shock, but nevertheless articulating his feelings results in a strong call for peace.

Having discussed the first two lines of Chorus 1, the following paragraph discusses the subsequent four lines, which read: “Peace on Earth/ Tell the ones who hear no sound/ Whose sons are living in the ground/ Peace on Earth.” Since in the first two lines of the chorus are a prayer addressed to Jesus, the request to tell the people that there is going to be peace on Earth is most likely also addressed to him and, thus, can be seen as an extension of Bono’s prayer for peace. Starting his prayer with a question, Bono now calls upon Jesus to “[t]ell the ones who hear no sound/ Whose sons are living in the ground/ Peace on Earth.” Bono asks for peace for both, the victims of the bombing who are dead and, thus, “hear no sound,” as well as their mothers. “[T]he ones who hear no sound” could actually also refer to deaf people, but since the lyrics were written in the context of the Omagh bombing, the phrase most likely refers to the victims of the attack. In these lines, there are also oppositions that give the text a mocking tone. Firstly, Bono asks Jesus to tell, i.e. acoustically communicate, to the victims of the bombing that there is going to be peace on Earth. However, these people are dead and cannot hear anything and, thus, cannot receive the message that peace on Earth will

nevertheless be established, although they died because of the Troubles. Bono requests the impossible, which gives the lines a mocking tone of irony and, thus, also mocks Jesus, because the request is directed at him. Secondly, Bono refers to the victims of the bombing as sons who are “living in the ground.” This euphemism adds a macabre tone to the prayer, as the victims of the bombing were killed and, therefore, ceased to live. It seems as if these lines especially are fuelled by Bono’s emotions, and his bitterness and helplessness is reflected in the mocking tone of irony. It appears as if the singer wants to challenge and provoke Jesus by asking the impossible of him.

The next few lines add to the emotional component of the song, as they describe the feelings of a mother whose child became a victim of the Omagh bombing and who now “cries/ for Peace on Earth.” The word ‘cry’ in this line has a double meaning: Firstly, the mother literally cries over her dead child. Secondly, the mother now cries out, i.e. calls for an end to the conflict in Ireland and for “Peace on Earth.” This directly relates to the Omagh bombing, as there were countless children among the victims. The statement that “[n]o-one cries like a mother cries,” suggests that, although the Troubles have brought grief to countless families, the loss of a child is almost unbearable for a mother. The lyrics then read, “She never got to say goodbye/ To see the colour in his eyes/ Now he’s in the dirt.” This further emphasizes the sorrow and grief every mother of each victim felt, which is amplified by the fact that they were struck down by their children’s deaths, without a chance to say goodbye.

Verse 4 then makes it explicit that the song was inspired by the Omagh bombing: It describes how the victims’ names are read out over the radio, and the lyrics even list some of them: “Sean and Julia, Gareth, Ann and Brenda.” This calling out of names adds a very personal component to the lyrics. Usually, the victims of bombing attacks remain anonymous to a mass audience, but by calling out their names over the radio, they are not presented as casualties of a war, but as people with concrete names and faces. In Bono’s view, the deaths of these people cannot be justified, because lives are worth more than winning any war. This becomes evident from the following phrase: “Their lives are bigger than any big idea.” By leaving out the surnames of the victims, the message put across in Verse 4 becomes applicable to any killing in the name of war. The use of the word “any” additionally suggests that the musician does not only condemn the Omagh bombing specifically, but the killing of people in the name of *any* war, i.e. *no* war is *ever* worth killing people.

As discussed above, the second chorus takes up the topic of Bono losing his faith in the possibility of peace. In addition, the verse constitutes a bridge to the beginning of the song

lyrics, i.e. to Verse 1. In Verse 1, the singer states that he has had enough of empty promises, of “hearing again and again/ That there’s gonna be/ Peace on Earth.” Lines three to five of Chorus 2 then read, “Peace on Earth/ Hear it every Christmas time/ But hope and history won’t rhyme.” Bono is exasperated by the promise of peace that is put forward “again and again,” namely “every Christmas time.” This bridge between Verse 1 and Chorus 2 is not only evident from the content of the lyrics, but is also reflected in the structure. While Chorus 1 is presented as one stanza, Chorus 2 is divided in two parts, with the second part relating to Verse 1. Christmas time supposedly is a peaceful time that puts people in the spirit of compassion and love. Especially at the end of each year, fundraising campaigns and humanitarian aid organizations want to raise awareness for their cause and advocate for peace, and they intensively lobby people to support them. Thus, each year at Christmas time people do good deeds by supporting them and hoping for peace in the future. However, people’s faith in peace and reality clash, as history shows us that every peace period is pre- and superseded by a period of war. This is reflected in the lyrics in the phrase “hope and history won’t rhyme.” Although the /h/-alliteration of “hope and history” aligns the two terms on a sonic level, the lyrics are quick to deny any likeness between them in real life. After World War I came World War II, and – in the case of Ireland – this was superseded by the Troubles. The last lines of Chorus 2 read, “So what’s it worth? / This Peace on Earth.” This suggests that Bono asks himself why anyone should advocate for peace if, so far in history, it only lasted for a small period of time in-between periods of violence and war.

The discussion of the lyrics of “Peace on Earth” sheds light on how Bono and U2 put forward their call for ending warfare and the Troubles. Firstly, reflecting on the real-life event of the Omagh bombing fuels the lyrics with emotions to which countless Irish people – and all people witnessing war – can relate. These emotions are then further emphasized by stylistic choices, such as word choice, alliterations, and metaphors, as well as by bringing in a personal component of the victims, namely their names. Thus, bystanders who are not affected by the Troubles can relate to the emotions felt by the people affected and, therefore, understand the urgency and necessity of establishing peace in Ireland. The necessity of ending the warfare is further emphasized by Bono’s own crisis of faith, which is reflected in the song. If he, a very religious and strong-willed person, is losing faith in the possibility of peace, countless other people will stop believing in it too. The reflection on Bono’s youth and the aphorisms furthermore suggest that violence is futile and will do more harm than good to anyone resorting to it. In addition the allegory in the lyrics makes it clear that the song gets a

more general, universal meaning, and that U2 not only advocate for peace in their home nation, but for world peace.

Therefore, through reflecting on past events, i.e. rewriting the past, the written lyrics suggest that people should learn from the past in order to prevent history from repeating itself. While history showed us that peace has only lasted for a small period of time and lasting peace might not be possible, the lyrics put forward that one should never give up hope or stop advocating for peace.

3.1.2.2 Performance Context

“Peace on Earth” is one of U2’s least performed songs, and the band has only played it live at 21 of their shows. All these performances were part of the third leg of the band’s “Elevation Tour” in the US and Canada in fall 2001 (U2, “U2”). In addition to the performances at the tour concerts, U2 performed “Peace on Earth” live for a telethon broadcasted on US television in order to raise money for the victims of, and families affected by, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA. The following two sections discuss “Peace on Earth” in its performance context at the 9/11 telethon, as well as at the “Elevation” tour concerts.

3.1.2.2.1 U2 Pay Tribute to American Heroes

After the second leg of the “Elevation” tour, the band had a one month break, and the next concert was to take place on 10 October 2001 (U2, “U2”). During that break, on 11 September 2001, four passenger airplanes were hijacked in the US by the terrorist group al-Qaeda: two of the planes were flown into the New York World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed on a farmland near Washington D.C. (Schier ch.1). The attacks – often referred to as 9/11 – were the single most deadly terrorist attacks in the US, killing almost 3,000 people and injuring more than 6,000 others (ch.1). What is viewed as particularly atrocious about the attacks is that – apart from the 19 terrorists on the hijacked planes – they killed only civilians, among them countless firefighters and policemen trying to rescue people from the collapsing Twin Towers in New York (Schier ch.1).

On 21 September 2001, two weeks before U2 continued their “Elevation” tour in North America, the band supported a telethon called “America: A Tribute to Heroes” in order to raise money for the victims of, and families affected by, the 9/11 attacks (“America: A Tribute to Heroes”). The two-hour broadcast was commercial-free and featured celebrities on the phone banks and as speakers, among others Jack Nicholson, Meg Ryan, Muhammad Ali, and Julia Roberts, as well as famous musical acts, such as Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, or

U2 (“60 Million Watch America: A Tribute to Heroes”). In contrast to the other musical acts, U2’s performance was not a ‘live performance’ in the strict sense, as there was no physical co-presence of the performers and the audience. U2 was in London at the time of the broadcast, and their performance was beamed live via satellite and used for the telethon in the US. This means that the audience was in a different spatial situation than the band, namely in the TV studio running the telethon, or in front of TV-sets watching the broadcast. Nevertheless, this performance of “Peace on Earth” was probably the most significant one for two reasons: Firstly, it changed the meaning of the song and put it into the context of 9/11 for the first time. The third leg of U2’s “Elevation” tour started two weeks after the telethon, and all the performances of “Peace on Earth” at the concerts were also put into the context of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Secondly, in the telethon performance, U2 merged “Peace on Earth” with “Walk On” for the first time, and they continued to do so at numerous of their “Elevation” tour concert performances (U2, “U2”). Considering the significance of the telethon performance of “Peace on Earth” for all the performances that were to follow, an analysis of the audiotext of the live broadcast performance seems valid, although it is not a live performance in the strict sense.

Apart from U2, the performance additionally featured four other musicians: Dave Stewart on vocals and guitar, and three background singers (“America: A Tribute to Heroes”; U2, “U2 - Peace On Earth/Walk On”). The performance took place in a soundstage (Boas), without the presence of a live audience in the same physical location, but with millions of live TV viewers that were called upon to donate for 9/11 victims and their families.

U2’s performance is rather early in the broadcast, and George Clooney introduces their performance as follows:

Officer John Perry of the 40th precinct in the Bronx went to police headquarters the morning of September 11 to file his retirement papers. When he heard the explosion at the World Trade Center he raced to the site. John Perry never returned. I don’t think anyone would have blamed him if he decided to stay behind that day, but he was a New York City policeman. He knew what he had to do, and he did it – one last time.

(U2, “Tribute To Heroes - Part 2 of 2”)

Clooney then goes on by saying that now it was everybody else’s turn to help – in the form of donations to the telethon, and the picture of Clooney blends into the satellite broadcast of U2’s performance (U2, “Tribute To Heroes - Part 2 of 2”). In this performance, the message of “Peace on Earth” is generalized so that it fits the situation of the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the US. U2 does so by omitting the Ireland-specific lyrics of the song, i.e. by only singing Verse 1 of “Peace on Earth,” and then the band merges the song with another of their

songs – “Walk On.” The lyrics of the second song are originally about a young female activist living in England who decided to leave her family behind and advocate for democracy in her home country Burma, which was ruled by a brutal military regime (Bono et al. 366). Bono remembers the inspiration for “Walk On”:

It’s a song about nobility and personal sacrifice, about doing what’s right, even if your heart is telling you otherwise. [...] Love, in the highest sense of the word, is the only thing that you can always take with you, in your heart. At some point you are going to have to lose everything else anyway.

(Bono et al. 366–67)

Originally written about a Burmese activist, the song lyrics get a new meaning through the introduction at the telethon: Like John Perry, countless other policemen and firefighters sacrificed their lives for others by rescuing them from the collapsing Twin Towers. Similar to the Burmese activist’s, their actions were noble and characterized by personal sacrifice. They did what was right, even though it claimed their lives, and they had to leave their loved ones behind. From the background information about the song, as well as from George Clooney’s introduction, it becomes evident that, through their performance of “Walk On,” U2 pay tribute to the people who let their lives for rescuing others. The song choice, therefore, emphasizes the message of telethon already inherent in its title: “A *Tribute* to Heroes.”

The fictive addressees of “Peace on Earth” are different in the performance from those of the lyrics on the page: On the page, the lyrics address the people affected by the Omagh bombing in Ireland, while the telethon performance is dedicated to the victims of the 9/11 attacks and their families. In addition, the fictive speakers of the performance are simultaneously the real authors – U2 are sick of the warfare in real-life and advocate for peace as fictive speakers of their performance. Live performances allow for this kind of spontaneity and for putting a song originally fuelled by a specific historic event into the context of a different one – and thereby giving it a new and/or additional meaning. Paired with the message of “Walk On,” the band call for peace, for an end to terrorist attacks, and they pay tribute to all the fallen heroes and try to console their families.

When the band starts playing the intro to “Peace on Earth,” Bono slightly gazes down on the stage, his hand folded behind his back, and his guitar hanging loosely from the guitar strap around his shoulders, as indicated by fig. 4a. In addition, Bono’s facial expression is relaxed, and – paired with his



Fig. 4a: Bono (U2, “U2 – Peace on Earth/Walk On”)

downward gaze – this makes him appear pensive. After the guitar has played the first few chords, the singer then sways towards the microphone, with his body moving left to right, and he starts to sing the first verse of the song. His voice is low in volume, and the words are articulated in a legato. In addition, his hands are still folded behind his back, and, instead of looking down on the stage, he is gazing into the distance, and his eyes appear unfocused (see fig. 4b). This specific voice action and body communication make Bono appear as if being physically present in the studio, but absent-minded. This pensiveness and calmness that is communicated is further realized by the instrumentation: The only instrument playing is a guitar in a low volume and slow beat – played by the Edge. Similar to Bono, he often casts his gaze down towards his feet, which underlines that he is composed and pensive (see fig. 4b). Considering that the band is playing the song to raise money for the victims of an atrocious terrorist attack, the supposed tranquility can also be interpreted as hopelessness. This means that the band is not calm and composed as it might appear at first sight, but the 9/11 attacks defeated their faith in peace on Earth. This emotionality is also reflected in Bono's voice, as he sings the words in a plain, hoarse timbre that makes it appear as if the singer is choking with emotions. There is a rise in pitch at the end of some lines, followed by a pause:



Fig.4b: Bono and the Edge

Heaven on Eath
 We need it n^{ow}
 I'm sick of all of this
 Hanging ar^{ound}
 Sick of the sorrow
 I'm sick of the p^{ain}
 I'm sick of h^{ear}^{ing}
 again and ag^{ain}

(U2, "U2 - Peace On Earth/Walk On")

At each rise in pitch, Bono's voice becomes strained and tense, as well as more nasal. This endows the words with an emotional quality that reflects and reinforces the words sung: Bono is in deep sorrow because of the attacks of 11 September, and, therefore, his voice is strained from emotions. This tenseness in his voice stands in opposition to his relaxed facial expression and the calmness of all the musicians in the studio. This discrepancy between strong emotions and supposed tranquility gives an impression of the mood of the band: They come across as overwhelmed by all the pain and terror to such an extent that they are

paralyzed. It seems as if the terror attacks of 11 September has rendered them feeling hopeless and desperate. It is important to note here that the telethon is a public performance, and U2 are well experienced in performing in public and, thus, probably also in using their body communication to achieve certain effects. Whether their facial expressions indeed mirror their internal states of mind or not, their looks are certainly appropriate for an event such as this. The band comes across as feeling hopeless, and this feeling of hopelessness, of losing one's faith and being weary of the affirmation that peace is possible is also reflected in the lyrics on the page – as already discussed. Thus, the band's body communication and Bono's voice reinforce the message communicated by the lyrics: that the pain, grief and sorrow caused by real-life events has rendered them paralyzed and hopeless, and it shook U2's faith in peace.

Nevertheless – compared to the lyrics on the page – the song gets a more positive meaning through its performance context. In the performance, the band changes the lyrics to "I'm sick of hearing again and again that there's never gonna be peace on Earth" (U2, "U2 - Peace On Earth/Walk On"). As discussed in the analysis of the lyrics on the page, this change of the text was suggested by the Edge in order to give the song a more positive meaning.



Fig. 4c&d: Bono

After this intro from "Peace on Earth," Bono says, "Hello from London" (U2, "U2 - Peace On Earth/Walk On"), and Larry Mullen junior counts in a faster beat with his drumsticks, which marks the transition from "Peace on Earth" to "Walk On." This shift from one song to another also marks a complete change in the performance style. Bono sings "Oooooohhhhaaaa" and he then looks up at the studio's ceiling as if looking up at the sky, with his back arched (see fig. 4c). He then sings it a second time, with a crescendo that leads to a scream. Bono's mouth is wide open – twisting his face into a grimace (see fig. 4d). It appears as if the scream was an act of liberation, as Bono jumps up after he screams, and – when landing on the stage – he starts to play the guitar and the instrumentation increases in volume. Before, Bono seemed restrained, as if he moved slowly and sang quietly because he carried a burden, but it appears as if the screams and the jump have helped him to escape the

paralysis, and he can move freely again. This liberation is reinforced by the increase in volume of the instrumentation.

In the second part of the performance, bass, drums and three guitars – played by the Edge, Dave Stewart, and Bono – replace the solo guitar, and lead singer Bono is supported on vocals by the Edge, Dave Stewart, and – in the end – also by the background singers. Bono’s voice is clearer and smoother, as if the emotions have been brushed off, and the volume of his voice is far louder than in the first part of the performance. In addition, the band’s body communication is different: Their stance is self-confident and they move around more, for example tapping their feet to the beat, nodding their heads, or walking around on the stage. Bono’s eyes are not gazing around anymore, but his look is focused, and he sometimes looks directly into the camera, as evident from fig. 4e. Bono’s voice action, as well as all of the performers’ body communication emphasizes the message put forward by the words sung:



Fig. 4e: Bono

And I know it aches
 Ha, your heart it breaks
 You can only take so much
 Walk on
 You gotta leave in behind.
 Got to leave it behind.
 We’ve got to leave it behind.

(U2, “U2 - Peace On Earth/Walk On”)

The message U2 delivers with this performance is that – although it is difficult to leave the past behind, because it caused so much sorrow and pain – it is vital to ‘walk on,’ i.e. to continue with one’s life. The fictive and actual spatio-temporal situation can be seen to concur in this instance, and so can be the real author/audience and fictive speaker/persona. The second person pronoun “you” addresses all people affected by the attacks on 11 September. This means that U2 and their guest performers tell the people in America that they can relate to the overwhelming emotions caused by terrorist attacks, and that they know how difficult the situation in America is right now. U2 actually *do* know the emotional turmoil caused by terrorism and warfare, as they experienced the Troubles in Ireland firsthand. Although there has not been one single incident in the course of the Troubles with a similar death toll as 9/11, the musicians nevertheless know what it is like rendered hopeless and paralyzed by terror and

warfare in one's own country. The pronoun "we" stresses this notion of unity between the performers and their audience, and it suggests that they are all part of the same tragedy that needs to be left behind in order to be able to move forward.

As can be seen from the analysis above, compared to the lyrics on the page, U2's performance of the songs gives them a new meaning and conveys a different message than the lyrics on the page. Unlike song lyrics on the written page, live performances allow for spontaneity, such as the merger of two songs, or changing the lyrics. This new message is emphasized through the performers' body communication, Bono's voice action, and the instrumentation. Furthermore, performing a song originally written about a terrorist attack of the Troubles that U2 experienced in their native country in the intro makes it clear that U2 can relate to the aftermath and emotional turmoil caused by the 9/11 attacks, as they, too, have been victims of warfare and terrorism in their own country. This makes the band's performance authentic and believable and creates a connection between the performers and the people in the US, which is based on shared experiences and emotions. Through putting "Walk On" into a new context, the band pays tribute to the fallen 'heroes' of the 9/11 attacks.

3.1.2.2.2 "Peace on Earth" at the "Elevation" Tour

The third leg of U2's "Elevation" tour was to start one month after the terror attacks of 11 September, and U2 seriously considered cancelling the shows (Bono et al. 385). Nevertheless, U2 felt that they needed to be in the US, and, thus, they decided to play their shows despite of what had happened (385). Adam stated in an interview, "Emotions were running high. Nobody really knew what was happening in America. A lot of people cancelled shows" (385), and Paul commented further, "The whole world seemed to change. We drew a deep breath, put the tickets on sale anyway, and the shows sold out" (385). The Edge further commented that he thought that people could connect to their album "All That You Can't Leave Behind," which they played at the "Elevation" tour, in a special way because of what had happened, as it "has an ache about it, and it's asking some big questions and dealing with loss and the stuff of real life. [...] America was is a massive crisis, and the album seemed to strike a chord with people" (Bono et al. 386). In the context of the 9/11 attacks, the songs played at the shows – among them "Peace on Earth" – "were transformed by what had happened" and got a new, even more emotional and powerful, meaning (386).

Unfortunately, there is no video recording of a live performance of "Peace on Earth" available from the "Elevation" tour, and since U2 performed the song exclusively on this tour, there is no video recording of the song at all. Thus, it is not possible to analyze an audiotext of a

concert performance of “Peace on Earth.” Nevertheless, the paratext of the performances of the song, such as concert reviews, the set list of the concerts, or interviews with the band members, offers substantial material available for analysis. One reason why U2 performed “Peace on Earth” only at the “Elevation” tour could be that – after putting it into the context of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and using it for the fundraising campaign – any performance at a later point would be associated with their activism for that cause. Interestingly, U2 often performed “Peace on Earth” together with “Walk On,” and the latter song is one of the band’s most performed songs (U2, “U2”). Another reason for not performing it often could be that “Peace on Earth” is one of the band’s most negative and pessimistic songs, and, as discussed above, it only became more positive by changing the lyrics.

In all but four of the performances of the third leg of the “Elevation” tour, “Peace on Earth” and “Walk On” comprised the last songs of the concerts, as they were not part of the regular set list, but of the encore (U2, “U2”). Similar to the telethon performance, the two songs were merged into one at most concerts (U2, “U2”). The performance spaces were large arenas with several thousand people in the audience, and the stage was encircled by another, heart-shaped stage that the band could walk on. In the middle of the heart was not only the main stage, but it also encircled a part the audience, as evident from fig. 5.



Fig. 5: The Stage at the "Elevation" Tour (U2, "U2")

The lighting of the performance space is also distinctive, which becomes evident from fig. 5 above: The back of the main stage is illuminated by a blinding, white light, and the floor of the main stage, as well as the heart-shaped stage, are flooded with a red light that even bathes parts of the audience in red. The color red has a distinctive symbolic meaning: It is the color of extremes, as it stands for love and compassion on the one hand, but also for danger, violence and blood on the other. This twofold symbolic meaning relates to the message

conveyed by the “Peace on Earth/Walk On” performance: While there has been violence, terror, and bloodshed, the people need to walk into the future with love and compassion in their hearts.

Similar to the performance at the telethon, U2 also put their performances of “Peace on Earth” at the concerts in the context of the terror attacks of 11 September: At the end of the shows, while performing the songs “One,” “Peace on Earth,” and “Walk On,” the screen on the stage scrolled down names of the victims of the 9/11 attacks (U2, “U2”). At some concerts, members of the police or fire service would also come up the stage to pay tribute to their dead comrades (U2, “U2”). The Edge remembers the first concert this happened, which was in Madison Square Garden in New York, saying, “At the end of the show members of the fire service came up on the stage. They just happened to be there, it wasn’t planned. A lot of them had lost brothers and close friends” (Bono et al. 387). One firefighter then grabbed a microphone and said, “This is for my brother, John. We had a rock band. Cheers, John. I always told you we’d make it to Madison Square Garden” (387). This incident demonstrates the spontaneity possible in live performances: The firefighters just walked up the stage and U2 decided to let them. They could have called security, but they rather wanted to show support and demonstrate that they are not only preaching compassion and love, but that they also follow through on it themselves. The firefighters used the stage as an outlet for their feelings, and the band demonstrated emotional support by letting them do so. The screening of the names and the firefighters on the stage catered for an emotional experience for the band and their audience: It suggested that, although the victims of 9/11 were dead, they would never be forgotten. After this spontaneous incident at the concert in Madison Square Garden, the band decided to repeat it at other shows of their tour, which is why at later concerts, firemen would also walk onto the heart-shaped stage (U2, “U2”). The Edge commented on the concerts that “[t]hey were no longer just rock ‘n’ roll concerts, they were a kind of group therapy session” (Bono et al. 387).

U2’s commitment to supporting the people in America in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks was what made their concerts authentic in the view of their audience, because the band was seen to act upon the beliefs and ideas put forward in their political songs. As mentioned above, other performers cancelled shows because of the attacks, but U2 managed to connect with their audience and relate to their needs by relating their performance of “Peace on Earth” and “Walk On” to the events of 11 September 2001, and, thereby, they catered for their audiences’ needs: they consoled them, they made them feel heard, and they paid tribute to the

people who lost their lives in the attacks by scrolling down their names on the screen and by inviting firefighters onto the stage. One fan commented on his experience at a concert:

“One” and “Peace On Earth” while the giant video listed the names of every person who lost their lives in the 9-11 Tragedy was one of the best tributes I've seen. You could see and hear that the band's hearts were really there. They took us with them.

(Ginger)

Thus, the performances of “Peace on Earth” at the concerts served the same purpose and put forward a similar message as U2’s performance at the telethon: They advocated for peace although it seemed impossible after the 9/11 attacks, encouraged the audience to ‘walk on’ and overcome their grief and sorrow by suggesting that they are not alone, and they paid tribute to the victims, above all, the fallen firefighters and policemen. Originally written about a terrorist attack of the Troubles, in the performances at the “Elevation” tour, “Peace on Earth” became a universal call for peace, and the band used it to console people in times of sorrow and grief.

3.2 Other Political and Social Activism in Ireland

Apart from denouncing the Troubles in some of their song lyrics, U2 also advocate for other political and social issues related to Ireland. The following two songs exemplify the diversity of the band’s political activism in their home country Ireland.

3.2.1 Van Diemen’s Land

“Rattle and Hum” is U2’s sixth studio album and was released as a companion to the film of the same name, which was directed by Phil Joanou (U2, “U2”). The documentary accompanies the band on their 1988-89 “The Joshua Tree” tour, and the album features the most successful live performances thereof. The album “Rattle and Hum” was released 10 October 1988, and apart from performances of the concert tour, it also features newly composed songs, among them “Van Diemen’s Land.” The ballad was composed by U2 guitarist the Edge, and it features the band member solo, on guitar and vocals. Although the song features only one member of U2, it can be seen as expressing the whole band’s opinion, as it was released on their studio album under the band’s name.

The song lyrics are dedicated to the Irish poet John Boyle O’Reilly (Strokes). The Irish writer was born in 1844, into a time of economic instability in Ireland (Kenneally). One year after he was born, the potato crops in the country were ravaged, which marked the starting point of the Great Famine in Ireland, a four year period of mass starvation, followed by mass emigration

(Kenneally). O'Reilly was spared from starvation, but he nevertheless witnessed a period of economic instability and injustice from an early age on. After beginning his career as a writer, O'Reilly joined the British army, with his delegation being stationed in Ireland (Kenneally). The reasons for his military career remain unclear, as he was a strong supporter of the Republican movement in Ireland that advocated for an independent Irish nation, which is the exact opposite of what the British army worked towards. O'Reilly joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in 1865, commonly known as the Fenians, and he actively advocated their cause (Kenneally). The IRB was renowned for their violent measures, as they believed that political change was only possible through an armed revolution ("The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB)"). By joining the IRB, O'Reilly was leading a dangerous double life as British military soldier and supporter of the Irish Republicans. He was arrested and convicted for treason in 1866, and he was deported to a work prison in Australia (Kenneally). John Boyle O'Reilly managed to escape the colony and fled to America, settling in Boston and successfully resuming his career as writer (Kenneally). Eventually, O'Reilly became one of the most famous writers in the United States and used his status to advocate for political and social change (Kenneally).

What is particularly interesting about U2 dedicating this song to John Boyle O'Reilly is that he was a member of the IRB, which believed in revolution through armed conflict. While the IRB was active in the nineteenth century, one century later, it was the IRA that similarly believed in change by force. As discussed above, U2 condemn their methods, and they advocate for peaceful change. This raises the question of why the band would dedicate a song to an activist who was a believer in revolution through force. One reason might be that – throughout his life – O'Reilly was renowned for his activism. He would stand up for civil rights and advocate for environmental and political causes. In his native country Ireland, O'Reilly would advocate for an independent Irish nation to the extent of risking his life. In the Australian work prison, the writer went as far as defying orders in order to save a tree ("John Boyle O'Reilly"). Additionally, while living in the United States, he became known for advocating for equal rights of Irish-Americans and black people, who were regarded as inferiors by white Americans (Kenneally). Black slaves were being shipped to the US from the colonies, and thousands of Irish people had immigrated because of the Great Famine, and both groups had to endure the xenophobia of the American people (Kenneally). While U2 might not agree with the means O'Reilly used to advocate for change, they nevertheless agree with the underlying reasons for his activism. The band themselves are highly politically and

socially active, which is what might have motivated them to reflect on another Irish activist in one of their songs.

Furthermore, another topic reflected in the song is emigration, and Bono called “Van Diemen’s Land” an “emigrant’s song – or immigrant’s song” (Strokes). From 1845-9, the potato crop in Ireland failed in three years out of four, and – as potatoes were the staple food of three million Irish people – this led to a mass starvation. Many Irish people would also leave the country to avoid starvation – mostly they would emigrate to countries that were part of the British Empire at that time, such as Canada, or to North America (“Great Famine (Ireland)”). The Irish emigrants hoped for a better life in another country, but they often faced financial and personal hardships (“Great Famine (Ireland)”). The Great Famine greatly diminished Ireland’s population: it led to a drop from 8 million to 6.5 million by 1951 (ch.1). John Boyle O’Reilly was born into this crisis, and he wanted to act against the continuity of suffering, injustice, and the imposed British rule in Northern Ireland. Thus, he joined the IRB and planned a military uprising (Kenneally). While he was deported because of his political activism, many other Irish people emigrated because of the economic situation in the country. More than a century after the Great Famine, U2 reflect on the historical period. At the time the song was written, the economic situation in Ireland was stable, but the Troubles raged in Northern Ireland, and the ubiquitous warfare and violence in the country led many people to emigrate.

3.2.1.1 *The Lyrics as Written Text*

The song lyrics to “Van Diemen’s Land” are one of the shortest lyrics of any U2 song, as they only consist of two verses and a chorus. The title of the song already yields insights into the topic reflected in the song, namely the deportation of a convict to Australia, but it nevertheless is somewhat ambiguous. As mentioned above, the life of the Irish activist John Boyle O’Reilly fuelled the lyrics of the song. Interestingly, although O’Reilly was shipped to Australia, it was not to Van Diemen’s Land. He was transported to the Penal Colony of Western Australia, which was on the mainland (Kenneally). Also, by the time O’Reilly was transported in 1887, the name of the island had already been changed to Tasmania (“Van Diemen’s Land” *Wikipedia*). This raises the question of why U2 would name their song “Van Diemen’s Land,” when O’Reilly had not even been sent there. Although the band has never openly spoken about the origin of their song title, Van Diemen’s Land was renowned for the brutal transportations of convicts from the British Empire, and it was the primal and most well-known penal colony in Australia (“Van Diemen’s Land” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

Thus, what appears to be most likely is that the band did not carefully research where O'Reilly was sent to exactly, but that they simply used "Van Diemen's Land" as an umbrella term to refer to any penal colony in Australia, including the one O'Reilly was shipped to.

In the other songs analyzed so far, the fictive speakers were U2, but with "Van Diemen's Land" this is somewhat different, which becomes clear from the Chorus. The fictive speaker is "on the rising tide/ For to face Van Diemen's land," which suggests that s/he is on a ship or boat about to be transported to the penal colony Van Diemen's Land. In relation to the context known about the song, the speaker presumably is John Boyle O'Reilly – speaking these words while being deported to Australia. The imperative "hold me now" suggests that he seeks comfort and needs somebody to console him with physical proximity. Thus, the first line adds an emotional component to the song. This emotionality is further emphasized by the word "oh" in "oh hold me now," as it is a word often used to express emotions, such as a desire for something ("Oh"). The second line then specifies for how long O'Reilly needs the comforting, namely "Till this hour has gone around." Literally speaking, this would mean that he needs another person to console him for an hour, however, a figurative meaning is more likely: "this hour" stands for a longer period of time. O'Reilly is about to be deported into a work prison, and he probably calls for somebody to help him through his time as a convict.

As mentioned above, U2 themselves call the song an immigrant's or emigrant's song, and an analysis of the chorus in the context of emigration yields new insights: In the context of emigration, the first person pronoun "I" refers to an emigrant on a ship about to "face Van Diemen's land." In this new context, this line does not refer to the penal colony, but rather it can be seen as a symbol for an unknown, far-away country. The emigrant calls for someone to comfort her/him until the journey is over and s/he has settled in the new environment. Considering that the term "Van Diemen's Land" is used in the lyrics, it is likely that the temporal context evoked by the lyrics is not the time the lyrics were written, as the name of the penal colony was changed to Tasmania in 1856. Thus, the temporal context of the lyrics is probably before 1856. This is further validated by the figurative language used. In their other songs, U2 make use of figurative language too, however, it is not as metaphoric as in "Van Diemen's Land." In the song lyrics, there are phrases, such as "dawning age" or "this hour has gone around." In addition, the register and style of this song greatly differ from other U2 songs that reflect more recent historic events. Some phrases exemplifying the archaic use of language are "And I gone," "For to face," "To be rent from one so dear," "dawning age," or "the poor will toil." The register of these phrases hints at the temporal context of the lyrics being not the present or recent past, but rather that the song lyrics tell a story of an emigrant

form a different era. Paired with the lyrics being based on O'Reilly – who lived in the mid-nineteenth century – it makes sense that the temporal context evoked by the lyrics is indeed the nineteenth century. As discussed above, the Great Famine raged in Ireland at this time, and it entailed a mass emigration from the country. Although there is no line in the song lyrics suggesting that the song is about an *Irish* emigrant, the lyrics reflect O'Reilly's life – who was Irish and planned an uprising against the government after the Great Famine to stop the continuity of suffering in the country. This suffering of the Irish people is also reflected in the song lyrics, which will be discussed in the analysis of Verse 2. Since many Irish people emigrated from the country in order to escape the suffering after the Great Famine, the lyrics most probably reflect the story of an *Irish* emigrant.

Verse 1 yields insights into the fictive speaker's emotions. In the context of O'Reilly, the first two lines of Verse 1 hint that he does not want to be deported: "It's a bitter pill I swallow here/ To be rent from one so dear." The "bitter pill" hints at his negative emotions towards the transportation, and the second line yields insights into why he does not want to be sent away: he is rent, i.e. violently torn apart ("Rend") from someone or something precious to him. Who or what is meant by "one so dear" is ambiguous. It could refer to Ireland, i.e. he is "rent from one [country] so dear," but it could also refer to a person, such as his family or girlfriend. The following two lines then clarify why he is being sent away: "We fought for justice and not for gain/ But the magistrate sent me away." The first person plural pronoun in this context probably refers to O'Reilly and his fellow Fenians who planned an armed uprising against the government. The motive for their resistance also becomes evident from these lines: They fought to end the injustice and suffering in Ireland, without aiming at enriching themselves. In the opinion of the fictive speaker, i.e. O'Reilly, they risked their lives for other people and for the 'greater good' of Ireland rather than for themselves. However, "the magistrate," i.e. the government, is now deporting him for breaking the law.

The first two lines of Verse 1 can also be interpreted in the context of emigration: The emigrant does not want to leave the country, as this entails being torn apart from "one so dear." Again, the "one so dear" could refer to Ireland as a country, but in the context of emigrating because of the Great Famine, it could also have a different meaning. During and after the hunger crisis, Irish people were not emigrating *en masse* from the country, but mostly young people sought out a new and better life in a different country – leaving their families behind ("Great Famine (Ireland)"). Thus, they were not only torn apart from their roots with respect to their home country, but they also had to leave their families behind without knowing whether they would survive the aftermath of the hunger crisis.

Verse 2 describes the future of the country the fictive speaker has to leave behind – who is either John Boyle O'Reilly or, respectively, an emigrant. In addition, the verse laments the situation in Ireland in the nineteenth century, and the injustice described makes it comprehensible to the reader/listener of the song why so many Irish people emigrated after the Great Famine:

Now kings will rule and the poor will toil
And tear their hands as they tear the soil
But a day will come in this dawning age
When an honest man sees an honest wage.

The first line of this verse suggests, that under the regime of the king, the Irish people who have little money have to endure hard manual labor in order to survive. It is important to note that – different from today – Ireland was not a democracy in the nineteenth century, i.e. the temporal context evoked by the lyrics, but from 1801 to 1921, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and, thus, the country was under to rule of the British king or queen (c.f. Healy). The fictive narrator of the lyrics is leaving behind a nation in which the poor people “tear the soil,” which means that they work as farmers, and the analogy in Line 2 indicates that the hard work leaves permanent marks on their bodies – the hard manual labor ‘tears’ their hands. Despite their hard work, they do not get paid enough, which becomes apparent from lines three and four of the verse: These lines foreshadow a time in which justice prevails, and people get paid fair wages. This hints that, at the time the fictive speaker leaves the country, the poor people receive inadequately low payment for their work. Put into the historical context of the Great Famine, the era after the hunger crisis was indeed marked by great poverty in Ireland (Healy ch.1). Line three of the verse then indicates that the times of change are already tangible, and that a new era is becoming apparent, which is reflected in the phrase “in this dawning age.” The word “dawning” furthermore implies that the situation in the country will change for the better, as the word is strongly connoted with the sun, and the sun – in turn – is a symbol for light, peace, warmth and safety. Put into the historical context, the Great Famine made apparent that the Union with Great Britain was unsuccessful, as the officials handled the crisis badly (Healy ch.1). Ultimately, the gruesome aftermath of the hunger crisis indeed led to a new era, and the people of Ireland strived for constitutional independence from Great Britain, which they achieved more than fifty years later, in 1921, through the Anglo-Irish Treaty (ch.1).

The fictive temporal situation in the song lyrics shows parallels to the real temporal situation in Ireland at the time the song lyrics were written: John Boyle O'Reilly was deported for

supporting the Fenians to end the continuity of injustice, and Irish people were emigrating because of the suffering entailed by an economic crisis and political oppression. And at the time the song was written, Ireland faced another crisis: Instead of the Fenians, the IRA fought for an end of the injustice – only in a more drastic and violent way, as their guerilla attacks were not only directed towards officials, but they killed countless civilians. As a result, many Irish people were fleeing the country to escape the suffering entailed by violence and warfare. Thus, the historical context reflected in the song poses an analogy to the situation Ireland was in at the time the song was written. Comparing the suffering of the Irish nation after the Great Famine to the suffering of the Irish people during the Troubles makes it apparent that history repeats itself. In the nineteenth century and during the Troubles alike, Irish people emigrated, hoping for a better life in another country. This comparison shows that “Van Diemen’s Land” can take on a universal meaning – the suffering described in the song does not only apply to emigrants of a specific era, but injustice in Ireland was ubiquitous at the time the song lyrics were written – and it had been for centuries.

As can be seen from the analysis above, the song lyrics can be interpreted in relation to two different contexts: with regard to John Boyle O’Reilly and his transportation, or in the context of the Irish people that emigrated from Ireland in order to flee the mass starvation entailed by the Great Famine. The analysis of the lyrics above, and Bono’s statement that the song is “an emigrant’s song – or an immigrant’s song” makes it clear that it is not a call for emulating John Boyle O’Reilly, but rather it acknowledges the hardships the Irish people face – and have faced for centuries. U2 might not agree with O’Reilly’s methods, but they certainly know what provoked – and still provokes – his violent measures, namely the injustice and continued suffering of the Irish people caused by economic instability and political oppression. Apart from O’Reilly, the song also reflects the topic of emigration during and after the Great Famine of 1845-9 in Ireland. In addition, the song lyrics reflect the reasons for Ireland seeking constitutional independence from Great Britain, and this wish for independence is what, ultimately, led to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and caused another wave of emigration. Through reflecting on the continuity of suffering, the song pays tribute to the people of Ireland enduring the hardships, and to the many people that decided to emigrate – be it the people who fled the country in the nineteenth century because of the hunger crisis, or during the Troubles to escape the violence.

3.2.1.2 Performance Context

With 33 performances at concerts, “Van Diemen’s Land” is one of the least often performed songs of the band (U2, “U2”). At concerts, the song is performed only by the Edge on vocals and guitar, and it is one of the band’s calmest and slowest songs, which becomes evident from the performance analysis below.

The performance under investigation was part of the second leg of the “Lovetown” tour, which followed the release of the band’s album “Rattle and Hum” on which “Van Diemen’s Land” was released. Although it does not become clear from the video recording itself where or when exactly the performance took place, it is a recording of the band performing the song in 1990 (U2, “Rare U2 The Edge Van Diemen’s Land Live 1990”). In that year, U2 only performed the song four times, and all of these performances were part of their “Lovetown” tour and took place in Rotterdam at the Sport Paleis Ahoy between 5-10 January 1990 (U2, “U2”). The stadium can accommodate 15,000 people (“Rotterdam Ahoy - Check out Ahoy”), and at all four Rotterdam concerts together, U2 sold 38,000 tickets (“U2 Live on Tour”).

The performance begins with the Edge striking a chord on his guitar, and he then walks down from the elevated back part of the stage to the front. His gaze is cast down on the stage, and a single, very bright white-blue spotlight is directed at him, and the rest of the stage is dark. This can be seen from fig. 6 below. While he strikes the first chord and walks down, there are occasional cheers from the audience. After having played this one initial chord on the guitar, and having reached the front of the stage, the Edge resumes playing, and he slowly moves his feet left to right while walking closer to the microphone. While he does so, the cheers from the audience increase in volume, and more and more people join in, until there is very loud cheering and applause for the musician. The Edge then looks to his left, and back to the front. His eyes are now fixed on something in front of him – probably the audience – and he starts to sing.



Fig. 6: The Edge (U2, “Rare U2 The Edge Van Diemen’s Land Live 1990”)

The loud cheers are now replaced by the audience joining in and singing with the Edge. Already upon the second “hold me now,” it seems as if the whole audience was singing along, which makes it appear as if a choir supported the Edge. That the audience knows the lyrics by heart suggests that they have listened to the song before several times and are thus familiar with its words and tune. Especially during the first and last line of the chorus, the audience loudly joins in. These lines read, “Hold me now, oh hold me now/ [...] For to face Van Diemen’s Land.” Through the audience joining in especially in those lines, they are sung in higher volume, and the message of them is stressed: A person seeks comfort because s/he has to go to Van Diemen’s Land. In the lyrics on the page, this verse can be interpreted in two different ways: with regard to John Boyle O’Reilly or an emigrant fleeing from the Great Famine. Thus, the fictive speaker of the performance is either O’Reilly or an emigrant, in the fictive spatio-temporal situation of the nineteenth century Ireland. As discussed in the analysis of the lyrics on the page, the chorus is highly emotional and expresses the fictive speaker’s need for comfort and consolation. In the performance, the Edge articulates the thoughts of the fictive speaker as poet-performer. The audience singing along makes them co-producers of the performance, and they, too, articulate the words of the fictive speaker. Thus, the lines between real audience and fictive speaker become blurred, and the thoughts of – and emotions expressed by – the fictive speaker in the lyrics on the page, are embodied by the Edge and the audience. Through articulating the emotions felt by the fictive speaker, the audience can probably also better relate to the experiences and emotions of the fictive speaker. This shared experience and transfer of emotions from the fictive speaker to the real author/audience is unique to live performances and cannot be achieved through the lyrics on the page.

The joining in of the audience also works on another level – in the context of emigration: The audience co-produces the performance and, thus, the people in the audience become authors in a sense. Suddenly, not only one person, i.e. the Edge, is putting forward the message of the fictive speaker, who laments the situation in Ireland and reflects the continuity of suffering in the country, but thousands of people articulate and embody these emotions. This suggests that the fictive speaker is actually only *one* of *many* people who experienced the hardships described in the lyrics on the written page. This relates to the fictive spatio-temporal situation, because after the Great Famine, not *one* person, but *one million* Irish people emigrated. It is important to mention that the performance took place in Rotterdam, and most of the audience consisted of *Dutch* and not *Irish* fans. Nevertheless, there has also been a great famine in Dutch history, after WWII – the Dutch famine of 1944-5 (“Dutch Famine of 1944-45”). In addition, the economic instability after the war caused a postwar emigration wave in the

country (“Dutch Diaspora”). Thus, the people in the audience can most likely relate to hardships described in the song, as the people of their nation, too, have experienced economic instability, a hunger crisis, and an emigration wave. Thus, the spontaneous joining in of the audience can be seen as a reminder that the suffering and injustice was experienced by millions of people rather than only one person. In addition, it makes it appear as if all those suffering Irish and Dutch people were singing the lament at the Ahoy stadium, i.e. the lines between fictive and actual spatio-temporal situation become blurred. Again, this is something that cannot be achieved through the lyrics on the written page.

In general, the song is performed in a calm and sober manner. The rhythm of the song is slow and regular.. Furthermore, the Edge articulates the words in a legato, which suggests calmness. The musician’s timbre can be described as oral, plain, and smooth – again suggesting calmness. This is further stressed by the body communication of the performer. At the beginning of the performance, he walks *slowly* towards the microphone, and there is hardly any body movement during the performance – apart from the Edge playing the guitar. The musician simply stands in front of the microphone, sings into it, and he bends and straightens his left knee in time to the measure. In addition, the staging of the song is simple: There is only one spotlight directed toward the Edge, and the rest of the stage is dark. This sobriety and calmness with which the song is staged exemplifies that “Van Diemen’s Land” is not intended as a rebel song, but a calm lament of the situation of Ireland during and after the Great Famine.

The pitch and volume movement of the Edge’s voice stress the emotions expressed in the lyrics on the written page. The Edge constantly and slowly raises or lowers the pitch of his voice. The pitch movement basically divides the lines in two parts, and the second part of each line starts with an upbeat. In two of the lines of the lyrics on the page, this division is realized by a comma between first and second part, namely in “Hold me now, oh hold me now,” or “And I gone, on the rising tide.” In the performance context, however, this division is present in all lines of the song. Thus, the performance adds meaning to the lyrics on the page, and it provides additional information about how the Edge thinks the song should be vocalized. The melody is the same in the chorus and the two verses, and it is exemplified on the basis of the chorus below:⁵

⁵ The lengths of the lines more or less correspond to the lengths of the vowels pronounced.

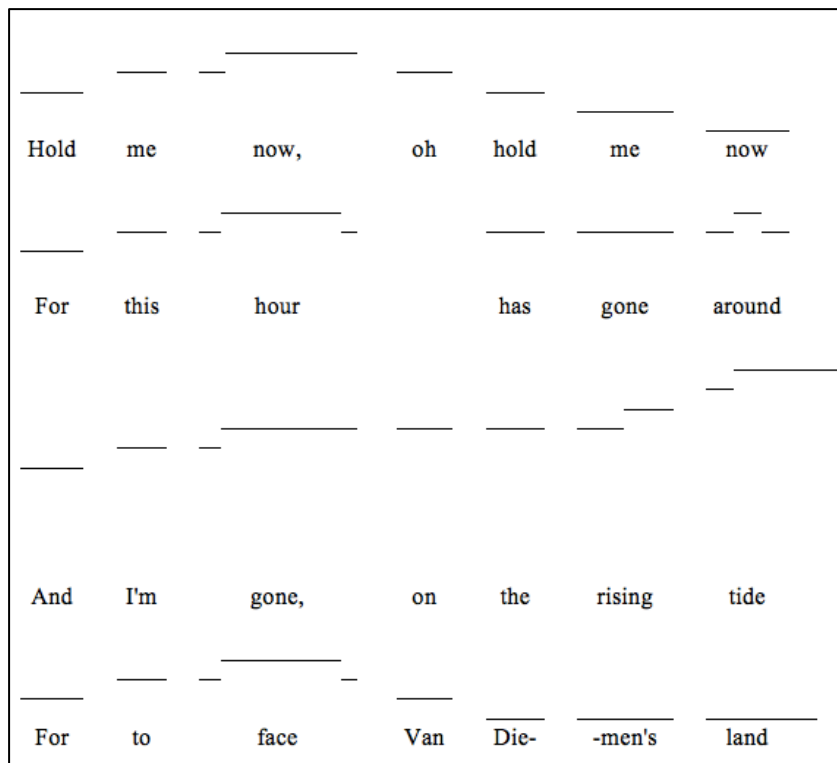


Fig. 7: Pitch Movement in "Van Diemen's Land"

As can be seen from fig. 7 above, the pitch movement of the chorus corresponds to its content. The fictive speaker is on a ship, and the pitch movements can be heard to reflect the waves of the ocean the ship is on: In the first part of each line, there is a rise in pitch, followed by a fall in pitch in the second part – just like the waves of the ocean rise and fall. Specifically, this first part of each line is sung in a crescendo, and the second part in a decrescendo. Thus, the in- and decrease in volume corresponds to the in- and decrease in the height of the wave. Only in the third line, the pitch is generally higher than in the other lines, and – different from the other lines – there is a rise in pitch in the second part of the line. This second part reads, “on the *rising* tide,” and – corresponding to the rising water in the lyrics – there is a *rise* in pitch in the performance. The third line is also different with respect to the Edge’s voice action: The other lines are sung in a lax, smooth timbre, but in the third line, the Edge puts extra effort in his voice, making it sounds tense, rough, and more nasal. It could be argued that the high pitch – paired with the voice action – corresponds to a very big wave, which reaches high up on the edges of the ship, and the effort in the Edge’s voice reflects the resistance of the ship against the ocean waves.

In Verse 1, the rise in pitch, as well as the crescendo, emphasize the words sung and, thus, the Edge’s voice action conveys strong emotions: It is very hard for the speaker, i.e. “a bitter pill,” to be torn apart from her/his loved one – exemplified in the performance through a rise in pitch and an increase in volume. As discussed in the analysis of the lyrics on the page, lines

three and four of Verse 1 can be said to revolve around John Boyle O'Reilly's deportation. Line three, "We fought for justice not for gain," is especially stressed, as the words are performed with more effort, and with a strained voice, in addition to the rising pitch and crescendo. The continued rise in the second part of the line further emphasizes that O'Reilly did *not* fight for his personal gain, but to stop the continuity of injustice in Ireland. Nevertheless, he is now on a ship about to be transported to Australia.

In line 1 of Verse 3, the rises and falls in pitch are used to emphasize an opposition: There is a rise in pitch on "Now kings will rule," and a fall on "and the poor will toil." That the kings will *rise* to power is stressed by a *rise* in pitch, and – in contrast to the powerful – "the poor will toil," which is emphasized by a falling pitch. Thus, these lines exemplify how pitch movement can be used to underpin the words sung: While, on the one hand, the king will rise to power and wealth – reinforced by a rise in pitch – on the other hand, the farmers will work hard and still be poor – reinforced by a fall in pitch. In line 2, the pitch movement is used to emphasize an analogy: The poor people will "tear their hands," which is sung in a rising pitch – "as they tear the soil," which is sung in a falling pitch. As discussed above, line three foreshadows a different, better era. While singing line three, the Edge puts effort on and strain in his voice, and it almost cracks. This particular voice action suggests that the new era will come, but it will take considerable effort to achieve change.

The discussion above indicates that the spontaneous participation of the audience actively shapes the performance, as the meaning of the lines they sing along to becomes stressed. Through singing along, the members of the audience become co-performers, the lines between fictive speaker and real author/audience become blurred, and the audience and the Edge embody the emotions of the fictive speaker. In addition, the singing along reinforces that in Ireland, as well as in The Netherlands, millions of people experienced injustice and suffering. In contrast to song lyrics in performance, lyrics on the page do not allow for this kind of spontaneity, or the co-performance of the audience. In addition, the way the song is staged in this particular performance – with little instrumentation, and in a sober manner – makes it clear that "Van Diemen's Land" is not intended as a rebel song, and it is not a call to emulate O'Reilly, but rather it laments the continuity of suffering that is also reflected in the song lyrics on the page. Furthermore, this performance constitutes a prime example of how pitch movement, volume, and voice action of a performer can be used to reinforce the content sung, or create a specific image in the mind of the audience, such as waves crushing on a boat. Again, this is not possible through the written medium.

3.2.2 Protesting Against Margaret Thatcher – “Red Hill Mining Town”

U2’s song “Red Hill Mining Town” was originally released on “The Joshua Tree” album in 1987, and in 2017, a new version of the song was released for the thirtieth anniversary reissue of the album (U2, “U2”; Strokes). The miners’ strike of 1984-5 in the UK and the strain it put on the families of the miners forms the backdrop of the song.

In 1984, the British National Coal Board – under the regime of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher – announced that they wanted to reduce the workforce in the coal industry by shutting down pits throughout the country (Jenkinson, Metcalf, and Harvey 27). The government announced that 20 pits should be closed, which would entail 20,000 miners losing their jobs (“The Miners’ Strike”). By order of Thatcher, *which* pits should be closed was to be kept a secret (Jenkinson, Metcalf, and Harvey 27). In fact, the government secretly intended to close 75 pits instead of 20, and – sensing that something was wrong – the head of the National Union of Miners (NUM) at that time warned the miners of the government’s secret agenda (27). In the early 1980s, the British steel industry had already greatly been decimated – with 95,000 jobs lost – and the miners feared the same fate (Jenkinson, Metcalf, and Harvey 12). Thus, they decided to take action, and a number of strikes were organized throughout the country, which developed into one great strike led by the NUM in 1984 (“The Miners’ Strike”). Despite the resistance she faced, Thatcher would under no circumstances meet the miners’ demands, and in March 1985, after a one-year strike, the NUM officially called off the strike (“The Miners’ Strike”). Thatcher’s harsh rule had repercussions not only for the people in the UK, but also on Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Firstly, Northern Ireland was part of the UK at that time, which meant that the Northern Irish people felt the immediate consequences of the strike in *their* country: Families were living in poverty due to the lost income, relationship broke up because of the stress the miners were under, riots and protests happened throughout the country, and the police and security forces were increased (c.f. Jenkinson, Metcalf, and Harvey; “The Miners’ Strike”). In addition – at the time of the strike – the Troubles were raging in Northern Ireland. Since the conflict centered around the partition of Northern Ireland from the UK – or, respectively, the union with the Republic of Ireland – it had negative repercussions on the entire isle of Ireland. To worsen the politically tense situation in both countries, the IRA condemned Thatcher’s politics and made her their number one target, and the organization even tried to assassinate her in Brighton in October 1984 (“6 Key Moments”).

3.2.2.1 *The Lyrics as Written Text*

While on strike, the miners' lives were characterized by financial hardships, and the political situation put a great strain on the miners themselves and their personal relationships. Bono stated that he did not feel qualified enough to write about the political machinations involved in the miners' strike, but he understood the pressure the strike put on the miner's personal relationships, and thus, he reflects on them in the song (Strokes).

The fictive speaker in the lyrics on the page is *one* miner, but the feelings conveyed apply to *countless* miners affected by the strike. Thus, the fictive speaker is representative of all miners affected by the situation. The fictional location of the lyrics is a mining town called "Red Hill," which becomes apparent from the song title and the phrase "In Red Hill Town" being repeated several times throughout the lyrics. Since there is no town in the UK with that name that is renowned for its former coal mining industry, and U2 never commented on the origin of their song title, it remains unclear why the band chose "Red Hill" as fictional setting. The most probable explanation seems to be that "Red Hill" evokes a town with a large coal mining industry.

The lyrics reflect the government's political line of resisting the strike and not meeting the miners' demands, which becomes evident from the metaphoric language in lines three and four of Verse 1: "Ooh, see the faces frozen (still)/ Against the wind." Considering the historic context, the "wind" in this phrase is most likely a metaphor for resistance – the resistance the miners are putting up against the intended pit closures. Despite the resistance of the miners, Thatcher's and her officials' "faces [are] frozen." If something is frozen, it is "incapable of being moved, changed, or undone" ("Frozen"). In the historic context, this suggests that Thatcher and her officials will not give way and agree to the miners' demands. In addition, the adjective "frozen" can be used to describe a person who is "drained or incapable of emotion" and "characterized by cold unfriendliness" ("Frozen"). This hints that the fictive speaker, i.e. a miner, perceives Thatcher as cold-hearted and indifferent to peoples' feelings. The /f/- alliteration in "faces are frozen" further emphasizes the negative emotions of the fictive speaker towards Thatcher's uncompromising politics.

Another topic reflected in the lyrics are the miners' relationships, and Bono confirmed that Verses 4 and 5 were written about them (Strokes). Verse 4 of the lyrics reads:

The glass is cut
The bottle run dry.
Our love runs cold
In the cavern of the night.

The cut glass in line 1 could be metaphor for the miners' relationships, and that it is "cut" hints that they are no longer intact. The "bottle" in line 2 could also be a symbol for the miners' relationships. Literally speaking, if a bottle has "run dry," there is no liquid in it anymore – it is empty. Figuratively speaking, this suggests that the miners' relationships are empty and drained. Considering the historic context, it seems as if the miners' strike broke up those relationships. Bono confirms this assumption by stating that Verse 3 reflects that "those relationships broke up under the pressure of the miners' strike" (Strokes). The "bottle" in line 2 could also have a different meaning: It could be a symbol for the miners having turned to alcohol to forget their sorrow, which might be another cause for the broken relationships. Lines 3 and 4 of the verse is about the physical intimacy of the miners' with their partners. A "cavern" is a "place providing privacy or seclusion" from something ("Cavern"; "Cave"). Applied to the miners, the "cavern[s] of the night" are probably their bedrooms, and that their "love runs cold" in the bedrooms hints that they are not having sex with their partners. The use of the word "love" hints that this has not always been the case, but that the miners' strike caused the love and passion to ebb. Bono comments in an interview, "I wanted to follow the miner home and write about that situation in the song. [...] Men would lose their pride in themselves and wouldn't be able to face their children or sleep with their wives" (Deriso).

After Verse 4 makes apparent that the strike puts a vast emotional strain on the miners, the emotions felt by the fictive speaker, i.e. the miners, are expressed in Verse 5:

We're wounded by fear
Injured in doubt
I can lose myself
You I can't live without.

"We" probably stands for the miners, and that they are "wounded by fear" and "[i]njured in doubt" reflects the historic context: As mentioned above, the government did not announce which pits they planned to shut down, and, thus, the miners were in "fear" and "doubt" of whether they would be able to keep their jobs. Explicitly stating the negative feelings felt by the fictive speaker makes Verse 5 emotional, and the reader/listener can better comprehend the hardships the miners were facing. Verse 5 also yields insights into the miners' personal relationships: As discussed above, they are having trouble with physically engaging with their partners, and Verse 5 provides the reasons thereof: The prospect of losing their jobs makes them afraid, they are emotionally "wounded" and "injured," and they "doubt" themselves. The last two lines of Verse 4 suggest that, despite the doubt the miners have in themselves, they trust their partners and desperately need them. The fictive speaker, i.e. the miners, value the love and support from their loved ones more than they value their own life. "You" in Line

4 probably stands for the partner of the fictive speaker, i.e. for the miners' partners. While s/he would be willing to "lose [her/him]self," s/he cannot "live without" his/her partner. Bridge 2 and the Chorus further emphasize these strong feelings of the fictive speaker towards her/his partner: "Yeah you keep me holdin' on," "You're all that's left to hold on to." This corresponds to the historic context: During the strike, the miners had no income and they were not sure whether they would actually be affected by the reduction in workforce. Thus, the only certainties in their lives were their relationships and partners, and even those often broke up under the pressure of the strike.

The uncertainty of which pits would be closed, and how many miners would actually lose their jobs is also reflected in the lyrics. Bridge 1 reads, "They leave me holdin' on/ [...] See the lights go down on..." "They" probably refers to the government not telling the fictive speaker, i.e. the miners, how many pits exactly they wanted to close and how many miners would thus be rendered redundant – they leave the miners "holdin' on," i.e. in uncertainty about what their plans were exactly. The phrase "holdin' on" is repeated several times throughout the lyrics, which additionally stresses the feeling of uncertainty experienced by the miners. The three dots reinforce that it was not clearly communicated *which* pits the government planned to close – the dots could be read as as placeholder for *any* pit the officials decided to shut down. The chorus of the song also exemplifies this uncertainty experienced by the miners, as they were "still waiting" whether the pit they worked in would be closed – they were still "hangin' on." These phrases, too, are often repeated in the lyrics, which functions to stress the emotions conveyed.

The analysis above yields insights into how U2 reflect the hardships the miners face during the miners' strike of 1984-5. Firstly, the miners live in uncertainty of whether or not they would be made redundant or not, which is stressed by the frequent repetition of phrases, such as "holdin' on," "I'm still waiting," or "hangin' on." In addition, the lyrics are highly emotional, as they reflect the strained relationships of the miners. This is achieved through metaphoric language and the use of symbols, as well as by naming the emotions felt by the miners, such as "fear" and "doubt." What is also reflected in the lyrics is the uncompromising political line of the government under Margaret Thatcher, which is the cause of the miners' struggles. This is also achieved through the use of figurative language. By addressing the emotional hardship of the miners under Thatcher's regime, the lyrics on the page raise awareness of the personal consequences of Thatcher's politics for the miners and their families in a highly emotional way.

3.2.2.2 Performance Context

Until the reissue of the song in 2017, U2 had never performed “Red Hill Mining Town” live, because, as Bono stated in an interview, he struggled with reaching the high notes of the song (McGee). In 2017, Bono explained that he had “learned how to sing” since the song had first been released, and at a performance of the song in Berlin he stated, “It has taken us 30 years to figure it out exactly. [...] We couldn’t play it, and it is odd now” (U2, “Bono Speaking”). For the analysis of the song in its performance context, the first live performance ever of “Red Hill Mining Town” will be discussed.

The performance took place on 12 May 2017 at BC Place Stadium in Vancouver in front of an audience of 45,436 people, and the concert featured the British band Mumford and Sons as opening act (U2, “U2”; “The Joshua Tree Tour 2017”). The concert’s set featured two stages – a 59m wide main stage, and a second stage, in the shape of the shadow of the Joshua tree (“The Joshua Tree Tour 2017”). Behind the main stage was the largest and highest-resolution LED screen ever used at a concert tour, which measured 60,9m × 13,7m (U2, “U2”). U2 played “Red Hill Mining Town” as eleventh song of the regular set list, and they performed the song on the main stage.

This performance – as well as all the other performances of the song at the 2017 “The Joshua Tree” tour – features a Salvation Army brass band (Greene). Although the brass band is not physically present at the concert, they are visible on the big LED screen, and the height relation between them and the U2 musicians makes them visually predominate the performance (see from fig. 8).



Fig. 8: Salvation Army Brass Band (U2, “U2 Red Hill Mining Town”)

The Salvation Army (SA) is an international charitable organization that is part of the evangelical Christ Church, and the organization raises money for a number of humanitarian

causes (“The Salvation Army International”). The SA was founded in London in 1865, and its structure resembles that of a military organization (“Salvation Army”). Originally, Salvationists used music for a very practical reason: When they preached in front of an audience, the listeners were often “unruly” and difficult to control (“Salvation Army”). Thus, music would play in order to keep the audience’s attention, and – over time – several bands and musical groups developed out of these, initially small, groups (“Salvation Army”). One SA brass band is also featured in U2’s performance. That U2 make them part of their performance sends a strong message: Firstly, it makes clear that U2 support the cause of the Salvation Army, and it underpins U2’s commitment to charitable causes. Secondly, considering the original purpose of music in the SA, it hints that U2 value music as a tool for advocating for peace. Since the miners’ strike of 1984-5 forms the backdrop of the lyrics on the page, through their performance, U2 suggest that they believe in peaceful resistance against authorities and the government.

The performance starts with Bono casually strolling towards the microphone with his back facing the audience. On the LED screen, the SA brass band is visible. Bono then faces the audience and sings the first line of the song in a tense and breathy timbre – probably due to the high rise in pitch at the end of the line. The next three lines are sung in a lax, but nonetheless, breathy timbre, and the “Ooh” in line three is not really sung, but it resembles a moan, with a rise in pitch and



Fig. 9a: Bono (U2, “U2 Red Hill Mining Town”)

very breathy in timbre. This correlates with the historic context reflected in the lyrics on the page: Bono’s moan could be symbolic of the miners’ exasperation at Thatcher not meeting their demands. After having sung “Against the wind,” Bono raises his arms (see fig. 9a) – for roughly 3.5 seconds. This gesture often communicates surrender. Considering the historic context that inspired the lyrics, Bono’s gesture stands in opposition to Thatcher’s politics, as she did not give way to the miners’ demands. What the gesture could also demonstrate is that one is ‘coming in peace,’ or ‘being unarmed.’ This hints that Bono advocates for peaceful resistance “[a]gainst the wind.” Considering the historic context, the “wind” probably stands for the resistance of the coal miners against the British government in the miners’ strike of 1984-5. However, the performance under investigation takes place more than 30 years after the strike, and, thus, it could also be possible that the “wind” stands for *any* resistance against *any* government or political leader, and not necessarily against one specific government.

Thus, with his gesture, Bono could also advocate for expressing one's opposition to any officials peacefully rather than through violence.

The performance goes on with Bono singing the second and third verse, in lax and rather smooth timbre, with little movement in pitch. In addition – compared to the instrumentation – Bono's voice is low in volume, and there are no crescendos or decrescendos. He articulates the words in a legato with pauses between each line. Furthermore, Bono's and the other band members' facial expressions are relaxed, and they hardly move around on the stage, except from shifting their weight from one foot to the other or tapping their feet to the beat. It seems as if the manner in which U2 performs these verses corresponds to the words sung: The lyrics reflect the miners' day-to-day routine of standing patiently in line to get into the mine and of the miners mechanically performing their chores – with their faces covered in dust and sweat. Coal mining is mechanic work that requires precision and hard labor. It is a systematic process that follows a routine, and this routine is reflected and reinforced by the manner in which Verses 2 and 3 are sung in the performance: plain, calm, and unagitated – without great pitch movement or body communication. Thus, the manner of the performance of these two verses reinforces the words sung. There is only one instance of more conspicuous body communication: When Bono sings about the "heart of stone," he forms one hand into a fist, clutches it with the other, and puts them on his heart (see fig. 9b). With this illustrative gesture, he stresses the words sung, as the fist of his hands represents a stone, and he puts it in front of his heart. In the historic context of the miners' strike, this emphasizes Thatcher's harsh politics and her suggested indifference to peoples' feelings.



Fig. 9b: Bono

The bridge then marks a transition from the lax voice quality in the verses to a tense and rough timbre in the chorus. In addition, there is a large crescendo in the Bridge that results in Bono almost screaming the words in the chorus. He puts effort in his voice, and it is strained to an extent where it almost cracks. This strain on the musician's voice can be heard as representative of the strain the miners' strike put on the miners' relationships. As discussed in the analysis of the lyrics on the page, all they had left were their partners, and the miners thus desperately tried to hold on to their broken relationships. Bono's body communication further emphasizes this emotional tension experienced by the miners: His posture is tense, and he seems to move with great effort. When singing into the microphone, he leans forward as if

fighting against a strong wind, and he is grabbing the microphone (see fig. 9c).⁶ His hand movement corresponds to the words sung: In analogy to the miners, who were holding on to their relationships with force, the musician is forcefully grabbing the microphone with one hand, and the microphone stand with the other.



Fig. 9c: Bono

The performance then continues in a very similar manner: Verses 4 and 5 are performed with a similar voice quality and body communication as the previous verses, and Bridges 2 and 3 and the choruses similarly to Bridge 1 and the first chorus.

Nevertheless, Verse 6 is performed differently: Bono almost speaks the words of the verse, and it seems as if the musician was delivering a speech. This is emphasized by Bono's body communication: He folds his hands in front of him, and kneads them as if he was nervous (see fig. 9d). This communicated nervousness is further emphasized by Bono missing his entry to line 3 of Verse 6: Instead of "And we stooped so low" he sings "We so low stooped" (U2, "U2 Red Hill Mining Town"), and he then corrects himself by fitting in the words of line 3 into line 4, which results in Bono singing, "Stooped so low reached so high" (U2, "U2 Red Hill Mining Town"). Bono correcting himself results in an irregular rhythm, not conforming to the beat of the song. Although it is not clear whether he



Fig. 9d: Bono

⁶ This image is a still from later in the video recording, as Bono was filmed from a different angle while he sang the chorus for the first time. However, his stance is almost identical during the performance of any of the choruses of the song.

does so unintentionally or on purpose, it fits perfectly to the conveyed emotion of feeling tense. In addition, he laughs while correcting himself, and laughing after having made a mistake further emphasizes the apparent nervousness. The emotions conveyed can be understood as relating to the historic context of the mining strike: The miners were left in uncertainty of whether they would lose their job, and they were thus nervous about their future. Bono resumes singing at the beginning of Verse 7, and the song fades out.

This performance is a prime example of how body communication and voice quality can be used to emphasize the words sung. In addition, through making a Salvation Army brass band part of their performance, U2 send a strong message of supporting “good causes” and advocating for peace. Originally reflecting one specific historic event, i.e. rewriting the past, the lyrics on the page get additional meaning through the performance context.

4 Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the sociopolitical agenda of the Irish rock band U2. It aimed at shedding light on the band’s motivation and means of advocating social and political change through their song lyrics, as well as the song lyrics’ realizations in various performance contexts. The present study demonstrated that concepts from poetry analysis can be used for an analysis of song lyrics on the page. It also exemplified that, for studying song lyrics in their various performance contexts, different methodological tools are needed. Thus, the thesis derived concepts from music studies and poetry performance studies and demonstrated how they can fruitfully be applied to the study of the vocalization of song lyrics.

U2’s song lyrics on the page function as memory of the past as they rewrite the past by reflecting on historic events and the repercussions they have on the people affected. Reflecting on historic events endows the lyrics with an emotional quality, and the emotions reflected are emphasized and further shaped by stylistic choices. U2 deliberately use a set of specific textual strategies, such as alliteration, repetition, rhetorical questions, or metaphors, to bring their message across. Furthermore, by using personal pronouns and directly addressing their readers, U2 create a relationship with their readers in order to convince them of their cause. The lyrics furthermore include autobiographical components, which makes clear that U2 do not call for peace or social and political change as bystanders, but they themselves have experienced warfare and injustice, and thus, they can relate to the emotions reflected in the lyrics, and the band tries to communicate that to their readers/listeners. In

addition, their lyrics on the page encourage people to stand up for their opinion and to be socially and politically active – albeit peacefully and not through violence. Moreover, the lyrics on the page often function as allegories, which gives their songs a more general, universal meaning. While the band reflects on specific historic events, the use of allegories makes it apparent that U2 not only advocate for peace and/or social and political change in Ireland, but for a better world in general.

The various performance contexts exemplify the multifaceted nature of U2's social and political activism. While the lyrics on the page reflect specific historic events, the band uses the spontaneity possible in live performances to put their songs into new contexts and, thus, change their meanings. In addition, they often reinforce the autobiographical connection to their songs in their performance contexts, which makes the band's performances authentic and believable, and it also creates a connection between the performers and their audiences. In addition, the participation of the audiences also actively shapes their performances and changes their songs' meanings. In general, U2's performances are highly emotional, and Bono's voice action and the band's body communication further emphasize the emotional component of their songs and help convey their meanings. Furthermore, the stage design of the performances adds additional layers of meaning to the song. All this additional meaning could have hardly been conveyed on the printed page, through the song lyrics alone.

In performance, as on the page, U2 thus rewrite the past and, thereby, try to change the present.

32,985 words

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6 Appendix

6.1 Song Lyrics

Sunday Bloody Sunday [Song Lyrics]

Verse 1

I can't believe the news today
I can't close my eyes and make it go away.
How long, how long must we sing this
song?
How long, how long?
'Cos tonight
We can be as one, tonight.

Verse 2

Broken bottles under children's feet
Bodies strewn across the dead-end street.
But I won't heed the battle call
It puts my back up, puts my back up
against the wall.

Chorus

Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Oh, let's go.

Verse 3

And the battle's just begun
There's many lost, but tell me who has
won?
The trenches dug within our hearts
And mothers, children, brothers, sisters
Torn apart.

Chorus

Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.

How long, how long must we sing this
song?

How long, how long?

'Cos tonight

We can be as one, tonight.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Bridge

Wipe the tears from your eyes

Wipe your tears away.

I'll wipe your tears away.

I'll wipe your tears away.

I'll wipe your bloodshot eyes.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Verse 4

And it's true we are immune

When fact is fiction and TV reality.

And today the millions cry

We eat and drink while tomorrow they die.

The real battle just begun

To claim the victory Jesus won

On...

Chorus

Sunday, bloody Sunday

Sunday, bloody Sunday

Peace on Earth

[Song Lyrics]

Verse 1

Heaven on Earth
 We need it now
 I'm sick of all of this
 Hanging around
 Sick of sorrow
 Sick of pain
 Sick of hearing again and again
 That there's gonna be
 Peace on Earth

Verse 2

Where I grew up
 There weren't many trees
 Where there was we'd tear them down
 And use them on our enemies
 They say that what you mock
 Will surely overtake you
 And you become a monster
 So the monster will not break you

Bridge

It's already gone too far
 Who said that if you go in hard
 You won't get hurt

Chorus 1

Jesus could you take the time
 To throw a drowning man a line
 Peace on Earth
 Tell the ones who hear no sound
 Whose sons are living in the ground
 Peace on Earth
 No whos or whys
 No-one cries like a mother cries
 For peace on Earth
 She never got to say goodbye
 To see the colour in his eyes
 Now he's in the dirt
 Peace on Earth

Verse 4

They're reading names out over the radio
 All the folks the rest of us won't get to
 know
 Sean and Julia, Gareth, Ann and Breda
 Their lives are bigger, than any big idea

Chorus 2

Jesus can you take the time
 To throw a drowning man a line
 Peace on Earth
 To tell the ones who hear no sound
 Whose sons are living in the ground
 Peace on Earth

Jesus this song you wrote
 The words are sticking in my throat
 Peace on Earth
 Hear it every Christmas time
 But hope and history won't rhyme
 So what's it worth?
 This peace on Earth

Fading Out

Peace on Earth
 Peace on Earth
 Peace on Earth

Van Diemen's Land
[Song Lyrics]

Chorus

Hold me now, oh hold me now
Till this hour has gone around
And I gone, on the rising tide
For to face Van Diemen's land.

Verse 1

It's a bitter pill I swallow here
To be rent from one so dear.
We fought for justice and not for gain
But the magistrate sent me away.

Verse 2

Now kings will rule and the poor will toil
And tear their hands as they tear the soil
But a day will come in this dawning age
When an honest man sees an honest wage.

Chorus

Hold me now, oh hold me now
Till this hour has gone around
And I'm gone on the rising tide
For to face Van Diemen's Land.

Red Hill Mining Town

[Song Lyrics]

Verse 1

From father to son
The blood runs thin
Ooh, see the faces frozen (still)
Against the wind.

Verse 2

The seam is split
The coal-face cracked
The lines are long
There's no going back.

Verse 3

Through hands of steel
And heart of stone
Our labour day
Has come and gone.

Bridge 1

They leave me holdin' on
In Red Hill Town.
See the lights go down on ...

Chorus

Hangin' on
You're all that's left to hold on to.
I'm still waiting
I'm hangin' on
You're all that's left to hold on to.

Verse 4

The glass is cut
The bottle run dry.
Our love runs cold
In the caverns of the night.

Verse 5

We're wounded by fear
Injured in doubt.
I can lose myself
You I can't live without.

Bridge 2

Yeah, you keep me holdin' on
In Red Hill Town.
See the lights go down on

Chorus

Hangin' on
You're all that's left to hold on to.
I'm still waiting
I'm hangin' on
You're all that's left to hold on to
On to.

Verse 6

We scorch the earth
Set fire to the sky
And we stooped so low
To reach so high.

Verse 7

A link is lost
The chain undone.
We wait all day
For night to come
And it comes like a hunter (child).

Chorus

I'm hangin' on
You're all that's left to hold on to.
I'm still waiting
I'm hangin' on
You're all that's left to hold on to.

Fading Out

We see love, slowly stripped away
Our love has seen its better day.
Hangin' on
Lights go down on Red Hill
The lights go down on Red Hill.
The lights go down on Red Hill.
The lights go down on Red Hill Town.

6.2 English Abstract

This diploma investigates the sociopolitical agenda of the Irish rock band U2. It sheds light on the band's motivation and means of advocating social and political change through their song lyrics, as well as their realization in various performance contexts. For the discussion of the song lyrics on the page, the thesis draws on the research areas of poetry criticism and music studies, and the framework for the analysis of song lyrics in their performance context is established by drawing on poetry performance studies. In total, four of U2's rock songs are discussed in the thesis: "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "Peace on Earth," "Van Diemen's Land," and "Red Hill Mining Town." While the first two songs reflect events of the Troubles in Ireland, the last two songs reflect other historic events that had repercussions on Ireland.

The analyses of the song lyrics on the page reveal that U2 use a set of specific textual strategies to bring their message across. In addition, reflecting on historic events endows the words with an emotional quality, and these emotions are further emphasized through stylistic choices. The analyses furthermore make apparent how U2 create a relationship with their readers/listeners and how the band uses this relationship to convince them of their cause. In addition, their lyrics on the page encourage people to stand up for their opinion and to be socially and politically active. While the band reflects on specific historic events, the use of allegories makes it apparent that U2 not only advocate for peace and/or social and political change in Ireland, but for a better world in general.

The analyses of the songs in their various performance contexts exemplify the multifaceted nature of U2's social and political activism. The message conveyed in the performances is reinforced through Bono's voice action, the band's body communication, the stage design of the performances, the performer-audience interaction, and the autobiographical connection of U2 to their song lyrics. While the lyrics on the page reflect specific historic events, the band uses the spontaneity possible in live performances to put their songs into a new context and, thus, change their meanings. All this additional meaning could have hardly been conveyed on the printed page, through the song lyrics alone.

In performance, as on the page, U2 rewrite the past and, thereby, try to change the present.

6.3 Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem soziopolitischen Aktivismus der irischen Rock Band U2. Die Arbeit beleuchtet die Beweggründe für deren Aktivismus und untersucht die Mittel mit denen sie sich in ihren Songtexten, wie auch in verschiedenen ‚Performances,‘ für soziale und politische Veränderung einsetzen. Die Analyse der Songtexte stützt sich auf Konzepte aus den Bereichen der Literaturkritik und Musikwissenschaft, und der methodische Rahmen für die Analyse der ‚Performances‘ der Songs stammt aus dem Bereich der Performance Studies. Gesamt werden vier von U2s Rocksongs analysiert: „Sunday Bloody Sunday,“ „Peace on Earth,“ „Van Diemen’s Land,“ und „Red Hill Mining Town.“ Während die ersten beiden Songs historische Ereignisse des Nordirlandkonflikts behandeln, reflektieren die anderen beiden Songs historische Ereignisse mit Auswirkungen auf Irland.

Die Analysen der Songtexte zeigen auf, dass U2 verschiedene Stilmittel und Strategien einsetzen um ihre Message zu vermitteln. Des Weiteren sind ihre Songtexte, aufgrund der wahren Begebenheiten die sie reflektieren, emotional, und diese Emotionalität wird durch Stilmittel verstärkt. Die Analysen zeigen außerdem wie es U2 gelingt eine Beziehung zu ihren Lesern/Hörern aufzubauen, und wie sie diese Beziehung nutzen um ihren Standpunkt zu vermitteln. Ihre Songtexte rufen außerdem zu sozialem und politischem Aktivismus auf. Obwohl die Band spezifische historische Ereignisse in ihren Songtexten verarbeitet, wird durch die Verwendung von Allegorien klar, dass sich U2 nicht nur für soziale und politische Veränderung in Irland einsetzt, sondern für eine bessere Welt im Allgemeinen.

Die Analysen der Songs als ‚Performances‘ verdeutlicht die Vielfältigkeit des sozialen und politischen Aktivismus von U2. Die unterliegende Botschaft der ‚Performances‘ wird durch Bonos Stimmeinsatz, die Körpersprache der Künstler, die Interaktion zwischen Künstler und Publikum, sowie der autobiographischen Verbindung von U2 zu ihren Songs verdeutlicht. Während die Songtexte spezifische historische Ereignisse widerspiegeln, macht die Band von der Spontanität, die in ‚live Performances‘ möglich ist, Gebrauch, setzt ihre Songs in einen neuen Kontext, und verändert dadurch deren Aussage. All dieses zusätzliche Gedankengut hätte durch die Songtexte allein nicht übermittelt werden können.

U2 reflektieren in ihren ‚Performances,‘ wie auch in ihren Songtexten, vergangene Ereignisse und versuchen dadurch die Gegenwart zu verändern.