Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Centro de Educação e Humanidades
Instituto de Letras

Marcela Santos Brigida

Peter Doherty's Contemporary Take on Emily Dickinson: a Transit Between Sentences

Rio de Janeiro
2020

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Dissertação apresentada como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Estudos de Literatura.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Davi Ferreira de Pinho

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DEDICATÓRIA

A Lana dos Santos Silva, minha mãe e melhor amiga, a pessoa mais forte que eu conheço (e a mais gentil). Forever and a day.

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Agradeço primeiramente ao meu orientador. Davi Pinho foi meu grande parceiro no longo processo de pesquisa e escrita que resultou nesta dissertação. Além de um grande professor e leitor, ele jamais dá as costas a um desafio: Davi acreditou e incentivou o meu projeto desde a primeira vez em que conversamos a respeito. Foi como aluna do Davi durante a graduação que tive certeza de que queria me dedicar à carreira acadêmica e é porque ele acredita que eu sigo acreditando mesmo quando tudo parece inacreditável. Davi faz a UERJ valer a pena. Pelo zelo com a minha pesquisa e pela amizade, serei eternamente grata.

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Last, but not least, I must thank Peter Doherty, my kindredest kindred spirit. Peter gave me so much, from Dickinson to Hancock, and made me believe it was possible to build an entire world with one's own with your imagination and live in it. When we met in May 2017 to talk about poetry, Peter was kind, attentive, witty and extremely respectful of my project. He was interested in helping me in any way he could and he did. Peter dear, I truly believe I am a better person for knowing you and for that I will be forever thankful. I hope you recognise yourself in the pages that follow (this must be my longest letter yet). Thank you for the memories.

We stood there and talked while Elizabeth sipped her milk daintily and she told me all about Tomorrow. The Woman had told her that Tomorrow never comes, but Elizabeth knows better. It *will* come sometime. Some beautiful morning she will just wake up and find it is Tomorrow. Not Today but Tomorrow. And then things will happen…wonderful things. She may even have a day to do exactly as she likes in, with nobody watching her…though I think Elizabeth feels *that* is too good to happen even in Tomorrow. Or she may find out what is at the end of the harbor road…that wandering, twisting road like a nice red snake, that leads, so Elizabeth thinks, to the end of the world. Perhaps the Island of Happiness is there. Elizabeth feels sure there is an Island of Happiness somewhere where all the ships that never come back are anchored, and she will find it when Tomorrow comes.

Lucy Maud Montgomery

Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming.

David Bowie

RESUMO

BRIGIDA, Marcela Santos. *Peter Doherty's contemporary take on Emily Dickinson:* a transit between sentences. 2020. 203 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

Esta dissertação estabelece o pensamento dickinsoniano (DEPPMAN, 2005) como a habilidade de abraçar a dificuldade, a ambiguidade e a polivalência ao conduzir processos de raciocínio que precluem qualquer espécie de síntese estável. Seguindo o estudo de Jedd Deppman dos poemas "try-to-think" de Dickinson (DEPPMAN, 2005, p. 89), esta dissertação persegue e descreve a forma pela qual o pensamento dickinsoniano ecoa no século XXI por meio de Peter Doherty. Ele surge aqui como um dos maiores expoentes contemporâneos da materialização do pensamento dickinsoniano, isto é, de uma sentença dickinsoniana. Se compreendermos o conceito de sentença (WOOLF, 1929; PINHO, 2015) como algo material, a combinação linguística de palavras e, ao mesmo tempo, o veredito para identidades que deriva dessa materialidade, propomos que a sentença dickinsoniana é marcada pela busca por uma linguagem poética adequada à inquietude de uma mente auto questionadora, algo que permite que a poeta habite um território intermediário entre sua vida em Amherst, Massachusetts, e a projeção da sua voz por meio da poesia, o que permite que esta dissertação aborde Doherty como seu contemporâneo. Os achados desta pesquisa estão estruturados em quatro capítulos. Para considerar como Doherty pode surgir como um contemporâneo de Dickinson e discutir o relacionamento de ambos no contexto de uma tradição compartilhada, nos voltamos para "What Is the Contemporary" (2009) de Giorgio Agamben e "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919) de T. S. Eliot no Capítulo 1. Além de abordar Dickinson e Doherty em seus próprios contextos e além, o capítulo apresenta a base teórica desta dissertação. O Capítulo 2, "Emily Dickinson and Music", toma como ponto de partida a asserção de Cristanne Miller (2012a) de que Dickinson escrevia em relação à música. Subdividido em quatro seções, o capítulo investiga o histórico de Dickinson com a música, a influência das estruturas de hinos e baladas na sua escrita como aspectos musicais de suas práticas composicionais, assim como remediações de sua poesia por compositores a partir da década de 1950. O Capítulo 3, "Peter Doherty and Poetry", introduz Peter Doherty aos Estudos Literários. A primeira seção investiga a história de Doherty com a poesia, estabelecendo como o seu longo relacionamento com essa forma artística se reflete nos seus escritos musicais, enquanto a segunda seção aborda o caráter heterotélico das letras de canção do compositor. A terceira seção discute o relacionamento de Doherty com a tradição literária anglófona, sublinhando suas citações e alusões a poemas e romances em suas letras de canção. O Capítulo 4 se debruça sobre o relacionamento entre Dickinson e Doherty, discutindo as formas pelas quais o projeto poético da escritora reaparece no do artista inglês. Ao longo das três seções desse capítulo, nos voltamos para citações diretas, convergências de imagens e temas empregados por Dickinson e Doherty, e para o pensamento dickinsoniano nas obras do compositor. A coda dessa dissertação oferece um comentário final sobre os resultados obtidos ao longo do processo de pesquisa e apresenta novas direções e ramificações que esses temas podem oferecer no futuro.

Palavras-chave: Emily Dickinson. Peter Doherty. Poesia. Sentença. Adaptação.

ABSTRACT

BRIGIDA, Marcela Santos. *Peter Doherty's contemporary take on Emily Dickinson:* a transit between sentences. 2020. 203 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

This dissertation establishes Dickinsonian thought (DEPPMAN, 2005) as the ability to embrace difficulty, ambiguity and polyvalence when conducting thinking processes that preclude any form of stable synthesis. Following Jedd Deppman's study of Dickinson's "try-to-think" poems (DEPPMAN, 2005, p. 89), this dissertation pursues and describes the way in which Dickinsonian thought echoes in the twenty-first century through Peter Doherty. He appears here as one of contemporaneity's main exponents of the materialisation of Dickinsonian thought, that is, of a Dickinsonian sentence. If we can understand the concept of the sentence (WOOLF, 1929; PINHO, 2015) as something material, the linguistic combination of words, and at the same time, the verdict for identities that stems from this materiality, I propose that the Dickinsonian sentence is one that is marked by a search for a poetic language suitable to the restlessness of a self-questioning mind, one that allows the poet to inhabit an in-between territory that stands between her life in Amherst, Massachusetts, and the projection of her voice through poetry, which allows for this dissertation's approach of Doherty as her contemporary. The findings of this research are structured into four chapters. To think about how Doherty can appear as Dickinson's contemporary and to discuss their relationship within a shared tradition, I turn to Giorgio Agamben's "What Is the Contemporary?" (2009) and T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919) in Chapter 1. Besides addressing Dickinson's and Doherty's in their own contexts and beyond, this chapter presents the theoretical basis of this dissertation. Chapter 2, "Emily Dickinson and Music", takes as a point of departure the assertion by Cristanne Miller (2012a) that Dickinson wrote in relation to song. Divided into four sections, it investigates Dickinson's history with music, the influence of hymnaic and balladic structures over her writing, as musical aspects of her compositional practices, as well as remediations of her poetry by composers from the 1950s onwards. Chapter 3, "Peter Doherty and Poetry", is dedicated to introducing Peter Doherty into Literary Studies. Its first section investigates Doherty's history with poetry, establishing how his early relationship with this art form is reflected in his musical writings while the second section addresses the heterotelic character of Doherty's lyrics. The third section approaches Doherty's relationship with the Anglophone literary tradition, underlining his citations and allusions to poems and novels in his song lyrics. Chapter 4 leans over and unpacks the relationship between Dickinson and Doherty by looking at the ways her poetic project resurfaces in his. Throughout this chapter's three sections, I turn to direct citations, thematic and imagery-related convergences between Dickinson and Doherty, and Dickinsonian thought in the works of the English songwriter. The coda of this dissertation offers a final commentary on the results obtained from the research process and presents new directions and ramifications these subjects might offer in the future.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson. Peter Doherty. Poetry. Sentence. Adaptation.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the research process that engendered this dissertation was to produce a thorough investigation of the ways in which Emily Dickinson's poetry not only influenced the contemporary English poet and songwriter Peter Doherty, but also of how he was able to establish a steady dialogue with the American poet in ways that go beyond his direct citations and allusions to her poems in specific songs such as "At the Flophouse" (2004) and "Arcady" (2009). My early impressions about both artists, which prompted this investigation, have been confirmed throughout the research process. While Doherty cites and refers to several writers and poets from the Anglophone tradition, his relationship with Dickinson presents peculiarities that constitute a legitimate object of research, for this particular case study raises multifaceted questions that contribute to poetry and song studies. Dealing with Dickinson's hundreds of poems and letters as well as with Doherty's songs, published diaries and interviews, one can reflect upon tradition and the transits between poetry and song throughout the centuries. It is my belief that Dickinson can inform a reading of Doherty and vice versa because, differently from all the other writers Doherty has cited or alluded to in his lyrics, the presence of her pen is not contained or restricted to his direct citations of her poetry. Rather, it is in Doherty's sentence that his reading of the Poet of Amherst is manifested more thoroughly. Dickinson has written that "Nature is a Haunted House – but Art – a House that tries to be haunted" (L 459a). In my understanding, Doherty's art is essentially haunted by Dickinson, a proposal I address throughout this dissertation.

Jedd Deppman has written extensively on Dickinsonian thought. In "Trying to think with Emily Dickinson" (2005)[1], Deppman opposes himself to Margaret Peterson's assertion that some of Dickinson's poems could be read as "a series of ecstatic assertions", choosing to address the poet as a "serious thinker" instead (DEPPMAN, 2005, p. 84). To the critic, Dickinson's poetry should be read as a "thoughtful production of, and reaction to, extreme states of being" (2005, p. 85). Dickinson's poems "stage the mind attempting to satisfy or improve itself" (p. 93) by continuously rethinking and doubting its own conclusions. Dickinson's practice of constantly rewriting her works is part of her thinking exercise: Deppman states that, although she did not read Kant, Dickinson "did share his basic attitude toward the self-contesting mind" (p. 88). Addressing Dickinson's poetic project, Deppman

[1] This article was published in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* in 2005. In 2008, Deppman published a book bearing the same title, in which he further developed his analyses of Dickinson "try-to-think" poems.

concludes it is permeated by her "tenacity and the will to force the mind beyond its human limits" (p. 89).

Thus, in agreement with Deppman, this dissertation departs from the notion that what characterises Dickinsonian thought is precisely the poet's refusal to evade the difficulty of conducting her thinking process by rushing to a stable synthesis. Dickinson "describes each new failure without ever arbitrarily changing the subject or leaping into the safety of a platitude or a faith" (p. 89). Deppman introduces his category of Dickinson's "try-to-think" poems, where "her mind repeatedly stretches, fails, realizes it fails, regroups, rewords, and reaches its limit again" (p. 89). In Deppman's eyes, try-to-think poems are "precisely sequenced, if difficult, thought experiments" which "invite readers to [try to] repeat their steps and monitor the results" (p. 93). Ultimately, Dickinson's poetry-writing is read as an exercise which "helped her think" (2005, p. 85). I explore Deppman's understanding of Dickinson's approach to poetry not as a form of self-expression, but rather as a philosophical exercise and the ways in which this further enables an interlocution between her and contemporary arts in Chapter 4.

One of the main axes of my dissertation is to pursue and describe the way in which this aspect of her writing –Dickinsonian thought – echoes in the twenty-first century through Doherty. While his admiration for English poets such as William Blake, with his appropriation and revival of Albion imagery, and the War Poets might imprint a more conspicuous mark on his song lyrics, Dickinson influences his language on a deeper level, contributing to the logic of his lyrics, songs and even his views on art and performance. Without ever claiming that place for himself, Doherty appears as one of contemporaneity's main exponents of what I identify as a Dickinsonian sentence.

If we can understand the concept of the sentence in Virginia Woolf[2] as something material, the linguistic combination of words, and at the same time, the verdict for identities that stems from this materiality, I propose that the Dickinsonian sentence is one that is marked by a search for a poetic language suitable to the restlessness of a self-questioning mind, one that allows the poet to inhabit an in-between territory. The Dickinsonian sentence, then, expresses the Dickinsonian thought. It is this sentence that allows her to exist both in Amherst, Massachusetts and Nowhere. Between the visibility inherent to the political and social implications – and duties – of the Dickinson name and the invisibility of an artist who writes at night and takes care of her father's house by day. Dickinson's withdrawn presence in

[2] I understand the sentence in the sense presented by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

the later years of her life performs in a physical level a ghostly presence-absence that is characteristic of her writing: an omnipresent voice precisely for its clandestine nature, one that eschews standardization and easy categorization. With only a few published poems and none of them under her name, Dickinson was still present through her works.

In this disconnection between her art and her name, Dickinson's refusal to actively pursue publication – together with the fact that the poems that were published did not bear her name – offered the poet a certain freedom of the margin, as she could write and question all the tenets that ruled her community as well as her home, from God to the Civil War, without any concern as to what would be made of it by her contemporaries. She could then engage in a permanent process of trying-to-think through poetry, trying to pursue unstable subjectivities through the written word, through the strange music of her rhymes and through a search for her place as a poet with no regard to the constrictions of the roles she had to perform within the bounds of her immediate context. In her refusal to be Somebody (Fr260) and in her embracing of a surreptitious existence as Nobody, she proceeds to engage with her readers through poetic questions that invite them to engage with her regardless of their place in time. Dickinson's poems are always open-ended invitations to new revisions by other poetic Nobodies.

Turning to the poet and songwriter that will act as Emily Dickinson's contemporary interlocutor in this study, it is interesting to note that journalistic discourse has often referred to Peter Doherty as a "rock star" – a framing he rejects (CHANNEL 4 NEWS, 2016) – and thus compared him to rock and roll personalities such as members of The Sex Pistols, The Clash and The Strokes. I contend that this is an unfathomable misconception that can only be attributed to the fact that Doherty first came to public attention on a mainstream level in the early 2000s as frontman of what was then presented as a rock and roll band, The Libertines.

Doherty was an active independent poet – who after 1997 went on to become a household name in London's underground scene – before he was even a member of the band The Libertines. Furthermore, said band did not even play rock and roll music until 2001, when a manager suggested they composed songs that were more in line with the repertoire of the American band The Strokes in order to be offered a record deal: "Banny [Poostchi, the band's manager] saw The Strokes and heard a cash tone ring in her head", Doherty later told *Rolling Stone* (HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 76).[3] In his book *Bound Together* (2006), Anthony

[3] "Banny arranged to meet Peter and Carl and offered to manage them again on strict conditions: 'Look, I'm going to get you signed in six months, guaranteed, to Rough Trade if you do exactly what I say. If you're

Thornton states that “Banny told them to scrap everything they’d written and write a whole new set”, and cites Poostchi as saying:

> I didn’t tell them to write like The Strokes. I said you’re fantastic songwriters, so why not write a bunch of songs that are similar to The Strokes and then we can get you signed. And then you’re signed you can fuck off the record company and do what you want. It wasn’t that I didn’t think The Libertines were brilliant, it was just that I knew you had to fit in initially to sell. (THORNTON, 2006, p. 27)

Carl Barât, Doherty’s co-frontman in The Libertines, chose an interesting framing to narrate the same events. It both recognises that tensions within the band (which had all but split up when Poostchi offered to manage them again) had arisen from Doherty’s wish to perform without charging and claims that the impulse to compose in a style similar to The Strokes’ was their bitter response to the fact the American band were “usurping” a place that should had been occupied by The Libertines. Barât also omits the fact that Poostchi had quit from managing the band and offered to return under the condition of him and Doherty accepting her every direction. The musician quickly shifts from placing the blame on Doherty to an abstract “we”, when he states it was a communal, spontaneous decision to turn away from their original style:

> It all broke up, though, when Peter began to change gigs around, cancel shows and refuse to take money for performing. The original drummer and bassist were too ambitious to take this, so they quit and the bottom fell out, but we stuck with our manager and, when we saw what The Strokes were doing, we began to form a different idea of the band. I think when The Strokes broke so suddenly and so big, we were rather fancifully annoyed at them: annoyed they were shagging our women and taking our drugs, taking the space that, in our minds, was reserved for us. We decided something had to be done, and so we began to write new songs. They were faster and more driven – sexier, more tortured, funnier – and everything began to click. I remember the time well because there as a Rough Trade showcase looming on the horizon, which we were due to play in, and I was at a friend’s flat teaching Johnny Borrell the bass line to ‘Horrorshow’. It was the day the planes hit the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York, and only a few weeks before the showcase came, I phoned him as I was arriving at Earl’s Court, to see if he was almost there. John, though, was on the Alabama 3 tour bus in Cardiff, in the middle of a rather large bender, so we had to do the showcase with me playing the fucking bass. Thankfully, it still worked and Rough Trade took us on. Gary, a session drummer who’d played most famously with Eddie Grant, was working in marketing at that point – he was our manager’s secretary’s boyfriend – and he came on board, too. Rough Trade then pointed out that we needed a bassist, so we asked John. And that was The Libertines fully formed in its second, famous, incarnation. We’d found a rich seam of new songs, which we continued to mine for the first single and album, but when we got to the second album the old ones started to sneak back in. ‘Music

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prepared to do that I can get you a deal. If not, I don’t want to waste your time.” (THORNTON; SARGENT, 2006, p. 27)

> When The Lights Go Out' is a song that has its roots in the quieter, poetic first incarnation of the band. It was great, after the angry thing, to have such a reservoir of wonderful, rich, lyrical material that we'd really wanted to sing about when we were young, fresh and idealistic. (BARÂT, 2010, p. 40-41)

Even though Barât recognises these incarnations of the band – one poetic, the other commercial –, the public's overall understanding of Doherty is heavily tainted by the commercial choices he made rather than by his body of works. The Libertines officially split up in late 2004. Doherty narrates the events that culminated in that episode in his song "Gang of Gin" (2004). After leaving The Libertines, in his band Babyshambles and especially in his solo career, Doherty returned to the acoustic, folk, skiffle-influenced composing style that marked his early writings. Nevertheless, a Libertines-centred narrative usually prevails when the public addresses the artist. After the split, the band's fans – old and new – produced an intense speculative market for festival executives, tour promoters and record companies that saw a strong demand for reunion shows and the potential for an elevated profit. In 2010, the first of those events took place, after Doherty and Barât were reportedly offered £1.5million to headline Reading and Leeds Festivals (JONZE, 2010)[4]. Four years later, the band reformed once more after Doherty and Barât were offered £500,000 each to play in Hyde Park, London. Doherty admitted his main reason for playing the shows was the financial return, as "he owed child support for his [then] 18-month-old daughter" (WILKINSON, 2014, p. 51). Nevertheless, while the artist labelled the amount of money offered as "filthy" (ibid.), he underlined that it was perfectly in tune with the "spirit of The Libertines" to accept it. Questioned as to what he would tell people who criticised them for "selling out", Doherty replied:

> What do they think The Libertines did? After doing everything in the spirit of the band for five years, [the fans] sold out. They begged John to come back just because he was good-looking, even though he'd left us when we were at our most needy. And we signed to Rough Trade, right? *Purely* for the money. It's completely in the spirit of the band to play Hyde Park for the money! What the fuck are they talking about?! It's a fucking horrorshow, it just happens to be amazing rock 'n' roll music. (WILKINSON, 2014, p. 51-52)

Doherty then stated that the reason he "went mad" and ended up in prison was that he and his bandmates were "unprincipled and scurrilous" (WILKISON, 2014, p. 52) and completely motivated by money and fame and being part of a "sickening charade that we far too late realised we weren't able to control" (ibid.). This incident demonstrates Doherty's

[4] The band also played two shows at the London Forum in 2010.

tension in relation to the band, revealing both his frustration with the way things were done at the early days – such as suggesting that John was only allowed back in the band because he was attractive while criticizing the bassist for "leaving them" when they needed him the most – and his scepticism about their reasons for reuniting. Doherty finishes his evaluation of the band's history with the industry by eerily predicting that, just as they were unable to control their own careers before, "it will be the same this time – we won't be able to control it" (WILKINSON, 2014, p. 52). The artist's evaluation of the band's situation upon its reformation in 2014 seems accurate under the light of the events that followed.

In December that same year, The Libertines signed a contract with EMI to record their third studio album. The deal was signed in Thailand under intense media coverage, shortly after Doherty finished his treatment at a rehabilitation facility (WRIGHT, 2014). In 2016, Doherty revealed in an interview how the busy tour schedule and playing in front of large crowds were detrimental to his health (CHANNEL 4 NEWS, 2016). The other side effect of The Libertines' brand being marketed as "the one thing they always return to" is the virtual effacement of all the projects Doherty has developed over the years and a distortion of his body of work as well as of his dimension as an artist. It is also this short sightedness that I aim to correct by pointing out and addressing how much closer Doherty is to Dickinson than he is to Sid Vicious. He has declared, after all, that "to perform in public is a nightmare, like war, but to sit down and write in solitude is like a dream", a statement Lyndall Gordon has deemed a "Dickinsonian aversion to public eyes" (GORDON, 2010, p. 140).

Evidently, in a project that seeks to study the relationship between artists of different times and social contexts under a comparative approach, one must deal with the transits made possible by tradition as well as recognise the inherent differences of radically distinct realities. As Cristanne Miller points out, the way a poet engages "with form is distinctly embedded in a historical moment and their understanding of genre is historically and locally framed" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 19). Such differences are not overlooked throughout this dissertation. Nevertheless, as I address Dickinson's and Doherty's social and cultural contexts in Chapter 1, the first points of contact are unveiled. Dickinson's and Doherty's anxieties about the place of the artist, their ideas about fame and success and a shared search in poetry for a voice that allows them to overcome the limitations of the ways of life available to them are some of the most interesting convergences.

In order to think about how Doherty can appear as Dickinson's contemporary and to discuss their relationship within tradition, I turn to Giorgio Agamben and T. S. Eliot in Chapter 1: "Tradition and Contemporaneity: Thinking of Dickinson and Doherty In and

Beyond Their Own Times". Besides addressing Dickinson's and Doherty's contexts and education, in this chapter I present the theoretical arguments over which this dissertation was built as well as introduce some aspects of Dickinson's compositional practices that are further explored in Chapter 2. Scholars such as Cristanne Miller, Judy Jo Small and John Shoptaw defend that Dickinson's poetry was predominantly aural. Therefore, addressing the musical aspect of her writing is key to understanding her poetics. If Dickinson wrote "for both the eye and the ear" (SHOPTAW, 2004, p. 21), and her construction of rhythms and rhymes are as important as her semantic meanings, it appears that Cristanne Miller is correct in her formulation that the poet "wrote in relation to song" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 49), referring to the influence ballads and hymns exerted on Dickinson's poetry. This characteristic of nineteenth-century American verse and, more specifically, of Dickinson's poetry must be addressed to establish a foundation for the comparisons and analyses between her and Doherty.

Chapter 2, "Emily Dickinson and Music", takes as a point of departure the assertion by Cristanne Miller that Dickinson wrote in relation to song. In its first section, "Dickinson's History with Music: Dickinson as a Musician-Turned-Poet", I address the poet's education as well as the role music had in it. As most of the girls of her class and age, Dickinson was a passionate pianist, one who was often complimented on her ability to improvise. She also sang in her church's choir and at school. Judy Jo Small states that, judging from the level of difficulty of some of Dickinson's collected sheet music, she was a "moderately accomplished pianist" (SMALL, 1990, p. 50). It is interesting, then, to think of Dickinson as a musician-turned-poet, as Small suggests, after citing an account by Clara Bellinger Green where she describes a visit to the poet and affirms Dickinson told her and her sister of her love of music and supposedly said that after hearing a famous pianist "play in Boston, she had become convinced that she could never master the art and had forthwith abandoned it once and for all, giving herself up then wholly to literature" (LEYDA, 1960, p. 272-273). To Small,

> This recollection suggests two rather remarkable things: first, that Dickinson may once have had serious musical ambitions that she relinquished for poetry, and second, that she had an auditory relationship to a town and its people that she had closed out of her sight. What part her persistent eye problems may have played in magnifying the importance of her hearing one can only guess. (1990, p. 51)

This approach to Dickinson is particularly relevant to this study as it makes it possible to address the relationship between her and Doherty in the terms of a mirror effect. While he is a poet who found his strongest poetic expression through songwriting, Dickinson might then be read as a pianist – and singer – who found in poetry the best vehicle to embody her

music. As Valentine Cunningham has pointed out, Dickinson often refers to her compositional experience in musical terms (Cf. CUNNINGHAM, 2002). Turning once more to Judy Jo Small's brilliant study on Dickinson's rhyme, one learns that the poet "did not share our hesitancies about the 'musical' aspect of poetry but in fact often thought of poetry as song and of herself as a singer" (SMALL, 1990, p. 27).

The second section of Chapter 2, titled "The Hymnody Question", focuses on the debate Dickinsonian scholarship has developed throughout the years surrounding the question of how extensive the influence of hymns in Dickinson's verse is. I also address Cristanne Miller's recent studies on the influence of ballads on the poet's writing and argue for an understanding of Dickinson's poetry that encompasses the influence of both musical poetic forms – hymns and ballads – as an element that reinforces the musical aspect of Dickinson's poetry as well as characteristics that allow for her works to be frequently set to music and adapted by composers and songwriters. In the third section, titled "Musical Aspects of Dickinson's Compositional Style", I address the ways in which the poet's education and passion for music served as tools that helped shape her verse and compositional style. Judy Jo Small, John Shoptaw and Cristanne Miller help us understand how Dickinson's historical context and the way in which she engaged with the cultural practices of her time appear in her poems. This section also addresses the influence of Dickinson's contemporaries on her poetics. The final section of this chapter, "Remediations of Dickinson's Poetry by Composers and Songwriters" focuses on said adaptations and remediations of Dickinson by musicians from the 1950s onwards. While Doherty's remediations are introduced in this chapter, they are thoroughly analysed in Chapter 4, which is fully dedicated to the relationship between Dickinson and the English songwriter.

Chapter 3, "Peter Doherty and Poetry", is dedicated to introducing Peter Doherty into Literary Studies, resuming and expanding an effort I established in "Who Will Buy My Beautiful Songs? An Introduction to the Dickinsonian Sentence in Peter Doherty's Works" (BRIGIDA, 2018). While in the scope of this dissertation it would be difficult to address all of Doherty's poetic works, some of which are only available in manuscript form in his published diaries, I include some of his most well-known poems, including one he recited on *Newsnight* in 2004, "The Bow Poem" and well as "Bowhemia". This chapter also constitutes an effort to correct misconceptions about Doherty's poetic project and his outlook on his role as artist.

In general terms, Chapter 3 investigates how Doherty's writing and performance made musical journalists and part of his fanbase look at him as a modern-day minstrel who has a complicated relationship with fame and predatory British tabloids. Alex Hannaford quotes

producer Simon Bourcier as describing Doherty as a "naïve minstrel who is listening to these people because he admires and respects what they've done. But ultimately, he is better than they are" and lamenting that "it's a shame he's being taken down a dusty road where other people's egos are influencing the situation" (HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 218). Hannaford also cites an article published on *NME* which covered one of Doherty's shows: "this is Pete[5] Doherty's ideal existence; a carefree minstrel playing songs here and when he pleases amongst adoring fans." (HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 155). More specifically, in its first section, "Peter Doherty's History with Poetry: Doherty as a Poet-Turned-Musician", this chapter is dedicated to establishing how Doherty's education and early relationship with poetry are reflected in his writings and to how he established himself first as a poet and later as songwriter. In the second section, "Good Songs, Good Poems? Reading Peter Doherty's Lyrics", I interrogate the differences and similarities between song lyrics and poems as art forms. Furthermore, the third section of Chapter 3, "Poetry in Doherty's Songwriting: References, Influences, Citations", addresses Doherty's relationship with the Anglophone literary tradition, underlining his citations and allusions to poems and novels in his song lyrics, and introducing his relationship with Dickinson, which is fully addressed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 is titled "Emily Dickinson in Peter Doherty" and is divided into three sections. In the first one, "Direct Citations", I address Doherty's direct citations and allusions to Dickinson's poems in his song lyrics. The second section of this chapter focuses on thematic and imagery-related convergences between Dickinson and Doherty, such as an economic logic employed as metaphor and their uses of images of light and darkness, focusing on the employment of the sun as a metaphor and its multiple significations throughout their *oeuvres*. I establish a dialogue with Wendy Barker's book *Lunacy of Light: Emily Dickinson and the Experience of Metaphor* (1987) which provides us with a thorough analysis of the sun as a key metaphor in Dickinson's works. While I disagree with Barker's analysis in some accounts, it is still a brilliant and methodical study of Dickinson's metaphors that must be addressed in this dissertation. The portrayal of the poet as birdsong is also a point of interest as Doherty often employs this image to address freedom and entrapment, main questions in both artists' works. It is an especially interesting topic if one considers the fact

[5] Doherty is often referred to by the media as "Pete" instead of Peter. Questioned in an interview why he had "changed his name" upon the release of his first solo album (released under the name Peter Doherty), he responded: "I've never changed my name, you lot changed my name. The very first interview I ever did with NME and I remember it well because it was the day of the May Day riots. I said: "Can you put 'Peter'?" and the geezer, he looked me in the eye, and he said: "Yeah, I'll put Peter, whatever." Pete. And I wrote in…"Dear NME, right, look: my name is Peter, please can you put Peter? Yours sincerely, Peter." (NME RADIO, 2009)

that the official video for Doherty's "Broken Love Song" (2009) portrays the singer inside a prison cell with a portrait of Dickinson on the wall. Considering the song was written during a period Doherty spent in prison in 2008, this is a topic that must be discussed. The final section of Chapter 4, as its self-explanatory title states, unpacks the "Dickinsonian Thought in Doherty". It addresses Doherty's inheriting and appropriating of Dickinson's poetics of uncertainty and analyses his discourse about the poet in interviews and in his published diaries, *The Books of Albion* (2007) and *From Albion to Shangri-La* (2013).

The conclusion or coda of this dissertation offers a final commentary on the results obtained from my Master's research and present new directions and ramifications this intensive period might offer in the future. The publication of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* by Thomas H. Johnson in 1955 made it easier for scholars to address – and assess – Emily Dickinson's oeuvre in its entirety. The fact Johnson refrained from attempting to standardise her writing where it was deviant also meant readers had now access to poems disposed and presented in a manner much closer to the way Dickinson had preserved them. Thus, a tradition of Dickinsonian academic investigation began to form, and names such as Sewall, Gelpi and Capps produced studies on Dickinson that remain extremely relevant. In the late 1970s, feminist critics turned to Dickinson's *oeuvre* and while some of the studies then produced are often more speculative than analytical, they still represent a critical effort in the sense of producing a body of critical work dedicated to Dickinson and recognizing her place in the North-American poetic tradition. In 1987, Cristanne Miller published the excellent *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar* and in 1990 Judy Jo Small published *Positive as Sound: Emily Dickinson's Rhyme*. Both are essential reads to anyone interested in Dickinson's poetics, innovations and the conditions under which she wrote. In 1992, *The Emily Dickinson Journal* was published for the first time and has since offered its subscribers two editions per year with articles that help us keep in touch with what is being produced about Dickinson all over the world. This brief overview aims to demonstrate that as I write this dissertation, I am aided by a long, well-established tradition that has looked at Dickinson's *oeuvre* under many different lights.

Aiming to analyse Peter Doherty's work and the ways in which he was influenced by Dickinson's poetry and how he engages and establishes a dialogue with it, I was confronted by the lack of scholarly productions related to the artist. A search through The British Library's online catalogues brought me all of Doherty's registered works, from songs to his published books, as well as books written by journalists about him at the peak of his fame, and a single scientific article published in the *Journal of gender studies* in 2014, titled "Rock

and roll or rock and fall? Gendered framing of the rock and roll lifestyles of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty in British broadsheets". While it is an interesting paper, it does not deal with Doherty's work, but rather with the way he and Amy Winehouse were portrayed by newspapers under a comparative approach. I believe that the fact he has only been covered by journalistic discourse that places his output as a member of The Libertines centre stage is detrimental to an understanding of his *oeuvre*. Furthermore, this allows for his work to be overlooked by literary studies. In that sense, this dissertation fills a significant gap when it comes to the study of Doherty's poetry and song writing in academia.

1 TRADITION AND CONTEMPORANEITY: THINKING OF DICKINSON AND DOHERTY IN AND BEYOND THEIR OWN TIMES

In "What Is the Contemporary?" (2009), Giorgio Agamben delineates how tradition allows us to fracture the vertebrae of chronological time to reach contemporariness with writers and texts from other times. If those who are truly contemporary "neither perfectly coincide with their times nor adjust themselves to its demands" (2009, p. 40), the disjunction and anachronism inherent to contemporariness appears to offer a space of communication with the immemorial. In "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919), T. S. Eliot argues that "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality," (ELIOT, p. 37) undertaken to apprehend what tradition has to offer. Eliot introduces the concept of the historical sense, an indispensable tool to "anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year" (ibid.). He states the historical sense involves

> a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. (1919, p. 37)

Eliot then argues for a new understanding of tradition not as "some pleasing archaeological reconstruction" (1919, p. 36) or as a "handing down" that "consisted in [the artist] following the ways of the immediate generation before [him] in a blind or timid adherence to its successes" (p. 37), but rather as something that prompts contemporaneity. That is, contemporary writers are those who are aware of the fact that their work – if significant – can never be dislocated from tradition. A truly contemporary artist is aware of "the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (p. 37), combining his sense of the timely with his perception of the timeless, as well as of their coexistence.

Very much in synch with Eliot's new understanding of the traditional and the contemporary, Agamben cites Roland Barthes as proposing that the contemporary "is the untimely" (AGAMBEN, 2009, p. 40)[6]. If this is so, I believe that to understand the transit

[6] Although Agamben does not provide the full reference, candidly stating that this is a "note from his lectures at the College de France", the excerpt was taken from Barthes' posthumous work *La Préparation du roman* (2003).

between Dickinson's and Doherty's sentences one must turn to the context and logic of their immediate contexts to formulate an argument that recognises them simultaneously inside and outside of their own times; contemporaries in the manner described by Agamben:

> Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands. They are thus in this sense irrelevant [*inattuale*]. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time. (2009, p. 40)

It is that characteristic – contemporariness, "a singular relationship with one's own time" (2009, p. 41) – that allows for Dickinson to be perceived by twentieth and twenty-first century readers as current and relevant, her *oeuvre* so inviting to other artists – composers, in the scope of this dissertation – whom appropriate and adapt her verse. Thinking of Doherty, I must also address the question of nostalgia. Agamben states that the disconnection the contemporary displays in relation to his own time should not be misunderstood as nostalgia:

> Naturally, this noncoincidence, this "dys-chrony," does not mean that the contemporary is a person who lives in another time, a nostalgic who feels more at home in the Athens of Pericles or in the Paris of Robespierre and the Marquis de Sade than in the city and the time in which he lives. An intelligent man can despise his time while knowing that he nevertheless irrevocably belongs to it, that he cannot escape his own time. (2009, p. 41)

Agamben is highly critical of a nostalgic approach to the past. In fact, he makes it clear that for those who are truly contemporary, there is no nostalgia in recognizing the presence of the shadows of the past. They articulate a peculiar relationship with their own times that implicates a certain distancing and a critical eye towards it that does not translate itself as a romanticizing of the past, but rather recognises its presence in the present. Articulating his and Eliot's theories, one could say both believe that engaging with tradition is not about emulating the artists of the past, but rather working with what has not been explored in the past, thus establishing a dialogue with it. Therefore, because he or she knows the past – tradition – the contemporary knows where and how to get inserted in it. It is this insertion that produces "the new", or "breaks", from Eliot to Agamben.

I aim to demonstrate here that although Doherty has often been nostalgic, he reaches contemporariness in the anachronous-disjunction sense and becomes a poet through Dickinson, the first relationship in which he refrains from emulating the admired artist but rather engages with the questions and challenges of the text. Doherty can be remarkably

nostalgic in his manifestations as an artist. This is a feature that has been pointed out by journalists, critics and admirers of his work. Some of his poetics and aesthetics follow this vein, especially in pieces where the influence of the Romantics and of members of the Decadent Movement such as Oscar Wilde are most evident. The fact that his first band – the one in which he achieved most significant mainstream success and financial return – was named The Libertines[7] offers an insight into just how interesting studying him under the light of Agamben may be. It is my understanding that emulation and nostalgia represent a more juvenile impulse in Doherty and that some of his attachment to those values reflect an early attempt made by the artist to acquire the historical sense. Eliot states that tradition "cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour" (1919, p. 37). It appears that it is through his contemporaneity with Dickinson's works that Doherty is able to mature his relationship with tradition. Perhaps, it may be argued that this is so because, differently from most of the writers Doherty admires and idealises – all men, most of them English – he cannot try to engage with Dickinson through emulation.

While Doherty has often stated his admiration for Oscar Wilde's rebellious, defiant life style, his elegance, social impact and even his addiction to opium (Cf. DOHERTY, 2014), Dickinson's life does not offer a parallel to which he might have tried to relate as a young reader of her poems. Therefore, his relationship with Dickinson might be the most creatively significant to him because it was the first one – the only one – that dealt not with biography, appearance or idealised glamour. It was always an engagement with the text itself and, because Dickinson's poems are so layered, ambiguous and open-ended, she transcended her time and place to engage Doherty with her question: "I'm Noboby! Who are you? / Are you – Nobody – too?" (Fr 260).

This poem appears here as a method of investigation of Dickinsonian thought and of the transit between Dickinson and Doherty as the English songwriter seeks to answer her question. Cristanne Miller has pointed out that an anonymous poem published on the *Hampshire and Franklin Express* (a local Amherst newspaper the Dickinson family read) on 4 April 1856 was titled "Nobody by Somebody" and included the line "Sign yourself 'nobody,' quick as you can" (MILLER, 2016, p. 751). Considering Franklin ascribes Dickinson's poem to 1861, this might have been the poet's response and reworking of these ideas surrounding the construction of subjectivities. Organised into two quartets, this is one of Dickinson's many poems for which she left us more than one version. In the first stanza, the

[7] After the Marquis de Sade's *Lusts of the Libertines* (1785).

speaker proclaims herself as Nobody[8] and asks her reader if he/she, shares this name – or the lack of one – and position:

> I'm Nobody! Who are you?
> Are you – Nobody – too?
> Then there's a pair of us!
> Don't tell! they'd banish us – you know! [they'd] *advertise*[9]

Presuming the only possible answer from a reader of this poem could present would be a confirmation of *Nobodyness*, the speaker is quick to instruct her interlocutor to keep silent about their shared status. Dickinson's use of dashes in this poem is masterful; they act both as interesting markers for performing the poem and visual indicators (together with the exclamation marks) of the speaker's ecstatic reaction to finding another Nobody. Significantly, the word appears isolated by dashes in line 2. In the fourth line, the speaker seals the pact of camaraderie between her and her Nobody-reader: not only there is a pair of them, but this shared condition also constitutes a shared secret. Their condition also encompasses a mutual transgression for which there is an announced sanction. In the original version of the poem, the speaker states their sanction would implicate being banished by "them", the Somebodies, one may infer. In the alternative version, the reason given for her request of secrecy, is that if "they" knew about the speaker's and the reader's true conditions, "they'd advertise".

Besides showcasing Dickinson's process of constantly rethinking and experimenting with her own poems, this first stanza offers us a few keys to reading the transit between her and Doherty's sentences. Firstly, there is a sense of escape from constrictions in being Nobody. This is not a lament, but a jolly celebration not only of this condition she annunciates (in private and to her fellow Nobody only), but also of their encounter on the page. As I further develop in Chapter 4, the tension between the public and the private, fame and invisibility are major questions for both artists. Secondly, both her alternatives speak to Doherty's writing. His song lyrics and diaries are filled with observations on his sense of alienation before and after becoming famous and a sense of shutting down in the face of the

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[8] The capitalisation here is very significative, as the poet usually capitalised elements she aimed to stress or personify (Cf. HART; CHUNG, 2008).

[9] Both expressions for line 4 (banish us / advertise) are included in Dickinson's manuscript, which is available at Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. I have transcribed both here following the format Cristanne Miller used in *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (2016), attempting to transcribe in print Dickinson's placing of the alternative word in the manuscript, which is also available online at the Emily Dickinson Archive <http://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/235484>.

outside world (filled with Somebodies, perhaps)[10]. Entrapment was already a theme that permeated Doherty's writing before his experiences in prison in 2003 and 2008 and forced hospitalisation in rehabilitation clinics. The first threat is banishment, the second is advertisement; Doherty has suffered both. A journal entry titled by *From Albion to Shagri-La*'s editor Nina Antonia as "Tour Diary 18" could be read in dialogue with Dickinson's poem:

> When I heard they were evicting me
> From my own fantasy
> An executive explained to me
> How it follows demographically
> And then the executive said
> That I should try and be dead
> By next July
> Of course we'll miss you
> But we can exploit and
> Reissue
> And sell footage of you snuffing it
> To Sky
> (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 234)

This could be read as Doherty's description of what follows when a Nobody allows *them* to know who he is: he becomes a Somebody. The speaker in this entry suffers both banishment (eviction from his fantasy) and advertisement (But we can exploit and / Reissue / And sell footage of you snuffing it / to Sky). It also allows me to introduce Dickinson' second stanza, where her speaker describes all the disadvantages of being Somebody:

> How dreary – to be – Somebody!
> How public – like a Frog –
> To tell your name – the livelong June – [To tell] one's
> To an admiring Bog!

Dickinson's framing of the woes of *Somebodiness* are all experienced by Doherty as a famous artist. Although this is a topic that is further developed later in Chapter 4, Dickinson's sentence, embodied in this poem, speaks to Doherty both by its portrayal of the problems related to having – and performing – a name, and by its description of the only way out of the dreariness of serving an "admiring Bog": to be Nobody and to do so with no announcement, within the cracks of public discourse and through the silences inherent to her fragmentary poetry. Confronted by Dickinson's contemporariness in her addressing of issues so

[10] "The phone rings on the far-side of the room, shifting from side to side occasionally, relaying people's pointless attempts to communicate with me" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 85), he describes in one of his journal entries.

uncharacteristic of the image of the mournful poetess pop culture has often made of her, Doherty finally engages with tradition not through emulation, but rather through a dialogue with Dickinson's questions. In a nineteenth-century American woman from Amherst who never travelled too far from her father's Homestead, Peter Doherty found his most significant counterpart, one who allowed him to forge a voice that understood his own time without looking to the past in a romanticised manner. Through Emily Dickinson, Peter Doherty became a poet.[11]

In his effort to answer Dickinson's question through art, taking it as a poetic project, Doherty was able to actualise tradition and even to refine his relationship with other writers and themes. Through Dickinson, the past is not hierarchised for Doherty anymore. The pastness of the past is made present – her question is his question. The artist can finally take part in tradition. By resorting to Eliot's aesthetic principle that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone" (1919, p. 37) and that a truly new work of art will inevitably, in its dialogue with tradition, alter "if ever so slightly" (ibid.) the existing order of elements (with the implication that while the past influences the present, the opposite is also true), I argue here that Dickinson catapults Doherty from mere student of the historical sense to an active engagement with tradition that allows for him to reach contemporariness. Her question: "I'm Nobody! Who are you? / Are you – Nobody – too?" (Fr260) pushes Doherty out of a nostalgic position by presenting him with a fragment of tradition that unveils to him the presence of a past that can be updated by him. They share common ground.

While his attachment to the band The Libertines reflects some of his most nostalgic efforts (and the band became a source of nostalgia itself, projecting a double image of "the good old days" as well as of an idealization of "what could have been"), in some of his earliest songs, such as "Albion", Doherty does not attempt to *be* Blake, ressignifying the concept of idyllic England into a place of his own. Therefore, when I refer to a course of refining and maturing in Doherty's work, it should be observed that this is not a chronological process. Throughout this dissertation – and especially in Chapter 3 – I argue for an understanding of Doherty as an artist whose *oeuvre* can be organised into at least two main categories; Dohertian artworks and Marketable artworks. Those which are more

[11] Cristanne Miller addresses Dickinson's engagement with her reader in an interesting way:

"To the extent that Dickinson's poems focus on the intensity of an articulated feeling or dilemma rather than an individualized biographical frame for that experience, they resemble songs waiting for a singer, someone to step into the 'I' provided as a staged performance, although with greater self-consciousness and irony than typical of ballads and hymns" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 90).

representative of his relationship with Dickinsonian poetics fall into the first category, while some of his most well-known artistic output falls into the second. As nostalgia became a part of The Libertines' brand, Doherty's experimentations and, dare I say, potency as an artist are sometimes stifled by the need to emulate a specific moment in his career in which his compositional practices were driven towards signing a record deal.

In that sense, Poostchi's proposal that he and his colleagues would temporarily write songs in a certain popular style in order to secure a record deal and earn their freedom appears as one of the many instances in Doherty's career where he fell into a state of entrapment while looking for freedom. This is a paradox he addresses in *From Albion to Shangri-La* (2013): "I seem to have spent a lot of my creative time contradicting myself, searching for liberty whilst imprisoning myself" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 240). Nevertheless, I explore the relationship between Dickinson and Doherty in this chapter with contemporariness as their main shared value, a communal characteristic that also allows the English songwriter to establish a dialogue with the American poet's works. I intend to demonstrate that the transit between their sentences is made possible by their affinity within tradition as artists that find their full expression in the hybrid terrain where music and poetry are equally present; artists which can reflect upon their times precisely because of their ambivalent positions as insiders that are simultaneously outsiders. In this sense, the present time their arts inhabit is one that resists a complete incorporation by the artistic vocabulary of each writer's particular historical time, which is the basis for Agamben's understanding when he states that

> Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect. are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it. (2009, p. 41)

Before turning to an overview of Dickinson's context and musical education, I must clarify what I mean by the word "sentence" in the scope of this dissertation, for it contributes to the understanding of the contemporaneity between Dickinson and Doherty. The sentence is understood here as presented in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Virginia Woolf. Throughout her essay, Woolf's speaker presents the concept of the sentence when addressing the conclusions she arrived at after failing to find a solid tradition from which women writers could draw. After pointing out that the woman "who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself" (1929, p. 39) as

"all the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain" (ibid.), Woolf identifies in Aphra Behn the beginning of a shift for women's writing. Behn, a seventeenth-century middle-class woman was "forced by the death of her husband and some unfortunate adventures of her own to make her living by her wits" (1929, p. 49) and therefore

> proved that money could be made by writing at the sacrifice, perhaps, of certain agreeable qualities; and so by degrees writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance. A husband might die, or some disaster overtake the family. Hundreds of women began as the eighteenth century drew on to add to their pin money, or to come to the rescue of their families by making translations or writing the innumerable bad novels which have ceased to be recorded even in text-books, but are to be picked up in the fourpenny boxes in the Charing Cross Road. (WOOLF, 1929, p. 49)

To the essayist, it was Behn who earned her successors "the right to speak their minds".

Woolf states that in the nineteenth-century she finally "found several shelves given up entirely to the works of women" (1929, p. 50). However, she questions why almost all those works were novels when "the original impulse was to poetry" (ibid.). Here Woolf concludes that since a woman writer would often be interrupted at home, "it would be easier to write prose and fiction there than to write poetry or a play" as "less concentration is required" (1929, p. 50). Nevertheless, Woolf concludes that the lack of a steady feminine tradition from which they could draw and establish a dialogue was what led women writers to choose the novel as a more malleable form:

> But whatever effect discouragement and criticism had upon their writing—and I believe that they had a very great effect—that was unimportant compared with the other difficulty which faced them (I was still considering those early nineteenth-century novelists) when they came to set their thoughts on paper—that is that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. Lamb, Browne, Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, De Quincey—whoever it may be—never helped a woman yet, though she may have learnt a few tricks of them and adapted them to her use. The weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully. The ape is too distant to be sedulous. Perhaps the first thing she would find, **setting pen to paper, was that there was no common sentence ready for her use.**[12] All the great novelists like Thackeray and Dickens and Balzac have written a natural prose, swift but not slovenly, expressive but not precious, taking their own tint without ceasing to be common property. They have based it on the sentence that was current at the time. The sentence that was current at the beginning of the nineteenth century ran something like this perhaps: 'The grandeur of their works was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or

[12] My emphasis.

> satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generations of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion; and habit facilitates success.' That is a man's sentence; behind it one can see Johnson, Gibbon and the rest. It was a sentence that was unsuited for a woman's use. Charlotte Brontë, with all her splendid gift for prose, stumbled and fell with that clumsy weapon in her hands. George Eliot committed atrocities with it that beggar description. Jane Austen looked at it and laughed at it and devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use and never departed from it. Thus, with less genius for writing than Charlotte Brontë, she got infinitely more said. Indeed, since freedom and fullness of expression are of the essence of the art, such a lack of tradition, such a scarcity and inadequacy of tools, must have told enormously upon the writing of women. (WOOLF, 2015, p. 53-54)

Woolf's long quote illustrates the fact that there was a common language proper of the public sphere – the common sentence – that was already given, established and hardened when women began "setting pen to paper". This language had always been masculine because, historically, the language of the public world – as much as that of the epic or the poetic play – had always been exercised by men. Thus, the sentence is both the linguistic construction and the material construction that delimitates feminine and masculine performances. If Austen devised a sentence that was "perfectly natural" to her use, it was precisely because it never departed from the peculiarities inherent to the domestic world she inhabited and knew well. Woolf defends that to combine the feminine sentence – the poetic language that had historically been left unheard – and the masculine sentence – that of tradition, of political discourse and the public sphere – is the only path through which we can install her project of an androgynous mind. This movement is best described by Woolfian scholar Davi Pinho:

> But hers [Woolf's] is a reverse appeal: an appeal for poetry in the arts, for the death of the naming subject, for a resumption of feminine values. The androgyny of the mind, the ability to use both sentences, that of silence as well as that of eloquence, as Woolf had chosen to do at the old Hyde Park Gate, would be the beating heart of the maintenance of human freedom in Woolf.[13] (PINHO, 2015, p. 154)

With that in mind, I have borrowed Woolf's concept of the sentence as something that stands between the text's materiality and a verdict for identities that do not wish to be fixed around their own times. The main goal of the research project that led to this dissertation was to investigate, map and interpret how Doherty has responded in his *oeuvre* to Dickinson's appeal to her reader: "I'm Nobody – Who are You? / Are you – Nobody – too?" (Fr 260), which subsumes the discussion of tradition and contemporaneity, from Eliot and Woolf to

[13] All of the translations from Brazilian Portuguese into English are mine.

Agamben, for here, in this dissertation, Dickinson and Doherty answer this question alongside one another, partaking, from their different contexts, in the construction of meaning that never exhausts Emily Dickinson's question.

While Dickinson's poetry has often been misread as confessional, especially by feminist critics of the 1970s, Cristanne Miller demonstrates the problems of approaching the lyric poem through retro-projected norms:

> Nineteenth-century American definitions of and references to "lyric" rarely mention subjectivity, address, or temporality – the characteristics centering virtually all twentieth- and twenty-first-century discussion of this genre. Instead, despite the fact that nineteenth-century American poets and critics were well versed in British (and, typically, German) romanticism, they tended to understand the lyric in relation to song, which is to say sound, music, harmoniousness, "Beauty". Lyric, in short, was scarcely distinguished from the lyrical. Reading Dickinson with attention to the properties of the lyric valorized by her contemporaries returns us to features of her verse currently largely ignored or interpreted simplistically: in particular the sonic qualities of rhythm, assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and repetition. (MILLER, 2012a, p. 20-1)

Therefore, one must firstly recognise the importance of differentiating between Dickinson and her speakers. Secondly, it is interesting to think of what *Nobody* might represent as a Dickinsonian speaker. If we think of how Dickinson used poetry to exercise her imaginative freedom to experiment with and access subjectivities alien to her own, this poem may be the exacerbation of that movement. I propose that we read Dickinson's Nobody as analogous to Agamben's contemporary and to Woolf's androgynous mind; a non-circumscribable subjectivity that looks not to assert itself by objectifying the other, but to find a peer that is equally faceless, adaptable and flexible. While Dickinson reflects upon poetry and poets in many poems, this (Fr260) is not usually included amongst her metapoetic pieces. Nevertheless, I believe we can read this poem and the notion of Nobody in tune with "The Poets light but Lamps –" (Fr 930) and "I reckon – When I count at all –" (Fr533):

> I reckon – When I count at all –
> First – Poets – Then the Sun –
> Then Summer – Then the Heaven of God –
> And then – the List is done –
> But, looking back – the First so seems
> To Comprehend the Whole –
> The Others look a needless Show –
> So I write – Poets – All –

The first poem strengthens Dickinson's understanding of the role of the poet (and her request that her poems not be read as expressions of her subjectivity) as someone who sheds

light upon the path for others to come, while Cristanne Miller cleverly identifies a possible allusion to Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 in the second. She has added the following note to Fr533 on *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (2016): "Shakespeare's sonnet 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' concludes: 'thy eternal summer shall not fade' as long as his poem survives." (p. 762). Considering Dickinson wrote a letter to Susan saying, "We are the only poets, and everyone else is prose" (L56), her allusion to a sonnet in which Shakespeare celebrates poetry's ability to pierce through the limitations of time is especially poignant. The defence of poetry's perennial power is strengthened by the poem's last verse, where she declares poets are "All –". The idea that "The Poet lights but Lamps - / Themselves – go out – " (Fr930) also indicates that "for her, the poet is the instrument for staging the poem, and it is the poem, the enactment of communication, that matters" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 91). Following Miller's traces, I believe Dickinson saw poetry as the strongest way she could possibly engage with readers – friends, whomever they might be.[14]

Dickinson's Nobody creates a double sense of both invisibility and identification on the reader that might agree with the notion that to be Somebody would be dreary. It breeds camaraderie while stating Dickinson's understanding of poetry's possibilities. Cristanne Miller is among the scholars that recognise the likelihood that the reason Dickinson kept fascicles and clean copies of her poems could be that she once entertained the idea of possibly publishing her texts. Although Miller does not believe Dickinson saw her effort of copying her poems and circulating them poems among her correspondents as publication "in and of itself" (2012a, p. 180) (a point Martha Nell Smith tries to make in her 1992 book, *Rowing in Eden - Rereading Emily Dickinson*), the critic argues that both acts are revealing of Dickinson's approach to her poetry. Sending poems to friends allowed the author to make it possible for them to "be read after her death" (2012a, p. 180) and to assure her position as "not just a writer of poems but a poet" (ibid.).

Miller also states that in her keeping of poems in clean copies and well-organised fascicles, Dickinson "preserved them for potential later circulation and publication" (2012a, p. 180), a notion strengthened by Martha Bianchi Dickinson's report that, in her later years,

[14] On the matter of the ways in which Dickinson's poems speak to her readers, Cristanne Miller has pointed out that "while Whitman comically and endearingly proclaims 'I will not tell everyone but I will tell you' in a published poem, Dickinson creates a protean quality in her unpublished verse with much the same double-faced intimacy: it can seem to address a particular 'you' (whether circulated to one person or several or not at all), or to express only private meditation, and to imply its own imperative "Go tell it" in encouraging the broadest possible audience. (MILLER, 2012a, p. 192-93)

when her health began to faulter, the poet would often express concerns about her work[15]. Under that light, it appears that the notion of being survived by her texts and of those being found by readers who could understand and establish a dialogue with them was crucial to Dickinson. Her writing efforts, her "try-to-think" exercises were meant to be read by *Nobody(s)*, but the notion of them being literally read by nobody, forgotten inside a chest in Dickinson's room overlooking the garden at the Homestead was a source of anguish to this poet, who first approached Thomas Higginson, one of her main correspondents throughout the years, by asking if her "Verse" was "alive" (L260). Dickinson's poetry has since found more readers than one could account for, from critics who dedicated their careers to analysing and studying her poetics to artists who wrote about her, to her, and with her. Within this last group, I believe Doherty has been very successful in his engagement with Dickinson's "try-to-think" processes precisely because, as an artist, he had a need for a sentence that allowed him to rework not only his place in a public arena that was quick to label him in an extremely restrictive way, but also his own creative processes, pasteurised by commercial expectations.

Thus, I believe Dickinson is Doherty's most significant aesthetic and poetic influence because it is precisely to the *nobodyness* of her poetry – in opposition to behavioural performances he would emulate from male writers – that he answers to when he remediates her poems, cites them or writes in a Dickinsonian fashion. While writers such as Oscar Wilde, the War Poets and George Orwell offered Doherty the masculine sentence and models he could emulate, Dickinson's feminine sentence gave him the possibility to access androgyny, which in turn allowed for him to engage with tradition through his writing.

1.1 **Dickinson In and Beyond Her Own Time**

T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" describes a phenomenon Dickinson's poetry often is subjected to, as some attempt to class her as an isolated, misunderstood genius who was mostly impermeable to the influence of her predecessors and contemporaries:

[15] "Martha Dickinson Bianchi reports that Lavinia heard her sister "murmur in her later years, 'Oh, Vinnie, my work, my work!'" and her request to have her papers destroyed was understood by her sister – who would know best – to be no more than the standard request to destroy personal correspondence, an instruction she (unfortunately for us) followed" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 180).

> One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity. (ELIOT, 1919, p. 36-37)

In 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, which would win them a Pulitzer Award and become a cornerstone in feminist literary criticism. Its final chapter, "A Woman-White: Emily Dickinson's Yarn of Pearl", approaches "There is a morn by men unseen" (Fr13), proposing that "the paradise her [Dickinson's] packets shadowily depict, however, is one Emily Dickinson yearned to inhabit openly, from the silent beginning of her elaborately camouflaged poetic career to its silent end" (p. 642). This introduction is an early indication that the critics do not acknowledge a speaker detached from the author in the poem, privileging an autobiographical interpretation instead. In that sense, their chosen critical method for this poem consists of pursuing the author's intention by looking for traces of what is known – or presumed – of her life.

Dickinson herself asked editor and friend Thomas Higginson to observe that the *I* in her poems was not meant to be taken as evidence that she was writing Confessional Poetry (L268). Although Gubar and Gilbert acknowledge several times throughout their text the author's stance and her famous assertion in Letter 268, "When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse – it does not mean – me – but a supposed person", they choose to ignore it in their analysis of Dickinson's poems. Instead, they stress their understanding of the conventions of Lyric Poetry as a form of personal address. In that sense, Páraic Finnerty's article "'It Does Not Mean Me, But a Supposed Person': Browning, Dickinson, and the Dramatic Lyric" (2014) offers a great contribution to a better understanding of Dickinson's poetic project by proposing that

> Following [Robert] Browning, Dickinson constructs speakers whose identities are divided, contradictory, and fragmented, and, in so doing, she further impersonalizes the personal lyric by creating the possibility of a difference between what her speakers say and what her poems mean. (p. 264)

Finnerty explores Browning's reception in America and cites Dickinson's correspondence with Higginson to demonstrate that both identified as readers and admirers of the English poet. In that context, Dickinson's claim to be writing as a "supposed person" in her poems likely intended to invite Higginson to read her lyric poems in the same way he approached Browning's, recognizing the innovations brought about by the Dramatic Lyric. Finnerty spots a gap in Dickinsonean studies:

> While most critics have abandoned the naive assumption that Dickinson's poems are unmediated expressions of her thoughts and emotions, few have explored the idea of Dickinson as a skilled crafter of characters who disappears behind her creations. Eberwein and Phillips, for example, have examined Dickinson's use of diverse personae and noted the way Victorian poetry facilitated her adoption of 'the voices of imagined characters', her entering 'vicariously into situations remote from her own life' and bringing of 'a substantial measure of dramatic objectivity into her apparently subjective verse' (Eberwein, 1985: 95; Phillips, 1988). Her claim to be writing lyrics *à la* Browning, however, has been ignored. Typically, scholars agree with Richard Sewall that, although Dickinson 'found encouragement in Browning's distinctive form, her themes or preoccupations were different from his, her tone was habitually more lyric, and she had very little of his interest in creating characters' (Sewall, 1974: 716). Such an assessment rests on a twentieth-century understanding of the type of poetry Browning was writing, namely, that he was the innovative practitioner of dramatic monologues rather than the composer of dramatic lyrics. (2014, p. 270)

This contextual analysis further complicates Gilbert and Gubar's choice of ignoring – and even repelling – Dickinson's own words. The problem is not necessarily that their study disregards something the poet herself declared, as it is perfectly reasonable to study the poems by addressing exclusively the materiality of the text. The issue is that, while attempting to trace the author's intention, the critics ignore Dickinson's own voice on the matter. Furthermore, Gilbert and Gubar attempt to impose interpretations that go beyond the writing of the poems, aiming to establish something about Dickinson's character and personality. In that sense, if there is an interest in investigating the author's intention – a complicated effort in itself – Gilbert and Gubar turn away from any clear evidence Dickinson provides as well as from a heavy load of contextual information we have available. The critics present the writing of prose fiction as "a far more selfless occupation than the composition of lyric poetry" (p. 547), as

> The novelist in a sense says "they": she works in a third person form even when constructing a first-person narrative. But the poet, even when writing in the third person, says "I." Artists from Shakespeare to Yeats and T. S. Eliot have of course qualified this "I," often emphasizing, as Eliot does, the "depersonalization" or "extinction of personality" involved in the poet's construction of an artful, masklike persona, or insisting, as Dickinson herself did, that the speaker of poems is a "supposed person." Nevertheless, the lyric poem acts as if it is an "effusion" (in the nineteenth-century sense) from a strong and assertive "I," a central self that is

> forcefully defined, whether real or imaginary. The novel, on the other hand, allows - even encourages - just the self-effacing withdrawal that society fosters in women. Where the lyric poet must be continually aware of herself as a subject, the novelist must see herself in some sense as an object, if she casts herself as a participant in the action. In constructing a narrative voice, moreover, she must as a rule disguise or repress her subjectivity. (…) If, as Joyce Carol Oates once suggested, fiction is a kind of structured daydreaming, lyric poetry is potentially, as Keats said, like "Adam's dream - he awoke and found it truth." Even if the poet's "I," then, is a "supposed person," the intensity of her dangerous impersonation of this creature may cause her to take her own metaphors literally, enact her themes herself: just as Donne really slept in his coffin, Emily Dickinson really wore white dresses for twenty years, and Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton really gassed themselves. (1979, p. 549)

The argument here is slightly confusing. The critics undergo an intricate routine of mental acrobatics to justify reading Dickinson's poems under an autobiographical light, going so far as to suggest that a sort of psychological instability is inherent to writing Lyric Poetry. In order to rectify some widely held misconceptions about Dickinson's writing practices and her relationship with the cultural context she was immersed in, I turn to Cristanne Miller, who debunks the idea that the poems could possibly work as reflections of the poet's subjectivity:

> Dickinson wrote no long poems and there is little evidence that she conceived of her poems in significant relation to thematic or narrative clusters of sequences, given that she never revised fascicle booklet arrangements in the way she does the wording of individual lyrics.[13] She nevertheless experiments in her poems with the boundaries of narrative, dramatic, and lyric properties, all of which undermine the notion of a personally subjective lyric speaker and hence also of the lyric poem as a private reflection, "overheard" by its readers – as John Stuart Mill put it in 1833. (2012a, p. 23)

Miller and Judy Jo Small have developed researches that help us understand Dickinson's poetics and writing patterns according to the context in which the poet lived. While we can still appreciate Dickinson's poetry without turning to such information about nineteenth-century poetic values, one is at a risk of making – and even publishing – ill-advised guesses at what could have been Dickinson's project and interpret her writings in an anachronistic way. Small states that Dickinson's framing of herself in letters – especially to Higginson – as an eccentric genius was a deliberate pose[16]. The romantic notion of poetry as a

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[16] "The image of Dickinson as an eccentric genius bursting with psychic energies she could not control has been a persistent fascination, and critics have been fond of quoting this statement from her fifth letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson (August 1862): 'I had no Monarch in my life, and cannot rule myself, and when I try to organize – my little Force explodes – and leaves me barred and charred -.' That letter was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in October 1891, less than a year after the first volume of poems appeared, and again in 1894, in the first collection of letters. (...) Seldom has it been noticed that the disclaimer itself is beautifully organized. It is dramatic, figurative, rhythmical, poetic – and it blends a modesty calculated to appeal to a preceptor with the sly brag of a young genius claiming volcanic powers of inspiration. Dickinson cultivated the image of herself as

product of genius, a gushing of unmediated emotion, can hardly be claimed by a hard-working poet who meticulously and constantly revised and rewrote her own poems. On her turn, Miller demonstrates how antebellum culture's aesthetic values are present in Dickinson. Both critics oppose the stance defended by Dickinsonian scholars who postulate that reading the poet in print – instead of her manuscripts – is to read a translation, not the poems *per se* and that "to represent her manuscript lineation as metrical stanzas is to distort or domesticate her writing practice" (MILLER, 2008, p. 403). John Shoptaw has called this group the "Scripturalists", referring to names such as Martha Nell Smith and Susan Howe, critics who conflate "the poetic text with the photographic text," (2004, p. 21) thus implying "Dickinson imagined her poems exactly as they appear to us in her own hand" (ibid.). Miller, Small and Shoptaw underline the fact that poetry was understood by nineteenth-century America as a predominantly aural structure and thus,

> It is also plausible that she did not ''see'' her own verse in quite this way. Dickinson wrote for both the eye and the ear. Too much faith in the manuscripts can make us forget this simple fact; we might open our eyes only at the cost of closing our ears. Which means, I believe, closing down the one dimension of Dickinson's poetry that is often misrepresented if not entirely neglected by modern editors—the radical innovation of her rhythms. Once we tune into this dimension, we may no longer be willing to forfeit the aural experience of her poems for the graphic delights of her manuscripts. That, at least, is what I hope to show. (SHOPTAW, 2004, p. 21)

Focusing on Dickinson's most productive period, from 1860 to 1865, Cristanne Miller argues that the poet establishes a dialogue with her cultural context. She wrote in relation to antebellum culture and the Civil War, "experimenting with form in ways congruent with her peers, and both accepting and experimenting with basic genre assumptions of her era" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 1). Within that context, claims that Dickinson was the only poet prone to experimentation (which in turn would make her insecure to seek the publication of her poems) are promptly debunked: "antebellum American verse cherished originality, often described as wildness, and encouraged what we might call a fluid relationship between European or traditional forms and innovative poetic practice" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 20). To illustrate her point, Miller cites Longfellow, stating he wrote "in multiple, experimental, and irregular verse forms", declaring him a "master of metrical variation" (2004, p. 209). That does not mean to say Dickinson's poetry was not innovative or unusual. Miller and Small take issue precisely with the fact the poet's innovations are misplaced by rash interpretations. To Miller,

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an ingenuous, eccentric genius, but she was never so ingenuous as she appeared; her brother Austin said of her that she 'definitely posed' in the letters to Higginson (quoted from Mabel Loomis Todd's journal, Sewall 538)." (SMALL, 1990, p. 2)

> Dickinson's poetry was unusual in its radical concision and disjunction, its yoking of strikingly disparate realms of thought or registers of language through metonymy and metaphor, and in its social, philosophical, and religious acuity. Before 1866, she also uses irregular forms for many of her poems. The practice of formal innovation and her understanding of form in relation to sense or argument, however, was thoroughly a product of her time. (MILLER, 2012a, p. 36)

On her turn, Small recognises Dickinson uses traditional stanza patterns as the basis of her poetic structure (SMALL, 1990, p. 47) and declares her "strangely deviant rhymes" (1990, p. 6) are the innovation that "most obviously characterize" her voice. Although rhyme "is pervasive in her poetry" (ibid.), her rhymes are "unexpected, disruptive, unsettling", deviant from "established poetic norms". Those rhymes – by-products of the poet's "experiments with aural effects in her poetry" offer a "strangely distinctive sound, recognizably Dickinson's" (1990, p. 6). Furthermore, Miller points out that Dickinson's experimentation "with formal elements of the page" (2012a, p. 83) was quite attuned to that of other antebellum poets and publishers, stating that employing "irregular or innovative divisions of metrical lines" was quite common. Even her use of dashes – so often and insistently discussed in Dickinson's works – had a place within the tradition she was a part of; they would "fit well-known patterns of using punctuation as a paralinguistic feature to signal hesitation, emphasis, or other rhetorical modes without having distinct elocutionary coding" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 83). It is not Dickinson's use of those tools that set her apart from her contemporaries, but rather the way she appropriated them into her own project, adapting and reworking the elements available to her.

Cristanne Miller's proposal to read Dickinson "in time" – that is, considering her poetry within the context in which it was produced – can help us understand what makes the relationship between Dickinson's poems and twentieth and twenty-first century composers who adapt and remediate them so fruitful. While I will further develop the question of Dickinson's relationship with music and song in Chapter 2, I must stress here that the influence of hymns and ballads on nineteenth-century American poetry and, more specifically, on Dickinson's poems, are among the evidences that unveil that this was a time where poetry was thought of as an aurally-oriented art, where reading poetry aloud was a communal experience and features such as sound, rhythm and rhyme were intensely appreciated. Significantly, one can trace a convergence between Miller's argument in *Reading in Time* and Eliot's in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" when she underlines that "the metrical structures and properties of sound of Dickinson's poems" (2012a, p. 21) both

approximate her to other nineteenth-century American writers and "distinguish her as a great poet":

> The aspect of nineteenth-century American verse most often overlooked or thinly understood by current readers is the formal. For Dickinson and her peers, poetry was an art conceived in relation to rhythm, figure, and sound, although these elements were regarded as secondary to the extent that they were assumed to enable the thought and feeling of the verse. (…) Although aesthetic norms had changed by the end of the century, Dickinson's poetic practices remained within the formal range extolled as exemplary according to the praise her poems received when they were first published in 1890 – in contrast to the widely held assumption that Dickinson was roundly condemned by her first reviewers. As Willis Buckingham summarizes, within the decade following the publication of Poems, five hundred commentaries on Dickinson's work appeared in print, most of them written by critics on average fifteen years her junior – that is, readers educated in the 1860s and 1870s, not, like her, in the 1840s and 1850s ("Poetry Readers"). (MILLER, 2012a, p. 21)

As much it might seem paradoxical aligning Miller's *reading in time* with Agamben's untimely and Eliot's timelessness, this is not so; by reading Dickinson within tradition, one can understand where she innovates and how she propels her voice towards the future. It becomes clear how she engaged with tradition and how she instrumentalised it as a way to escape from the constrictions of her own time. In Chapter 4, I further address how this makes her into a singular poet through Dickinsonian thought. Miller points out that while "the deeply allusive texture of Dickinson's poems and letters" is "riddled with quotations from or nods to earlier and contemporary literature and events" (2012a, p. 182), she also underlines the poet's concern with preserving her poems so that future generations might access them. Furthermore, while she "may have written as a way of engaging in the cultural, political, and philosophical issues of her times" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 187), the poet may not have intended to "interven[e] in them" or to speak 'directly to her contemporaries" (ibid.). Dickinson is both an artist of her time and a voice that projects itself outside of it. She is a contemporary, especially if we consider the fact that, even if she gave up the possibility of publication after her most productive writing years, she never dropped her pen, even when it became clear any major readership she might reach would be established posthumously. If her productivity fell in the late 1870s (Cf. MILLER, 2012a, p. 182-183), it remains a fact that she wrote poetry until the year she died.[17]

[17] Dickinson's last two poems are dated by R. W. Franklin circa April 1886. "The Immortality she gave," (Fr1684) is Dickinson's last poem for which we have a manuscript by her own hand and the last one for which she retained a copy. It was included on her penultimate letter to Higginson (The last was sent in early May, the month she died), late April 1886.

If nineteenth-century poetry was a predominantly aural art, as Miller demonstrates, and poetic innovation was based on sound, it appears that it is precisely the music of Dickinson's verse that makes her so appealing to composers. Sérgio Bugalho states that "to set a poem to music is to recreate a work which in its own ways is already intrinsically musical" (2001, p. 299). The critic understands the process of setting a poem to music as one of semiotic translation in which the composer must interpret and recodify the music of poetry – which takes shape in its performance by the combination of rhythm, accent, rhyme – into the music of a song, which follows different rules and codes. This raises a question, then, about what sets Dickinson apart from her contemporaries and so appealing to twentieth and twenty-first century composers. Judy Jo Small argues that although Dickinson engaged with the poetic practices of her time, she "manipulated her language to give it an uncommon, individual voice" (1990, p. 39) and that "we know her by her distinctive music. As she wrote of the robin, we 'know Her – by Her Voice' (P 634)" (ibid.). In that sense, it is precisely the ways in which Dickinson engaged with – and departed from – the poetic practices of her time, recognizing cultural givens but approaching them with her profound and constant questioning and rethinking that makes her into such a singular artist.

1.2 **Doherty In and Beyond His Own Time**

In an attempt to trace back the context in which Doherty acquired his literary influences – especially Dickinson – I am going to establish a timeline of significant events in his early years. In 2006, Doherty's mother, Jacqueline Doherty[18], published a book narrating her son's youth and the tribulations that overcame him after he became famous. Doherty's father – Peter Doherty, Snr – was an army major who is retired as of now. Doherty was born during the period his father was stationed in Ouston, Northumberland. He was the couple's second child; Doherty's older sister, Amy Jo, was born in 1978 (Cf. J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 182). Throughout his childhood, Doherty's family moved cities and even countries frequently due to his father's work. They relocated to Germany in 1982 when he was two years old. Throughout his childhood, Doherty lived in Cyprus and several locations throughout England. Jacqueline describes her son as a "sensitive soul" and an "avid reader" (2006, p. 50), a

[18] From this point onwards, I will refer to Jacqueline Doherty as "Jacqueline" as she shares her son's last name.

"wonderful child growing up, so happy, so funny, so much a part of the family" who loved listening to the radio. He was heartily missed when he left home "in September 1997, to study English at Queen Mary and Westfield University in East London" (2006, p. 4). She states he always had good health and hardly ever missed school, which he enjoyed attending (p. 97). Peter Doherty Senior wrote an "Afterword" to his wife's book, where he offers his testimony on his son's childhood:

> I was always involved in sport and used to coach football. Peter loved playing football but eventually turned his attention more to his studies. His final few years of schooling were spent in Warwickshire. He was developing academically and, although he lost interest in playing football, he became even more obsessed with following QPR. He decided to create his own fanzine called 'All Quiet on the Western Avenue'. Armed with an Amstrad computer, he wrote and edited it, printed it off and, with the help of his cousin Adam, flogged it a QPR home and away games. It was his pride and joy, and everyone was impressed by his efforts.
> I started to run car-boot sales on camp to raise money for both the unit and local charities. Peter and I would go to the local auction and buy shed-loads of books and, once he'd taken what he wanted, he would sell the remainder at the sale. He'd spend all his time reading and chatting with the punters. Peter was fascinated by a number of classic poets and writers, especially Oscar Wilde. I have no doubt that Wilde's self-destructiveness and penchant for mind-altering additions to his diet were prevalent in Peter's mind. Wilde had always harboured a desire to take opium; he had also developed a love for music. (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 253-4)

Jacqueline describes how her son had a habit of writing in his journal every day since he was a child (something he still does as of 2019, having published two volumes of his diaries through professional publishers and made many others available online): "Wherever he is, you can be sure that a pen or pencil and definitely a book won't be very far away" (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 26). She also talks of Doherty's good relationship with his father. Many of the composer's passions – which oftentimes find their way into his song lyrics – were acquired from the relationship with Peter Doherty Senior. From Tony Hancock to the Queens Park Rangers (QPR). Jacqueline tells of Doherty's penchant for comedy, stating he "used to impersonate Margaret Thatcher and have us all in stitches, not just for the almost-perfect pitch but also for the content of his little act" (p. 102):

> Peter and his dad had so much in common. They shared a love of an endless list of such TV comedies as 'Only Fools and Horses', 'Blackadder', 'Fawlty Towers' and 'Hancock'. They could quote whole passages of a sketch and would be in a world of their own. They were both members of the Tony Hancock Appreciation Society – they still have the neckties to prove it – and one year they went to a Hancock Convention.
> They both loved Chas & Dave and the early black-and-white Ealing Studio films. They played chess and squash and, in his teenage years, Peter would accompany us most Monday evenings to an auction in Rugby where he'd usually buy old books by

> the boxful. They also, of course, shared a passion for football and, when Peter embarked on his QPR fanzine, it was his dad who encouraged him most. (p. 169-70)

Doherty left Queen Mary less than a year after he first started attending. At this time, he had already become friends with Carl Barât and intended to dedicate himself to the band they had formed and to his work as a poet. Jacqueline states that when he decided to leave university, he reassured her: "Mum, I will never stop reading" (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 102). Throughout his nomadic childhood, Peter Doherty started developing what would blossom into a deep-rooted love for a vision of mythical England – Albion – and for London. His idealised vision of Britain is ingrained into many of his lyrics and in his aesthetics. Alex Hannaford asserts that Doherty's had a "rose-tinted vision of an England in which he wished he'd lived" (2006, p. 9-10), but that most likely never truly existed[19]. Hannaford quotes Doherty as saying about the songs he co-wrote with Carl Barât: "England was starved of the kind of songs I somehow knew the pair of us could craft. It's about time British kids had something in music to say was truly theirs" (p. 35):

> And just as George Orwell had aroused nostalgia by praising English institutions such as horseradish sauce, Stilton, Yorkshire puddings, red pillar boxes and comic seaside postcards, so Pete would seek his fictitious vision of England by immersing himself in the British TV shows, films and literature of the 1950s and 1960s. Popular culture had been described as 'the battleground for identity' and Pete's quest to discover the meaning of 'Englishness' saw him poring over endless episodes of *Rising Damp*, *Dad's Army* and *Hancock's Half Hour*. There was one small problem: the council estate that Pete's dad had come from, and the streets that Chas & Dave had known as young boys in north London, weren't all about cups of tea on the front steps, cockney banter and street football. Life was tough; there was violence, alcoholism and depression. To a large extent the England Pete was looking for doesn't exist now and didn't exist back then. His vision of London was opaque, looking at it as he was, through rose-tinted glasses. But it wasn't just Pete who pined for this lost and possibly fictitious era. In 1997 social historian Jeffrey Richards suggested that, as the millennium loomed, Britain was undergoing a crisis of national identity. Pete was against the Americanisation of society, of which Orwell had also warned; he certainly didn't want to see a world lacking in religion and culture, where ambition and drive – the survival of the fittest – replaced imagination, tradition and ideology. (HANNAFORD, 2006, pp. 39-41)

The earliest reference to Doherty's poetic output comes in the form of him winning a local poetry award in 1996 for a poem called "Smoking" (Cf. J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 5). He was seventeen, then. After relocating to London, he became increasingly involved with performance poetry. Carl Barât says that "Peter used to run a night there [at the Foundry on

[19] Doherty acknowledged that in 2015, in an interview: "'I never went to school in England until I was 12. It was this mythical place, but when we moved there, the England that I thought existed – this England of Hancock, Porridge and Kipling – was nowhere to be fucking seen.' He raises an eyebrow. 'Imagine my surprise.'" (LYNSKEY, 2015)

Old Street, London] called *Arcadia*, a performance poetry thing which he used to revel in" (2010, p. 8). Doherty also spoke of that time in an interview included on *From Albion to Shangri-La* (2013):

> I used to run a poetry night at the Foundry on Old Street. Worm Lady used to read her work… there was a piano… we'd recite poetry and drink absinthe, as part of the Amphetamine Cabaret. We did an exchange that the British arts council paid for because we were skint. There was a club in Russia, The Dom, that was supposed to be doing a similar thing so they came over for a week. (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 242-243)

Musical journalist Anthony Thornton, who wrote a book that set out to tell the "definitive story of Doherty and Barât", asserts that "Peter saw the guitar as a means to end, didn't see himself as a musician but as a poet, and as half of a songwriting partnership with Carl" (2006, p. 18). The earliest entries in Doherty's first volume of published diaries, *The Books of Albion* (2007), are dated February 1999. Many of the entries written during that year describe or refer to events connected to poetry-related commitments and allow us to establish a timeline of his moderate success as a poet.[20] The first entry that addresses poetry is dated 10 February 1999, and Doherty mentions he is "an official Paradigm Poet" now, referring to a local group that is beginning to form. An anxious nineteen-year-old Doherty proudly observes that that night he "shall be asked to perform" (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 3).

In another entry (undated, but still in the 1999 section of the diary), Doherty complains about tensions in the band, observing that "The Albion is still on course[21], though the route is annoyingly prone to be more akin to a Sid James Mystery Tour than a plain-sailing maiden voyage" (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 4). Doherty states that he sees himself as "the ideal frontman for the songs" in The Libertines, as those were "mostly written with the blood of [his] heart" (ibid.). While this can be taken as an early sign of tensions that would blow up as the band rose to fame, Doherty's concerns are apparently eased by the fact he split his time between his efforts as a member of The Libertines and as a poet: "I have plenty of stage to myself with the performance poetry malarkey, which is providing a great deal of interest at the moment" (2007, p. 4), he states. The artist proudly observes that he would be allowed to host "the Sunday night poetry sessions" whilst the poet responsible for that effort was out on tour. In an

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[20] I have gone through the laborious task of transcribing these diaries since they are handwritten in order to begin to trace Doherty's process of becoming a poet.

[21] The expression "the Albion is still on course" works both as a reference to the fact Doherty and Barât considered the possibility of naming their band "The Albion" before settling for "The Libertines" and as an indirect quote of the lyrics to their song "The Good Old Days": "The Arcadian dream has all fallen through / But the Albion sails on course".

entry from 1 March 1999, Doherty celebrates "a storming reception for my opening set at the Foundry" the night before, stating that was "the first time I think, that my poetry has ever been met by cheers and crys of delight", while lamenting *Time Out* misspelled his name (2007, p. 20). The artist also describes working "a plenty on the poetry front" and working "a plenty at Prince Charles"[22] (2007, p. 48). From his journal entries, one could argue that in 1999, while Doherty was already a member of The Libertines, his work as a poet was given at least as much thought as his work as a musician, as the following entry – one in which Doherty attempts to draw a few projections for his ideal future as an artist – demonstrates:

> I have a vision of a healthy creative life as whatever service to humanity calls me. My wells are deep, my eyes are keen and my heart is full of hope, love & passion. My stomach is full of ambition & a few guts. My head is full of brain and my head is full of hair. What more might I ask of a creator. Fertility, felicity and fire. Ideally, in the short term, success as a popstar, a performance poet and a musician is my inclination. (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 9)

Those entries precede The Libertines' record deal and their projection onto international fame. While during the late 1990s Doherty was able to balance his career as a poet and his role in The Libertines and seemed incline to keep working on both activities, he eventually made a choice, something he discussed in an interview to *Poetry Corner Paris* several years later:

> INTERVIEWER: So you think it's possible nowadays to live as a Poet?
> PD: I think to live, people do this thing called performance poetry, you know when you go from show to show selling your own booklets and building up a real artificial thing. I tried to do it for a little while, putting on a show and building up this thing, this character that I built on stage, but in the end I got driven to the music which became, I wouldn't say easier but you've got such a more powerful way of putting out a message and reaping the benefits that a young man needs. Like this weird craving for fame that you had when you were younger, and regretting that really when it comes to trying to do something like you say that is just poetry pure and simple on a page. (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 52)

The quote is helpful in its illustration of the fact that Doherty always had an ambiguous relationship with fame, something that I further address in Chapter 4. Commenting upon her son's popularity as a child, Jacqueline Doherty stated that "his range of friends was staggering" (2006, p. 43), but that while he was always surrounded by fans after The Libertines' rise to fame, she saw him after a show looking "so lost and so lonely" (ibid.), even though he had an adoring crowd around him. Whether what he described as a "weird craving

[22] Doherty is referring to the Prince Charles Cinema in the West End of London, where he then worked.

for fame" has to do with this melancholy – one that is pervasive in his lyrics – is not possible to assert, but citing Jacqueline once more, she describes him as "a very sensitive and vulnerable person." (p. 65) who "often feels lonely and has an acute awareness of this," but that, paradoxically, is very rarely alone: "perhaps the noise of his fans drowns out the noise of his loneliness", she concludes. (p. 43-4). The question of the artist's melancholia is noticeable in the first time he writes about poetry in his journal after 1999:

> [EDITOR NOTE: Christmas 2002, Peter is back with his parents in Germany, experiencing severe heroine withdrawal.]
> It's these restless nights I shake up the ugliness exterior and resign myself to it. If I feel like I could die... then I would die. But die happier here, [illegible] & not all sullen. If love is a shadow it crept up on me there why else mention the thing? **No poet am I now, lost for mystery & romance, pale in the short air**.[23] Cranked window & all military bombardments on the scenery. My peasant's heart resents the earth, my Makers fingers fatter than amateur perfection. Lungs, all one cavern, softened to the mossy fur of smoke that warms me & rolls me away like under stones. I coil as for further shores and resist sleep so as not to resist the entire day here. Cordial to the low murmur, I collapse, scratching, light in collarless cotton. I hope daylight comes soon that I might see it. It may mark my features permanently though I fear it is too late already. "Someday you're going to need me, and I'll be waiting." I want to keep on living ever in this hard-heartened witching hour, "so please, hurry darling don't make me wait too long." (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 94)

Further along the *Books of Albion*, Doherty pasted a newspaper clipping from the *East London Advertiser* titled "Pete the Poet" published in 2005 onto the diary's page. During the interview, questioned as to how he was doing, the artist responded, "We have these little apocalypses" (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 222). He also speaks of Dickinson in the piece: "At 13, I was reading Orwell – *1984*, and *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Then I read the poets: Suskind, Dickinson, and later on Verlaine and Baudelaire" (ibid.). He spoke of a time when he worked at East Side Books on Brick Lane and that "music has never been number one. I'm mostly into words and hats" (ibid.). The interviewer – Jessica Smith – then asked if he ever thought of being a novelist: "Every day I think about it. Writing and music thrive off each other, they goad each other along, they make something complete" (ibid.).

It appears then, that Doherty's anxiety and dissatisfaction in relation to playing live (a question I fully address in Chapter 3) was something that had already disturbed him about performance poetry. It is telling, then, that he describes the stage as a "cage" in his song "Killamangiro" (*Down in Albion*, 2005). This tension between freedom and entrapment is a major point of convergence between Dickinson and Doherty, and it appears that to both artists poetry represents the ultimate freedom, while the attachments of actually presenting oneself as

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[23] My highlight.

a poet and the concept of making a name for oneself displeases both, hence my pointing out of Dickinson's poetics of *nobodyness* as the element that makes the transit between both sentences possible. However, while Dickinson had the discipline to sit down and write to a limited audience and was notably coy and protective of her works whenever a possibility for publishing materialised itself (Cf. MILLER, 2012a, p. 184), Doherty chased recognition and had to suffer the consequences. Regarding his discomfort in relation to performance poetry, he added:

> INTERVIEWER: So you think that without performance around your poetry…
> PD: Well that's what I wasn't able to do. I was unable to achieve that quiet perfection just with the words so you create an image and hide behind that but the idea is to have the poetry just in itself stand before the rest. But I personally know I couldn't have the patience or probably not the talent to do that. Maybe if I persevered and had a bit of self-discipline, like 20 press-ups every morning. (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 52)

My analysis is not meant as a judgment or evaluation of either artist. Doherty had to make a living, after all, and he felt as a young man he could only prove himself through acquiring recognition, even if he (as he has already stated) loathes the moments that precede his going up onstage to play – as well as the experience itself – and would rather be anywhere else. While onstage Doherty retracts into himself, stating he can "feel his head disappear" (BLUE BALLS FESTIVAL, 2017). The idea that he had a craving and an anxiety towards the question of becoming famous that might have stifled his work as a poet is stated by the artist himself: "I think you need time to be a real poet. Time to read, time to live, you know, real time. Reading is the most luxurious thing in the world. Literature is the stuff dreams are made of"[24] (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 54). On her turn, Dickinson might have felt she owed her father and family anonymity, thus choosing to keep the bulk of her poetic production to herself, resorting to controlled circulation of a fraction of her production. However, she also kept her works in a manner that allowed for them to be eventually found. The transit between Dickinson and Doherty takes place, then, precisely in this poetic silence, in the escape from the roles attributed to him, this disappearing of the self Doherty describes. Cristanne Miller defines Dickinson's silence as one that is characteristic of attentive listening:

> Dickinson is a poet of sounds. Where Marianne Moore defines poetry through an organic metaphor as "'imaginary garden with real toads in them'," Dickinson may,

[24] Here, Doherty is paraphrasing a line from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11). In that scene, which is set in his cell, Prospero states "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life /Is rounded with a sleep." (4.1.156-158)

> in “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” in effect define poetry as language that brings us to the experience of “Being [as] but an Ear” (Becoming Marianne Moore 73). Reading Dickinson requires affiliation with that “Silence” of attentive listening, which alone situates us in the moment, in the poem’s “here,” although any reader’s response to a poem will inevitably move out from that “here” to the “And then” of his or her contextual understanding, often being struck by lines that both illuminate ways of thinking and implant tunes in our brains. Such reading is encouraged by approaching Dickinson as a poet of lyric strains in the implied definitions of her century, whether or not in relation to critical definitions of ours. (MILLER, 2012a, p. 46)

Through Dickinson, Doherty can channel his fragility into his writing, as opposed to the pressure to perform as the marketable public figure from a famous band. Dickinson is an American, a Calvinist, a Ghost that haunts Doherty’s poetics, offering him something that goes beyond what most English male writers he admires can provide: a feminine sentence, in the sense described by Virginia Woolf, as access to an androgynous existence.

The musician has spoken of Dickinson in interviews. In what is probably the most often cited one, he talks of how he “nicked two of Dickinson’s lines” for his song “At the Flophouse”:

> Pete Doherty drums his fingers on the table and tells me about stealing from Emily Dickinson. "Actually, I nicked one or two of her lines," he whispers, sipping a Guinness in London's Boogaloo bar. (…) What did he pinch? "I took one draught of life, paid only the market price," he quotes from his At the Flophouse. "I added, 'and now I'm estranged.'" He sings, "Wow, wow, wow - oh, look around it's so true," impersonating first an electric guitar and then Lou Reed. (…) How did he come to be pick-pocketing Emily Dickinson? "I don’t know how it came about! Just stumbled into it. When I was a kid we were always moving around, changing schools and I remember winding up in the Nicholas Chamberlaine comprehensive in Bedford, and I just stood up one day in class and it was like, 'Doherty! Doherty! What you doing? Sit down!' And I just walked out, up through the estate, up the hill, and just sat in the cemetery. Sat there for hours. And I think I'd nicked an Emily Dickinson book." He drifts into quietness again. "I think she had quite a curious life as well. Not like . . . " His lighter flickers as he perhaps ponders his own excesses, "more abstinence, wasn't it?" (BARTON; PETRIDIS, 2006)

It is interesting to look at the way in which Doherty connects Dickinson to his early experiences. It seems that the American poet occupies both a space of silence – in his narration of a scene of non-compliance to school authority – and gives him an alternative, poetic language. Cristanne Miller’s approach of reading in time allows us to understand how the poet engaged with tradition and the cultural givens of her time, but it also educates us as to the ways she appropriated and reworked tradition making her explorations of form, content and thought into artworks that set her apart from her peers, as I have discussed earlier, on page 31. This allows us to align Miller’s study with Eliot’s sense of the timeless and Agamben’s untimely. Dickinson’s sentence is far-reaching precisely because of the ways in

which she engages with tradition and of her outlook on several literary sources and registers, from the Bible, to Shakespeare, to hymns and ballads to Robert Browning and minstrelsy. Through her adherence and disjunction, as well as through her enduring question, Dickinson gives Doherty the silence of attentive listening that engenders creativity. In an earlier interview, he had already connected Dickinson with his recollections of a melancholic, contemplative childhood: "Doherty describes his childhood as strict and lonely. 'I had no choice really but to disappear into myself, just veering between old, flickery episodes of *Rising Damp*, Tony Hancock radio shows, Emily Dickinson, flowers and QPR'" (CRIPPS, 2004). This idea of the artist "disappearing into himself" confirms my thesis that Dickinson's sentence works as a disruption of chronological time for Doherty, thus opening the door for him to work through tradition as a contemporary. The sense conveyed here by *disappearing into myself* does not truly refer to the artist's interiority, but rather to a disappearing into others, communicating with tradition in the sense posited by Eliot. Alex Hannaford has taken issue with Doherty's description of his childhood as lonely and introspective as it clashes with his parents' and especially his mother's account of his extroverted, joyful nature as a boy. Furthermore, Hannaford interviewed a man who attended Dalton Middle School alongside Doherty through 1990 to 1991 who also describes him as an extrovert. The journalist cites the same 2004 interview I transcribed above and concludes that

> It's interesting that later on, with the success of The Libertines and the increasing interest in Pete's background and personal life, he would tell journalists he'd had a lonely childhood. 'The only life I knew was moving on, changing schools,' he'd say. He described it as a 'rootless existence' and said that for the most part he was alone, 'living in dreams, kicking footballs against walls… devouring literature'. (…) The truth was a little less romantic. Yes, his life was constantly disrupted by his father's job, but he was rarely alone. Wherever he went, Pete seemed to attract friends and followers. He was incredibly popular, the life and soul of the party and a relentless practical joker. Everyone fell under his spell – even when he was just twelve. (HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 13-14)

The journalist's analysis is flawed on several levels. Firstly, the fact that there are accounts that contradict Doherty's should not be taken as evidence that those people are narrating an absolute "truth" of events, but rather that reality is perceived in various ways. I do not mean to say his parents or the school friend were being dishonest or intentionally distorting reality[25], but rather that different people experience events in different ways and the

[25] Something Hannaford subtly accuses Doherty of doing with the inference that he would have made up the narrative about his childhood melancholia and introspection "after the success of The Libertines and the increasing interest in his background and personal life". As the journalist has no account of Doherty describing his early years on different terms before he became famous, there is no logical reason to presume the artist was

fact people saw Doherty as the "soul and life of the party" does not mean he did not feel the loneliness and melancholia he describes. The interesting question here is precisely the different ways in which reality is understood.

While Hannaford appears to take personal offense at the way Doherty looks back at his own life, framing the accounts he collected as if he was physically present throughout the artist's childhood, one should always bear in mind the journalist is relying on second-hand descriptions of past events. Jacqueline herself has spoken of the paradox that although her son is rarely alone, he still is, oftentimes, lonely. Finally, it is of no consequence at all if Doherty actually stole a book from Nicholas Chamberlaine comprehensive's library or left school unauthorised. The fact he frames his relationship with Dickinson in these terms is what matters, not what happened in real life. The image of stealing a book of Dickinson's poems and losing himself speaks directly to this contemporary break I have discussed with Eliot and Agamben. Doherty's description of losing his epistemological limits and making himself contemporary with Dickinson is precisely the process this dissertation is addressing. If all of that is meant metaphorically, it is no less – perhaps it is even more – significative of the formative influence Dickinson has had on his thought processes as a creator. The question of the boy who does not quite fit in, but still tries to entertain, and of the musician who is unable to fully resign himself to the place and function thrusted upon him inside the music industry game but cannot quite stay outside of it either is a tale of an artist at the borderline, a sense Dickinson conveyed through her many speakers in a myriad of ways. The particular narrative Doherty delineates about himself as a boy running away from school with a book of poems is evocative of Dickinson's "Why – do they shut me out of Heaven?" (Fr268):

> Why – do they shut me out of Heaven?
> Did I sing – too loud?
> But – I can say a little "minor"
> Timid as a Bird!
> Wouldn't the Angels try me –
> Just – once – more –
> Just – see – if I troubled them –
> But don't – shut the door!
> Oh, if I – were the Gentleman
> In the "White Robe" –
> And they – were the little Hand – that knocked –
> Could – I – forbid?

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being dishonest. Hannaford mentions Doherty has a history of saying outrageous things that are not true about himself to shock interviewers. Nevertheless, the times where he referred to his childhood in the terms Hannaford contests, he was not saying anything worthy of shock value (such as when he told the *NME* during The Libertines' first ever interview, in 2002, that "he spent the rest of his childhood moving around the UK depending on whether he was staying with his mum, dad, nan or the social services") (OLDHAM, 2010, p. 18)

Dickinson's poem begins and ends with questions. Firstly, her speaker questions why she was "shut out of Heaven", wondering if she sang "too loud" for Heaven's standards. In another example of the poet's great use of the dashes, they permeate her interjections and exclamations, suggesting an impatient interlocutor that interrupts her pleas precisely by refusing to listen to them. Ironically, it was her attempt to make herself heard, by singing "too loud" that signalled her impropriety. As a lady, she should had known better and behave as timidly "as a Bird". Here (and in her singing) we can infer a reference both to poetry, as Dickinson often referred to poems as her music, and to the singing of hymns at church.[26] In both senses, the shutting of Heaven's door to the speaker's face is addressed by her in terms of promising to amend her shortcomings, her inadequacy. The door, however, is closed, as verse 8 seems to stage with the disruptive effect of the dash mid-verse: "But don't – shut the door!". The final quartet is extremely Dickinsonian – and moderately impious – in its imagined reversal of the roles. It would be taken as somewhat insulting to New England theology and pretentious of a wicked, loud-singing girl who had been shut out of heaven to dare to imagine herself exchanging places with "the Gentleman / In the 'White Robe' –", a defiant epithet for God in itself. Dickinson extends her witty and caustic reversal of roles to present "them" (the angels, God himself?) as the "little Hand" that knocked – underlining the unfairness of her punishment in the face of her vulnerability – and ending with a question: "Could – I – forbid?". Dickinson's isolation of the "I" among dashes seems, once again, slightly provocative. Although she offers no definitive answer, one hangs in the air. Emily Dickinson's speaker is fairer than God. Likewise, Doherty's narrative of running away from school with Dickinson's book carries a sense of unrepentant inadequacy that evades actual constrictions and rules to fall into the subversions and timelessness of poetry.

While studying Doherty's remediations of Dickinson's poetry is an interesting and enlightening exercise (which is undertaken in Chapter 4), I believe it can be just as interesting and thought-provoking to investigate and identify how Dickinsonian thought is ingrained into song lyrics where the poet is not directly cited and even in Doherty's speech, as in the 2004 interview for *The Guardian*. While this chapter aimed to establish the theoretical foundations upon which this research process was built and to recognise the differences as well as contextualise the writings of each artist, it also introduced what I understand as Dickinsonian thought and how it manifests itself in Doherty's contemporary take on the poet. The word

[26] Cristanne Miller tells us that "Dickinson attended church until around 1860, after she had begun writing seriously and eschewing other public appearances" (2012a, p. 56)

“contemporary” holds at least two layers of meaning here. That is, it both presents Dickinson and Doherty as participants of their own times, which would be the face-value of the word, but also forces them into a shared contemporaneity, a common time that connects them. However, one of the many questions that such an understanding raises is: what does it mean to be Dickinsonian in the present time? The following chapter aims to offer one of the possible answers to that question by addressing the relationship between Dickinson and music, from her education to her popularity amongst musicians and composers in the twentieth century, which led Valentine Cunningham to name her the “darling of modern composers” (CUNNINGHAM, 2002).

2 **EMILY DICKINSON AND MUSIC**

In *Reading in Time*, Cristanne Miller addressed a long discussion in Dickinsonian studies regarding the influence of hymns on the poet's compositional practices. While some critics have argued hymnody played a significant role in shaping Dickinson's metrical preferences (Cf. JOHNSON, 1955; ENGLAND, 1966), Miller explains that it would be more appropriate to assert that the poet "wrote in relation to song" (2012a, p. 49). This implicates not only in a discussion of Dickinson's writing, but in one regarding how nineteenth-century America understood lyric poetry. As I have already established in Chapter 1, while retro projected twentieth-century norms had some critics claiming Dickinson wrote lyric poetry as a form of personal expression, this was not how she and her contemporaries looked at this poetic form. Accepting Miller's claim that Dickinson wrote in relation to song as a point of departure, this chapter aims to unpack that assertion by analysing the poet's relationship to music and by asking a series questions: what was Dickinson's relationship to music like? Could one say that it had a bearing on how she dealt with the musicality of her own poetry? Regarding a long critical tradition that associates Dickinson's poetry and Calvinist hymns, are Cristanne Miller and Judy Jo Small correct when they challenge these notions and argue that ballads had just as much – if not more – influence over Dickinson's structuring of her poems? This final question leads us to interrogate how the musical aspects of Dickinson's compositional style are manifested in her poems as Miller asserts that the poet's "extraordinary accomplishment was to recognize the possibilities for an ambitious, complex, and powerfully expressive lyric poetry offered by this range of popular short-lined verse and song" (2012a, p. 81). Finally, considering that this is a dissertation that looks at the way Dickinson engages with tradition and how other artists – poets and musicians – engage with her poetry, the final section of this chapter will look at remediations of Dickinson's poems by composers and songwriters other than Peter Doherty, whose relationship with Dickinson is unpacked and discussed in Chapter 4.

2.1 **Dickinson's History with Music: Dickinson as a Musician-Turned-Poet**

Emily Dickinson was engaged in learning and playing music from a very early age, a fact that her preserved letters demonstrate. As Cristanne Miller has pointed out, in her correspondence, Dickinson "mentions music over one hundred times, not counting references to bird or insect song" (2012a, p. 53). In a note to one of Dickinson's numerous letters to childhood friend Abiah Root, Thomas H. Johnson observed that when she was as young as two and half years old, her aunt Lavinia described her in a letter as "a very good child", telling her addressee that the girl had just "learned to play on the piano – she calls it the *moosic*" (L11). One should bear in mind that Emily Dickinson's "frequent reference to music is hardly surprising in this era given the huge popularity of music, in and out of the home" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 53). Cristanne Miller explains that, although by 1850 – when Dickinson turned twenty years old – "owning a piano was de rigueur for the middle-class family and every accomplished girl knew how to play" (ibid.), the era's strong engagement with music extended beyond the middle classes parlours: "minstrel shows, popular throughout the States, included considerable music, as did most theatrical performances" (ibid.). Miller also reminds us that Dickinson reviewed a concert by Jenny Lind (L46), whose acclaimed American tour testified to a wide-ranging interest in musical performance. Music was also extremely popular throughout the Civil War (1861-1865): "there are innumerable stories about the songs sung by Confederate and Union troops as they marched" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 53-54).

Abiah Root moved to Amherst as a young girl to live with her cousins. Once there, she attended Amherst Academy, "where she joined Emily Dickinson's group of five close girlhood friends" (EMILY DICKINSON MUSEUM, 2019). Emily and Abiah kept a steady correspondence of which only twenty-two missives written by Dickinson remain. The number of letters in which she discussed the subject of musical study has led Cristanne Miller to assess that, to Dickinson, "piano playing was a form of shared pleasure" (2012a, p. 52). By reading the poet's letters to Abiah, researchers have found that, besides singing hymns in church, Emily Dickinson "studied voice at Mr. Woodman's singing school in Amherst and that she studied piano, beginning in 1845 when her father purchased one, as a student of her Aunt Selby" (SMALL, 1990, p. 49). In a letter dated 23 February 1845, a fourteen-year-old Dickinson asks Root: "I go to singing-school Sabbath evenings to improve my voice... Don't you envy me?..." (L5). In a letter written in August that same year, Dickinson reiterates that her music learning is taking up much of her time, one of the reasons it took her a while to write back to her friend. By then, Edward Dickinson had purchased a piano for the family home and the young girl was being taught how to play by her aunt. Emily sometimes apologises for not answering Abiah right away: "When I tell you that our term has been 16

weeks long & that I have had 4 studys & taken Music lessons you can imagine a little how my time has been taken up lately" (L7), but also demonstrates great enthusiasm and seriousness when it came to her piano learning:

> How do you like taking music lessons. I presume you are delighted with it. I am taking lessons this term, of Aunt Selby who is spending the summer with us. I never enjoyed myself more than I have this summer. For we have had such a delightful school and such pleasant tea[c]hers, and besides I have had a piano of my own. Our Examination is to come off next week on Monday. I wish you could be here at that time. Why cant you come. If you will - You can come and practice on my piano as much as you wish to. I am already gasping in view of our examination, and although I am determined not to dread it I know it is so foolish. (…) Are you practising now you are at home - I hope you are, for if you are not you would be likely to forget what you have learnt. I want very much to hear you play. I have the same Instruction book that you have, Bertini, and I am getting along in it very well. Aunt Selby says she shant let me have many tunes now for she wants I should get over in the book a good ways first. (L7)

In the following letters, Dickinson's enthusiasm in relation to her singing and piano-playing did not falter. In September 1845, she wrote another letter to Abiah: "I am taking [music] lessons and am getting along very well, and now I have a piano, I am very happy" (L8). In January 1846, she mentioned she was "taking music lessons and practising two hours a day" (L9). In late autumn that same year, Dickinson reiterated she had been "sewing, practising upon the piano, and assisting mother in household affairs" (L14). This, Judy Jo Small explains, remained the case "up until the time she entered Mount Holyoke" (1990, p. 49) at age 17. While Small underlines that it is not clear if the college offered piano lessons, Dickinson did write in November 1847 (L18) that she practised the instrument every afternoon while there. The same missive makes it clear, however, that Mount Holyoke "did have an instructor of vocal music, Harriet Hawes, and Dickinson sang for a half hour each day in Seminary Hall, probably with all or most of the student body" (1990, p. 49-50). Cristanne Miller points out that although Dickinson's singing at school was likely to be composed of hymns (2012a, p. 53), her musical enjoyment was not strictly religious:

> Sandra Runzo relates the story of Mary Lyon inviting the popular abolitionist Hutchinson Family Singers to Mount Holyoke for a private concert for the student body in spring or summer of 1848, while Dickinson was a student there, and Dickinson owned sheet music for Hutchinson Family and several other popular songs. Her classmate Mary Lyon recalls a day when Dickinson fetches her "singing-book in hand" to walk with her to a sequestered spot outdoors where they could sing "tune after tune… carrying two parts, and by snatches three or four" as a "remedy for depression, repression, suppression and oppression." In a playful letter to her Uncle Joel Norcross, Dickinson represents the "fun" of her life as a song: Amherst, she writes, is a "great town…Chorus – 'a still greater one in this.' 'Now for the jovial bowl,' etc. You are fond of singing – I think – and by close, and assiduous

> practice may learn ["Lady of Beauty" and "Susanah"] before I see you again" (L29). (MILLER, 2012a, p. 53)

Dickinson's stay at Mount Holyoke was notably brief. When her brother Austin took her home in 25 March 1848, Emily had been there for mere 10 months (HABEGGER, 2001, p. 22). Judy Jo Small underlines that although "there is no evidence of any formal musical instruction afterward, music certainly played a large role in the parlor entertainments and in the Amherst College ceremonies attended by the poet in her youth" (1990, p. 50). The scholar observes that Dickinson's collected sheet music (available at the Houghton Library at Harvard University), demonstrates how familiar she was "with a large range of popular songs, waltzes, marches, and quicksteps, extending from adaptations of Beethoven to 'Ethiopian Melodies,' with lyrics in dialect, from contemporary minstrel shows" (1990, p. 50). Small states that the "difficulty of the selections indicates that she must have been a moderately accomplished pianist" (1990, p. 50). Dickinson's letters both testify to her family's appreciation of her playing as to the fact her interest in music and musical metaphors were not restricted to the letters she wrote to Abiah Root. Cristanne Miller observes that "Dickinson's letters to Austin often mention music or use musical metaphors," citing a letter written in 30 October 1851 "where family life on a stormy night involves musical counterpoint: 'the orchestra of winds perform their strange, sad music'; Vinnie diverts their father 'with little snatches of music'; and she hopes that Austin's 'stove is singing the merry song of the wood' (L60)" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 53). Furthermore, in a missive addressed to Root in January 1848, Dickinson observed that after she returned from a party at 10pm, her father asked her to play: "Father wishing to hear the Piano, I like an obedient daughter, played & sang a few tunes, much to his apparent gratification" (L20). Reports of Dickinson's musical proficiency abound. As frequently noted, Kate Scott Turner "recalls 'those blissful evenings at Austin's' when 'Emily was often at the piano playing weird & beautiful melodies, all from her own inspiration' – evenings that evidently continued into 1859" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 52). Turner also remembers Dickinson "playing weird and beautiful melodies, all from her own inspiration…" (LEYDA, 1960, p. 367). Other assessments of Dickinson's musical talent include letters and testimonials:

> Writing to her friend John Graves in 1856, Dickinson reminds him of old times together and remarks, "I play the old, odd tunes yet, which used to flit about your head after honest hours – and wake dear Sue, and madden me, with their grief and fun…" (L 184). Richard Sewall, her biographer, writes, "Her particular talent, it seems, was for improvising"; implicit in his statement is a surmise that she may have experimented with extending the conventional range of music as she extended

> the conventions of poetry (407). The suggestion is intriguing, particularly if we think of her main extension of the phonic conventions of poetry – her "weird" rhymes. (SMALL, 1990, p. 51-52)

It should be noted, however, that between her early musical education and her later "parlour entertainment" phase, Dickinson might have considered pursuing music in a serious manner. It is a known fact that as she became more reclusive, Dickinson enjoyed having her visitors sing and play the piano to her (Cf. SMALL, 1990, p. 50). One of such visitors, Clara Bellinger Green, who came to see Dickinson in 1877 accompanied by her siblings, reported that, after listening to Nora B. Green sing the Twenty-third Psalm from her room upstairs, Dickinson told them "of her early love for the piano and confided that, after hearing Rubinstein [?] – I believe it was Rubinstein – play in Boston, she had become convinced that she could never master the art and had forthwith abandoned it once and for all, giving herself up then wholly to literature" (SMALL, 1990, p. 51). Small remarks that the recollection not only underlines the poet's aural relationship with her town – she had invited Nora to sing for her after the young lady had already sung publicly in Amherst – but also that Dickinson "may once have had serious musical ambitions that she relinquished for poetry" (ibid.).

Whether Dickinson had a serious inclination towards professional musicianship or not, it remains a fact that a musical vocabulary and mindset was instilled into her language from a very early age and that the structures of in-between forms – hymns and ballads – heavily influenced her compositional methods. She actively thought about and discussed music. Citing a letter sent by Dickinson to John Graves in April 1856, in which she personifies a ballad and associates the playing of music with "grief and fun"[27], Cristanne Miller argues that in stances such as that, "it appears that Dickinson imagines life as a succession of musical moments and in relation to a succession of songs that she hears, hums, or that 'madden' her, presumably by being stuck in her head" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 53). Music is thus an obsession as consuming to the poet as the lines of her try-to-think poems, which she continually rearranged throughout the years. The question of the interchangeability between musical and poetic genres also remains relevant. Cristanne Miller reminds us that throughout the nineteenth century, "'Psalm,' like 'hymn,' was used interchangeably with poem or song, again suggesting an understanding of 'lyric' that crossed the boundaries of saying and singing and the religious and secular" (2012a, p. 54). Acknowledging the blurred boundaries between

[27] "For example, she hopes that he 'as a ballad hummed, and lost, [may] remember…and drop a tear, if a troubadour that strain may chance to sing,' namely 'Lang Syne.' Later she notes, 'I play the old, odd tunes yet, which used to flit about your head after honest hours – and wake dear Sue, and madden me, with their grief and fun' (L184)" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 53).

spoken word and singing, I address the long discussion in Dickinsonian studies regarding the scope of the influence of hymnody over Emily Dickinson's writing of poems.

2.2 **The Hymnody Question**

Considering Emily Dickinson's extensive body of work is made up entirely of lyric poems, this choice of form is a significant one that has been widely discussed by critics. Cristanne Miller has stated that although lyric poetry was extremely popular in America throughout the nineteenth century, including "a great variety of verse (…) from sea chanties to verse of highly irregular rhyming and stanzaic structure" (2012a, p. 49), the lyric poem was not widely discussed as a genre in the mid-nineteenth century. Instead, after the eighteenth-century revival in Britain, the ballad "had been the topic of active public debate for decades by the time of Dickinson's youth" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 49). It was also a popular form for "imitation and experiment" as well as a source of the "American enthusiasm for departures from set form, especially for short-lined poems" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 49). Miller explains that although the rhythms of hymns did influence Dickinson's writing quite significantly, it would not be accurate to restrain an analysis of the musicality of her verse to hymnal structures. Thus, she states that the poet wrote in relation to song and that "song, in this context, includes the hymns and ballads she sang, the poetry she read, and the popular music she played on the piano" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 49).

Writing on the "popular enthusiasm" for poetry and song in America throughout the nineteenth century, Miller underlines the ease with which an artwork could oscillate between music and poetry. The fluidity that marked the relationship between poems and songs was so great, she ascertains, that as they were often and quickly adapted and popularised as songs, "poems were known by the name of the composer rather than the lyric's author" (2012a, p. 158). Ultimately, Miller observes that although there is no evidence that Dickinson herself wrote new words for any existing popular song, the culture "in which tunes, rhythms, and phrases were freely borrowed and adapted may have encouraged some of her experimentation with popular idiom and rhythms" (2012a, p. 158-59). Dickinson, following the contemporary

practice[28] of her time, does not conform to any system of nomenclature. Cristanne Miller points out that, in letters, the poet "refers to the popular 'Lady of Beauty' and bird song as hymns (L29, 269)" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 54). This was a category she also bestowed upon poems "by Holland, Higginson, and herself (L307, 674, 182, 418)" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 54). Furthermore, in the poem "Musicians wrestle everywhere –" (Fr229) the poet refers to "a sermon as a 'Hymn from pulpit read –' (F229 B, 1861)". Likewise, in "We don't cry – Tim and I –" (Fr231), the speaker mentions Tim "– reads a little Hymn –".

Dickinsonian researchers owe much to Thomas H. Johnson's efforts to make Emily Dickinson's poems widely available. His publication of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* in 1955 was the first large effort not only to avoid selecting poems but also to standardise the poet's writing (although he does make selections, omitting variants and dashes in several instances). That same year, however, Johnson published his *Interpretive Biography*, which is widely taken into consideration by those who claim that hymnody had the most significant influence over the poet's metric forms. Talking about the structure of Dickinson's poetry, Johnson claimed that "basically all her poems employ meters derived from English hymnology" (1955, p. 84), justifying his assertion by pointing out that the poems are "usually iambic or trochaic, but occasionally dactylic" (ibid.). Notwithstanding the fact that those are entirely common rhythms in English poetry, Johnson associates them with "the metric forms familiar to her from childhood as the measures in which Watts's hymns were composed" (ibid.). Judy Jo Small points out that although Gay Wilson Allen "had already pointed out in 1935 in his *American Prosody* (312-14) the fundamental similarity of most of [Dickinson's] rhythms to those of traditional ballad quatrains" when "Whicher noted the similarity of her meters to those in the hymnals available in her family library" (1990, p. 41), Thomas H. Johnson's detailed study associating Dickinson's metric forms with those present in Isaac Watts hymns inaugurated a long tradition in critical practice that accepted hymns as the main structural influence over Dickinson's poems, a stance Small disputes, arguing that "all in all, the influence of the hymn form on her prosody has been greatly exaggerated" (1990, p. 42) and stating that such claims do not withstand deeper scrutiny. Martha Winburn England's assertion, for instance, that "a hymn vocabulary impregnated" (1966, p. 119) Dickinson's "amounts to little more than a recognition of her use of a generalized religious vocabulary not

[28] Cristanne Miller tells us that "*The Household Book of Poetry* contains fourteen hymns by Isaac Watts among its 'poems.' Easily the most popular Northern song of the Civil War was Julia Ward Howe's 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' – a poem written to replace the lyrics of 'John Brown's Body' (sung to an already well-known tune), printed in a literary magazine, and then sung as a marching song to which soldiers added a "Glory Hallelujah" chorus" (2012a, p. 54).

specific to hymns" (1990, p. 44). Small also debunks claims that Dickinson would have employed hymnal structures ironically (Cf. ENGLAND, 1966; PORTER, 1981; WOLOSKY, 1984) by stating that "so many poems depart so widely from hymn meters and hymn vocabulary that any relation is too tenuous" (1990, p. 44) to be so.

If, according to Johnson, Watts gave Dickinson "a beginner's lesson in metrics" (1955, p. 85), stating that the metric forms the poet employed the most were those "familiar to her from childhood as the measures in which Watts's hymns were composed" (1955, p. 84), it should be noted that Judy Jo Small developed a quantitative analysis of Dickinson's meter and concluded that "the two meters most frequent in Dickinson's verse after common meter – sevens and sixes (7-6-7-6) and common particular meter (8-8-6-8-8-6) – are not used by Watts, whose rhythms supposedly permeated her thoughts" (1990, p. 44). The scholar observes that, while those meters can be found in the works of other hymn writers, they are also found "in a great many secular poems as well" (SMALL, 1990, p. 44). Small argues that as many critics accepted Johnson's analysis without question, the fact is that most of the stanzaic patterns Dickinson employs "are by no means exclusive to hymnody"[29] (1990, p. 44). This is a point that had already been argued by Anthony Hecht in "The Riddles of Emily Dickinson" (1978). The critic had asserted that "one of the commonplaces that is due for serious revision is her supposedly narrow indebtedness to the hymnals, and to Dr. Watts in particular" (HECHT, 1978, p. 5). Furthermore, "the actual number of poems that have been shown to refer directly to any particular hymn is extremely small" (SMALL, 1990, p. 42). With that in mind, it seems that the claim that Dickinson's main structural influence was provided by hymns does not withstand when confronted against the poet's actual poetic output. While the influence is there, both Miller and Small agree that ballads can be said to have had an influence just as significant – if not more far-reaching – than hymns. The influence of the ballad revival is especially felt in the myriad of poems with a "narrative element", says Small (1990, p. 45), but the stanza forms that Dickinson employed were equally being explored by her contemporaries as a consequence of the ballad's ascension as a high-brow poetic form after the revival. The forms Dickinson explored the most, such as common meter and common particular meter, are widely found in the poetry of Wordsworth,

[29] "Long meter is a pattern fundamental throughout Indo-European literature. Common meter is the same as ballad meter and apparently derives from seven-stress couplets ('fourteeners') rearranged in quatrain form. Short meter is the poulter's measure (alexandrine plus fourteener) arranged as four lines instead of two. Common particular meter is the same as the romance-six. These stanzas and numerous variants of them have long been abundant in English lyric poetry, especially in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. They have always been the mainstay of popular poetic forms including songs and hymns" (SMALL, 1990, 44-45).

Coleridge and Blake, as well as in the poems published “in the magazines and newspapers of Dickinson’s day” (SMALL, 1990, p. 45). The poet was by no means exploring these poetic forms by herself. This is a point that Cristanne Miller has stressed in *Reading in Time;* she states that ballads “may also have appealed to Dickinson as providing a general model for her dramatic speakers because, unlike hymns, they were strongly associated with a region or nation, through dialect or distinctive colloquialisms and through the kinds of tales they tell” (2012a, p. 86-87).

For the present study, it is amply significant that two of Dickinson’s main formal influences stood on a hybrid territory between music and poetry. This is, of course, a characteristic inherent to most lyric poetry: Cristanne Miller states that “in the early and mid-nineteenth-century United States, “‘lyric’ described any poetry that was not distinctly dramatic, epic, or narrative, that was harmonic or musical in its language, or that was conceived as song” and that “Dickinson’s poetry fit this model” (MILLER, 2012a, p. 24). American poets and critics “tended to understand the lyric in relation to song, which is to say sound, music, harmoniousness, ‘Beauty’” (MILLER 2012a, p. 20). Considering Dickinson’s structural choices were quite specific, fitting the language of her poems, this section aims to underline some of the most distinguished features of her writing, i.e. “the sonic qualities of rhythm, assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and repetition” (ibid.). Judy Jo Small acknowledges the relevance of Dickinson’s choice of stanza forms. While “her knowledge of poetry was broad, and she undoubtedly could have written sonnets had she wanted to” (SMALL, 1990, p. 47), the poet decided to explore and master a form defined by its “apparent simplicity” and “connection with the roots of lyric poetry” (ibid.). Likewise, Cristanne Miller assesses that Dickinson’s “extraordinary accomplishment” resided precisely in her recognition of “the possibilities for an ambitious, complex, and powerfully expressive lyric poetry offered by this range of popular short-lined verse and song” (MILLER, 2012a, p. 81).

While some of Dickinson’s work – such as “I never saw a Moor” (Fr 800), for instance, which James Davidson has likened to lines of hymn written by Watts (1954, p. 144) – are clearly influenced by hymns, the amount of poems that would be best classified as variations of the ballad far surpass those. It was a wide general interest in the ballad in the mid-nineteenth century, Miller underlines, that led American poets – from Longfellow to Dickinson – to experiment with their metrical lines and depart from set form. The ballad was, after all, a malleable format. Albert Friedman has stated that “it is partly the influence of balladry and folksong that has broken the tyranny” (1961, p. 346) of the iamb, and, “through encouraging trisyllabic substitution and musical cadences, has liberalized English prosody”

(ibid.), meaning that the ballad revival aided poets not only to stray from iambic patterns but also from syllabic structures (such as those of hymns). Miller argues that while Dickinson's "exact repetition of short-lined accentual-syllabic patterns in many poems stems from the kind of regularity required for the communal singing of hymns", "her use of a looser running rhythm or accentual (as opposed to accentual-syllabic) meter follows the model of balladic verse" (2012a, p. 50). Miller also asserts that the way Dickinson combines the "precise tunes of hymns" and "the ballad's 'wild' looseness", adding her "own musical sense of cadence in language" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 51) can be best broken down and understood once we understand both her own musical practice and "the musical culture of the United States during her formative years" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 51).

The ballad speaker also appears to have influenced Dickinson's myriad of lyric-Is. Stating that her poems "focus on the intensity of an articulated feeling or dilemma rather than an individualized biographical frame for that experience" (2012a, p. 89), Cristanne Miller has argued that, while Dickinson was not a balladeer or a scholar of the form, contemporary discourse "on the virtues of 'simple and straightforward' speech may have influenced her development of the pithy, sagacious, informal speaker" (2012a, p. 89) that did not coincide with herself, as I have already discussed in Chapter 1. To Miller, "while Dickinson participated enthusiastically in the culture of poetic greatness through requesting author photographs and reading biographies"[30] and "while some of her poems regard poetry as implicitly divine, (…) her poetic speakers more closely resemble the anonymous ballad singer than the writers she idolized" (2012a, p. 86). In this, the poet both partakes in the folksong tradition of balladeering – as the "the untrammelled expression of the *Volk*" (FRIEDMAN, 1961, p. 249) – and, as Miller highlights, balances a paradox by writing a "philosophically profound poetry drawing on vocabularies of contemporary scientific, mathematical, and political knowledge while frequently representing her speaker as naïve and the poet as unexceptional" (2012a, p. 86). Francis James Child has argued that, in their original incarnation, popular ballads had as their fundamental characteristic the "the absence of subjectivity and of self-consciousness", underlining that "though a man and not a people has composed them, still the author counts for nothing, and it is not by mere accident, but with the best reason, that they have come down to us anonymous" (1874, s/p). This understanding of the speaker as an invisible everyman – a Nobody – is reminiscent, of course, of Dickinson's "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (Fr260).

[30] A point Páraic Finnerty further explores in "'If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her': Dickinson and the Poetics of Celebrity" (2017).

Adorno has approached the lyric poem speaker as a voice that rises to confound capitalist logic, being simultaneously immersed and apart from it. The lyric poem thus emerges from a sense of singularity that stands against the collective voice of society. Proposing that "the lyric work is always the subjective expression of a social antagonism," (ADORNO, 1991, p. 45) Adorno goes on to argue that the "'I' whose voice is heard in the lyric is an 'I' that defines and expresses itself as something opposed to the collective, to objectivity" (ADORNO, 1991, p. 40). It is precisely by writing through the perspective of this "I" that the lyric speaker is able to render into language a reaction against social expectation and uniformity. Here, the speaker enacts his uniqueness and dissent by employing "the force with which the 'I' creates the illusion of nature emerging from alienation" (ADORNO, 1991, 41). This is certainly the case for many of Dickinson's poems, with this sense of alienation often being conveyed by a dichotomy between poetry and prose. In the following poem, the speaker paints a scene in which an unspecified "they" attempt to keep her away from poetic leanings: "They shut me up in Prose – / As when a little Girl / They put me in the Closet – / Because they liked me 'still' –" (Fr445). Those who attempted to make her conform in said closet fail, however. This is communicated by the stanzas that follow[31] and attested by the materiality of the poem itself. Comparing herself to a bird that had been trapped "in the Pound," the speaker laughs at her raptors' foolishness by asserting her voice and singularity through this poem, a testament to the fact she is no longer trapped in prose. Ultimately, Dickinson's speakers often stand apart to observe, choosing to be "Nobody," over the direness of having a name and criticising "Soft – Cherubic Creatures," the gentlewomen who are horrified by "freckled Human Nature" (Fr675).

If we are to assess the way in which Dickinson combined elements of ballads and hymns to establish her own writing style, I must address what formal elements defined those poetic types. If the definition of the lyric in mid-nineteenth-century America was loose and hard to pinpoint, the same, in a way, might be applied to the ballad[32]. However, the

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[31] Still! Could themself have peeped –
And seen my Brain – go round –
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason – in the Pound –

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity – Abolish his – [Captivity –]
And laugh – No more have I –

[32] Cristanne Miller stresses that a "loose nomenclature leads Cohen to hypothesize that the term 'ballad' was used as a 'sign of [the poet's] ability to reach thousands of readers' and of 'a poetic culture only indirectly under the control legitimating social forces' ('Whittier' 26). Certainly at the level of practice, early and mid-nineteenth-

differences in formal rules between the two should be underlined. Hymns, Cristanne Miller tells us, "had a privileged place in nineteenth-century musical culture because of the dominant Protestant culture and widespread ritual of church singing" (2012a, p. 56). To Miller, Dickinson found meter "generally enabling because it was a shared system of cultural givens that she could manipulate in individualistic, innovative ways without departing from its cultural base or sense of writing in relation" (ibid.). Miller also identifies a similarity between the hymnal dialectic of "individuality and relation or community" and the ballad's "hybridity as part of both print and oral culture, or a modern manifestation of poetic making presumed to stem from oral traditions" (ibid.). Addressing Dickinson's relationship with Watts's writing, Cristanne Miller has argued the point that, besides "being part of the common New England vocabulary of rhythm and verse" (1987, p. 142), his use of slant rhymes and idiomatic diction would constitute an attraction for the poet. Watts' "frequent use of irregular rhymes and harshsounding phrases (usually involving vocabulary considered neither poetic nor religious)" as well as "the extraordinary variety of sounds and themes he used within a simple rhythmical frame" (1987, p. 142) must have exercised a formative impact on young Dickinson. Miller evaluates that "the extraordinary fertility of Dickinson's stanzaic and metrical forms arises from these intersections of elite and popular, printed and sung, religious and secular short-lined forms prevalent in the 1840s and 1850s" and that "her experimentation with loosened meter, shifts in stanzaic form mid-poem, and testing of free verse rhythms also reveals the influence of the eighteenth-century ballad revival as it had filtered into American popular poetry" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 50).

Hymnal common meter, Cristanne Miller tells us, differs from standard ballad meter not only in the fact that the former is counted in syllables (8686) while the latter is counted in beats (4343), but also in the rhyme scheme: hymnal quatrains "typically rhyme abab rather than abcb, although poems were called ballads that used an abab rhyme, and hymns sometimes rhymed abcb" (2012a, p. 57). Looking at Dickinson's body of work, Miller concludes that the poet's "favored rhyme scheme is abcb, that is, the typical ballad, not hymn, pattern" (2012a, p. 58). A syllabic meter means, of course, that hymns "have greater metrical regularity than ballads, eschewing both multiple unstressed syllables (for example, where a 4-

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century American literary culture showed less concern with formal definition and more with a broad conflation of qualities for omnibus genres like the lyric and ballad" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 51). In "Dickinson and the Ballad", the critic also observed that "while the ballad is now associated generically with a particular metrical form (4343 beats, rhyming abcb), during the early nineteenth century it was understood more in relation to the easy regularity of its rhythms and its popularly accessible narrative quality than with any metrical structure" (MILLER, 2012b, p. 34).

beat line might have ten or more syllables) and the omission of unstressed syllables (giving a 3-beat line as few as three syllables" (ibid.). This regularity is necessary, Miller stresses, since hymns were sung to the same tune:

> Hymns differ from ballads also in their precise syllabic definition: hymns are classified according to syllables per line in stanzas, as, for example "8s" or "7s" (a stanza of repeated eight- or repeated seven-syllable lines) or as "6 & 5" (a stanza alternating 6- and 5-syllable lines), with distinct patterns of line-end stress for lines with odd and even numbers of syllables. Ballads, in contrast, organize lines accentually by numbers of strong beats in a line without regard to the patterns of unstressed syllable between beats or at the end of a line. Exactly repeated numbers of syllables per line ensure that hymns of any metrical pattern can be sung to the tune of any other hymn having that same pattern – hence, a congregation would need to know only a small number of tunes in order to sing an infinite number of hymns. While ballads are also often sung to well-known tunes, there is greater leeway for truncated or extended lines because traditionally their verses are not sung chorally. (MILLER, 2012a, p. 58)

As its accentual structure meant the ballad form was not as strict as that of a hymn, there are different accounts of what constituted one in mid-nineteenth-century America. "Generally," however, "poems with anecdotal, narrative, or comic focus using relaxed diction in clearly accented meter were called ballads" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 58) – which is the case of a considerable amount of Dickinson's compositions. Furthermore, the fact that the poet "uses more than one stanzaic form in a single poem links her poetry distinctly with ballads, since such alteration of rhythmic pattern cannot be tolerated in hymn singing" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 58). Nevertheless, Miller stresses the point that "Dickinson repeats precisely defined stanzaic structures like 8787 or 7686, not varying even one syllable per line," something that, the critic assesses, "indicates without question the influence of hymn form on her meter" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 58-59). It should also be noted that Dickinson's employment of stricter or looser metric structures and rhythms cannot be broken down into specific themes or topics: "to repeat a previous claim, Dickinson does not write in rhythmic or formal codes" (ibid.). To Miller, having mastered both hymnic and balladic structures, Dickinson seems "to find all forms flexible to her thought or design" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 58-59). Given the structures the poet explored and experimented with, most of Dickinson's poems "resemble songs waiting for a singer, someone to step into the 'I' provided as a staged performance, although with greater self-consciousness and irony than typical of ballads and hymns" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 90). It is Dickinson's reworking of popular poetic/musical genres that makes her poetry sound so much like music of her own. As the final section of this chapter will show, a number of twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers found inspiration in her "songs".

2.3 **Musical Aspects of Dickinson's Compositional Style**

> The distinctive difference of Dickinson's poetry depends in large part on her intentionally quirky rhymes. Experimenting with rhyme, she devised a poetry with a radically new sound. Her subtle manipulations of rhyme often contribute importantly to the effect and meaning of individual poems. Her work as an innovator in the field of rhyme, furthermore, has permanently altered the ears of poets and readers. (SMALL, 1990, p. 28)

Cristanne Miller has evaluated that Dickinson's poems fluctuate "between the precise tunes of hymns, the ballad's 'wild' looseness," punctuated by "her own musical sense of cadence in language" (2012a, p. 51). As the previous section has demonstrated, Dickinson's insight into the musical and poetic culture of mid-nineteenth century America can help us get a better grasp of her creative process. The poet's musical education as well as the predominantly aural, performance-driven[33] characteristic of poetry (which has probably influenced Dickinson's speech-like diction) are elements that should be considered while analysing the compositional methods of the poet as well as her thematic choices. Dickinson does often refer to the poet – or the speaker – as songbird and to poems as songs. Throughout this section I will discuss an aspect that Judy Jo Small has considered "a structural backbone" (1990, p. 6) to Dickinson's poetry: the poet's rhymes. As Small asserts, Dickinson's "poems and letters indicate not only that she had a keen auditory sensitivity but also that she had given thought to the ways sound conveys meaning" (1990, p. 30). This is a notion that this section aims to demonstrate by analysing a selection of poems, breaking down sound devices employed by Dickinson. Small argues that it is not only the poet's manipulation of balladic and hymnic structures that define her distinctive sound, but the way in which she composes her rhyme schemes. Throughout this section, I will discuss some of the structural strategies identified by Small when it came to analysing Dickinson's "unconventional" rhyme.

In the preface to the 1890 *Poems of Emily Dickinson,* Thomas W. Higginson pointed out that Dickinson "often altered a word many times to suit an ear which had its own

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[33] There is enough evidence to support the claim that Dickinson's own poems were performed orally among family and community circles in Amherst: "As Hart and Smith document, Sue at least occasionally read Dickinson's poems to friends.48 More significantly, Martha Ackmann has found evidence that Dickinson herself at least occasionally "said" her poems to the family: cousin Anna Norcross Swett referred to hearing Dickinson "talk poetry," and Louisa Norcross reports that Dickinson read her poems to her while she worked in the pantry". (MILLER, 2004, p. 219)

tenacious fastidiousness" (xx). He goes on to ask the reader to overlook the verses that could sometimes seem like "poetry torn up by the roots, with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them," given the fact that those could give "a freshness and a fragrance not otherwise to be conveyed." That is, he regrets Dickinson's disruptiveness, which, quite often, manifests itself not through meter, but through rhyme. It is noteworthy that the editor had once "evidently suggested" that the poet would "amend or discard her rhymes," (SMALL, 1990, p. 6), which she refused (L 265). Small argues that, while Higginson seems willing to overlook Dickinson's "'faulty' rhymes when a thought took his breath away," he missed the fact that her disruptive rhymes "themselves take one's breath away" (p. 100). Claiming "disjuncture and deferral and surprise" (ibid.) as Dickinson's main artistic tools, Small highlights the poet's rhyme shifts when analysing her poems, stating that such strategies, moving along with "subtle fluctuations of thought and feeling", provide a "dynamic means of stirring, shaping, and guiding responsive currents of lyric emotion" (ibid.):

> One of her chief means of heightening the materiality, the fleshly presence of words, making us aware of them as words and not as mere transparent signifiers, is emphasis on the sheer sound of the words and their interplay in a texture of poetic language. All poets use words so, more or less, but we have hardly realized the extent to which she relies on phonology for poetic effects. Part of her strategy is to reduce the logical element of her verse and to emphasize the mysteriously suggestive elements including sound. (SMALL, 1990, p. 63)

Small states that critical attention to Dickinson's rhyme and problematic assessments result, partially, from misled notions about the ways in which rhyme operates. She lists the strangely resistant idea that "full rhymes indicate happiness or confidence while partial rhymes indicate sorrow or doubt" (1990, p. 7). While this theory does not hold when applied to poem analysis, it still orients some critical accounts. Considering Dickinson's main structural strategies deal with rhythmic shifts between full and partial rhymes, it behoves one to approach her structures without pre-conceived notions about how partial and full rhymes operate in relation to semantic meaning. Citing Timothy Morris' compiled statistics and chronological charts of Dickinson's rhyme[34], Small points at the poet's "growing reliance on

[34] Of 4,840 rhymes in Dickinson's poems, 2,006 (41.4%) are exact (of the type see/me, 1732); 167 (3.5%) pair a vowel with a reduced version of itself (me/immortality, 712); 80 (1,6%) are assonantal (breath/quench, 422); 731 (15.1%) are vowel (blew/sky, 354); 1,535 (31.7%) are consonantal (mean/sun, 411); 164 (3.4%) pair a consonant with a cluster containing that consonant (night/erect, 419); 23 pair a cluster with another cluster that shares one consonant with it (disclosed/blind, 761); 2 rhyme a cluster with the same cluster reversed (used/birds, 430); 84 (1.7%) rhyme one nasal consonant with another (thing/begun, 565); 20 rhyme one fricative with another (breeze/divorce, 896); 2 rhyme one voiced stop with another (sob/wood, 45); 5 rhyme one unvoiced stop with

inexact rhymes" (1990, p. 15). Assessing Dickinson's usage of such rhymes is complicated by the chronological distance between contemporary and nineteenth-century American English as a number of partial rhymes "have become conventional through common use" (SMALL, 1990, p. 16). Shifts in pronunciation must also be considered; vowel sounds are "particularly unstable" – which accounts for the scarcity of assonantal rhymes in English verse, "whereas consonantal rhymes are relatively common" (SMALL, 1990, p. 16). Finally, there are partial rhymes that "have found acceptance in tradition because of an actual full rhyme that did exist at some historical time and place – the pair *love* and *prove* is the most familiar of these" (p. 17). Addressing the analogy between the minor mode in music and partial rhymes, Small argues that there is a point to this comparison. Citing Wells's assertion that the reason the minor mode is "more ambiguous and less stable than the major mode" is due to the fact that, while other modes "are essentially diatonic" (SMALL, 1990, p. 224), the minor mode "is quasi-chromatic and changeable, appearing in several different versions" (ibid.). Thus, "the repertory of possible vertical combinations is much greater in minor than in major, and, consequently, the possibility of any particular progression of harmonies is smaller" (WELLS, 1947, p. 226). It thus "tends to create ambiguity and uncertainty as to harmonic direction" and to "obscure the feeling of tonal center" (WELLS, 1947, p. 220). Small aligns this "ambiguity and uncertainty" with partial rhyme's "more ambiguous" nature in relation to full rhyme. This is due to the larger "possibility of combinations of partly rhyming words and sound," obscuring the reader's "feeling of tonal center," disrupting "a secure sense of acoustic progression, and thus [arousing] suspense and tension" (SMALL, 1990, p. 73-74). If the effect of any rhyme "depends on how it interacts with a reader's expectations" (SMALL, 1990, p. 71) – defined by poetic convention and any particular poem's rhyme scheme –, one of Dickinson's main structural strategies is to disrupt and frustrate those expectations. Partial rhyme (and its alternation with full rhyme in any given poem) works as a tool for the poet to accomplish that. The meaning of the shifts is usually attached to the discursive sense of the poem, as the examples addressed below – which are aligned with Small's claim that rhyme shifts are fundamental to Dickinson's poetic constructions (1990, p. 77) – will demonstrate. These rhyme shifts work by establishing a rhyme pattern, raising expectations that they will be sustained throughout the poem and then defeating what was anticipated. Small shows that Dickinson achieves "a wide variety of effects, enhancing poetic affect, supporting poetic

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another (frock/night, 584); 21 rhyme-positions show less close approximations to exact rhyme, and cannot be considered rhyme at all (for instance, blaze/forge in 365). (SMALL, 1990, p. 14-15)

movement, and contributing to poetic meaning in complex ways" by manipulating rhyme in that way (1990, p. 77).

2.3.1 Full Rhyme to Partial Rhyme

"The first Day's Night had come –" (Fr423) is a good example of a poem in which Dickinson inserts a harsh transition from full to partial (consonantal) rhyme. To Judy Jo Small, the function of the rhyme shift here is to destabilize the reader after an initial sense of security provided by the full rhymes in the first stanza (*thing/sing*). After that, "the intervention of consonantal rhyme – persistent throughout the remainder of the poem and thinning out in the final stanza to a semi-consonance (between a voiced and a voiceless sibilant) – seems a disharmony" that is in tune with the despair caused by the terrible night endured by the speaker's Soul and the subsequent anxiety enacted by her Brain (SMALL, 1990, p. 78).[35] Small states that the explicit musical references (the request for the soul to sing, the snapped strings of her bow) "point to an interpretation of the partial rhymes as dissonant, disoriented, and disorienting, echoing despair" (1990, p. 78):

	syllables	beats	rhyme
The first Day's Night had come –	6	3	A
And grateful that a thing	6	3	B
So terrible – had been endured –	9	4	C
I told my Soul to sing –	6	3	B
She said her strings were snapt –	6	3	A
Her Bow – to atoms blown –	6	3	B(p)[36]
And so to mend her – gave me work	8	4	C
Until another Morn –	6	3	B(p)
And then – a Day as huge	6	3	A
As Yesterdays in pairs,	6	3	B(p)
Unrolled its horror in my face –	8	4	C
Until it blocked my eyes –	6	3	B(p)
My Brain – begun to laugh –	6	3	A
I mumbled – like a fool –	6	3	B(p)
And tho' 'tis Years ago – that Day –	8	4	C
My Brain keeps giggling – still.	6	3	B(p)

[35] Cristanne Miller points out that the theme of this poem may allude to Philippians 1:21–23, which reads: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." (MILLER, 2012a, p. 767)

[36] (p) is an indicator of partial rhyme.

And Something's odd – within –	6	3	A
That person that I was –	6	3	B(p)
And this One – do not feel the same –	8	4	C
Could it be Madness – this?	6	3	B(p)

Dickinson employs short meter in this poem, in a variation from the standard (4343, abcb) ballad form. She follows the iambic structure throughout the poem with no disruptions, ensuring that her acute rhyme shift from the first to the second stanza stands out.

The poet explores the dissonance generated by the shift from full to partial rhyme in a different way in "A Bird, came down the Walk –" (Fr359). The poem is also written in short meter, although Dickinson deviates slightly from the iambic structure in the fourth and fifth stanzas. The function of the rhyme shift here appears to mark the quick change in the speaker's tone. While the "end-stopped lines, elementary diction, ultra-commonplace subject matter, rhyme, and rhythm in the first two stanzas" (SMALL, 1990, p. 79) lead the reader – or listener – to code this as a sort of children's verse, the thrill of danger and confusion introduced in the third stanza is punctuated by partial rhymes:

	syllables	beats	rhyme
A Bird, came down the Walk –	6	3	A
He did not know I saw –	6	3	B
He bit an Angle Worm in halves[37]	8	4	C
And ate the fellow, raw,	6	3	A
And then, he drank a Dew	6	3	A
From a convenient Grass –	6	3	B
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall	8	4	C
To let a Beetle pass –	6	3	B
He glanced with rapid eyes,	6	3	A
That hurried all abroad –	6	3	B(p)
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought,	8	4	C
He stirred his Velvet Head. –	6	3	B(p)
Like one in danger, Cautious,	7	3	A
I offered him a Crumb,	6	3	B(p)
And he unrolled his feathers,	7	3	C
And rowed him softer Home –	6	3	B(p)
Than Oars divide the Ocean,	7	3	A
Too silver for a seam,	6	3	B(p)
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon,	8	4	C
Leap, plashless as they swim.	6	3	B(p)

If the two opening stanzas introduce a speaker with "a childlike wonder at the ordinary" (SMALL, 1990, p. 79) where the strangest thing one can observe while gazing at

[37] This line brings the variant "[He] shook –".

nature is a bird eating the worm “raw,” the third stanza changes the tone as the bird becomes frightened. The use of partial rhymes appear to be a nod to the overall notion of disconnection between speaker and nature where before the disturbance there had been a sense of tranquillity between observer and observed. The images Dickinson employs gradually become as strange as the rhyme pairs (*abroad/Head, Crumb/Home, seam/swim*), while the bird recoils from the speaker. The resulting sound effects “support the tone of quiet awe at a splendidly appealing but elusive creature” (SMALL, 1990, p. 81). The odd images delineated by the speaker communicate her inability to account for the movement that leads to the bird’s departure. This notion is communicated both by the events that take place after the second stanza and by the frustrated expectation of the reader/listener as the full-rhyme pattern in interrupted. On that same note, the final two stanzas introduce metrical irregularities to the iambic pattern. Judy Jo Small argues that the sense of disappointed awe of the closing lines is complimented by “the final four rhyme-words, softly modulated on the consonant *m*, *crumb/home/seam/swim*, which bring the poem to a delicate close while leaving a faint hum of something elusive, not quite resolved” (1990, p. 81).

In “A Spider sewed at Night” (Fr1163) Dickinson employs the shift from full to partial rhyme to achieve yet another effect. This poem is structured in three triplets (a rare structure not only in Dickinson’s oeuvre, but in English poetry in general). The types of rhymes employed by the writer throughout the poem follow syntax and meaning and the former becomes more intricate and the latter more elusive. While the first triplet brings, as Small has pointed out, “the most obvious kind of rhyme available (fully rhyming nouns, commonly used, and linked by clear semantic associations as well as phonetic similarity)” (1990, p. 81) to accompany a straightforward tale of a spider that worked at night, she introduces consonantal rhymes in the second stanza as it “expresses uncertainty about the purpose of the spider’s endeavor,” while the pun on “inform” “makes understanding of these lines tricky, but possible; what we comprehend, though, when we decipher it, is that our comprehension of the spider’s art is inevitably limited” (SMALL, 1990, p. 81). It also gives the spider an air of self-reliance: the quality and outcome of her efforts are going to be defined by her own qualities. After the steadiness communicated by the reiteration of the full rhyme in the first stanza (*Night/ Light/ White*), the way Dickinson approximates *Dame* and *Gnome* is odd not only in its disrupture of the previous pattern, but in the semantic uncertainty it conveys by refusing the reader/listener any insight into the actual workings of the spider. As Dickinson moves on to unmatching unaccented rhymes in the final triplet, meaning becomes even more elusive as

it is hard for anyone to assert with certainty what the speaker means by qualifying the spider's strategy of immortality as "physiognomy":

	syllables	beats	rhyme
A Spider sewed at Night	6	3	A
Without a Light	4	2	A
Upon an Arc of White –	6	3	A
If Ruff it was of Dame	6	3	B(p)
Or Shroud of Gnome	4	2	B(p)
Himself himself inform –	6	3	B(p)
Of Immortality	6	3	C(p)
His strategy	4	2	C(p)
Was physiognomy –	6	3	C(p)

It is hard not to approach the spider as an artist figure and as a metaphor for Dickinson's own labour, writing her poems at night. Albert Gelpi has addressed this in *The Emily Dickinson: Mind of the Poet* (1965), arguing that "the spider is Emily Dickinson's emblem for the craftsman spinning from within himself his sharply defined world" (p. 151). The analogy between artist – especially an artist whose efforts are somehow thwarted – and the spider is even stronger in "The Spider as an Artist" (Fr1373), in which the speaker states the talent of the arachnid and takes it "by the Hand": "The Spider as an Artist / Has never been employed – / Though his surpassing Merit / Is freely certified / By every Broom and Bridget / Throughout a Christian Land – / Neglected Son of Genius / I take thee by the Hand –". In "A Spider sewed at Night," Dickinson's music follows her meaning triplet by triplet: "as the poem moves from clarity to an abyss of unknowing, the rhymes move from the plain to the bizarre" (SMALL, 1990, p. 81).

While the poet employs the shift from full to partial rhymes with, apparently, different intents in each of those poems, combining this with particular devices in each of them, they all have in common a sense of rupture, of a sudden clash as the poem strays from the unspoken contract it had assumed with its reader/listener. However, it is also interesting to observe what effect Dickinson creates when the standard she strays from is established by partial, not full rhymes.

2.3.2 Partial Rhyme to Full Rhyme

In “I am ashamed – I hide –” (Fr705), Dickinson establishes a progression “from uncertainty to triumph” (SMALL, 1990, p. 90) that is accompanied by a shift from partial to full rhyme. While David Porter has singled out this poem as an evidence of Dickinson’s “inability to sustain a rather intricate rhyme scheme”, arguing that “it unravelled, came apart in the last stanza” (1981, p. 100), Judy Jo Small argues for a different understanding of the poet’s construction here, stating that, in the final stanza, “the rhyme scheme brilliantly *knits*” (1990, p. 87). In the first stanza, Dickinson establishes the poem’s metrical pattern as common particular meter, a variation of ballad meter in which the four-stress lines are doubled, producing a stanza of six lines in tail-rhyme arrangement with a 443443 accentual pattern. From the start, Dickinson rearranges this, alternating between iambs and trochees, varying the number of beats per line and employing split metrical lines on the third and fourth stanzas:

	syllables	beats	rhyme
I am ashamed – I hide –	6	3	A
What right have I – to be a Bride –	8	4	A
So late a Dowerless Girl –	7	3	B(p)
Nowhere to hide my dazzled Face –	8	4	C
No one to teach me that new Grace –	8	4	C
Nor introduce – My soul –	6	3	B(p)
Me to adorn – How – tell –	6	3	A(p)
Trinket – to make Me beautiful –	8	4	A(p)
Fabrics of Cashmere –	5	2	B(p)
Never a Gown of Dun – more –	7	4	C
Raiment instead – of Pompadour –	8	4	C
For Me – My soul – to wear –	6	3	B(p)
Fingers – to frame – my Round Hair	7	4	A(p)
Oval – as Feudal Ladies wore –	8	4	A(p)
Far Fashions – Fair –	4	2	B(p)
Skill – to hold my Brow like an Earl –	8	4	C
Plead – like a Whippowil –	6	3	
Prove – like a Pearl –	4	2	C
Then, for Character –	5	3	B(p)
Fashion My Spirit quaint – white –	7	4	A
Quick – like a Liquor –	5	2	
Gay – like Light –	3	2	A
Bring Me my best Pride –	5	3	B
No more ashamed –	4	2	
No more to hide –	4	2	C
Meek – let it be – too proud – for Pride –	8	4	C
Baptized – this Day – A Bride –	6	3	B

Judy Jo Small perceives the metrical deficiency and the consonantal rhyme in the first stanza as a parallel to "the shy, shrinking hesitation of the bride" (1990, p. 86), which is carried forward by the partial rhymes in the second stanza (*tell/beautiful* and *Cashmere/wear*). As "the speaker strives to acquire the grace and presence of her new estate" (ibid.) in the third stanza, Dickinson includes two pairs of partial end-rhymes, *Hair/wore* and *Fair/Character*. Nevertheless, the rhymes "are less deficient than they seem, for the first b-rhyme (*Fair*) chimes perfectly with the first a-rhyme *(Hair*) and with the final b-rhyme of the previous stanza (*wear*)" (ibid.) Dickinson seems to challenge the metrical pattern she set for herself as she explores alliteration and forms other rhyme pairs than those that would be suggested by the metrical structure she established. Throughout the stanza "*Far* and *Fair* sound a rich consonance, *Skill* rhymes lightly with *Whippowil, and Earl/Pearl* rhymes at a distance with *Girl* in stanza one" (ibid). This leads Small to conclude that "amid the apparent chaos" of consonantal and odd-sounding rhymes "is perceivable an acoustic thrust toward a fuller harmony" (ibid.). Such harmony is fully materialised in the final stanzas, "which rings with a surprising accord of rhyme-sounds" (ibid.). Throughout it, the b-rhymes and the c-rhymes merge together, and they are closely allied phonologically with the a-rhymes: "all of them sound bright and confident" and "shameful shrinking is gone as the speaker arrives at a fulfilment that transcends even pride" (SMALL, 1990, p. 86-87). As the speaker finds her pride and leaves her insecurities behind, Dickinson ends the poem "grandly on the same rhyme-sound with which it so tentatively began" (ibid.).

Dickinson employed this approach to rhyme shifts for other ends and effects, however. Judy Jo Small argues that part of the rhetorical strategy Dickinson adopted in "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" (Fr1096) is to establish a series of partial rhymes that is suddenly disrupted by a full rhyme; this "is a deviation from [the] pattern and hence can come with a surprising force – the longer the preceding series, the greater the force" (1990, p. 90). Dickinson establishes common meter as the metric structure for this poem, although she deviates from it from the third stanza, as it brings on a pattern of seven-and-sixes and 3333 beats. All but the last stanza employ partial rhymes:

	syllables	Beats	rhyme
A narrow Fellow in the Grass	8	4	A
Occasionally rides –	6	3	B(p)
You may have met Him – did you not	8	4	C
His notice sudden is –	6	3	B(p)
The Grass divides as with a Comb –	8	4	A
A spotted shaft is seen –	6	3	B(p)

And then it closes at your feet	8	4	C
And opens further on –	6	3	B(p)
He likes a Boggy Acre	7	3	A
A Floor too cool for Corn	6	3	B(p)
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –	7	3	C
I more than once at Noon	6	3	B(p)
Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash	7	3	A
Unbraiding in the Sun	6	3	B(p)
When stooping to secure it	7	3	C
It wrinkled, and was gone –	6	3	B(p)
Several of Nature's People	7	3	A
I know, and they know me –	6	3	B(p)
I feel for them a transport	7	3	C
Of cordiality –	6	3	B(p)
But never met this Fellow	7	3	A
Attended, or alone	6	3	B
Without a tighter breathing	7	3	C
And Zero at the Bone –	6	3	B

Small points out that the fact that Dickinson reserves the only full rhymes of the poem for the last stanza create an effect that echo the reference in the first stanza to the snake's "notice sudden." The critic underlines the employment of repetition of sound in "narr*ow* Fell*ow* and a "faint hissing of sibilants is detectable in the first three stanzas" (1990, p. 90). The "music" of this poem is marked by Dickinson's employment of consonantal rhymes sharing an n-sound (*seen/On, Corn/Noon, Sun/gone*). She "establishes a pattern into which the first word of the final rhyme-pair (*alone*) fits" (ibid.), but also intensifies the effect of the unexpected final rhyme. This is notably one of the ten poems that were published during Dickinson's lifetime. An unidentified recipient sent it to the *Springfield Daily Republican* and it was published on 14 February 1866 under the title "The Snake". Cristanne Miller points out that "the recipient may have been Susan Dickinson (as the Dickinson Electronic Archive indicates), in which case Emily Dickinson sent her the poem twice" (2016, p. 722). We know that Dickinson became aware of the poem's publication because of a letter she sent to Thomas W. Higginson after she became worried that he would think "she had approved the publication after telling him she 'did not print'" (ibid.). The poet sent him a clipping with the poem on 17 March 1866, saying "it was robbed" (L316) of her.

2.3.3 The ABA Structure

Although Judy Jo Small does not look to exhaust Dickinson's structural strategies by presenting us with categories, the critic identifies three significant strategies that work with rhyme shifts, the last of which can be called the ABA structure. In it, the poem opens "with one kind of rhyme, move[s] to another, and return[s] at last to the original kind" (1990, p. 92). Dickinson employs that in a poem in which the speaker discusses the notion of poetry as a kind of music. The first two stanzas contain full rhymes, the next three only partial rhymes, and the final one full rhymes. This arrangement, Small argues, "reflects the pattern of lyric narration in the poem, rhapsodizing first about a wonderful 'strain' the speaker has heard, then wandering off to a consideration of legends about Eden and its 'better – Melody,' and at last returning to the wonderful 'tune'" (1990, p. 93):

	syllables	beats	rhyme
Better – than Music!	5	2	
For I – who heard it –	5	3	A
I was used – to the Birds – before –	7	4	B
This – was different – 'Twas Translation –	8	4	C
Of all tunes I knew – and more –	7	3	B
'Twasn't contained – like other stanza –	8	4	A
No one could play it – the second time –	9	4	B
But the Composer – perfect Mozart –	9	4	C
Perish with him – that keyless Rhyme!	8	4	B
Children – so – told how Brooks in Eden –[38]	9	5	A
Bubbled a better – melody –	8	4	B(p)
Quaintly infer – Eve's great surrender –	9	4	C
Urging the feet – that would – not – fly –	8	4	B(p)
Children – matured – are wiser – mostly –[39]	9	4	A
Eden – a legend – dimly told –[40]	8	4	B(p)
Eve – and the Anguish – Grandame's story –	9	4	C
But – I was telling a tune – I heard –	9	4	B(p)
Not such a strain – the Church – baptizes –	9	4	A
When the last Saint – goes up the Aisles –	8	4	B(p)
Not such a stanza splits the silence –	9	4	C
When the Redemption strikes her Bells –[41]	8	4	B(p)
Let me not spill – its smallest cadence –[42]	9	4	A
Humming – for promise – when alone –	8	4	B
Humming – until my faint Rehearsal –	9	4	C
Drop into tune – around the Throne –	8	4	B

[38] This line brings "[Children –] assured that [Brooks]" as a variant.
[39] This line brings "[Children –] grown up –" as a variant.
[40] This line brings "[dimly] learned • crooned" as variants.
[41] This line brings "[Redemption] shakes –" as a variant.
[42] This line brings "[not] lose • waste –" as variants.

Small remarks that, although the poem describes a tune that is not "contained – like other stanza," it is "'contained' in stanzas of long meter" (1990, p. 232) and that it is also interesting that the sections that "treat the 'Keyless Rhyme' are rhymed conventionally, while the digression about lost paradisal melodies is rhymed more freely and thus from one vantage point has more claim to be considered 'Keyless,' liberated from the restrictions of conventional 'keys'" (ibid.). While many interpretations can be bestowed upon this clearly deliberate choice, what is interesting for the purpose of this dissertation is the fact that, in a work that exploits the parallel between music and poetry, Dickinson's shifts give her poem a particular sound – the elusive music of her poetry. Furthermore, full rhyme "succeeds here in giving a sense of exhilarated affirmation and of a return, after departure, to a joyful 'tune'" (SMALL, 1990, p. 232).

Having analysed a few examples of what Small meant when she stated that Dickinson's most significant innovation was placed in her treatment of rhyme, one of the questions Chapter 4 looks to answer is if this crucial aspect of Dickinson's "music" has influenced Peter Doherty's structuring of his own rhyme schemes in song lyrics and poems. As this study, endeavoured under the light of Judy Jo Small's seminal book on Dickinson's rhyme, has showed, the poet sought to work her rhyme schemes alongside her meaning to create sound effects that would render her verse "Alive,"[43] as her question to Higginson allows us to affirm that it was one of her main preoccupations. Assuming that oral performance was always in the poet's mind as she wrote her poems, "Better – than Music!" is a good example of a poem in which rhyme works as the poem's structural backbone, establishing a pattern "well suited to the theme of paradise, exile, and return" (SMALL, 1990, p. 94).

Small finishes her analysis of Dickinson's rhyme strategies by stating that, besides the structures she discussed in her book, the poet's "technical daring is in evidence everywhere, and even more dramatic structural disjunctures than those rhyme modulations I have been describing make up a prominent strategy" (1990, p. 100). She reminds us that "not infrequently, [Dickinson] wrenches one portion of a poem into a new shape for special prosodic and semantic purpose" (ibid.). The question that must be asked is: considering pop music's requirements when it comes to formal structure – a verse followed by a bridge and a chorus, always complimented by rhyming pairs –, to what point is it possible for a songwriter to embody in his or her writings Dickinson's poems' "structural backbone", when their music,

[43] In the first letter she even sent to Thomas W. Higginson, on 15 April 1862, Dickinson asked: "Mr Higginson, Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?" (L260).

unlike hers, must fit into pre-conceived standards? Besides the issue regarding adaptation of her verse – the poems which are usually set to music are those in which rhyme is the least disruptive – if I argue here for an understanding of Doherty as having learnt from Dickinson to a point in which one can hear her sentence in his writings, is it possible to say that "the resistance of her structures to categorization, the impossibility of reducing her rhyming procedures to consistent, mechanical rule" (SMALL, 1990, p. 116) are perceptible in his songwriting? If we look at Doherty as engaging with tradition through Dickinson, is he able to capture precisely "the side of her art she imagined in musical terms, as 'Instincts for Dance – a caper part - / An aptitude for Bird –' (P 1046)" (ibid.)? While these are questions I look to develop in Chapter 4, in the next section I address adaptations and remediations of Dickinson's poems by composers in general.

2.4 **Remediations of Dickinson's Poetry by Composers and Songwriters**

Linda Hutcheon has defined adaptations as "inherently 'palimpsestuous' works" which are "haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (2013, p. 6), especially when the person involved in the reception process is aware of those texts. Therefore, while any adaptation as product is an artwork in itself, its condition also implicates an "overt relationship to another work or works" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 6). While Emily Dickinson's oeuvre has inspired poets such as Adrienne Rich (1980) and Annie Finch (2000), her appeal to composers and songwriters was remarkable throughout the twentieth century and remains so in the twenty first. The fact that her poetry comports remediation through musical language so well and so widely inspires the discussion presented throughout this section. If adaptation, as a formal entity, appears as an "announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 7), the choices that mark the process of transcoding from one artform to another (and, in this case, from one medium to another) tell the reader/listener something about how a particular artist in a particular historical context has read and worked with Dickinson. That is, as a process of creation, an adaptation is always the result of a privileged reading of an artwork by another artist. Hutcheon defines this process as being shaped by (re-)interpretation and (re-creation) (Cf. 2013, p. 8). Thus, the process of reception will be marked by the adaptation's inherent intertextuality: "we experience adaptations (*as*

adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 8).

In *Reading in Time*, Cristanne Miller has observed that "for nearly a century, composers have demonstrated their sense of [Dickinson's] poems' musicality by setting them to music." (2012a, p. 38-39). From the 1950s onwards – that is, after Johnson's 1955 publication of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, which made the poet's work more widely available –, the poet's works inspired composers even more often. Such an influence has materialised itself on several levels. While Dickinson's themes and imagery appear in citations, allusions and paraphrases, in certain poems the rhythm and musicality of Dickinsonian verse – derived from a combination between hymnic and balladic forms, as we have seen – also allow for them to be set to music in their entirety. Amongst the musicians that have recently endeavoured to adapt Dickinson's poems is Carla Bruni, who released in 2007 a studio album titled *No Promises* containing Anglophone poems set to music by the French-Italian artist. Three of the tracks are adaptations of Dickinson's poems: "I Felt My Life With Both My Hands" (Fr357), "If You Were Coming in the Fall" (Fr356) and "I Went to Heaven" (Fr577). By turning to those songs, one can identify the songwriter's remediation not simply of the poems themselves, but of her own, particular reading of them, as she adapts poetic language to a musical one, recoding the poems "into a new set of conventions as well as signs" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 16).

Bruni's choice of poems is interesting. "I Felt My Life With Both My Hands" was written circa 1862 and is amongst the poems in which Dickinson's speaker dreads the idea of heaven – others include "What is – 'Paradise' –" (Fr241) and "I never felt at Home - Below – " (Fr437B). Joanne Feit Diehl has approached the poem as underscoring "the distanced objectivity with which the cognitive self may assess the experiential subject" (1996, p. 104). She reads the "necessity for such deliberate scrutiny" on the speaker's features as a sign of a "depersonalization that has already occurred" (1996, p. 104). Referring to Dickinson's refusal to provide her correspondent with a portrait of her likeness, Sarah Blackwod reads the poem as "a poetic reprise of her question to Higginson" (2005, p. 54). If Dickinson asked her friend, referring to her portrait "Could you believe me - without?" (L268), in this poem the speaker asks that question of herself. The metrical structure of "I Felt My Life With Both My Hands" is widely clever. While Dickinson hints at accentual-syllabic regularity in her first stanza – written in common meter – the partial, consonantal rhyme (there / possibler) is already disruptive for a standard hymnal pattern (that the poet uses her neologism as an end-rhyme adds to the oddness of the sound).

In the second stanza, while the speaker talks of turning her being “round and round”, Dickinson maintains the number of beats and syllables, but alters the rhythm of the stanza by shifting to a 8668 /4334 pattern. She reinforces the notion of confusion but echoing the /ound/ sound throughout the stanza (*round and round / sound / pound*). By the third stanza, the balladic character of the poem is confirmed by Dickinson’s maintenance of the number of beats – albeit the fact she shifts the pattern once more to 4433 – and loosening of syllabic control: “I pushed my dimples by, and waited –” has 9 syllables and “If they – twinkled back –” has 5. This last verse also disrupts the iambic rhythm. Dickinson’s dash works as a caesura – one could even consider that the pause replaces a syllable – as “twinkled back” introduces a trochee into the poem. In the final stanza, Dickinson seems tempted to resume the 8686 pattern, but this is disrupted by the third verse’s extra syllable. The speaker seems to flinch away from her own attempt to rejoice in the prospect of Heaven. Rhythmically, the iambic pattern is already disturbed. The former verse’s dash after “That” causes a similar effect to that of the third verse of the third stanza. Had there been no indication of caesura, it would work fine as an iambic verse: (That *wás* a *fór*mer *tíme*). However, the dash pushes the stress to “That”, and the rhythm of the entire line seems off after that, however one chooses to place the stress (the most likely possibility being a dibrach followed by two iambs):

	syllables	beats
I felt my life with both my hands	8	4
To see if it was there –	6	3
I held my spirit to the Glass,	8	4
To prove it possibler –	6	3
I turned my Being round and round	8	4
And paused at every pound	6	3
To ask the Owner’s name –	6	3
For doubt, that I should know the sound –	8	4
I judged my features – jarred my hair –	8	4
I pushed my dimples by, and waited –	9	4
If they – twinkled back –	5	3
Conviction might, of me –	6	3
I told myself, “Take Courage, Friend –	8	4
That – was a former time –	6	3
But we might learn to like the Heaven,	9	4
As well as our Old Home”!	6	3

Bruni’s song tells us something about her particular interpretation of the poem. If adapters are “first interpreters and then creators” (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 18), it appears that Bruni transcodes Dickinson’s uncertainty in the first stanza by whispering the lyrics slowly,

respecting the pauses hinted by the poet's dashes. Once Bruni moves on to the second stanza, her voice gains some confidence. She sings louder and faster as the speaker starts her search, even if she remains filled with uncertainty. The singer adds an appropriate pause after "And paused at every pound" and goes on to sing "To ask the Owner's name –/For doubt, that I should know the sound –" twice, thus transcoding to music the sense of repeated action communicated by those lines. As she moves on to sing the third stanza, Bruni's speaker is even more self-assured as she checks her features on a mirror. The singer's voice sounds almost flirtatious at this point, as she returns to sing the second stanza once more, having turned it into a chorus. As she sings the chorus for the second time, now more comfortable in her search, Bruni hums before moving on to the fourth stanza, now apparently fully aware of herself and sure of her purpose. When Bruni sings "I told myself, "Take Courage, Friend – / That – was a former time –", the listener feels as if some time has elapsed between the uncertain voice that whispered at the beginning of the song and this courageous one, who is ready to face heaven and beyond. Returning to the chorus for the last time, Bruni takes full property of the poem as song lyrics, taking the liberty of adding an extra "round" in the first line. The journey from uncertainty to confidence that Bruni enacts is as much about what the adapted poem said as about her own process of taking ownership of those words. Considering that Dickinson's poems were originally intended for, if not necessarily musical adaptations, at least for oral performances, Bruni captures the relationship between the poet's clever metrical structure and the uncertainty and confusion that mark the speaker's attempts to gauge herself through melody and intonation. Setting "I felt my life with both my hands" to music exemplifies Linda Hutcheon's assessment that a remediation "both limits and opens up new possibilities" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 35). While the recording of the songwriter's reading and interpretation of the poem "shuts the door" (Cf. Fr409) to a myriad of other possible readings for this poem, the song also makes Dickinson's poem accessible to new generations of readers that may have come into contact with her works through Bruni for the first time. Finally, the songwriter's reading and interpretation not only produces a new artwork, but also allows us to return to Dickinson's poem with fresh eyes.

"If You Were Coming in the Fall," the second poem set to music by Bruni, is written in common meter. Stating that the poet writes "some of her greatest poems" (2012a, p. 59) in accentual-syllabic 8686 abcb quatrains, Cristanne Miller addresses the fact that this is one of the poems that demonstrate that Dickinson does not need to employ disruptive metrical patterns – as she does in "I felt my life with both my hands" to imprint "extraordinary force and distinction" (ibid.) into her writing. It is interesting that Dickinson employs the name

"Van Diemen's Land". Miller tells us that "the island was used as a penal colony until 1853", but then it became a "self-governing British colony in 1856" (2016, p. 755) and was renamed Tasmania. Considering that the poem was penned in summer 1862, Dickinson willingly refers to a "country that no longer exists" (ibid.). The poem's steady metrical pattern is reinforced by Dickinson's unwavering usage of iambic rhythm:

	syllables	beats
If you were coming in the Fall,	8	4
I'd brush the Summer by	6	3
With half a smile, and half a spurn,	8	4
As Housewives do, a Fly.	6	3
If I could see you in a year,	8	4
I'd wind the months in balls –	6	3
And put them each in separate Drawers,	8	4
For fear the numbers fuse –	6	3
If only Centuries, delayed,	8	4
I'd count them on my Hand,	6	3
Subtracting, till my fingers dropped	8	4
Into Van Dieman's Land.	6	3
If certain, when this life was out –	8	4
That yours and mine, should be –	6	3
I'd toss it yonder, like a Rind,	8	4
And take Eternity –[44]	6	3
But, now, uncertain of the length	8	4
Of this, that is between,	6	3
It goads me, like the Goblin Bee –	8	4
That will not state – its sting.	6	3

Carla Bruni remediates this poem into a pop, *nouvelle chanson* song that works remarkably well in its new clothes, with the songwriter taking property of the words as she sings them. Here, if one never knew this was an album dedicated to remediations of anglophone poems, the lyrics could easily be mistaken for Bruni's own words. This is something that Caspar Salmon's otherwise harsh review of *No Promises* has recognised, as he conceded that this poem-turned-song "lends itself oddly well to Bruni's sauce" (2007). Salmon elected "If You Were Coming in the Fall" Bruni's most successful effort in the album, classifying this "doo wop piano-and-guitar jam" as "the one highlight of the set" (SALMON, 2007). If adaptations are "extended critical and creative engagements with a particular text" (HUTCHEON, 2007, p. 39), this might be the instance, at least where it comes to Dickinson, in which Bruni produced an artwork that at the same time best converses with

[44] In a variant of the poem this line reads "And taste Eternity".

the original poem and imprints the adapter's stamp into the new artwork. Bruni's election of the third stanza as the chorus seems a wise one, as it both subsumes the strange imagery of the other stanzas and rings catchy in the singer's voice and intonation, an indispensable feature in a pop song.

While "If You Were Coming in the Fall" follows hymn-meter form, the main characteristic of "I Went to Heaven" is the poem's beat-based structure and, like "I felt my life with both my hands", its irregular rhythm. Writing of the "speechlike accents of Dickinson's poetry" (1987, p. 105), Cristanne Miller praises "I Went to Heaven" for its "short sentences, a contraction, and common or rural analogies" that "contribute to the effect of informality" (1987, p. 105). Breaking down the poem's 2-beat ballad line, the critic analysed its "dramatically uneven rhythm" (2012a, p. 71):

	syllables	beats
I went to Heaven –	5	2
'Twas a small Town –	4	2
Lit – with a Ruby –	4	2
Lathed – with Down –	3	2
Stiller – than the fields	5	2
At the full Dew –	4	2
Beautiful – as Pictures –	6	2
No Man drew –	3	2 (3?)
People – like the Moth –	5	2
Of Mechlin – frames –	4	2
Duties – of Gossamer –	6	2
And Eider – names –	4	2
Almost – contented –	5	2
I – could be –	3	2
'Mong such unique	4	2
Society –	4	2

Miller points that the "nuanced shifts in rhythm" that punctuate the poem prevent it from "having a strong rhythmic drive until the last four lines, which function like a rhyming couplet of iambic tetrameter" (2012a, p. 71). The poem's rhythm is iambic in its opening and closing lines ("I wént to Héaven –" and "Mong súch uníque / Socíetý –"), but presents sections with a rising rhythm ("'Twas a smáll Tówn –") and others with falling rhythm ("Béautiful - as Píctures -" and "Dúties - of Góssamer –"). Miller also underlines the fact that some lines "might be read as catalectic with three beats rather than two, especially because of the caesura following the first two syllables: 'Stíller - thán the fíelds' and 'Péople - líke the

Móth –'" (2012a, p. 71-72). While "on the whole this poem resists [the] 'easy' rhythms," which define the ballad to Parker, Miller assesses that "the final 'Society' playfully, almost parodically, elevates the secondary stress of its final 'y' to provide the expected final beat and rhyme" (ibid.). Overall, however, such resistance is "underlined by the mid-lined dashes, interrupting the syntax every few words" (2012a, p. 71-72).

Dickinson's resistance to "easy rhythms" in this heavily descriptive poem as well as its speech-like accents are both recognised and transcoded by Bruni. Firstly, the songwriter refrains from turning one of the stanzas into a chorus, thus distancing herself from pop song conventions and setting this song apart from the other two. While singing, Bruni dutifully adheres to the stress pattern of the poem. Since accentual patterns are more flexible in song lyrics than in poems, the fact the singer is so careful and clear in her enunciation strengthens the bond between poem and song. The fact that "I went to Heaven –" was produced to emphasize Bruni's singing, which is exclusively accompanied by an acoustic guitar throughout the first stanza,[45] also makes this song sound almost lullaby-like, a children's song about going to heaven. The softness of Bruni's voice communicates the same sense of delight that permeates Dickinson's poem as the speaker tries to build a picture of heaven that is suitable for her. Although Bruni sings the final lines to some stanzas twice (No Man drew –/Society –), she only sings the stanzas once, repeating "'Twas a small Town –/Lathed – with Down –" while humming throughout a long acoustic guitar solo that takes up the final minute of the track, as if blowing the main aspects of her imagined heaven into the wind, making them resonate with the strictly instrumental section of the song.

That Carla Bruni successfully adapts these poems into pop ballads is a testament not only to Dickinson's lyrical staying power but to the latent musicality even in her most disruptive verse. In *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds* (2010), Lyndall Gordon recognises a musicality inherent to Dickinson's poems and argues that the appeal of Dickinson to jazz musicians might lay at the liberties she takes with the English language, creating new words to fit her meanings and metrical intentions. As of 2019, the Emily Dickinson Lexicon Website hosts "over 9,275 words and variants found in the collected poems" (EMILY DICKINSON LEXICON WEBSITE, 2019). Recognising Dickinson as an "avid reader" of Shakespeare, Gordon underlines that she "took similar libertines with English grammar" (2010, p. 134), coining words such as "'perfectness' to convey a uniqueness too intractable for standard 'perfection'" (ibid.):

[45] As Bruni moves on to the second stanza, a violin is heard in the background and by the third a soft beat is added.

> In that poem on the impossibility of objective perception (‘Perception of an Object costs’) she transforms the passive voice of the verb ‘is situated’ into an ungrammatical active form, ‘situates’. Each transformation has its rationale. ‘Situates’, like ‘perfectness’, conveys a wilful distance from definition - a disruptive energy crucial to her art. It turns the noun into a verb. (GORDON, 2010, p. 134-135)

Gordon states that research on Shakespeare’s grammar, “in particular his use of a noun as a verb (say, ‘foots it’ for dance), has demonstrated a measurable surge in the brain of his reader or audience” and that if “nouns and verbs may be processed in different regions of our brains,” this would mean that “when the usual connection is challenged a new pathway opens up” (2010, p. 135). The consequence of the unexpected exchange would be a “‘surge’ in the brain” that ‘registers on an electro-encephalogram one sixhundredth of a second after we hear a novelty of transformed grammar” (2010, p. 135). Gordon states that this surge “is said to be a kind of syncopation” and that, in jazz, “the jolt of syncopation interrupts the glide of musical pathways” (ibid.). In that sense, Jane Ira Bloom’s 2017 album *Wild Lines: Improvising Emily Dickinson* would be a good example of how “this rhythm, as vital to jazz as to Dickinson’s start-stop lines, has made her appealing to composers” (ibid.). Gordon states that this also makes Dickinson appealing to pop musicians, citing songwriter Peter Doherty, whose relationship with Dickinson is unpacked and discussed in Chapter 4. The poet’s works have also attracted musical attention in translation. While this is not the scope of this dissertation, it should be noted that in 2017, Brazilian songwriter Cid Campos followed an interesting path in his album *Emily*, setting translations by Augusto de Campos to music. Nevertheless, while pop songwriters have taken notice of the poet in the last two decades, classical composers turned to Dickinson even before Thomas H. Johnson made her works widely available.

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) composed in 1949 a cycle of 12 songs based on Dickinson's poems. It was titled *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Years later, the composer orchestrated eight of these compositions. The most recent rereading of this orchestra version came to life in 2018 in the voice of soprano Lisa Delan, who released the album *A Certain Slant of Light*. The project was initiated in 1949 as Copland “began to compose music for ‘Because I could not stop for Death –’ (Fr479), then worked on a group of three songs, then six” (BAKER, 2003, p. 1). The work was completed in 1950 and the cycle “premiered on May 18, 1950 with the soprano, Alice Howland, and Copland himself as pianist” (ibid.). Dorothy Baker has written of Copland’s adaptation, arguing that he studied Dickinson’s poetry, and “ultimately assumed her poetic voice when he set her lyrics to music” (BAKER,

2003, p. 1). The critic praises the composer's engagement with Dickinson's poetry, underlining that, although Copland "relied on the early and heavily edited editions of her work, yet nonetheless he arrived at a sophisticated understanding of Dickinson's poetry" (BAKER, 2003, p. 3). She evaluates that he "chose poems that challenge the stability of fixed ideas and identify her critical inspection of multiple aspects of a given theme" and that, very early, Copland "identified the intellectual flexibility that characterizes the corpus of her work" (p. 3). In his own words, the composer stated that it was his "hope, nearly a century after these remarkable poems were conceived, to create a musical counterpart to Emily Dickinson's unique personality" (COPLAND, 1989, p. 158).

John Adams also worked with Dickinson's poems in the composition of his *Harmonium* choral symphony (1981). In 1994, British composer Judith Weir created a concerto for 10 instruments titled *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere*, which took the Dickinsonian poem of the same name as thematic inspiration. A year later, she produced *Moon and Stars*, a performance in which a choir of women sang Dickinson's poem "Ah, Moon, and Star!" (Fr262); "Weir was stirred, she said, by Dickinson's fancy of rising to join in the celestial music, wearing a lark's bonnet and a 'Chamois' Silver Boot'" (CUNNINGHAM, 2002). The composer would revisit Dickinson again in 1999. Her *We Are Shadows* (children's choir, SATB choir, orchestra) opens with Dickinson's "What Inn Is This" (Fr100).

In an article published in *The Guardian* in 2002, Valentine Cunningham seeks to answer the question of how Emily Dickinson became "the darling of modern composers," illustrating this assessment with the artists cited in the previous paragraph and listing British composer Simon Holt's remarkable interest in the poet's work:

> Simon Holt, meanwhile, has devoted all his recent major output to Dickinson. Each of the five parts of his sequence The Ribbon of Time reflects on her verse. In the first part, Sunrise' Yellow Noise (1999), high soprano lines push eerily at Dickinson's lines about making a "Bed with Awe" and not letting the "yellow noise" of sunrise interrupt. Part two, the Two Movements for String Quartet (2001), reflects on two lines from the poem I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died (being dead is a favourite Dickinson apprehension). Part four, Clandestiny (2000), is written for soprano and organ, and gathers in 10 Dickinson pieces about pain, separation, despair and wresting grace from Jesus. Part five, Startled Grass (2001), has six sopranos and six altos, armed with handbells, singing yet more presentiments of death.[46] (CUNNINGHAM, 2002)

[46] This is a reference to Dickinson's poem "Presentiment – is that long shadow – on the Lawn –" (Fr487), which Holt has adapted.

Cunningham concludes that it is the "the rich musicality of her address to modernist preoccupations" that makes Dickinson so particularly appealing to composers. That "makes her wonderfully adaptable, to music of all kinds" (CUNNINGHAM, 2002). While the "bareness, spareness and rhythmic variety" of her verse make it especially attractive to "modernists, minimalists and musical atonalists," the journalist reports that "madrigals, rags, and even sub-Wagnerianisms" have been made in her name (CUNNINGHAM, 2002). Cunningham points out that throughout her oeuvre, Dickinson presents her compositional experience as predominantly musical and reminds us of the strong influence of hymnody in the context of mid-nineteenth-century America. Although Cunningham places excessive weight on hymnal influences in Dickinson's writing, the journalist seems to capture the in-between territory in which the poet wrote her poetry. As we have seen, she explores hymnaic and balladic structures to fashion her own poetic style, shifting (and combining) structures from one poem to another to fit specific purposes. The musicality of Dickinson's poems is, to a point, inherent to the genres of lyric poetry she masterfully explored throughout her active years as a writer. Nevertheless, the aesthetics of nineteenth-century American poetics does not explain the poet's staying power and undeniable appeal to musicians. This, I argue, is an effect of both the poet's concerns with the aural effects of poetry – something her contemporaries would share – and of Dickinsonian thought (a concept I will explore in Chapter 4), defined by her constant reworking of poems as a mean to evade the constrictions of her own time.

3 **PETER DOHERTY AND POETRY**

3.1 **Peter Doherty's History with Poetry: Doherty as a Poet-Turned-Musician**

Before he became internationally famous as a musician and branded as a "rock star", Peter Doherty was a poet. Published in 2007, *The Books of Albion* are a collection of his diary entries from February 1999 to June 2007, mapping out not only his rise to fame, but the transition from recognising himself primarily as a poet to scribbling down setlists and tour diaries illustrated by polaroids of life on the road and news pieces about him. Doherty's 1999 entries include reports of his engagements as an active member of poetry nights in London, film reviews and musings on Sidney James and Tony Hancock. Although references to The Libertines are aplenty, those portray the band as an activity as important and time-consuming as those related to his career as a poet. At age 19, when the entries begin, Doherty reveals a considerable history with poetry that had originated from his voraciousness as a reader. When describing her son in her 2006 book, Jacqueline Doherty often highlighted his lifelong love for reading and writing, stating that he "writes in his journal every day and has done since he was a child" (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 26) and that "wherever he is, you can be sure that a pen or pencil and definitely a book won't be very far away" (ibid.). Discussing his childhood, she stated that "from an early age, Peter didn't need a lot of sleep and used to read late into the night. As a small child, he devoured books at an alarming rate" (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 109). Peter Doherty, Snr also described how his son became increasingly more interested in literature as he entered his teenage years and that throughout that time they would "go to the local auction and buy shed-loads of books and, once he'd taken what he wanted, he would sell the remainder at the sale" (DOHERTY SNR apud. J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 253). Among his favourite authors his parents cite Oscar Wilde (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 253) and George Orwell (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 116)[47], writers whose works he would allude to in his song lyrics years later.

Discussing the effect literature and music had on him while growing up, Doherty pointed those artforms as escape routes away from reality. Describing his childhood spent in

[47] Doherty has spoken of his admiration for Orwell, citing *Nineteen Eight-Four*, *Keep The Aspidistras Flying* and *Down and Out in Paris and London* as his favourites: "I liked the idea of this man in the 1940's coming out from behind his desk and going out into the world, I found that appealing". (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 239)

army barracks as "stifling" and "intimidating" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 239), Doherty found himself a different mind space in the arts. He has stated that "the first poetry [he] liked was the war poets" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 239), highlighting Wilfred Owen's work. Wishing to leave his parents' home at age 16, Doherty described himself as "a greyhound out of a trap" (ibid). He moved to London in September 1997 to study English at Queen Mary and Westfield University (Cf. J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 4), although he made it clear to his mother he had no wish to pursue his degree, explaining that he "would like to earn some money and find himself" (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 117). Before moving to London, Doherty had already become friends with Carl Barât, who then attended Brunel University and was friends with Doherty's older sister AmyJo. According to Barât, they wrote the song that would later be titled "The Good Old Days" and released in *Up the Bracket* (2002) on the day they met, so when Doherty moved to the city, they were eager to work on the band and moved together to a flat in Camden (Cf. BARÂT, 2010, p. 12).

As he moved to London to attend Queen Mary, Doherty sought to become involved with independent poetry groups. He had already won a poetry competition in 1996 for what he would later call "a crap poem about smoking" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 242) and soon became engrossed in London's literary events. Doherty used to run a poetry night at The Foundry on Old Street and, as part of an exchange promoted and financed by the Arts Council, the artists involved in his "Arcadia" nights travelled to Russia for a one week residency at The Dom, a club that had a similar project, while Russian artists travelled to London (Cf. DOHERTY, 2013, p. 242-243). The fact that Carl Barât also took part in the performance poetry nights at The Foundry[48] by playing the piano is a testament to how much his musical and poetic projects were intertwined in Doherty's mind. The very name of the band, The Libertines, was inspired by the Marquis de Sade's *Lust of the Libertine*, and many of the band's songs pack literary or poetic references. At this point, both projects were equally important to him and, while his paternal grandmother believed he should focus on poetry[49], his family were overall supportive of both activities, with his father closely following media reports on The Libertines once they became famous (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 255).

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[48] Carl Barât has written of the nights at The Foundry in his memoir: "I first felt plugged in to the city at a place called the Foundry on Old Street. They're knocking it down now to build a grand hotel or something, to cash in on the area's cool – Shoreditch surgically removing its own heart – but Peter used to run a night there called Arcadia, a performance poetry thing which he used to revel in. I'd come along and play the piano very badly, but it was art so the quality of the performance didn't really matter. We'd get free Guinness and we'd host a raffle to make money. I think the most auspicious prize we gave away was half a gram of speed and a Charles Manson record, but it always made us a couple of bob for a few beers and a fine breakfast." (BARÂT, 2010, p. 8)

[49] "Nanny London has always said that Peter should give up his music and concentrate on his poetry." (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 118)

On his turn, Doherty seemed very attached to his career as a poet in the late 1990s and showed no signs he intended to give it up for the band. In the earliest entries of his 1999 journal, Doherty alternates between excited descriptions of some of his engagements with a group called the Paradigm Poets and reports of tensions within The Libertines: “The Albion is still on course, though the route is annoyingly prone to be more akin to a Sid James Mystery Tour than a plain-sailing maiden voyage. Tension on ship as ever, but more body mass to absorb & ease it” (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 4). In that same entry, Doherty states a two-track demo had recently been recorded by the band and that “Instruments are being bought, new songs being written” (ibid.). In the entries, he always looks at both of his careers while evaluating his course of action. Discussing who should be the band’s “ideal frontman”, Doherty asserts himself in that role as the songs were “mostly written with the blood of my heart” (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 4). He relents, however, and admits to “relish the opportunity of watching Steve perform live from close quarters” (ibid.), especially as he had “plenty of stage to myself with the performance poetry malarkey, which is providing a great deal of interest at the moment” (ibid.). In the following page, Doherty complains about his current living conditions. At that time, he was sharing a flat with Carl Barât in Camden and he complains about his bandmate: “without any clue as to the basics of self-sufficiency, Carlos is a slight burden - but still richly talented and quite noble old stick who goes well out of his way not to prise anything out of my weak grasp” (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 5). He thus concludes he requires “a cheap, spacious room somewhere central” (ibid.), proceeding to sketch out a publication:

> POET, YOUNG & BUSY, SEEKS
> CHEAP, SPACIOUS ROOMS
> SOMEWHERE CENTRAL/WEST/NORTH
> LONDON. EXCELLENT REFERENCES
> AVAILABLE.
> (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 5)

While Doherty is clearly being playful, the predication of himself as “poet” signals that his poetry not only occupied his mind as much as his band, but also defined his main professional occupation – and indeed, his main subjective identity – at that point. On that same page, he considers a newspaper ad for “story readers to synopsize books at home” (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 6) and produces short film reviews. Considering that at this point, two years after the creation of the band, Doherty and Barât had yet to attract the attention of record labels and to amass a consistent fanbase, it seems that while he had a vision of what he expected to achieve as a poet and saw a means to do so, his plans to develop The Libertines

into the type of band he envisioned were not yet clear. In another entry from early 1999 in *The Books of Albion,*, Doherty voices what his dreams with the band were, but while he makes clear he aimed to achieve a level of fame and adoration paramount to that of the bands he loved – The Smiths and The Stone Roses – and mentions that they had produced a demo and were about to play a few gigs, there is no clear plan on how to achieve what remains a far-fetched idealised fantasy at this point:

> I want to create a band that people will be sorry to miss, and obliged to adore. The Smiths had a special power. As did the Roses, The Jam and, according to taste, many others. Something very English - imagine having melody, range, emotion, something to say and wear that attracts, interests and informs even instructs those that buy your records & mouth your words. I want to have a crack before I outgrow this youthful urge to be worshipped, this need to fill a ladder on English Pop's evolutionary chart. I have a band (almost) and the spirit of the Albion enthuses it. A not quite ideal C.D has been cut, and a live performance seems fairly imminent. I want somebody, somewhere to feel it in his best interest to defend himself (at the threat of violence) in his belief that 'The Libertines' (or whatever we call ourselves) are perfection & beauty personified. (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 8)

This paragraph might help us gain a better understanding of what Doherty meant in his 2016 *Poetry Corner Paris* interview, in which he addressed the reasons that led him to draw away from performance poetry to dedicate himself more thoroughly to the band. He declared that one of the main reasons that made music prevail was that, as a career, it was better suited to providing him with fame and success, thus fulfilling the “weird craving for fame” (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 52) he had when he was young. What remains consistent at this point – between his two possible careers – is Doherty’s anxiety to become famous. While he was still far from achieving that with The Libertines in 1999, it appears he still believed the band was his better chance to reach the level of fame he then desired.

Looking back to the early days of The Libertines in 2019, he commented on how he and Barât “were so weird about fame, we’d read reviews and we’d get the name and address of the people who’d give us bad reviews and we’d go see them” (TAGGART; DOHERTY, 2019). It was in the same year of the diary entries cited above, in 18 September 1999, that the *NME* reviewed a Libertines concert for the first time, signalling a relevant, if small, development for the band. After seeing they play at the Bull & Gate in Kentish Town, Roger Morton opens his review by describing how “Libertines’ puppy-eyed frontman Pete” (MORTON, 1999, p. 33) cast his “poetry pearls among the meagre but appreciative onlookers with a nonchalance that belies his youth” (MORTON, 1999, p. 33). The journalist describes the band as “fresh, wry, flowery and savage” (MORTON, 1999, p. 33), mentioning that their name was inspired by the Marquis de Sade’s work. The fact Morton defines The Libertines’

sound as “all light and skiffley” (MORTON, 1999, p. 33) signals that this review predates Pootschi’s plans for the band. Presumably, then, besides the fact that this positive review assured Morton was not the kind of reviewer Doherty and Barât would chase after, this signals that Doherty must have believed it possible to achieve the type of fame he desired by playing songs he wrote in the way he envisioned them: in Morton’s words, “light and skiffley”. Needless to say, the two bands Doherty mentions in his journal – The Smiths and The Stone Roses – although loosely classified as rock bands, do not subscribe to the mood or aesthetics of the type of chaotic punk brand of rock’n’roll that would later be associated with The Libertines. My point is that in the same way Doherty, many years later, revealed that the type of career he was building with performance poetry ultimately bored and bothered him (while remaining as the only way he thought he could make a living as a poet), the same brand of concerns were attached to achieving success with The Libertines.

If performance poetry seemed “artificial” (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 52) to Doherty while “just poetry pure and simple on a page” (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 52) appeared to be his ideal, and the demands of the music industry would soon arise tension within the band, I believe that the question is not the medium and art form which Doherty channels his writing into, but rather the demands and expectations that come attached to any given commitment with materialisations of fame and success (a specific type of performance demanded or expected from outside forces) as opposed to the artist’s idealisation of them (“a youthful urge to be worshipped”). Although Doherty justifies his choice of musical career over his poetic one on the basis of what could provide him with a stronger fulfilment of his yearning for fame, I believe that while this must have played a relevant part in his choice, the fact remains that performance poetry disappointed him earlier than music did – he had been working on it for longer, and in a more independent fashion – early in his career (circa 1999-2000), he still believed there was room to achieve success with the band without compromising its original identity[50].

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[50] I reckon this is part of the constant contradiction that permeated Doherty’s artistic project, which he identified in a 2013 interview to Nina Antonia: “I seem to have spent a lot of my creative time contradicting myself, searching for liberty whilst imprisoning myself” (ANTONIA; DOHERTY, 2013, p. 240). In the same interview, he also subsumed the tension between idealisation and concretisation that defines his relationship with fame:

N – *Was it difficult, the adjustment to fame?*
P: I was living it already in my head so I was prepared for it… but it was a fantasy. All that happened was reality became a fantasy that I’d had. That we’d imagined, dreamed of late at night, talked about, conspired over, through the songs that happened. It’s a strange business becoming a public figure. By signing a record contract, by putting yourself in someone else’s hands, you immediately cease the way of life that created those beautiful songs. There’s only so much time you’ve got with that original spirit before, by necessity, you change. I could see it happening, I could feel it happening, that’s why I got out, that’s what happened with The Libertines… they

Turning back to his 1999 diary entries to map out Doherty's transition from poet to fulltime musician, throughout the year, he continues to fill the pages of his journals with lyrics to The Libertines' songs and some of his own poems. In an entry added on the last day of February 1999, he celebrates that his poems received "cheers" and "cries of delight" at The Foundry (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 20) while others track the growing volume of activities for the band as they perform live and record demos. The journals also include citations of excerpts by Truman Capote's "A Diamond Guitar" (p. 57) and DH Lawrence's *Phoenix II* (p. 60). There is an abrupt cut to early 2002 as one notebook ends and a much later one starts. The shift between Doherty's earlier style and the one found in these pages is glaring. Now there are several references to recording sessions, possible track lists for The Libertines' debut album and life on the road. As the entries take place after The Libertines were signed by Rough Trade, the band had now become Doherty's main concern and occupation. Soon the entries begin to reflect tensions within the band and the toll his relationship with the industry took on Doherty. There are no more references to poetry nights and as he suffered with the effects of heroin withdrawal during a visit to his parents' home in Germany, the musician scribbled down: "No poet am I now, lost for mystery & romance, pale in the short air" (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 94). Doherty's 2002 diaries often express his sense of estrangement from the world around him:

> Scraps of identity, a warped & oppressive system that was sidestepped, and I spiralled untangled embracing rushing air & new sensations, fears & opportunities for the rampant imagination. Alone again or in a crowd, in the heart of London or in a bed in Bilbao. Scaling creaking wobbly old metal pipes up the side of the 'Empress of Russia' pub (now a fish restaurant) a massive old empty building near sadler wells that we squatted awhile & had mashed up nights in, ever a gig of sorts... flying goggles & cranky guitars. (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 97).

Most of Doherty's following journals are taken up by rants on his relationship with Barât as he was removed from the band and then reunited with The Libertines. Soon there are also entries about his new group, Babyshambles (formed in 2003). Doherty's relationship with substance abuse also begins to appear in several entries around this time, as the artist tries to conciliate his ongoing struggle with addiction with the ideals that shaped his artistic project:

> Wait for what?

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were quite happy to live in a way I couldn't, so they edged me out and tried to carry it on for as long as they could. (ANTONIA; DOHERTY, 2013, p. 240)

> 'I don't know'
>
> Still death hounds the life out of many a young 'un. I'm strung up useless now in the inner circle of my own conspiracy. Heroin & crack bind my ankles & scrub my back & my mattress my magic carpet whisking me into Arcady, that warm enchanted soft forbidden hiss I'll be punished for all eternity all for 1/2 an hour of exceptional liberty, laying along side the arcadian wench that never forsook me not for all the impotence in hell nor all the dreary drunken deeds that the well-meaning wideboy wasted love rarest hours with Abandon! It rails me, senseless. (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 108)

An entry dated 10 September 2003, written when Doherty was imprisoned for the first time (for burgling Carl Barât's flat), describes some of his cellmates and the dynamics of his relationship with them. At this point, the British tabloid media had already begun framing him as a problematic rock star:

> Radio blaring all night. someones banging on the cell door this morning, 'Doherty, you're famous mate,' passing the Sun through the door to show me the 'jail for junkie rocker' snippet. Dfs, bacons, swinging livers, yardies, rudeboys, irons, bitches, sirens, 23-hour bang-ups. bollocks. (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 101)

Public opinion regarding Doherty leaned towards favouring this view of him, especially after 2005, when he became widely known in Britain and abroad for his relationship with a famous model. Soon, album reviews focused more on his perceived rock'n'roll persona than on the music itself, which clearly frustrated him. Throughout *The Books of Albion* there are several newspaper clippings of headlines such as "Junkie Pete", "Addict Pete" as well as others related to his then girlfriend, suggesting he not only kept track of how he was being portrayed by the media, but also that he was bothered enough to keep those and allow them to be published alongside his journal entries. Although this is a topic I have already discussed in Chapter 1, I believe it is interesting to turn back to it now as we trace back Doherty's relationship with poetry and literature, and how some side effects of his successful career in music did not allow for most of the greater public to identify the artist behind the celebrity.

The grand irony in Doherty's tabloid persona is that The Libertines' success among their fanbase was widely due to their literary and cultural references, as well as the fact they were a very approachable band (Cf. BEAUMONT, 2004). As Alex Hannaford has observed, the band's character was noted and highlighted by a considerable part of the musical press, but not necessarily by the more-widely read tabloids: "reviewers were beginning to grasp Pete and Carl's concepts of Albion and Arcadia as well. Journalist Betty Clarke said, 'The Smiths and Blur can both take a sizeable chunk of Albion as their own – but rarely has such literacy

looked so cool'" (HANNAFORD, 2006, pp. 118-9). This is not to say that Doherty's literary leanings were not perceived at all, as around 2005 he slowly began to engage with poetry events again. In 2004, he was interviewed by Kirsty Wark on BBC's *Newsnight* and not only had the opportunity to speak about his literary interests, but was also asked by his host to perform one of his poems (which would later be referred to as "The Bow Poem").

In an interview for the *East London Advertiser* titled "Pete the Poet" – a clipping of which he attached to one of the pages of his diaries – Doherty talks to a journalist who seems somewhat surprised when she met the man behind the tabloid character. She writes: "Despite his rock and roll media image, the musician describes himself as 'bookish'" (SMITH apud. DOHERTY, 2007, p. 222). Doherty goes on to talk to Smith about his GCSE's and A levels, besides mentioning the poetry competition he won at age 16. He also discusses some of his favourite novelists and poets: "At 13, I was reading Orwell – *1984*, and *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Then I read poets: Suskind, Dickinson, and later on Verlaine and Baudelaire" (ibid.). Doherty seems very keen on deconstructing the idea the journalist appeared to have about him, also mentioning he worked at East Side Books on Brick Lane before The Libertines got a record deal and that "these days [he] visits Spitalfields market to find new titles" (ibid.). Doherty even declares that "music has never been number one, I'm mostly into words and hats" (ibid.). When Smith asks him if he had ever considered being a novelist, "his eyes light up for the first time in our 45-minute conversation" (SMITH apud. DOHERTY, 2007, p. 222). Doherty replied that he thought about it "every day"[51] and that "writing and music thrive off each other, they goad each other along, they make something complete" (ibid.). By the end of the interview, Smith asks the songwriter if he "ever wishes he could go back to being a normal person" (ibid.) to which he argues that we has, in fact, a normal person and that

> You can't touch fame, it doesn't really exist outside you and the money. It's a funny old game. I am part of celebrity culture, but I am also part of a hospital waiting list. And to the people who are worried about me being a bad role model for young people – why do media only focus on the drugs then? (SMITH apud. DOHERTY, 2007, p. 222)

It seems significant that the subhead of the article says "Jessica Smith discovers a polite and sensitive side to Pete Doherty in an exclusive interview with the junkie rock star" (SMITH apud. DOHERTY, 2007, p. 222). While the piece apparently aims to showcase

[51] *The Books of Albion* include some chapters of an unfinished novel Doherty was then writing.

Doherty's "polite and sensitive side", the way that sentence is phrased implies that such a side would necessarily be at odds with the overall view on the artist. This is reinforced, of course, by using the epithet "the junkie rock star" to refer to him. Smith starts her article by reporting that she told Doherty she had been "nervous" about interviewing him after hearing he had punched a *Radio One* reporter. A few paragraphs later, Doherty tells her he was "not really giving interviews at the moment" as "the nationals only care about the drugs" (SMITH apud. DOHERTY, 2007, p. 222).

While the epithet "the junkie rock star" is obviously insulting due to the derogatory term used to refer to addiction, Doherty has also declared he finds the term "rock star" to be offensive (Cf. CHANNEL 4 NEWS, 2016). Regardless of his opinion, after The Libertines' rise to fame, it has often been used in the press to describe him. When describing particularly chaotic Babyshambles or The Libertines gigs, journalists would often praise Doherty's performance as being "very rock'n'roll". This review, published on the *NME* in 8 October 2005 is an example of that:

> It all ends with a stage invasion during "Wolfman," in which Pete crawls around on the floor, is hugged by a succession of bouncer-dodging fans, and rips through the venue's curfew, not finishing their set until 11.30pm, when the house lights are up and the band are all but obscured by the bouncers lined up on the stage. It's totally rock'n'roll. There's still a real magic about it, and you still find yourself rooting for Pete. (NEEDHAM, 2005, p. 34)

Doherty has spoken of his discomfort in relation to the workings of the music industry. Besides having bitterly stated that he agreed to reunite with The Libertines in 2014 for financial reasons and that doing so was "completely in the spirit of the band" as they had once signed to Rough Trade "purely for the money", concluding that "it's a fucking horrorshow, it just happens to be amazing rock 'n' roll music" (WILKINSON, 2014, p. 51-52), he has also stated that for an artist to succeed he must necessarily abdicate from his original ideals. In Doherty's case, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, The Libertines had to conform to the style and attitude that were successful in the early noughties to get signed. This compliance meant that they would become a rock band and that Doherty would have to adhere to a façade he often seemed at odds with in the years to come. In a 2017 interview for *Q Magazine*, Doherty expressed his scepticism towards the industry. He veers away from the point that was being made in the interview, rather circling around the idea that all successful artists, ultimately, "become of value to the thing you're against, labels, agencies, but you've taken the money, so

you're used" (PATTERSON, 2017, p. 40). In an introduction to a 2002 interview with The Libertines, the *NME* clearly lays out the ground rules for success as a musician. The fact that music is far from being the main ingredient does not seem to be lost on the band, who, according to the interviewer, provide him with enough of "the talk that goes with the walk" to spike the interest of the magazine's readers:

> What do we look for in our stars? The best ones come from disadvantaged or damaged backgrounds, are a bit weird and have done something brilliant that makes them stand out. They try harder, take bigger risks and put up with more knockbacks. This is now we like our stars to be, and for the most part, this is ow The Libertines are. Musically, they may turn out to be one of the best bands we have, or, in fact, one of the worst. Their music is a bit like that (more of which later). But of course, being a pop star isn't about the music. It's the other stuff that makes The Libertines worth our attention – their attitude image and reference points; the talk that goes with the walk. This, The Libertines have in spades. And if they sometimes confuse their fact with their fiction, right now this can only help them. (DAVIS, 2010, p. 38)

In an interview ahead of a show The Libertines were playing as part of the Love Music Hate Racism project in 2004, Doherty was asked why he felt it was important for the band to perform that gig. One should bear in mind this happened at the height of both The Libertines' success and of the turmoil within the band. Doherty answered by stressing the contrast between his earliest intentions when forming the band and the place he now occupied: "There's a point you reach before you're perverted and tainted by all the things that drag you into the music business, like avarice or a lust for fame. The original reason why I started was some feeling of community, equality, wanting to fight for things you believe in" (WHAITE; DOHERTY, 2004). This identity crisis between the way Doherty looked at himself as an artist and the commercial front that made him famous worldwide resulted in a varied, at times conflicting, musical output. If he set out with Albion as a centre to his artist project, it soon came to encompass a blatant anger and resentment towards the many ramifications of The Libertines rise and fall: the industry, reckless managers, a sense of betrayal, and drug abuse. While The Libertines' discography encompasses songs that were written or rewritten to fit the expectations around the band, Doherty has gradually dared to give heed to his earliest, most poetic leanings in music, veering away from his rock'n'roll stage persona and even mocking it in his most Dickinsonian album, *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres* (2019). In a late 2005 entry to his diary, Doherty muses on his anxieties in relation to his own position as an artist. It should be noted that this was a time Doherty was receiving an overwhelming amount of media attention:

> Must I draw from it all the very nourishment for my moral life? Whose morality denies me? for my own sake – because they have the power to cut off my head it feels like – I must become a hero to organize my life & obtain from it what they deny me.
>
> If I live, in order to continue to live with myself I must have more talent than the most exquisite poet.
>
> These people can only put up with the tamed heroes - they don't know about heroism. (DOHERTY, 2007, p. 232)

Below that entry, Doherty attached a poster that reads "Ireland's Writers". It is illustrated with photographs of James Joyce, Thomas Moore, J.M. Synge, Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Swift, Patrick Kavanagh, Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, W.B. Yeats, G.B. Shaw, Bram Stoker and Samuel Beckett. In the mid-section of the poster, Doherty glued his own photograph and wrote down his name. Considered alongside the written entry on that page, this seems to allude to Doherty's dissatisfaction in relation to the current state of his career, showing he craved for literary recognition as well as a musical one. And, significantly, he marks this craving by aligning himself with Irish writers, a gesture that perhaps shows an urge to correct and reconstruct England and Englishness in his on-going fabrication of a different Albion. Irishness is in many (historical and cultural) senses a mark of otherness in an English context, even in the contemporary context of Brexit[52]. By returning to Albion under the somewhat marginal position of writers from Ierne/Éire, Doherty marks this return as one of constant alteration.

It is my perception that Doherty channelled into his songs the main questions that preoccupied him as a poet. He wrote the words to what would later become the song "Albion" when he was 16 in the form of a poem. That song, which would go on to become one of his most popular tunes amongst fans and a testament to his ability as a lyricist, was born out of a poetic work. If we take England and Englishness as a recurring question that orients most of

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[52]*Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres'* debut album (2019) was recorded in Étretat, France, but originally released in England. The LP's back cover reports that the album was "made in the EU". This information thus reads like a statement of the band's position in the Brexit controversy. Doherty has said in an interview that he has "got this horrible, creeping feeling like in *Watership Down* when the fields start to turn black, because of all the propaganda that we're getting fed about Brexit" (LOUGHREY, 2019). He expresses his disappointment in the British people in general – "I don't believe that this great British nation is capable of doing that to itself" (LOUGHREY, 2019) – and states that leaving the European Union would be particularly detrimental to The Puta Madres: "And destroying my band in the process, because I'm the only British passport holder in the band" (LOUGHREY, 2019). The back cover of *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres* lists the name of each band member, followed by the instruments they play in the record and the flag of the country they are originally from. Alongside Doherty's name, there is a flag which is made up of half a Union Jack and half an Irish tricolour. This, I reckon, not only reaffirms his rejection of Brexit, but reaffirms the question of Irish otherness in his *oeuvre*, one that might be of interest to other researchers that come to develop studies on Doherty's dialogues with literature.

Doherty's musical output, it is interesting to consider the way in which many of the poets he read helped him forge his take on England. It is also remarkable to look at the role Emily Dickinson plays in this, not thematising Englishness itself but offering Doherty philosophical tools to think about his question. If mortality and an uncertainty in relation to the Christian faith in which she was raised appear as some of the themes that permeate Dickinson's *oeuvre*, it is interesting that Albion occupies a similar place in Doherty, who describes the search for this place as a sort of spiritual journey:

> N: *You are a big aficionado of W.B. Yeats – You mentioned his poetry as referencing something akin to Blake's Albion, a quasi-mystical England?*
> P: I can't not be interested in anything to do with a W.B. Yeats' poem… I know it's been said before, but it is so richly evocative. It gets me every time. 'Slouching towards Bethlehem'… crawling towards Albion. Each one of us is on our own spiritual journey. (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 246)

The reference to Yeats – whose "The Second Coming" (1919/1920), directly quoted by Doherty above, was intertwined with the war and the Irish self-rule question – opens interesting critical transits in our reading of Doherty. Is the English poet and songwriter questioning and decentring his Albion in this reference? Is the beast that slouches towards Bethlehem in Yeats – probably a marker of the end of Empires and, specifically, of British rule in Ireland – analogously marching towards Doherty's Albion? To answer these questions is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, whatever our answers are, what is of the utmost importance to this study is that most of the poets Doherty mentions in interviews and even alludes to in his songs provide him with themes and images he adheres to and references in his works, opening up gaps of indecision, ambiguity and polyvalence.

As it concerns this dissertation, this constant polyvalent equivocation is an operation that Doherty learns from Dickinson, an American poet with no great concern for England other than it being the home of some of her favourite writers, one of the few women writers Doherty ever cites as an inspiration and certainly the main one. If other writers serve as entry points to ambivalence, I propose that Dickinson provides him with a compositional method, even if unbeknownst to him, which makes her otherness the dominant mode of writing and singing that Doherty incorporates through his "alteritist reading" of tradition, as I will propose in this chapter (3.3). I unpack and discuss the Doherty-Dickinson question in Chapter 4, but before taking on this task, and after the following considerations in regard to a methodology of reading Doherty's lyrics (3.2), this chapter will trace some of the references other than to

Dickinson that Doherty makes in his oeuvre in order to elicit future research, and, at the same time, in order to highlight how literature and music are interwoven in his artistic projects.

3.2 **Good Songs, Good Poems? Reading Peter Doherty's Lyrics**

In "Letra de música" (2006), Brazilian poet and songwriter Antonio Cicero approaches the relationship between poetry and music and, more specifically, the one between poems and song lyrics. As a poet who has had many of his works set to music and who has written verse specifically designed to work as lyrics, Cicero explores in this text a myriad of approaches to the age-old discussion around lyrics being considered to be poetry or not. While he considers some aspects of the discussion tiring and pointless, explaining that much of the concern around this is a matter of artistic status rather than a preoccupation with form or aesthetic experience, he still looks to explore the question: "are song lyrics poems?" by experimenting with reformulations of it. In his first attempt, Cicero comes up with "Are song lyrics good poems?" (CICERO, 2006, p. 12). However, he disregards this as an "insufficiently precise question as, from the modal standpoint, it could be inquiring two different things", namely: "(1) if song lyrics are necessarily good poems" and "(2) if song lyrics could possibly be good poems" (CICERO, 2006, p. 12). While the answer to the first question must obviously be a negative, as "no poem is necessarily a good poem, no text is necessarily a good poem, therefore no song lyrics are necessarily a good poem", he shifts to a different question: "are good song lyrics necessarily a good poem?" (CICERO, 2006,p. 12). This question brings us nearer to the point that interests me in this section. Considering that this is obviously a matter that can only undergo a subjective evaluation, could one say that an accomplished piece by a songwriter will necessarily work well as a standalone poem? Cicero believes that this is not the case, asserting that one often is moved by the lyrics to a song when they are being sung, but that the sensation is not reprised when reading it on a page, with no musical accompaniment. This is due to the fact, he explains, that while a poem is an autotelic object, even when we consider the element of performance, the lyrics to a song are necessarily heterotelic due to the fact that they constitute only one of the elements necessary to composing the full artwork, that is, a song: "in order for us to consider it good, it is necessary and sufficient that it contributes to the musical work it is a part of to be good; in other words, if the lyrics work to make a good song, they are good, even if unreadable" (CICERO, 2006, p.

12). To Cicero, the lyrics remain good even if they cannot work as a standalone poem on the page because they play out a specific role: “it can be unreadable because, to structure itself, to acquire a certain colour, to emphasise the right sounds or words, it depends on the melody, the harmony, the rhythm, the tone of the song with which it is associated” (ibid.). This is very much in tune with Doherty’s assertion that his process of composing poems and that of composing lyrics are very different, with the latter one always taking place with the accompaniment of an acoustic guitar (Cf. ATTISSO, 2016, p. 53).

Turning to his second question (if song lyrics could possibly be good poems), Cicero concludes that the answer is definitely a positive one. He illustrates his assertion by mentioning that the lyric poems of Ancient Greece are, themselves, songs that, as we know, not only work well as standalone poems but are considered to be great ones. Ultimately, he says, “each case must be approached individually” (CICERO, 2006, p. 12). As I have discussed in Chapter 2, Emily Dickinson partook in a tradition of the lyric that always judged it in relation to the ear – be it because poetry was always conceived considering its vocal performance, be it due to the lyric’s close relationship with the hymn and the ballad. Here, I look to establish that, in a similar way, Doherty’s song lyrics – although heterotelic pieces that do not always necessarily work well as standalone poems – should always be read under the light of the composer’s history with poetry not only as a reader, but also as a writer/performer. If not as poems *per se*, his lyrics should be approached as literary works on their own right, as they establish a continuous and elaborate dialogue with the anglophone tradition in several ways and instances, with Doherty as a competent interlocutor to other poets, novelists and playwrights and an artist who updates and appropriates literary questions. In the following section, I am going to dissect some of Doherty’s main literary relationships and the way those appear in his songs, highlighting authors and questions that orient him as an artist. I will purposefully evade any major analysis of his relationship with Dickinson at this point as that is addressed and unpacked in Chapter 4.

3.3 **Poetry in Doherty’s Songwriting: References, Influences, Citations**

When Peter Doherty formed The Libertines with Carl Barât in 1997, he had already authored several poems, including “Albion”, which would later become one of his most celebrated songs (its title was also considered when they were trying to define the band’s

name). Doherty was a seasoned reader with a particular interest in England and Ireland that stretched from mystical Albion to kitchen sink realism. Doherty would imbibe his lyrics with allusions to writers that stretched from highbrow canonical literature as Oscar Wilde and George Orwell to references to comedy greats, with several nods to Ray Galton and Alan Simpson's *Hancock's Half Hour*. Asked in an interview what Englishness meant to him, Doherty replied:

> It's always a contradiction. I don't feel myself to be representative of a general feeling of Englishness. I'm interested in William Blake, but there are less spiritual, more practical people like Galton and Simpson, and Joe Orton, who were interested in the fineries of everyday dialogue and puns. In the same way that I immersed myself in The Smiths, I did the same with a lot of aspects of English culture. I was obsessed with certain writers, certain styles of film. Those kitchen sink films, like *Billy Liar*, hit me right in the heart. I suppose I did live inside those films for want of a better place to be. The films I watched were about a pride, a dignity and a respect for people who you feel you belong with - a community and a mutual respect. (WHAITE; DOHERTY, 2004)

It is that contradiction that appears to fuel Doherty's writings about England. Although that interview came somewhat early in his career, England has remained Doherty's greatest theme, one he has captured from different angles and on different takes, the most recent one appearing on his 2019 album *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres*, thematising the Brexit[53] turmoil and nodding at the supposedly traditional British values that were instrumentalised by the Leave campaign. In "Lamentable Ballad of Gascony Avenue", the songwriter addresses current themes such as austerity and gentrification, as he half speaks and half sings:

> I'd like a full English Brexit please
> And a… nice cup of tea
> Yeah forget about it
> It's going to be alright, everything's
> gonna be fine!
> (PETER DOHERTY AND THE PUTA MADRES, 2019)

Throughout his career, Doherty has continually thought about England and being English, chronicling contemporary history since The Libertines' first studio album, *Up the Bracket*, which covers the May Day riots of 2001, until his most recent release that tackles Brexit, Britain's great political question of the late 2010s. He has also, however, looked at historical England – addressing the great wars, rationing and the sixties specifically – and a

[53] Asked by Channel 4 News if he felt Brexit would be bad for music, Doherty declared: "No, it'll be the best thing in the world for music. You'll see, you'll get the most insane new wave of the most incredible [acts]. You see the difference between writing a poem in prison and writing a poem in a cottage by a lake, you know. There will be an incredible backlash." (CHANNEL 4 NEWS, 2019)

mythical one that stays somewhere in between Blake's Albion and one of his own imagining, populated by Tony Hancock, Chas and Dave, and The Smiths. Straightforward approaches such as the one we find on "Lamentable Ballad of Gascony Avenue" are entwined with a different, more dreamlike one, such as this description taken from *From Albion to Shangri-La:*

> N: *Mystical Albion; is it in the blood, DNA, memory…?*
> P: We don't have mountains but we have forests. I used to live in the past, was entrenched in it, the time when England had forests of oak; but when we conquered the world, and became an empire, the forests disappeared, and the timber was used for boats, ships. We are Elizabethans, that's what we are, surrounded by history. I'm not a royalist but I can't deny that I'm an Elizabethan. I'd love to go back to the Elizabethan age, to the time of alchemy and true adventure when you got on a ship and set sail from Portsmouth and didn't know where you were going, maps weren't completed yet. Charts were being written by Englishmen and Europeans. (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 245-246)

England appears as the main, orienting question in Doherty's poetic project, one that he reconsiders and rethinks continually throughout time, accompanied by different writing partners and different bands, as he looks at it from different places on the inside – Nuneaton, Camden or Bethnal Green in London, Wiltshire and now Margate – as well as from the outside – in places such as Germany, Cyprus, Ireland, Paris or Buenos Aires. Like circumference or immortality for Emily Dickinson, England remains a question Doherty does not appear to look to exhaust, but rather to continually refashion and re-approach.

In the lyrics to "Times for Heroes" (THE LIBERTINES, 2002b), for example, a song that will reappear in my analysis, Doherty presents a take on contemporary Britain that is simultaneously eulogistic and highly critical. The lyrics to "Time for Heroes" were inspired by the songwriter's involvement in the 2001 London May Day riots. They thematise police brutality, the staleness of the reactionary undercurrents of turn-of-the-century of English culture (personified by Bill Bones)[54] and, on the other hand, the strong influence of American

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[54] This criticism of reactionary staleness is not exclusive to the Right, as Doherty criticises New Labour politics in the lyrics to "Fuck Forever" (2005):

Oh, what's the use between death and glory?
I can't tell between death and glory
New labour and Tory
Purgatory and no happy families
It's one and the same, one and the same
No, it's not the same, it's not supposed to be the same
You know about that way
The way they make you pay
And the way they make you toe the line (BABYSHAMBLES, 2005)

culture in England throughout the nineties. It should be noted that although he is English, Doherty spent a considerable part of his childhood and teens living abroad as the family relocated often according to his father's stationing in the army. In a sense, as he became a chronicler of England and Englishness as a songwriter, Doherty's voice was simultaneously that of a national and that of a foreigner, an insider and an outsider. His own words signal that the reality of England clashed with and deflated his youthful idealisations of it:

> "I never went to school in England until I was 12," he says. "It was this mythical place, but when we moved there, the England that I thought existed – this England of Hancock, Porridge and Kipling – was nowhere to be fucking seen." He raises an eyebrow. "Imagine my surprise." (LYNSKEY, 2015)

In that sense, one could argue "Time for Heroes" subsumes an "alteritist reading" of contemporary England that Doherty employs. In "'Why Should we Welcome the King of England? Didn't Parnell Himself ...': James Joyce's (Re-)Vision of 'Englishness' and Virginia Woolf's (Re-)Vision of 'Irishness' As Postcolonial Symptoms" (2013), Verita Sriratana defines an alteritist reading as "a reading of 'otherness' which, as Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva point out in their works, is part of one's 'self'" (SRIRATANA, 2013, p. 33). In the lyrics to this song, Doherty's speaker simultaneously positions himself as an outside onlooker and as part of the crowd. In the first stanza, he conjures up a violent scene from the demonstration as protesters and policemen clash, but he does so in a conversational mode, by describing the scene to his addressee. In the stanza's final line, he veers off topic, somewhat excising himself and the other person from the scene he just described:

> Did you see the stylish kids in the riot?
> Shovelled up like muck and set the night on fire
> Wombles bleed, truncheons and shields[55]
> You know I cherish you my love
> (THE LIBERTINES, 2002b)

While apparently still reporting the happenings of the riot, in the second stanza the speaker produces a commentary on the larger landscape of English culture's obsession with gossip ("But there's a rumour spread nasty disease around town"), something Doherty has often addressed in his criticism against tabloid journalism. It is significant, however, that now

[55] In a post to a thread on the now extinct thelibertines.org forums, Doherty (under the username "heavyhorse") explained who the wombles were: "The 'wombles' were a revolutionary sect from the era of the Mayday riots in the year 2000. They were rioters who all dressed up like wombles from the t.v series, including tinfoil shields and wobbly truncheons, mimicking the riot police. There were about 12 of them, but they had many enthusiastic disciples."

his addressee is part of the scene as protesters flee from it after clashing with the police: “You caught round the houses with your trousers down/A headrush in the bush/You know I cherish you my love/Oh how I cherish you my love” (THE LIBERTINES, 2002b).

In the chorus, the speaker sceptically reflects on the inevitability that all the effort conjured up by the protesters will amount to nothing, soon being cast as old news. It is also at this point that he refers to “Bill Bones”, that is, Old England – the one behind the violence of the police force – is well aware of how easily forgotten attempts to change things are: “Tell me what can you want now you've got it all/The whole scene is obscene/Time will strip it away/A year and a day/ And Bill Bones/Bill Bones knows what I mean”. This pessimistic prognosis evolves to criticism in the following stanza, in which the speaker reveals to the listener/reader his own views on the apparent unshakeability of the *status quo*, as his reference to Bill Bones turns into reported conversation. This ghost is aware of the speaker’s views on the matter (“He knows it's eating, it's chewing me up/It's not right for young lungs to be coughing up blood”), but more than that, the speaker recognises himself as a part of the problem he is trying to tackle. If in the first stanza he asks his addressee if they saw what took place matter-of-factly – as one comments on the news on the paper – now the blood being coughed by young lungs as a result from police brutality is “all in my hands/And it’s all up the walls”. Although the notion of having blood on one’s hands holds a symbolic connotation of guilt, the fact remains that, within the context of the lyrics, in which the speaker is suddenly inserted into the scene of the confrontation, this description leaves room for him at any side of it. I take this difficulty to place the speaker in the scene he describes – outside/inside, a protester/an enforcer of the law – as an effect of Doherty’s alteritist reading of a current real-life event. If “it can be implied from Derrida’s statement that the self is also the other, and the other is also the self” (SRIRATANA, 2013, p. 34), Doherty’s speaker in “Time for Heroes” seems well aware of this ambiguity, recognising within himself both the spirit of change and the spirit of reaction against it.

Ultimately, as the song progresses, Doherty’s speaker accommodates in his voice the notion “that the foreign other is always a part of one’s own sense of self and selfhood” (SRIRATANA, 2013, p. 34). Thus, he suddenly finds himself merging with the very thing he set out to fight against. The song’s character as a wider social commentary on the state of contemporary English culture transpires in the fifth stanza. Here, the speaker affirms Bill Bones “knows there’s fewer more distressing sights than that/Of an Englishman in a baseball cap”, problematising the Americanisation of English culture, and addressing his perception of a lack of social mobility: “And we’ll die in the class we were born/But that’s a class of our

own my love/A class of our own my love". Although the way in which the lyrics of this song are structured helps us to identify it as an art work crafted out of Doherty's alteritist reading of his place as an Englishman at the turn of the century, the same alteritist stance must, of course, orient our analysis when mapping out his reading of and engagement with the literary canon. In her article, Sriratana also defines an alteritist reading as "an alternative way of reading canonical texts written by canonical writers, which have been read over and over again and which tend to be taken for granted as being emblematic representations of the writers' own sense of nationhood" (SRIRATANA, 2013, p. 35). This certainly is the case for Doherty's engagement with the question of England/Albion as well as that of England-Ireland.

In short, while I believe that Dickinson offers Doherty try-to-think poetics as a tool to develop this laborious exercise in his poetic project, other writers have also provided him with an array of images and references through which he engaged with a tradition of handling England, Englishness and beyond through literature, poetry and song. In the following sections, I am going to discuss a selection of Doherty's songs that engage with the Anglophone literary tradition, underlining how Doherty has responded to it in his own words.

3.3.1 Literary References in Songs Released by The Libertines

Literary references have populated Doherty's musical output from the first official release by The Libertines in 2002. Co-written by Doherty and Carl Barât, the single *What a Waster* (2002) brings a nod to James Joyce by describing a girl who "reads like the Book of Revelations/Or the Beano or the unabridged Ulysses" (THE LIBERTINES, 2002a). More than this girl's eclectic reading taste, this casual reference to *Ulysses* (1922) is a demonstration of how Doherty's songs would make – often highbrow – literature accessible in a pop song. Although "What a Waster" did not receive much airplay due to profanity in its lyrics, it went on to become one of The Libertines' most popular songs. Although it is fair to guess that most of the band's fans did not decide to brave through Joyce's labyrinthic prose due to Doherty's reference, it still inaugurated a conversation about literature that the songwriter would further establish in his following records.

Later in 2002, The Libertines released their first studio album, *Up the Bracket*. If one considers Doherty's references to literature under an ampler light, the very name of the album

(and the homonymous song) is a reference to Galton and Simpson's *Hancock's Half Hour*. In the radio show, Tony Hancock's character – Anthony Aloysius St John Hancock – would often present Sid, Bill and other characters with the following threat: "Watch it, mate, or I'll have you, with a punch up the bracket!". Doherty has praised Hancock's use of a "language of a long gone era" (THE TELEGRAPH, 2017) and, in fact, most of the language that is employed quite cavalierly in the show goes back even further than the post-war years in which it was produced, with Galton and Simpson exploring Victorian slang. In *Up The Bracket*, there is also a reference to Galton and Simpson in the first track, "Vertigo". The first stanza[56] of the song brings the line "Lead pipes, your fortunes made", which is lifted directly from a poem written and read by Sid (played by Sidney James) on *Hancock's Half Hour* episode "The Poetry Society" (the 11th episode of Season 6, which originally aired in December 1959). As he does in "What a Waster", Doherty produces a bricolage of canonical literature and pop culture in "Vertigo". Besides the citation of a poem penned by Hancock's con-man best friend in the show, Sid, the song's title as well as the lines "The rapture of vertigo/And letting go" are lifted from Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies* (1951):

> What I sought, when I struggled out of my hole, then aloft through the stinging air towards an inaccessible boon, was **the rapture of vertigo, the letting go**[57], the fall, the gulf, the relapse to darkness, to nothingness, to earnestness, to home, to him waiting for me always, who needed me, and whom I needed, who took me in his arms and told me to stay with him always, who gave me his place and watched over me, who suffered every time I left him, whom I have often made suffer and seldom contented, whom I have never seen. (BECKETT, 2009, p. 27)

On *Up the Bracket*'s second track, we find the first poetic reference. Doherty has stated that "Death on the Stairs" was inspired by a nightmare Carl Barât had (Cf. WELSH, 2005, p. 9-10), and so they chose to structure the song as a kind of response to *Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment* (1816). The lyrics explore similar alliterations and imagery, as well as the overall theme of visions and ghosts that haunt one's dream state. The first stanza of "Death on the Stairs" echoes lines 44 to 49 in Coleridge's poem. While *Kubla Khan* brings:

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw:

[56] Although the usual term employed to refer to each block of lyrics of a song would be "verse", I am employing a poetic vocabulary here given the nature of the analysis of Doherty's text and the comparisons between lyrics and Dickinson's poem I am going to develop in Chapter 4.
[57] My highlight.

> It was an Abyssinian maid
> And on her dulcimer she played,
> Singing of Mount Abora.
> Current Eritrea has been part of Abyssinia.
> (COLERIDGE, 1816)

Doherty and Barât offer:

> From way far across the sea
> Came an Eritrean maiden she
> Had a one-track mind and eyes for me
> Half blinded in a war.
> (THE LIBERTINES, 2002b)

As it becomes clear from these early examples, Doherty and Barât found several creative ways to include references and nods to literary works in their songs, from paraphrasing to direct quotes and the citation of titles. In “Time for Heroes”, another single from *Up the Bracket*, Doherty’s speaker refers to a character named “Bill Bones”, a likely reference to *Treasure Island*’s (1883) Billy Bones. A paranoid, drunkard pirate bully, Bones dies of a second stroke after not relenting to his doctor’s orders to stop drinking after the first one. While other characters in *Treasure Island* embody adventure and mobility, Bones personifies stale immobility and nostalgia. Thus, in the lyrics to “Time for Heroes”, the speaker affirms “Bill Bones knows what [he] mean[s]” when he refers to the action of passing time: “Tell me what can you want now you've got it all/The whole scene is obscene/Time will strip it away/A year and a day/And Bill Bones/Bill Bones knows what I mean” (THE LIBERTINES, 2002b).

Percy Bysshe Shelley’s influence in the lyrics to the opening track of The Libertines’ self-titled, second studio album. “Can’t Stand Me Now” addresses the tensions within the band. It became The Libertines’ second highest-selling single in the United Kingdom and was certified Gold in November 2019 (BPI, 2019). In an interview for *Phil Taggart’s Slacker Podcast* in May 2019, Doherty spoke of the reference when comparing a demo version of the song that was played in the podcast and the one from the single:

> “Can’t Stand Me Now” came out of the split, didn’t it? It was a song that we did after Alan McGee got the band back together after we’d fallen out and that line in there… in the single it’s “your light fingers threw the dark shattered the lamp” and that is from the Shelley poem “When the Lamp is Shattered”. The line in this version is “your light fingers threw the dart that shattered the lamp” as opposed to a hand, you know, going through the shadowy alleyways and unlocking a window from the inside. (TAGGART; DOHERTY, 2019)

Doherty is referring to two alternate versions of the opening lines of “Can’t Stand Me Now” while also explaining that the metaphor of the “light fingers” that threw the dark/the dart originally came from his reading of Shelley’s four-stanza lyric “When the Lamp is Shattered” (1822), which opens with the lines: “When the lamp is shattered/The light in dust lies dead -”.

Another literary reference in The Libertines’ second studio album comes in the track “Narcissist”, which addresses contemporary vanity and cites the title character of Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890) in the chorus. The first stanza introduces an image of fast-paced, twenty-first century urban London life:

> Professionally trendy in the glow of Clapham sun
> There's life after work and it can be such fun
> You see all the models in magazines and on the walls
> You wanna be just like them
> Cause they're so cool
> (THE LIBERTINES, 2004)

The chorus apparently turns to Dorian Gray to find respite, as a form to breathe away from the influence modern life. There, the speaker seems to adhere to a more poetic form of narcissism. However, the speaker is quick to put the literary character in the same level as the fashion-obsessed characters of the other stanzas: “They're just narcissists/Well wouldn't it be nice to be Dorian Gray?/Just for a day/They're just narcissists/Oh, what’s so great to be Dorian Gray/Every day?”.

In the eleven-year gap between The Libertines’ second and third studio albums, Doherty and Barât remained active songwriters, each working with their own bands and on their respective solo careers. Once the band congregated again, literary references continued to play an important role in the language of their partnership. Their 2015 album was titled *Anthems for Doomed Youth*, a direct reference to Wilfred Owen’s “Anthem for Doomed Youth” (1917). The Libertines always proclaimed an interest in the war poets. Carl Barât set Siegfried Sassoon’s “Suicide in the Trenches” (1918) to music and the pair recited the poem as they accepted the award for “Best British Band” at the 2004 ceremony of the NME Awards. The album also brings a track with the same title, which is entirely sung by Barât. *Anthems for Doomed Youth*’s first single, “Gunga Din”, references Rudyard Kipling famous poem originally published in *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1890). The lyrics to Doherty and Barât’s song bring two speakers who narrate and describe their own problematic, self-destructive patterns of behaviour that have strained the relationship. In the chorus, they turn to

the words of the English soldier in Kipling's poem, who exhorts Gunga Din – a bhishti who is continually abused by the speaker, takes care of him after he is wounded in battle and is ultimately shot and killed – as the better man of the two. The final lines of the poem read:

> You Lazarushian-leather Gunga Din!
> Though I've belted you and flayed you,
> By the living Gawd that made you,
> You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!
> (KIPLING, 1890, s/p)

Recontextualised in The Libertines' song, the exclamation sung by both Doherty and Barât - "You're a better man than I" – appears to be pointed at each other. While Barât's speaker describes trouble with alcohol and mood swings, Doherty's declares he is "Getting sick and tired of feeling sick and tired again"[58]. The phrase originated in the Civil Rights movement as "I'm Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired". Fannie Lou Hamer used it in a speech at an event with Malcolm X at the Williams Institutional CME Church, in Harlem, New York in 1964 (Cf. JOINER, 2017), but it has often been employed in substance addiction recovery contexts as a moment of clarity in which the addict garners the strength to break the cycle and look for help (Cf. BARNES, 2013). Before the song dissolves into the chorus, Doherty's speaker announces he "Dreamt of Gunga Din". In the lines that follow – which are sung by both Doherty and Barât – the songwriters successfully transcode into a pop song the poignant final lines of Kipling's poem. In response to the poem's final lines, The Libertines' song brings the following lyrics:

> Oh, the road is long
> If you stay strong
> You're a better man than I
> You've been beaten and flayed
> Probably betrayed
> You're a better man than I
> (THE LIBERTINES, 2015)

Finally, Doherty and Barât blur the line between song lyrics and poetry even further in the track "Dead for Love". This song, which thematises a toxic relationship, brings a spoken-word outro. Barât recites an excerpt of David McDuff's translation of Marina Tsvetaeva's poem *Insomnia* (1916) and Doherty cuts in, voicing an excerpt of DM Thomas's translation

[58] The lines "Woke up again to my chagrin/Getting sick and tired of feeling sick and tired again/I tried to write, because I got the right/To make it look as if I'm doing something with my life/Got to find a vein , it's always the same/And a drink to ease the panic and the suffering" (DOHERTY; BARÂT, 2015) open the song.

of the poem "I Share My Room" by Anna Akhmatova. The citation of these two poems not only accentuates to the overall dark atmosphere of the song, but also invites the listener to consider its lyrics under the light of the Russian poems that are cited in it. Considering that The Libertines began their career as a signed band by releasing a single that alluded to James Joyce's *Ulysses* and whose identity as a group was always punctuated by its composers literary leanings, it is interesting that in their first album after several years apart they embraced not only authors that have long been embraced by the English-language canon[59], but also turned to foreign women poets read in translation. This might be understood as an indication of the writers' artistic maturity, a gesture of their opening up to an ampler array of references and discussions, while solidifying their identity as a band of avid readers.

3.3.2 Literary References in Songs Released by Babyshambles

Peter Doherty formed Babyshambles in 2003 as he was pushed out of The Libertines for the first time, allegedly due to his ongoing troubles with addiction. After an initial struggle regarding the name of the band – Doherty intended to perform with his new group under the name The Libertines – it progressively acquired a personality and a fanbase of its own, with official single releases in 2004 and its first LP, *Down in Albion*, in 2005. Through Babyshambles, Doherty found not only an alternative outlet for his creative endeavours, but

[59] The fact that The Libertines have room to accommodate both Owen and Kipling – poets with such radically different stances on war and the British Empire – as references in their songs is an instance worthy of inquiry in itself, as it raises questions about the meaning of England and Englishness in their songs, either critical or laudatory. Of course, one should bear in mind that in songs that were co-written by both Doherty and Barât, it is not always easy to gauge whose references are present in any given song. In regard to Kipling, specifically, it should be noted that, considering Doherty's vast discography, he has only ever been referenced in songs by The Libertines ("The Man Who Would Be King", "Gunga Din"). Furthermore, Doherty has never mentioned the poet as an influence or an inspiration in interviews. This leads me to infer that references to Kipling are likely to have been proposed and developed into songs by Barât. The singer was the one who explained the reference to Kipling in an interview with the *NME* upon *Anthems For Doomed Youth*'s release (Cf. MORGAN BRITTON, 2015) and he seems more comfortable with reproducing an Anglocentric view of the world in interviews than Doherty:

"In an interview with the Guardian, the singer discussed his relationship with Doherty, who is currently in Thailand after completing a stint in rehab, as well as the picture that emerged online of the two working together there. 'We were listening to the new Hancock on the wireless, so it's not [an] entirely alien [environment],' Barat said. 'It was a bit like being in the colonies in the '50s or '60s. And they do say that there's nothing more English than an Englishman abroad. Not that I want to keep hammering on about Englishness, that's getting a bit tired.' (KHOMAMI, 2015)

also a new partnership that would be nearly as celebrated as the one he had with Barât. Patrick Walden was Babyshambles' lead guitarist and co-author of six of *Down in Albion*'s sixteen tracks and of "The Man Who Came to Stay" (the B side to one of Babyshambles' earliest singles, *Killamangiro*). Although he left the band in December 2005[60], his partnership with Doherty produced some of Babyshambles greatest commercial and critical successes. Doherty's personal life was under the British media's scrutiny around the time of the release of Babyshambles' debut album due to a high-profile relationship. The way he was portrayed helped solidify his dreaded rock star persona. Although Babyshambles were then predominantly perceived as an indie rock band, Doherty's most active years with the group saw him exploring a myriad of genres, from pop ballads and folk to ska. His literary references – as well as his investigative interest in Albion/England – remained as lively as ever. Released in the band's debut album, "Albion", a song that was already a fan favourite from The Libertines' live performances and recording sessions made available online by the band, quickly became one of Doherty's most acclaimed achievements. The literary references do not stop in his reappraisal of Blake's mythical England, however. Released as a B Side to Babyshambles's *Fuck Forever* (2004) single, "East of Eden" is a response to the John Steinbeck novel (1952) of the same title, addressing themes such as a sense of entrapment, betrayal and a need for escape. *Down in Albion*'s "A'Rebours" was inspired by the Joris-Karl Huysmans novel of the same title published in 1884. In the band's second studio album, *Shotter's Nation* (2007), the track "Lost Art of Murder" appears to reference George Orwell's essay "Decline of the English Murder" (1965), especially when one considers Doherty's oft-expressed admiration for Orwell's prose. Babyshambles' third and final album before the band started a hiatus that stretches to this day, *Sequel to the Prequel* (2013), brings a track titled "Minefield" (in which Doherty shares credits with Drew McConnell, John Robinson and Mik Whitnall) which, according to McConnell, was written "in real time", with the composers "freestyling the lyrics – one line each" during a storm (UP THE ALBION, 2013). The line "Have you ever heard such a thing in your life as three blind mice?" evokes the

[60] "In December 2005, Walden left Babyshambles. The band continued to perform under the same name, but did not replace Walden with a different guitarist immediately. In the January 10, 2006, issue of NME, Walden's departure was officially announced. However, on January 23, 2006, Walden turned up to play guitar for the Babyshambles at a gig in the Junction, Cambridge. He returned again to the band in February and played several of the gigs on the band's tour. Walden was supposed to have played with Babyshambles on their Nov/Dec 07 Arena tour. The band released a statement saying that he had dropped out at the last minute, even after travelling with them on the tour bus. Walden later stated that he did not appear on stage because there were drugs about, even though it was supposed to be a drug-free tour. Furthermore, Walden stated that his successor, Mik Whitnall, didn't want him to play with the band anymore." (UP THE ALBION, 2019)

nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" (1609) as well as the Agatha Christie's short story of the same title (1950). All three works share an overall threat of impending danger as a key trope, which is underscored by the characters' – or the speaker's – inability to dodge or escape what threatens them.

3.3.3 Literary References in Songs Released by Peter Doherty

Peter Doherty had been performing solo acoustic shows for many years (since 2003) by the time he released his first solo album (2009). Still, as his habit was more widely known by his fanbase and specialised journalism, the mainstream media – and even some vehicles dedicated to musical journalism that had been following Doherty's career for years, such as the *NME* – were curious about the reasoning behind this release as well as Doherty's alleged "shift" from "Pete" to "Peter"[61]. Since the release of *Grace/Wastelands* in 2009, Doherty has worked on his solo career alongside his commitments with Babyshambles (who released an album in 2013) and The Libertines (who released an album in 2015 and have been on countless tours since). Releasing a work under his own name and not a band's seemed to offer him some freedom to return to the more varied array of influences of the beginning of his musical career. Gone was the rock'n'roll persona – both on the record and onstage – as *Grace/Wastelands'*s tour began. In his solo career it appears that the "young poet" who posted an ad looking for a spacious flat in Central London returns ten years later – one who competently balances poetry and showmanship, as we introduced earlier by referring to one of the earliest entries of the *Books of Albion*. The shift in tone between Babyshambles' *Shotter's Nation* (2007) and Doherty's *Grace/Wastelands* (2009) was not lost even in the most sceptical of reviewers, with BBC's Liz Ennever identifying Doherty's poetry (even if she puts it between inverted commas) as the link that connects what would have easily become a "slightly disjointed and incoherent album":

> With its diverse range of styles, Grace/Wastelands appears at first to be a slightly disjointed and incoherent album. However, it soon becomes apparent that there is one thing linking all the tracks – an honest and genuine outpouring of Doherty's soul. Whether it's the 60s, jaunty flavour of Arcadie, the darker New Love Grows

[61] As a I have explained in Chapter 1, Doherty has always presented himself as Peter, although he became amply known as "Pete".

> On Trees or the lazily-paced, jazz-infused Sweet By And By (that could have come straight off a Fats Waller album), Doherty's heartfelt 'poetry' spans them all, providing a universal theme of 'this is the real me'. (ENNEVER, 2009)

Pitchfork's Ian Cohen highlighted the album's "largely acoustic" nature, one "peppered with plenty UK signifiers of string pads, light drums, horns, and shuffle/skiffle tempos" (COHEN, 2009). He also identified the nod *Grace/Wastelands* gives to the point of rupture between The Libertines most poetic and the later, more commercial incarnations – recognised by Carl Barât as I discussed in Chapter 1 – by describing the album as one that "imagin[es] as alternate reality where 'Radio America' was the jumping off point for the rest of his career" (COHEN, 2009). "Radio America" is a soft acoustic track sung entirely by Doherty that clashes with *Up the Bracket*'s overall rock'n'roll track list. Doherty has reported he insisted on the track being a part of The Libertines' debut album against the wishes of the rest of the band. In an interview, the songwriter stated that he could only convince them after forgiving a debt Barât had with him:

> I thought 'Radio America' was alright. We never really did that live though, because the rest of the guys, I dunno, I don't think they were that into it. But I managed to get it onto our first album, like by hook or by crook. I think I owed Carl a bit of money and he was going, "Where's that money you owe me?" And I'd sort of say, "Look...." No wait.... Hang on, HE owed ME money. I cancelled the debt and he let me put 'Radio America' on the album. Typical fuckin' Libertines! (Laughs) Absolutely disgraceful. (UP THE ALBION, 2019)

Grace/Wastelands' poetic and literary references are as varied as its musical style. The first track of the album, "Arcady", borrows and rephrases several lines of Emily Dickinson's poem "There is a morn by men unseen" (Fr13). In "A Little Death Around the Eyes", the lines "Fee-fi-fo-fum/I smell the blood of an Englishman/Be he alive or be he dead" are lifted directly from the English fairy-tale "Jack and the Beanstalk". "Salome" brings Doherty's take on the notorious Biblical character, with the lines "By the telly appears Salome/I stand before her amazed/As she dances and demands/The head of Isadora Duncan on a plate". As an avid reader of Oscar Wilde's works, Doherty's interest in Salome may in part be justified by his 1891 one-act play about the character. In "Broken Love Song", the reference to Wilde is clearer, as Doherty cites a few lines from "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1897): "Why, I never saw a man/Who looked with such a wistful eye/Upon that little tent of blue/[Which]Prisoners call the sky" (WILDE, 1897). In "I Am the Rain", Doherty cites two lines from "The Rain in Spain" (Frederick Loewe/Alan Jay Lerner), one of the songs that constitute *My Fair Lady's* (1956) original soundtrack. The musical is an adaptation of George

Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913). Doherty's interest in musical adaptations of works pertaining the Anglophone literary canon becomes evident in "Palace of Bone", in which the line "You gotta pick a pocket or two" was likely lifted from "You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two", a song from the Tony Award-winning British musical *Oliver!*[62] (1960), which is an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839). As these examples demonstrate, Doherty infuses his compositions with several literary references and allusions in *Grace/Wastelands* with more freedom and intensity than he had done before in his musical output with The Libertines and Babyshambles. This freedom is also expressed by the myriad of rhythms and musical styles that the album embraces.

Grace/Wastelands may be understood as a shifting point in Doherty's career in the sense that it appears to have allowed him more freedom to experiment with his literary roots and attempt to forge conversations with the authors that inspired him. However, it is my understanding that it was only with the release of *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres* (2019) that he was able to firmly establish a sentence of his own in a larger scale, one that moved him past emulation and mere citation. Chronologically, however, between *Grace/Wastelands* and *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres* lie albums by Babyshambles (*Sequel to the Prequel*, 2013), The Libertines (*Anthems for Doomed Youth*, 2015) and Doherty's second solo album, 2016 *Hamburg Demonstrations.* Doherty's second solo studio album is an assortment of several unreleased songs Doherty had been playing live for several years (i.e. "The Whole World Is Our Playground"), early songs that were not deemed fit to be released by The Libertines (i.e. "She Is Far") and two versions of the same new song (i.e. "I Don't Love Anyone"). Although its songs are by no means inferior than those included in any of the artist's previous or following projects, there appears not to be a clear project behind the recording of *Hamburg Demonstrations.* With that in mind, however, it remains an important transitional album in which the artist's poetic wit is very much alive. In "I Don't Love Anyone (But You're Not Just Anyone)", Doherty's speaker is delightfully non-committal in his ambiguous declaration of love to his significant other. His employment of indefinite pronouns is enticingly Dickinsonian in the sense that, in the same way the speaker in "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (Fr260) subverts the meaning of being "Somebody" or "Nobody", the one in Doherty's song repeats the same uncompromising declaration throughout the song without ever stating what he means. The logic behind the assertion "I don't love anyone, but you're not just anyone/You're not just anyone, to me" is never clear. Is the speaker stating that

[62] Doherty also references a song from *Oliver!* in "Gang of Gin". I further discuss this song in Chapter 4.

he does not love “anyone”, but since the addressee is “not anyone” to him, she is thus excluded from his overall lack of affection, and, therefore, he loves her, specifically? Or is he merely appeasing her, stating that although he does not love anyone, “she is not just anyone” to him, that is, she cares for her, she is not a stranger, but he remains unable to love her? The rest of the lyrics offer no indication as to how this should be understood, with vague descriptions of what he likes about life with her: “Anything, mostly everything/You drop an eyelash and finger thumb a wish/You live this way, and oh I'll never leave (the other world, seems just so cold)”. The excessive repetition of indefinite pronouns seems to indicate the speaker’s discomfort and uneasiness while making these statements; sentences that start out grandiose and all-encompassing (“anything, mostly everything”) do not amount to much as the speaker moves forward. In these lines, for instance, a lucky penny “means everything”: “The luck a penny brings, means everything/When you kiss and cross superstitiously-aly-aly-aly”. Finally, as if having exhausted the theme, the speaker changes the subject entirely in the bridge, citing from an American Civil War era song, “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” (1863), which curiously reinforces thematically and contextually the Dickinsonian aspect of the song[63]. If it was present in its tone before, the allusion to “When Johnny” makes Doherty’s work gravitate towards a theme that this speaker is apparently more comfortable with:

> Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah
> Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah
> Johnny comes marching home again, with this and that and a big bass drum
> And they all come marching, over the hill from war
> (DOHERTY, 2016)

Doherty’s work in “I Don’t Love Anyone” is relevant to this analysis because it is an early example of an impulse towards a compositional method that he favoured sparsely throughout his career and that he leaned toward more thoroughly in *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres.* Here, we see the composer flirting with Dickinsonian try-to-think poetics of ambiguity and duplicity. Through this try-to-think poetics, a constant reassessment of Britishness and war enters his art.

Doherty also references other literary works in *Hamburg Demonstrations.* “A Spy in the House of Love” is a clear allusion to the 1954 Anaïs Nin novel of the same title. The songwriter’s admiration for Graham Greene, often mentioned by him in interviews (Cf.

[63] As Dickinson lived through the Civil War and wrote poems responding to it herself.

BOYD, 2004; DOHERTY;MCCARTNEY, 2007), and already expressed in the *Anthems for Doomed Youth* track "Heart of the Matter" (named after the Graham Greene novel of the same title, which was originally published in 1948), resurfaces in *Hamburg Demonstrations*. The track "Kolly Kibber" references the character Kolley Kibber from Greene's *Brighton Rock* (1938)[64]. Although not an outright citation, "Down for the Outing" brings a nod to Stevie Smith's poem "Not Waving but Drowning" (1957). Doherty's speaker describes a scene in which a person who is drowning is thought to be waving instead:

> Slowly down, and all down river
> The one they sold you down
> Where your timber shivers
> Hold you down
> And as you're flailing
> Yes as you drown
> They say "ah look he's waving"
> (DOHERTY, 2016)

The album's final track, "She Is Far" was, according to Carl Barât, one of the first songs Doherty ever wrote[65]. The line "Monuments on Margate Sands staples across your hands" appears to echo an excerpt of T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922): "On Margate Sands./I can connect/Nothing with nothing". Eliot's poem was written in Nayland Rock promenade shelter in Margate, which received listed status from English Heritage in 2009, thus becoming a "monument" of sorts, as per Doherty's lyrics (Cf. THORPE, 2009). The reference is reinforced by the fact that the bar at the hotel owned by The Libertines in Margate – the Albion Rooms – was christened "The Waste Land" after Eliot's poem (Cf. TRENDELL, 2019b).

3.3.4 Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres

[64] In *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres*, the track "Who's Been Having You Over" also cites lines from the novel's 1948 film adaptation by John Boulting.

[65] "We're just talking, you know? I'm going to meet Pete next week, and you never know, we might play something," says Carl. "Really, it's just lovely to speak to Peter again. It's always funny, all the same kind of emotions come up. With Peter, however long it's been… just doesn't feel like I've ever stopped talking to him really." On the phone the duo chatted fondly about "things that we haven't talked about for 18 years", like "She Is Far", one of the first songs Peter ever wrote, and Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*. (WILKINSON, 2014, p. 51)

In 2016, Doherty formed yet another band. After touring South America with The Libertines, he remained in Buenos Aires as the rest of the band returned to Europe and called a few friends to work with him on live performances and jam sessions. After his three-month visa expired, Doherty returned to Paris to perform at the Bataclan's reopening with his new band, The Puta Madres. The name was inspired both by the interjections of the band's Spanish drummer, Rafa, and by the ones Doherty often heard while rambling the streets of San Telmo, his home during the time he lived in South America. In December that same year, Doherty released his second solo album, *Hamburg Demonstrations*, which had been recorded in Germany. Less than a year after he left South America, he returned with The Puta Madres to promote his new album. The project appears to have both grown more serious with time and solidified itself as a counter-reaction on Doherty's part to the proportions any tour or engagement with The Libertines have taken. In the same interview in which he told Krishnan Guru-Murthy he found being called a rock star offensive, Doherty was asked how the Puta Madres experience differed from the one he had with The Libertines. His reply indicated that he dislikes the arrangements and dimensions involved in the band's tours: "The Libertines is a lifelong trip with very dear friends, that for one reason or another will never end. I love it, but it's not like, you know… Airport, hotel, massive venue, back to the hotel, back to the airport, you know?" (CHANNEL 4 NEWS, 2016). He also reflected on how prejudicial to his creative impulse his relationship with the industry is, observing that:

> When you're young and idealistic[66], you don't care. You play to no one, you play in your bedroom, like young kids with a football. You play it, you just love it, you just

[66] One can find evidences of Doherty's early idealism in accounts such as the following one, in which Carl Barât narrates how his friend insisted on the future of the band when Barât himself could not:

"That might make everything sound very purposeful, but the truth was that I didn't have any sense of where we were going while I was at the Old Vic, though Peter and I were increasingly inseparable and working more and more intensely on our lyrics. Peter was always very optimistic but somehow – and this is probably indicative of the insecurities that would dog me all the way through my performing career – I never thought I'd make it in a band. For me, it was an impenetrable world, and playing in front of a small audience was already intimidating enough. Peter's attitude was different: We can do this, you can be that. He was full of faith, life and vitality, and that sustained me; it was a real part of the magic of the time. Peter surprised me at work at the Old Vic one night, when we were meant to be rehearsing but I'd taken the paying job instead. Separate worlds – music and theatre – colliding momentarily, almost causing one to spin helplessly out of orbit. I was in my trusty trousers, probably gleaming in the theatre lights, serving a platter of vol-au-vents as part of a reception for Marcel Marceau. It was an after-show as far as I can remember – as much as great mime artists have after-shows, anyway. Then Peter just appeared, lumbering into sight, red-faced with tears in his eyes. I can't imagine what the guests must have thought as a stranger button-holed one of the waiters, and the quiet of the theatre bar was shattered as he screams: 'What are you doing here? Can't you see these people are cunts? We're meant to be writing songs!'" (BARÂT, 2010, p. 22)

Alex Hannaford's book *Pete Doherty: Last of the Rock Romantics* (2006) also includes several accounts of Doherty's idealism (Cf. HANNAFORD, 2006, p.155; HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 207; HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 261), such as the following one:

> love the music and then bang! as soon as you're in the industry and you think that's the dream, that's when the dream starts to end. (CHANNEL 4 NEWS, 2016)

This observation aligns well with Barât's description of the moment The Libertines began to work on new songs and a change in their image so that their manager could sell them as "The British Strokes". The songwriter observed that the band was in a state of crisis at that point because "Peter began to change gigs around, cancel shows and refuse to take money for performing" (BARÂT, 2010, p. 40). Two very different impulses were pulling The Libertines in opposite directions, and it was the commercial one – rather than Doherty's utopic vision of himself as a minstrel who would happily play for anyone willing to listen to him – that ultimately settled the direction they would pursue. It is my understanding, then, that as The Libertines irrevocably became a part of a bigger machine that appears to stifle rather than feed Doherty's creativity, he sought out other outlets and arrangements to explore different sounds with a level of freedom The Libertines brand would not offer him[67]. Speaking about The Puta Madres, Doherty stated that "for a long time I had trouble going onstage, but that's because I think my head disappeared so far... so I got some people who probably care more about music than other things and it became more about music than… other things" (BLUE BALLS FESTIVAL, 2017). It should be noted that although Doherty often performed alone, while promoting his solo albums he was usually accompanied either by members of Babyshambles or by ballet dancers who became part of the performance onstage. With The Puta Madres, however, he forged a more stable alternative to the arrangements with The Libertines, which ultimately generated some friction with the expectations around the older band.

"The gig at the Troubadour Café saw Pete and his new band together for the first time. The reviews weren't complimentary but Pete came away that night ecstatic, having done what he does best. He later described 'such joy' in his heart and enjoyment at playing. 'The four of us united in some long-lost Arcadian bliss and chaos and embraces, proud of each other,' he said. Pete was happier playing music in this environment. While his ex-band was on stage at the Carling Festival, garnering reviews like 'we're witnessing the ugly, messy aftermath following the booting out of Pete Doherty' from the Independent, Pete was playing the dives again but seemed happier than ever." (HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 154)

[67] In Anthony Thornton's book about The Libertines, *Bound Together*, the band's drummer Gary Powell describes a conversation he had with Doherty in which he felt that his friend had a need for an outlet besides The Libertines for his creative endeavours:
"GARY: 'Peter came up to me and said, 'What are you doing now? Do you want to hang out?' And as soon as he said it, I knew he had something he wanted to tell me.'
Gary said he was going to get wine and invited Peter along. The pair got back. After a shower Peter got his guitar out and they had a singsong and goofed around.
GARY: 'And then I was just asking him, 'Are you happy?' 'I don't know.' 'What do you want to do generally?' 'I don't know.' 'Well you need to take some time for you because right now you seem to be somebody who's at loggerheads with themselves about everything in general.' We had a really, really good chat about it and I think even though he had it in his mind I think that's where the whole Babyshambles band ended up coming together. Even though we never told anyone else that we spoke about it. He needed an outlet. He never told anyone else about it.'" (THORNTON, 2006, p. 109)

In early 2019, while many of the band's fans were expecting news of The Libertines new album,[68] Doherty announced that he and the Puta Madres would be releasing a self-titled album which had been recorded in the home of one of the bandmembers in Northern France the following Spring (Cf. TREFOR, 2019). Now based in Margate and living close to the hotel owned by The Libertines – The Albion Rooms – Doherty often plays acoustic secret gigs in the town's pubs with little to no notice at all. While the band's tours remain focused on large venues and tight schedules, this has allowed for The Libertines and Doherty himself to return, in a way, to the band's roots of guerrilla gigs and spur of the moment performances.

Defined as "an album of serene folk songs" (TRENDELL, 2019a) by *NME* journalist Andrew Trendell, *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres* earned rave reviews even from Doherty's harshest critics in the press, the tabloid media. *The Daily Mail* gave the album four stars, the same rating the *NME* awarded it. Commenting on the album's reception on *Phil Taggart's Slacker Podcast*, Doherty replied his host's suggestion that "maybe the way that the media were treating you in the other records, maybe they were more interested in the circus around it than the music" by saying:

> Shocking, absolutely shocking. They call it the English disease, don't they? (…) It's this culture, isn't it? This celebrity culture where you're famous for being famous and where a review of a record release cannot include any mention of the music. I mean, how dare The Daily Mail give me a good review? You know what I mean? After years of me putting out half decent music, some really good music, and they've never cared and now they've given me four out of five? Shocking, eh? (TAGGART; DOHERTY, 2019)

In the same podcast episode, Doherty stated that this was the first time he released a "DIY" album, claiming that it resulted in a project of which he had become truly proud of: "it's the first time I've dug in and done the promo with enthusiasm and yeah… and pleasure" (TAGGART; DOHERTY, 2019). He also remarked that, as this was "the first time I've actually got reviews where people seem to actually listen to the record" (TAGGART; DOHERTY, 2019), he was "quite intrigued by the whole process now as opposed to avoiding it" (ibid.). Repositioning himself as an artist in a more radical manner than he had done when he released *Grace/Wastelands* ten years prior, the reception process of *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres* tells us a lot about Doherty's development of his own sentence. If his first solo album was considered a shift for turning away from rock'n'roll and for its dense and allusive lyrics, Doherty's 2019 release refrains from quoting the canon in favour of phrasing literary

[68] Band members had been hinting at a new album since 2017, with drummer Gary Powell stating that it would likely be released Spring 2018. (Cf. DALY, 2017)

music in Doherty's own words. While some of the songs in this album are not new – "All at Sea" and "Narcissistic Teen Makes First XI" are among some of Doherty's earliest songs – the way in which they are reworked and aligned with the other tracks reveals that this is an album, not a mere collection of songs randomly yoked together to produce a new release. Doherty's interviews reveal that this is the first work that he feels fully comfortable with, exercising a suitable amount of creative control both over the songs and over the way the album was produced and marketed, stating that the process was "like growing your own opium" (NME, 2019). Speaking to the *NME,* he defined *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres* as "his most 'folky' record", the one that was "less hectic" (NME, 2019). Doherty's presentation of this new project also underlines his rejection of the entire culture involved in being in a rock'n'roll band. Apparently, the same elements that led him to consider being called a "rock star" offensive made him laud this album an "incredible escape from grey, tepic, sterile, macho reality" (NME, 2019).

One should bear in mind that the realities of The Puta Madres and of The Libertines coexist for Doherty, however. In the months that followed the released of The Puta Madres' album, Doherty toured the UK and Europe with The Libertines. The band's performances, which often attract a "rock'n'roll" audience that is drawn to violent outbursts on and offstage, remain as hectic as ever and Doherty's reactions to the pressure of being onstage and to the band's tight schedules frequently adhere to the macho violent culture he so openly criticises. In live performances, Doherty often hurls objects onto the crowd, from his harmonica and his guitar to the microphone stand. In December 2019, Doherty inadvertently injured a fan when he hurled his microphone stand onto the crowd during a Libertines concert at Glasgow's Barrowlands. When news that a 19-year-old fan was left with a bleeding gash on his head that demanded stitches (Cf. LYONS, 2019) were posted on a Facebook group ran by Doherty's fans[69], however, the reactions were overall negative, with people complaining about the boy's lack of enjoyment for rock'n'roll antics, the report being dismissed as nothing more than a tabloid story. One group member even went so far as calling the injured fan a "snowflake", an insult usually employed by right-wing reactionaries against what they consider "PC politics" online (another fan called him a "Greta gang member", referring to Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, elected Person of the Year of 2019 by Time Magazine).

Curiously, the discussion about the fan's injury took place at the same time group members were reacting to another thread that shared a news story about Doherty's plea

[69] The group is called "Dreams from Arcadia" and was created circa 2017.

against the Conservative Party. “Don't let it be the Tories”, Doherty asked the crowd at the same concert in Scotland in which the microphone stand accident took place. The songwriter was asking fans to vote for the Labour party in the December 12 general elections (REILLY, 2019) as chants in support for Jeremy Corbyn broke out in the crowd. Although, throughout the years, all members of The Libertines have always positioned themselves as left-wing, controversy ensued around both threads in the group as Conservative voters were offended by Doherty’s declaration of support for the Labour Party. This controversy, while not directly linked to the discussion about Doherty’s discography, tells us much about the difficulty involved in the artist’s apparent wish to shake off his rock star persona when a significant part of his fan base remains attracted to violent rock’n’roll antics.[70] Feeding off of and fuelling his fans’ attraction to violence, Doherty often obliges them, performing the same violence accompanied by whichever of his bands. This has oftentimes generated friction with bandmates. In *From Albion to Shangri-La*, Doherty reports that, around 2013, Drew McConnell and Adam Ficek were threatening to leave Babyshambles if the violence onstage did not stop:

> After a whooping old kipple at the Country Club on our day off, I was on a mission this night to adhere to the promise made to Drew and Adam to be done with the onstage violence and threats to harmonious flow… to try to fall into the music, be part of this band… sleep being conducive to the plan, it worked out all well and good methinks. (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 224)

Still, *Peter Doherty and The Puta Madres* stands as Doherty’s most significant reaction against his rock’n’roll persona. Although Doherty has claimed that he is “not an activist” but “a fantasist”[71] (NME, 2019) who creates a “safe place” (ibid.) to resist engagement with outside questions, I believe that is precisely his willingness to engage that makes this album remarkable. Differently from his earlier attempts to disrupt public perception of himself, Doherty was most successful with this particular project because

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[70] One of the commenters derided the fan who got injured by saying said “Image going to the papers about this. What a fanny! I would feel privileged if I got Doherty's mike stand of my pretty little head.” It should be noted that although newspapers reported the incident, the fan did not seek them out, his only declarations being transcribed from tweets shared in his personal account

[71] Questioned about the part political anxieties surrounding the UK during the production of the album play out in it, Doherty said that “they don’t so much, really” and that “Anxiety is always distilled for me when I’m getting the most I can from music personally rather than trying to lead some sort of crusade because I have to do that anyway to stay sane on a daily basis. I can’t… I’m not an activist, you know? I’m a fantasist. And I just create a safe place to get out of all that, you know? To get out of just getting involved in rows about absolutely nothing, you know? Because people don’t want to back down because they’re so fucking macho. You know? What a ridiculous thing. It’s a joyous thing a lot of the time – music. You know? And this album in particular has been a precious thing … positive for us to believe in it. It’s not: “we’ve got to fucking write a song … getting people writing, which is another thing entirely, you know?” (NME, 2019)

instead of turning away from the way he has been perceived and addressed in the past, he fashions a new sentence for himself by laughing at it[72]. "Pete Doherty from The Libertines" becomes a mere character as Peter Doherty openly mocks him. He does so expressly in "Who's Been Having You Over" as his speaker sings "My, you're so Rock'n'Roll" in a sarcastic falsetto:

> It's more or less that time is it?
> To revisit the how, the why, the what
> where and when
> And if you're still inclined to give it
> Credence or jib it on as conspiracy then
> You're so Rock'n'Roll
> My you're so Rock'n'Roll
> Oh but the rhyme that it took, to fill the
> right hook
> You need a miracle, a crowbar and a
> mi-ra-cle[73]
> (DOHERTY, THE PUTA MADRES, 2019)

However, Doherty also turns away from his dreaded persona by delivering a poetic, folkish, independently produced album when all eyes were turned to The Libertines' next big release, festival tour and big hits. Doherty further accomplished the process of freeing himself from expectations of the past by going onstage at the Kentish Town Forum in London – one of The Libertines' meccas – and playing a set that was almost entirely composed of new songs and some of his quieter older ones on 12 May 2019. In this tour, with this album, Doherty seemed keen on not catering to the taste of an audience that still looks for a specific version of him. In this gesture, as much as in the songs themselves, he adapts a Dickinsonian stance of focusing on the work at hand, perfecting it, refashioning it, dismantling it and putting it back together again. The close relationship between Doherty and the home-made production process of this album brings him closer to Dickinson's sewing her fascicles together by hand, producing an artwork with care, with no great plan as to who will receive it, but believing the process worthwhile nevertheless.

As I have said in Chapter 1, I believe that it is through Dickinson that Doherty becomes a poet. While many writers have influenced him and those relationships are often made obvious by the heavily allusive texture of his lyrics, the relationship with Dickinson

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[72] In *A Room of One's Own,* Virginia Woolf points out that Jane Austen looked at the man's sentence, the sentence of a tradition that excluded women from writing "and laughed at it and devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use and never departed from it. Thus, with less genius for writing than Charlotte Brontë, she got infinitely more said." (WOOLF, 1928/2015, p. 58)

[73] I have replicated the lineation from the album's booklet.

takes place on a level that is of the focus of this academic investigation. The fact his relationship with other authors elicit different questions worthy of investigation, such as critical approaches to the relationship between England and Ireland as well as Englishness reveals that Doherty's reading and writing practices offer interesting instances for further academic inquiry for literature researchers. In Chapter 4, I produce a thorough analysis of the impact of Doherty's relationship with Emily Dickinson's poetry not only in his works, but also in his writing practices. Although direct citations and references to Dickinson are not as abundant as those to authors such as Wilde and Orwell, I believe this is the relationship that allows Doherty to establish a place for himself in the Anglophone literary tradition to which he responds and with which he converses through his song lyrics. By adhering to Dickinson's try-to-think poetics, Peter Doherty not only becomes a more interesting artist on his own account, but also offers us a new, contemporary point of access to Dickinson's poetry. While most of recent interest in Dickinson's *oeuvre* appears in the form of fictionalised biographies – *A Quiet Passion* (2017, Terence Davies), *Wild Nights With Emily* (2018, Madeleine Olnek), *Dickinson* (2019, Alena Smith) – I believe the Poet of Amherst would be pleased to see twenty-first century readers finding her through engagements with her poetry, not through reimaginings of the prose she made sure was burnt to ashes before she left this life.

4 **EMILY DICKINSON IN PETER DOHERTY**

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued the point that Emily Dickinson is Peter Doherty's most significant literary influence because it is through this relationship that he is able to move on from mere allusion and emulation to thoroughly engaging with her sentence, thus becoming a poet on his own right. In Dickinson, he finds not an artist whose work he can identify with or a biography that compels him, but a philosophical companion who actively articulates projects of thinking through her poems. As Jedd Deppman has argued, writing poetry helped Emily Dickinson think (2005, p. 85), and it has been my thesis that it is the fact that Doherty picks up on the Dickinsonian sentence and adapts it to his own use and language as a contemporary reader that makes their relationship worthy of academic investigation. In this chapter, after having established the theoretical foundations upon which the artists' conversation develops, highlighting Dickinson's relationship to music and Doherty's to poetry, I unpack the different levels in which one can analyse Doherty's contemporary take on Emily Dickinson and the transit between their sentences.

In the first section, "Direct Citations", I discuss the two instances in which Doherty adapts Dickinson, citing lines from her poems and establishing instances of intertextuality in his song lyrics. The songs in question are "At the Flophouse" (2004), which borrows lines from "I took one Draught of Life –" (Fr396), and "Arcady" (2009), which borrows from "There is a morn by men unseen –" (Fr13). In the second section, I explore thematic and imagery-related convergences, focalising the relevance of the sun as a metaphor in Dickinson and Doherty, the predominance of economic and mercantile metaphors in their written works, and their takes on the songbird convention, which appears as a tool to articulate a sense of entrapment. In the final section of this chapter, I expand on what I understand as Dickinson's try-to-think compositional methods, which Doherty appropriates for his own use in a contemporary setting.

4.1 **Direct Citations**

There are two instances in which the dialogue between Dickinson and Doherty approximates remediation. Addressing the tradition of the relationship between different art

forms, Walter Moser explains that remediation refers to the "set of possible interactions between the arts that the western tradition perceives as distinct and differentiated, especially painting, music, dance, sculpture, literature and architecture" (2006, p. 43). The critic also points out that the interaction can occur at various levels, during production, in the artwork itself and in the reception process. Considering Doherty and Dickinson, it is essential to establish that in the two instances in which Doherty cites Dickinson directly, he acts as a composer – and not as a poet – when engaging with the artist's work. Moser proposes an aesthetics of the artwork as a "process of continuous creation" in which traditional divisions between performance and work and the roles of creator and performer "fade away in a categorical implosion that affirms the energetics of the act of creating and its initiatory transmission to art" (2006, p. 52). Thus, Doherty's songs would act to highlight and explore the musical potential inherent to Dickinson's poetry. The song appears as another medium in which one can perform poetry. This dialogue also reaffirms, through a new artwork that results from reading the original poem, the aspects in which both art forms meet. It should be considered, however, that, unlike the other artists that have adapted Emily Dickinson's works, Doherty does not simply set poems to music. The songwriter actively engages with and responds to Dickinson, weaving the poet's language with his own. Although he cites from Dickinson directly in "Arcady" and "At the Flophouse" and the listener can identify her voice in those artworks, Doherty's own voice – besides his take on the poems – also comes through. He thus establishes an active dialogue through the artwork itself that moves beyond mere citation. The songwriter engages with the poet as an equal and it is through a close engagement with Dickinson's sentence he creates his own.

4.1.1 "There is a morn by men unseen" (1858) vs "Arcady" (2009)

"There is a morn by men unseen" (Fr13) is one of Emily Dickinson's earliest poems. Its manuscript was included by the poet in the first of her fascicles. It was written in the summer of 1858, according to Cristanne Miller's *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (2016). In this poem, Dickinson's speaker describes a "mystic green" full of joys. The poet employs pastoral imagery to carefully construct a bucolic utopia. Although this is not, by far, one of Dickinson's most widely discussed poems among her scholars, it was approached by remarkable names of feminist criticism. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, as well as

Wendy Barker, have written of this poem as evidence of Dickinson's protofeminist approach to poetry and of her struggle against patriarchy. While they make interesting points, it remains necessary to address the fact that the considerations those authors published regarding this poem appear to have originated from a problematic interpretation of the poet's use of the word "men". By analysing "There is a morn by men unseen" in its entirety as well as by turning to other occurrences of the word "men" in Dickinson's poems, it becomes difficult to turn away from the likelihood that she employed it not to denote gender – that is, to create an opposition between men and the "maids" that inhabit the paradise she describes – but rather to refer to mankind, humanity in general.[74]

"There is a morn by men unseen" was partially adapted by Peter Doherty. The song that results from this effort is titled "Arcady" and was released in his first solo studio album, *Grace/Wastelands* (2009). Doherty adheres to the structure of the Dickinsonian ballad in it and offers a contemporary reading of Dickinson's poem by naming the paradise she described in her poem. Considering the musical roots of the ballad as a poetic form, as discussed in Chapter 2, one could say Doherty recognises the musical potentialities of this poem and enacts it through adaptation. Considering the conversation that takes place in this effort, one can regard Doherty and Dickinson as shards of the same tradition in the sense proposed by TS Eliot in "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919). Here, the English artist converses with Dickinson and establishes himself as a competent reader of her poetic works, and both artworks, each in its own context and time, recognise the close relationship between music and poetry through the ballad.

"There is a morn by men unseen" (Fr13) is written in common particular meter (886886), one of Dickinson's most explored hymnaic structures. The poet's verses emerge as two tetrameters followed by a trimeter. This is an aspect characteristic to this metric structure that, according to Miller, may contribute to the perception of the poem's underlying musicality, since "metered poetry with lines shorter than the pentameter tends to have a dominant metrical, not syntactic, rhythm" which is "typically underlined by regular rhyme and stanza units" (2007, p. 397). This characteristic explains why "such verse can sound sing-song" (ibid.), as it does in "There is a morn by men unseen":

	syllables	beats	rhyme
There is a morn by men unseen –	8	4	A
Whose maids upon remoter green	8	4	A

[74] This is a point I have discussed in an article titled "'There Is a Morn by Men Unseen': A Close Reading of Dickinson's Paradise" (2018).

Keep their seraphic May –	6	3	B
And all day long, with dance and game,	8	4	C
And gambol I may never name –	8	4	C
Employ their holiday.	6	3	B
Here to light measure, move the feet	8	4	A
Which walk no more the village street –	8	4	A
Nor by the wood are found –	6	3	B
Here are the birds that sought the sun	8	4	C
When last year's distaff idle hung	8	4	C
And summer's brows were bound.	6	3	B
Ne'er saw I such a wondrous scene –	8	4	A
Ne'er such a ring on such a green –	8	4	A
Nor so serene array –	6	3	B
As if the stars some summer night	8	4	C
Should swing their cups of Chrysolite –	8	4	C
And revel till the day –	6	3	B
Like thee to dance – like thee to sing –	8	4	A(p)
People upon that mystic green –	8	4	A(p)
I ask, each new May morn.	6	3	B(p)
I wait thy far – fantastic bells –	8	4	C
Announcing me in other dells –	8	4	C
Unto the different dawn!	6	3	B(p)

Dickinson remains strict metric-wise in this poem. She does not deviate from the 886886 structure and keeps the rhythm iambic throughout the poem, deviating from it only once, in the final stanza. She does, however, employ a rhyme shift[75]. While Dickinson employs exclusively full rhyme in the three first stanzas, she resorts to partial rhyme in the final one, as she replaces the rhyme pair *scene/green* for *sing/green*. The B-pair sounds even more dissonant, with a consonantal nasal rhyme that relies exclusively on the (n) sound: *morn/dawn*. Dickinson keeps on exploring alliteration and parallel construction as she does throughout the poem (May morn / different dawn), which makes her sudden change to partial rhyme sound more pointed. One could argue that this is so because, while the speaker describes this fantastic paradise in detail throughout the poem, announcing a "morn by men unseen," it is only in the final stanza that she makes it clear that she is among such men, longing to hear the bells that will announce her arrival into this "different dawn". The final stanza breaks away from this fantasy and allows the reader/listener to learn that this is an account that comes from a person who also longs to inhabit paradise, but has not yet arrived there. In her current location, there are no full rhymes: those are reserved for the bells that

[75] I have discussed the relevance of rhyme shifts in Dickinson's work in Chapter 2.

announce her utopia. This dissonance is strengthened by the fact that the only time throughout the poem that she deviates from the iambic rhythm in “People upon that mystic green”. The trochee at the beginning of the line creates a chiasm before the iambic rhythm is resumed in *up**ón***.

Citing Dickinson's poem in his song, Doherty named the utopia “Arcady”, a name repeated many times throughout the lyrics. The search for Arcadia as a sort of poetic ideal has permeated the artist's career since his youth, as one can observe in his first interview. In it, Arcadia is referred to as a mental space of freedom and creativity:

> “The pact was to sail the good ship Albion to Arcadia,” Pete states.
> Right.
> “The Albion is just the name of the vessel,” he elaborates. “The band could have been called The Albion, but it’s a shit name for a group.”
> What about Arcadia, then?
> “You mentioned that in the news story,” chides Pete, “but you twisted it. You mentioned ancient Greece, but it’s not in ancient Greece, it’s in there (*pointing to his head)*). It’s a vision of a better place. Everything is cool.”
> “Really, it’s just about the realm of the infinite, which is just in the mind,” corrects Carl, “and is capable of anything as radical or as beautiful or as sick as you can conjure up.”
> “It’s where cigarettes grow on trees and all benches are made of denim,” adds John, helpfully.
> “Basically,” concludes Pete, “we just sat down and thought, ‘We’re going to jack it all in and throw ourselves into eternity.” (OLDHAM, 2010, p. 18)

Doherty’s choice of words is particularly poignant when read under the light of Dickinson’s own search for eternity and “circumference”. She also frames her search for “eternity” as a sea voyage in “On this wondrous sea – sailing silently –” (Fr3), a poem she sent to her friend Susan Dickinson in a letter in March 1853 with the inscription: “Write! Comrade, write!” (MILLER, 2016, p. 41). Cristanne Miller has pointed out that the poem “may allude to Thomas Cole’s allegorical series of paintings *The Voyage of Life* (1842), widely distributed as engravings” (2016, p. 743):

> On this wondrous sea – sailing silently –
> Ho! Pilot! Ho!
> Knowest thou the shore
> Where no breakers roar –
> Where the storm is o’er?
> In the silent West
> Many – the sails at rest –
> The anchors fast.
> Thither I pilot thee –
> Land! Ho! Eternity!
> Ashore at last!

While this is something that could be further developed in “Thematic and Imagery-Related Convergences,” it seems that in verbally and poetically describing his view of Arcadia/Arcady, Doherty found that Dickinson's poem not only offered him the images of a very similar utopia to his, but that the musicality of her hymnaic structure may have influenced the composition of the melody employed by him. Although Doherty has asserted that his process of composing songs is distinct from that employed in writing poetry, I understand that by making Dickinson's paradise his own and naming it in his song after his Arcadian fantasy, Doherty seems to work with the poet as a composer who recognizes not only an interesting possibility for thematic convergence, but the aural appeal of the poem.

“There is a morn by men unseen”, the verse that introduces to the reader the paradise that will be described throughout the poem, appears in Doherty as “In Arcady, your life trips along”. Doherty's verses “Never saw I such a scene/Such maids upon such a molten green” (6-7) echo both “Ne'er saw I such a wondrous scene - / Ne'er such a ring on such a green -” (13-14) as the second verse of the poem, “Whose maids upon remoter green”. Dickinson's "Seraphic May" (3) becomes Doherty's "Seraphic pipes" (3) that may work both as an allusion to the musical instrument – something in keeping with the imagery of the folktale-like paradise drawn by Dickinson – or to smoking pipes, as Doherty had already alluded to Dickinson in poems that deal with drug-related imagery and themes.

	syllables	rhyme
In Arcady, your life trips along	9	A
It's pure and simple as the shepherd's song	10	A
Seraphic pipes along the way in Arcady	12	B
In Arcady, in Arcady	8	B
Never saw I such a scene	7	A
Such maids upon such a molten green	9	A
They employ their holiday with dance and game	11	C
And things I may never name	7	C
In Arcady, in Arcady	8	B
Where you said he was your teacher	8	A
Taught you true and wise	5	C
But now you know more than your teacher	9	A
I see nothing but cool self-regard in your eyes	12	C
In Arcady	4	B
So you see how twisted it becomes	9	A
See how quickly twisted it becomes	9	A
When the cat gut binds my ankles to your bedstead	12	C
That ain't love, no that ain't love	7	D

Said he was your teacher	6	A
And taught you true and wise	6	C
Now you know more than your teacher	8	A
I see nothing but cool self-regard in your eyes	12	C
In Arcady, in Arcady	8	B
In Arcady (In Arcady)	8	B
In Arcady your life trips along	9	A
Pure and simple as the shepherd's song	9	A
Few seraphic pipes along the way	9	B(p)
In Arcady	4	B
In Arcady	4	B
In Arcady	4	B
In Arcady	4	B
In Arcady	4	B

It should be noted that Doherty maintains a full-rhyme pattern throughout his lyrics, although he resorts to repetition a considerable number of times, which seems deliberate on his part. In the first stanza[76] we have the rhyme pair *along/song*, followed by *Arcady/Arcady* (which he repeats throughout the lyrics). In the second stanza, Doherty reprises two of Dickinson's pairs (*scene/green*) and (*game/name*). In the third stanza, he introduces a complication that is not present in the original poem: the speaker addresses a third person, speaking of a man who was a teacher and taught them "true and wise". The addressee, however, has grown cold towards the teacher, having become more knowledgeable than him, so now the speaker sees "nothing but cool self-regard" in their eyes. Here Doherty forms another full rhyme pair (*wise/eyes*).

The last verse of this stanza shows that Doherty's paradise is more problematic than Dickinson's: this betrayal of sorts has taken place *in* Arcady. Unlike the original poem, the speaker is narrating this from within his utopia. The only full rhyme pair in the following stanza is formed by repetition (*becomes/becomes*). The first line's assertion "So you see how twisted it becomes," is reiterated and intensified by: "See how quickly twisted it becomes". At first, it appears that the speaker is referring to what was narrated in the previous stanza. However, the verses that follow introduce a new, apparently nonsensical, element: "When the cat gut binds my ankles to your bedstead/That ain't love, no that ain't love". This puts Arcady significantly closer to Carrol's Wonderland[77] than to Dickinson's utopia and, significantly, this is the only stanza that does not bring "In Arcady" as its final line. The final two stanzas are a repetition of the chorus ("Said he was your teacher"), and a variation of the first one,

[76] Although the usual term employed to refer to each block of lyrics in a song would be "verse", I am employing a poetic vocabulary for clarity's sake given the nature of this analysis.

[77] Doherty's song "Through the Looking Glass" references Lewis Carrol's book of the same title. As "Arcady," it was released in 2009, as a b-side on the single to "The Last of the English Roses" and, later, as a bonus track on the album itself. It also featured on the album's DVD.

with a remarkable repetition (8) of “In Arcady”. This can be understood as a reaffirmation that while Dickinson’s speaker builds a paradise she hopes to reach one day, Doherty’s has reached it and discovered that a seamless paradise can only be so when gazed on from the outside.

4.1.2 “I took one Draught of Life –” (1862) vs “At the Flophouse” (2004)

A variation of sevens and sixes (7-6-7-6), one of the meters most commonly used by Dickinson according to Judy Jo Small (Cf. 1990, p. 4), is employed by the poet in “I took one Draught of Life –” (Fr396). It should be noted that this is far from one of Dickinson’s most well-known poems, with scholars rarely leaning over it in their papers and books, so this is an interesting choice for Doherty. It is also one of the poems for which we have no manuscript left. Cristanne Miller tells us that, as the poet’s niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, “gave the first leaf of this fascicle, containing this and the next poem, to Herbert F. Jenkins” (2016, p. 756) who, in turn, lost those (the order of the poems, however, is given by his transcription), the text for this work is taken from Mabel Loomis Todd’s transcript. Considering that there is a large school within Dickinsonian studies dedicated to in-depth analysis of the manuscripts[78], going as far as arguing that reading transcripts is to read a translation (Cf. HART; NELL SMITH, 1998) and the fact that the poet worked so laboriously throughout the years on her manuscripts, adding variants and altering the disposition of her lines for effect, it is lamentable that some of Dickinson’s texts, especially one that has been adapted by another artist, were lost.

The rhyme scheme for this poem is composed solely of partial rhymes, which, along with other structural particularities, fits the stance the speaker takes on describing an attempt to set a monetary value upon existence. *Life* and *existence* form a non-accentual, assonantal rhyme pair. Nevertheless, the reader feels cheated of a stronger pair when *price* comes along

[78] It should be noted that manuscripts are also relevant when considering Doherty’s lyrics. In several of his albums, the words to the songs are made available exclusively in his own handwriting, often without respecting metrical lines of any sort. In the single for “Albion” (2005), for instance, the lyrics to the song are handwritten as if in prose form. *The Books of Albion*, Doherty’s collected diaries, are also available exclusively in manuscript form. Doherty’s artwork often explores his own handwriting, as the prints available for purchase in his website demonstrate. When Doherty includes his lyrics in the booklet for his albums in any format other than his own handwriting, he usually chooses to use a typewriter and often the words are smudged by other elements in the artwork. Unlike Dickinson, Doherty rarely offers his listeners / readers clean copies.

halfway through the fourth line of the first stanza. Through that strategy, the poet reinforces a sense of unfulfillment that is also communicated by the verse "Precisely an existence," which, employing words of Latin origin, disrupt the iambic rhythm creating a chiasm (Pre**cís**ely an ex**íst**ence). Dickinson's structuring of this stanza makes *paid/said* the end-rhyme pair, even though *Life/price* would stand out aurally. Partial, consonantal rhyme is the rule throughout the second quatrain (*Dust/worth* and *Film/Heaven*).

	syllables	beats	rhyme
I took one Draught of Life –	6	3	A(p)
I'll tell you what I paid –	6	3	B(p)
Precisely an existence –	7	3 (2?)	A(p)
The market price, they said.	7	3	B(p)
They weighed me, Dust by Dust –	6	3	A(p)
They balanced Film with Film,	6	3	B(p)
Then handed me my Being's worth –	7	4	A(p)
A single Dram of Heaven!	7	3	B(p)

As he does in "Arcady," Doherty does not simply set Dickinson's poem to music. Instead, he cites some of her verses in his own song, mingling the poet's words, meanings and sound structure[79] with his own. One could even argue he wrote the song as a tribute to the poet. Performing at the Non-Stop Kino in Graz, Austria on 28 August 2008, Doherty dedicated the song to her before playing it (Cf. RETROPOLE, 2008). As many of Doherty's songs, "At the Flophouse" references drug abuse and the fragmentary relationships a speaker who is a user establishes not only with others but with himself, affecting his perception of the world around him. The very title of the song indicates its theme. While historically a flophouse is simply a space used for overnight lodging by those who need the lowest cost alternative to shelters or sleeping outside, they are popularly also known as places where drug users spend the night.

In the first stanza, Doherty's speaker introduces of an elusive boy who will not engage with anyone if things are not done in a certain way. In the second stanza, he describes a violent altercation that took place at a – presumably – underground station that resulted in blood being spread "on hands and steps," while the speaker observed in distress. In the third stanza, the speaker apologises for neglecting and then disrespecting his addressee, underlining

[79] Like Dickinson, he relies heavily on alliteration and parallel construction to establish the rhythm and sound structure of his lyrics.

that he meant no harm in doing so, but ominously declaring that “Tonight, I’ll be chasing you.” In the final stanza, Doherty cites from Dickinson. Her stanza “I took one Draught of Life –/I’ll tell you what I paid –/Precisely an existence –/The market price, they said” is reduced to “I took one draft of life/Paid only the market price,” the *Life/price* partial rhyme pair moved to an end-rhyme position. The consequence of the actions described in those two lines subsumes the pictorial, fragmentary character of the song. Now, after paying the market price for the draft of life taken, the speaker is “estranged” from all around him. If his relationships in the previous stanzas are strained – the first one defined by an attempt to connect with a spoiled addressee, the second one interrupted by violence, and the third one by an apparent misunderstanding – this attempt to pay for (in the implied intertextuality with Dickinson’s text) precisely an existence results in the speaker declaring his sense of estrangement from the world that surrounds him. He finally declares he feels “so lonely now” although he is not alone, reinforcing the sense of disconnection. “A lick and a boot” cements the origin of this sense of isolation: “lick” is slang that stands for “a hit of crack on the pipe,” while “boot” is slang for heroin on foil. “Maybe I’ll work from home/Maybe no” shows the speaker’s uncertainty regarding his place in the world and his relationship with others. Working from home might deepen his sense of isolation but might also free him from the sense of being lonely while in company.

“At the Flophouse” is not a typical pop song. There is no chorus and one finds no repetitions. Doherty only sings each stanza once and, though this is a characteristic of both Dickinson’s and his works, the employment of partial rhyme seems deliberate and particularly poignant here. “I Took a Draft of Life” appears in Doherty as a direct quote from the opening verse of Dickinson's poem. Metrically, this Dickinsonian line fits perfectly with Doherty’s first line. It displays the same number of syllables as in “Everything's got to be,” which introduces the song. I understand this structural coincidence – which does not stretch to the rest of the lyrics – as a nod to Dickinson. As the table below will demonstrate, the scanning of “At the Flophouse” reveals a structure very much unlike Dickinson’s. Asked in an interview whether to write song lyrics he takes the same approach he uses to write poetry, Doherty replied that, to him, those are distinct processes and that the lyrics are always written with the accompaniment of a guitar (ATTISSO, 2016, p. 54). This answer allows us to conclude that the structure of the text in Doherty's lyrics is conceived in relation to the melodic structure of musical composition. Thus, his lyrics are approached as such here and considered within the context of their publication not as standalone poems and autotelic works of art, but rather as one of the elements necessary to compose the final artwork, a song. However, I would like to

argue that he retains the sense of disruption of Dickinson's attempt to gauge existence with an economic logic as he does with the paradise from "There is a morn by men unseen," by naming it. While her paradise appears as Arcady to him, the sense she describes in "I took one Draught of Life –" in which her "Being's worth" is subsumed as an intangible "single Dram of Heaven," is one of estrangement from the world's expectations of her. If read under the light of her poetic effort and her stance on social conventions as a whole, this poem seems to signal the poet's take on the meaninglessness of propriety, property and the expectations on her role as a woman, something she has called "prose"[80] in so many other occasions. Unpacking and updating this "prosaic" quality of living in "At the Flophouse", Doherty paints a few portraits of life as relationships his speaker cannot fully develop. As the final notes of the song play out, the listener can hear a crack pipe being lighted on the background as a hint of the veil that stands between him and the world he cannot quite engage with.

	syllables	rhyme
Everything's got to be	6	A
Just how it has to be	6	A
Or he won't play	4	B
And I know that boy wants to	7	C(p)
Approach me and say	5	B
All he's got to say	5	B
Maybe he'll say it today	7	B
Maybe no	3	C(p)
There was a slight altercation, oh	9	A
Down at the station, oh, today	8	A
There's blood on hands and steps	6	?
I'm holding my head	5	C
She's got some front, oh	5	?
Did you hear what she said?	6	C
I'm so sos if I neglected you	9	A
I mean you no harm, mean you no harm	9	B
And I'm so sos if I disrespected you	11	A
Mean you no harm	4	B
Oh look around, it's true	6	C(p)
Tonight, I'll be chasing you	7	C(p)
I took one draft of life	6	A(p)
Paid only the market price	7	A(p)
Now I'm estranged	4	B(p)
And I'm so lonely now	6	B(p)

[80] Dickinson told Susan Gilbert in a letter they were "the only poets" and everyone else was "prose" (L56). Besides being her friend – and later sister-in-law – Gilbert was perhaps Dickinson's main reader in the poet's lifetime, receiving many poems and letters throughout the years (MARTIN, 2002, p. 83 & GORDON, 2010, p. 151). She also wrote in Fr466: "I dwell in Possibility – / A fairer House than Prose – / More numerous of Windows – / Superior – for Doors –". What the poet seems to despise is not prose itself – she wrote imaginative prose quite often in her letters, for instance, but prosaic, commonplace usages of language.

Though I'm not alone	5	C(p)
A lick and a boot	4	D(p)
Maybe I'll work from home	5	C(p)
Maybe no	3	D(p)

By adapting Dickinson’s poems into his own lyrics, Doherty enables us to read her oeuvre under a different light. He does so without necessarily claiming to be an heir to the poet's legacy. While his citation of “I took one Draught of Life –” is more conspicuous, since the songwriter referenced the poem in interviews and dedicated its live performance to the poet, in “Arcady” he has been notoriously more coy about the instances of intertextuality, never mentioning Dickinson in the interviews he gave on the occasion of the album’s release. Here, specifically, his dialogue with Dickinson’s work appears to take place in a sphere that invites us – his listeners, her readers – to identify their conversation. Even those who are unaware of the quotation experience Doherty's relationship with tradition in the very structure of his language, beyond those interviews in which he announced his admiration for the poet, naming her as a direct influence. To grasp Emily Dickinson’s project is key for anyone who desires to undertake a serious reading of Doherty, as his experience as a reader of her poems is branded into his own poetic language. When Doherty turned into song the utopia that he always declared as one that ruled his views on art as well as an ideal to pursue, it was the materiality of Dickinson's poem that he explored to illustrate Arcadia into verse. Even though addiction is far from being one of the American poet’s main themes, Doherty is able to articulate the sense of estrangement it brings by turning to her poem. It is the fact that Doherty is so well-versed in Dickinson’s thinking that signals that his connections with her oeuvre are far more complex than those that he establishes with other writers. Dickinson is an artist who turned to lyric poetry as an art form that enabled her thought processes. Through her poems, Dickinson formulated questions and laboured on them throughout the years. Doherty looks at her works as more than mere aesthetic objects, but as the material manifestations of the poet’s thinking. The fact he grasps her works on this level enables Doherty to establish a steady dialogue not only with the text on the page, but with the thinking exercises that produced it.

4.2 **Thematic and Imagery-Related Convergences**

In “Searching for Dickinson’s Themes” (1998), David Porter speaks of the difficulties of identifying predominant themes in Dickinson’s *oeuvre.* While “other major American poets of Dickinson’s time induce full and coherent thematic understanding in their persistent readers” (1998, p. 183), he states that “with Dickinson, our impassioned search for a similar thematic preoccupation leads to a formidable array of mysteries concerning her intellectual focus and her intentions” (ibid.). According to the critic, that aspect of Dickinson’s writing makes it impossible for the reader to remain passive. Since most of her poems resist fixed interpretation, Dickinson activates “unbridled reader-response free play” (1998, p. 188). By choosing ambiguity over fixed connotations, the poet writes in a manner that obliges the reader to produce meaning along with her, be it by completing her verse where she leaves intentional gaps, be it, as Doherty has done, by engaging and adapting her poems, writing in an equally ambiguous manner. This section focuses on thematic and imagery-related convergences between Dickinson and Doherty. As I have proposed in Chapter 1, Doherty’s works can be divided between a more commercial category and a Dickinsonian one. Throughout this section, I am going to analyse a selection of Dickinson’s poems that appear to have influenced the reasoning behind songs by Doherty, which employ some of the same strategies that the poet did when it comes to specific categories of metaphors and imagery.

4.2.1 An Economic Logic

Discussing Emily Dickinson's poetic responses to the Civil War in *Reading in Time* (2012), Cristanne Miller addressed the employment of an economic logic in “It feels a shame to be Alive –” (Fr524), a poem in which Dickinson “both evokes and disturbs the pieties of war martyrology while expressing the guilty gratitude of a civilian to soldiers” (2012a, p. 150). The critic states that the poem’s “governing metaphor of life as pawned” steers its “thinking into the unanswerable area of cost and undercuts the romance of patriotic martyrdom” (2012a, p. 151):

> It feels a shame to be Alive –
> When Men so brave – are dead –
> One envies the Distinguished Dust –
> Permitted – such a Head –
>
> The Stone – that tells defending Whom
> This Spartan put away

What little of Him we – possessed
In Pawn for Liberty –

The price is great – Sublimely paid –
Do we deserve – a Thing –
That lives – like Dollars – must be piled
Before we may obtain?

Are we that wait – sufficient worth –
That such Enormous Pearl
As life – dissolved be – for Us –
In Battle's – horrid Bowl?

It may be – a Renown to live –
I think the Men who die –
Those unsustained – Saviors –
Present Divinity –

In the notes from *As She Preserved Them* (2016), Miller acknowledged Dickinson's reference to the glory of Spartans[81] in the second stanza by underlining that the fact that the poet's "Mount Holyoke textbook *Elements of History, Ancient and Modern*, by J. E. Worcester, 1828" (2016, p. 760) described how "after the battle at Thermopylae, the heroism of the Spartans was inscribed on a stone" (ibid.). However, the critic underlines that the poem might also "allude to the March 1863 Union draft law, which caused riots in New York City in July" (ibid.). Then, "draftees could pay a substitute to take their place, as Austin Dickinson and others from Amherst did the following year, in 1864" (ibid.). Under this light, the allusions to monetary transactions intermingled with a sense of guilt in relation to the fallen during the war seem particularly poignant in this poem. Miller evaluates that the fact that her own brother had to make such a choice pressed the philosophical question for Dickinson: "Perhaps the very possibility of her brother Austin's being drafted raised more urgently for her the question of the 'cos' of life and the danger of rhetoric urging sacrificial behavior" (2012a, p. 152). Finally, Miller underlines the fact that Ralph Waldo Emerson "used a similar metaphor in 'The Boston Hymn': the slave owner 'goes in pawn to his victim' (Atlantic Monthly, February 1863)" (2016, p. 760).

Although this is an interesting and significant instance in which Dickinson employed an economic logic to reinforce a metaphor, "It feels a shame to be Alive –" is far from the

[81] Miller points out that "Dickinson avoided all openly partisan vocabulary of the war: she never uses the words 'Union,' 'Yankee,' 'copperhead,' 'rebel,' or any of the popular terms for the conflict: war of rebellion, war of secession, war of the states. She refers to no battles, no generals, writes nothing obviously temporal about the war's beginning or its conclusion, although she may write indirectly about Lincoln's assassination. From her poems you cannot guess who is fighting, or even that one side eventually wins this war. Many popular war poems are equally vague" (2012a, p. 156).

only instance in which the poet did so. I would like to argue that this is not only observed in a at least 52 of Dickinson's poems but also that this is one of the convergences between her writing practices and Doherty's, who also employs this device in several of his song lyrics. The verb "to pay" appears 25 times in Dickinson's poems, while "to buy" appears 18 times; "To sell" appears 8 times (with one occurrence of the noun "seller"), "to auction" and the noun "auctioneer" are found two times, while "money" appears one time. The noun "gold" appears 10 times in metaphors involving commercial transactions. In Peter Doherty, this sort of metaphor[82] appears in several songs: in "A'Rebours" (*Down in Albion*, 2005) the speaker talks of the "big debt I owe to sorrow" while, of course, "At the Flophouse" reprises Dickinson's criticism of the "market price" of one's being.

Under the light of Doherty's views on the constrictions inherent to the stage experience versus the creative freedom of poets and readers, we turn to the lyrics of his song "Gang of Gin" (2004), in which he addresses the frustration of being expelled from his own band. Besides being highly critical of the musical industry, he denounces that promises of fame and recognition come with restrictions, hinting at violence when his speaker refers to an "industry of fools/Musclemen and ghouls". The speaker also denounces that, to be a part of this industry, the artist must relinquish his own will to work as a pawn to promote other people's interests: "If you're not a puppet or a muppet/Then you might as well call it a day". The lyrics denounce what Doherty perceives as the hypocrisy that surrounds the structure comprised and promoted by the music business. It was supposedly due to his drug use that he stopped being allowed to play with The Libertines. The following stanza questions the legitimacy of those claims: "The truth here gets distorted/The wall scrapings get snorted/I'm welcome back if I give up crack/But you gave me my first pipe anyway".

In the bridge, the speaker asks: "Who will buy my beautiful roses?/Who will buy my beautiful songs?". Here, besides the clear paraphrase of lyrics from the song "Who Will Buy?" (Lionel Bart)[83], there is a possible allusion to Shelley's "The Question" (1822)[84].),

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[82] I am addressing exclusively the songs that use an economic logic as metaphor. Lyrics that reference money and commercial transactions *per se*, such as "La Belle et La Bete", are not included.

[83] The song is part of the *Oliver!* (1960) soundtrack. Doherty cites another song from the musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) in his 2009 album *Grace/Wastelands.*

[84] The reference to Shelley, though not publicly acknowledged by Doherty, is particularly likely not only due to the fact the songwriter has cited from the poet before, but that he did so in "Can't Stand Me Now", a song that addresses the fraught relationships within The Libertines. This, of course, is a theme that resurfaces in "Gang of Gin". The song appears to echo the final stanza of "The Question":

"Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers

However, these lines are also thought-provoking because they can be tied to issues addressed in Doherty's *Poetry Corner Paris* interview. In the interlude offered by the bridge, Doherty conveys the image of the artist trying to sell his work, but doing so to survive, making the same plea of the rose-seller in the musical. In the scene in question, Oliver is out on an errand for Mr. Brownlow when he sees the vendors offering their goods and joins them in song. After they leave, he is grabbed by Bill and Nancy and taken back to Fagin. There lies a clever analogy from Doherty: the artist, unaware of the risks of making himself vulnerable out on the marketplace, is seized by corrupt figures with questionable intentions who render him powerless. In his denunciation of a vicious system in which he got caught up as an artist looking for recognition as well as in his suggestion that he had subjected himself to it for the need to make a living out of his art, Doherty echoes Dickinson's harsh criticism of the book trade in "Publication — is the Auction" (Fr788). In this poem, the speaker argues that "Publication — is the Auction/Of the Mind of Man —/Poverty — be justifying/For so foul a thing". Dickinson's speaker presents poetic ability as a gift that should not be sold by the poet, who is merely its bearer, not its owner. The final stanza of the poem, "In the Parcel — Be the Merchant/Of the Heavenly Grace —/But reduce no Human Spirit/To Disgrace of Price —" brings an ingenious employment of mercantile imagery. While the poet can be the "merchant of heavenly grace" and the poem a parcel, the artist should never put a price to human spirit. Dickinson then returns to the theme of poverty from the first stanza. While poverty makes the foul commodification of the artwork justifiable, price is still a disgrace that should not be imposed upon art. The tension between poetry – art, in general – and price is also addressed in "Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower," (Fr92), in which the speaker refuses to sell a flower to a prospective buyer, suggesting, instead, that they borrow it for a limited amount of poetic time: "Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower,/But I could never sell –/If you would like to borrow,/Until the Daffodil/Unties her yellow Bonnet/Beneath the village door,/Until the Bees, from Clover rows/Their Hock, and sherry, draw,/Why, I will lend until just then,/But not an hour more!". Dickinson also produces a veiled criticism of the performance involved in celebrity culture in "I came to buy a smile – today –" (Fr258). In this poem, the speaker pleads with her addressee so that she may buy a smile, stating that just "a

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Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it!—Oh! to whom?"
(SHELLEY, 1822)

single smile" will please her, "The smallest one upon your cheek –/Will suit me just as well – ". She eerily ends the poem with a question that subsumes the harshness of commercialising not only artworks, but artists as well (anticipating questions that would be later developed by the Frankfurt School): "I'm pleading at the counter – sir –/Could you afford to sell?".

Economic and mercantile metaphors abound in Dickinson's poems. Some of them, like "Publication — is the Auction", establish their critical stance of monetary and financial values by alluding or recurring to biblical references. Such is also the case in "*One life* of so much consequence!" (Fr248). As Cristanne Miller has pointed out in her endnotes to *As She Preserved Them*, this poem alludes to Matthew 13:45–46[85], which "compares the 'kingdom of heaven' to a 'pearl of great price,' for which the merchant was willing to sell all he had" (MILLER, 2016, p. 750). In the poem, Dickinson's speaker declares she would be willing to pay her "soul's entire income" for this "life of so much consequence". In the second stanza, she establishes a parallel between such a life – or, more likely, the Christian afterlife – and a pearl for which she would "instant dive –" although she was aware that to do such would cost her life:

> *One life* of so much consequence!
> Yet I – for it – would pay –
> My soul's *entire income* –
> In ceaseless – salary –
>
> *One Pearl* – to me – so signal – [*Pearl* –] Of such proportion
> That I would instant dive –
> Although – I *knew* – to *take* it –
> Would *cost* me – *just a life!*

Ultimately, then, Dickinson establishes a parallel with the biblical text in her speaker's intention to give up all material possessions – monetary and even her own life – for the promise of eternity. Like in "I took one Draught of Life –", Dickinson constructs a hierarchy of values that is based on an economic logic. "*One life* of so much consequence!" differs from that poem, however, in the way the poet does not refute such logic. As she aligns herself with the biblical text, the allusion to incomes, salaries and payments is not rejected as being improper to measure the value of existence, but taken as a sign of the speaker's commitment to the afterlife.

The poet's refusal to adhere to an economic logic reappears in "What would I give to see his face?" (Fr266). Here, the speaker lists the things she would be willing to give up in

[85] Dickinson also combines an economic logic to biblical/Christian allusions in "Must be a Wo –" (Fr538) and "You're right – 'the way *is* narrow' –" (Fr249).

order to see a departed loved one once again. Unlike "*One life* of so much consequence!", here her own life is not enough, this offering being hastily discredited. The poem is organised in two long stanzas. Throughout the first one, Dickinson's speaker enlists her valuables – they are all poetic elements: the bobolink (a bird she often uses as a metaphor for the poet), roses, bees and butterflies. Once again, Dickinson ascertains the inadequacy of seeking for an objective, monetary value for life:

> What would I give to see his face?
> I'd give – I'd give my life – of course –
> But *that* is not enough!
> Stop just a minute – let me think!
> I'd give my biggest Bobolink!
> That makes *two* – *Him* – and *Life!*
> You know who "*June*" is –
> I'd give *her* –
> Roses a day from Zinzebar –
> And Lily tubes – like wells –
> Bees – by the furlong –
> Straits of Blue –
> Navies of Butterflies – sailed thro' –
> And dappled Cowslip Dells –

In the second stanza, Dickinson's speaker confronts her poetic and invaluable possessions with objectively economic notions, invoking Shakespeare's Shylock to "Sign me the Bond!", thus closing the deal in an "*Extatic* Contract":

> *Now* – have I bought it –
> "Shylock"? Say!
> Sign me the Bond!
> "I vow to pay
> To Her – who pledges *this* –
> *One hour* – of her Sovreign's face"!
> *Extatic* Contract!
> *Niggard* Grace!
> My *Kingdom's worth* of Bliss!

In these poems, one of Dickinson's most common usages of an economic logic for building metaphors becomes apparent. The poet is keen to mock the mercantile language she likely overheard from her father and brother's conversations in the homestead's parlour. One should consider that Edward Dickinson was the treasurer of Amherst College from 1835 until 1873 and that Austin took over his father's post that same year, remaining in the position until his death, in 1895. In her poems, however, the poet was free to place value and establish price under her own logic, subverting a language she must have classified as "prose". Dickinson deals with the tension between the value of life and objective price in a similar way in poems

such as “Rather arid delight” (Fr1718), “How dare the robins sing,” (Fr1782), “Would you like Summer? Taste of ours – Spices? Buy – here!” (Fr272), and “Is Bliss then, such Abyss –” (Fr371).

In other poems, however, Dickinson does not confront her own, poetic economic logic with a mercantile, monetary one. In “For each extatic instant” (Fr109), for instance, the transaction is an entirely poetic one: a proportional anguish is paid for each ecstatic instant: “For each extatic instant/We must an anguish pay/In keen and quivering ratio/To the extasy”. In “I pay – in Satin Cash –” (Fr526), likewise, the speaker asserts that, as her addressee has not stated their price, “A Petal, for a Paragraph/Is near as I can guess –”. Dickinson’s alternative, poetic, barter practices also predominate in “I gave myself to Him –” (Fr426), where each lover gives himself in exchange of the other. Dickinson’s speaker ponders that, while she, “a poorer prove”, might disappoint the balance of this “contract of a Life”, they are, at least, assuming a proportional risk: “At least – ’tis Mutual – Risk –/Some – found it – Mutual Gain –/Sweet Debt of Life –/Each Night to owe –/Insolvent – every Noon”. In “I cannot buy it – ’tis not sold –” (Fr493), the speaker describes something unique which, once lost, cannot be replaced by anything else. She is unable to buy a replacement, as “There is no other in the World –/Mine was the only one”. Other poems in which Dickinson establishes her own, poetic currency include “Somewhere upon the general Earth” (Fr1226), “I saw the wind within her –” (Fr1531), “The farthest Thunder that I heard” (Fr1665), “I did not reach Thee” (Fr1708), and “Go slow, my soul, to feed thyself” (Fr1322).

Ultimately, Dickinson’s employment of an economic logic can be split into at least three main categories: (1) those that allude to, and thus reproduce, biblical passages that had already established a monetary metaphor to refer to the afterlife; (2) those in which she yokes together poetic images with merely mercantile ones in order to show how a capitalist logic cannot account for human experience; and, finally, (3) those in which she refrains from acknowledging official currency altogether, employing the vocabulary of commercial transactions – to buy, to sell, to auction, to pay – in order to mark the noncapitalistic exchange of exclusively poetic items, from flowers and birds, to affection and life[86]. The poet also

[86] Animals that are characterised as being free from the constraints of monetary binds often appear in Dickinson as emblems for freedom in a way that closely aligns them with speakers that mock a traditional, unpoetic, economic logic. This is the case for the Rat from “The Rat is the concisest Tenant.” (Fr1369), a poem in which the rodent, a tenant who refuses to pay rent, embodies a sort of freedom from convention: “The Rat is the concisest Tenant./He pays no Rent./Repudiates the Obligation –/On Schemes intent”. Like Dickinson’s speakers, the Rat is an outcast that laughs at monetary conventions: “Balking our Wit/To sound or circumvent –/Hate cannot harm/A Foe so reticent –” and which is ultimately impervious to them: “Neither Decree prohibit him –/Lawful as Equilibrium.” The same logic applies to “The Butterfly upon the Sky” (Fr1559), which is defined as

works with these metaphors to express her distrust towards the possibility of commodification that comes with exposure and fame, something that one might suppose was a cause of concern for Dickinson throughout her lifetime as she struggled to decide whether she intended to publish her poems or not.

Economic metaphors also permeate Doherty's oeuvre, and most of their occurrences are connected to a tension regarding his first band's tumultuous rise to fame – as have I discussed in Chapter 1 – as well as his complicated relationship with the media and public exposure. In a second, smaller group of songs, however, Doherty works his metaphor in a manner that much resembles Dickinson's work with her poems that yoke together ineffable aspects of life and monetary transactions to convey how inappropriate it is to connect them.

As he does in "Gang of Gin", Doherty explores economic metaphors to criticise or allude to his experiences with the music industry in several of his lyrics. The very title of "Plan A" (a song co-written by Peter Doherty and Carl Barât), for instance, is an allusion to a plan devised by Banny Poostchi to sign The Libertines to Rough Trade[87]. As I have discussed in Chapter 1, the plan consisted of not only persuading Doherty and Barât to shift the style in which they played their own songs, but getting them to compose new ones that were more similar in sound to The Strokes' output. Subsequently, they would market The Libertines as the British alternative to the American band. Thus, this intentional rebranding on the business side of the band appears in the lyrics to "Plan A" – sung by Doherty – as "Sharpen up and carve them into something/Carve it into something new/Carve it into something". An economic logic permeates the lyrics. In the second stanza, the speaker lays down a series of instructions that will culminate in "carving it into something new": "And there's plan A/Take a seat/Watch them play/Keep a receipt". In the middle eight, Doherty addresses a sense of dissociation as the transformation begins to take place. This is expressed through a reference to his addressee's – probably Barât's – "stolen eyes": "Tell me what it is that you see/With your stolen eyes/And you're singing one two three/And I open up my eyes". Finally, stating clearly the uneasiness that permeates the lyrics, Doherty sings of selling one's soul and buying new shoes:

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being as "high" as the speaker and her addressee or, she adds, after consideration, even higher, as the insect in freer: "The Butterfly upon the Sky/That doesn't know its Name/And hasn't any Tax to pay/And hasn't any Home/Is just as high as you and I,/And higher, I believe,/So soar away and never sigh/And that's the way to grieve –".

[87] "CARL: 'Banny did the wining and dining to the max. it was really impressive, utterly persistent. Part of Plan A was that she'd quit her job and become the manager full-time. I mean, it was a real high-flying job at East West records. And so yeah, we were going to be blood brothers, in it together. Us two and Banny.'" (THORNTON; SARGENT, 2006, p. 29)

> And well in New York sold your soul
> And bought new shoes
> If you never choose
> You're bound to lose
> By the end of the road
> Come on I need to know
> (THE LIBERTINES, 2002c)

While this might be read as a direct allusion to the tumultuous time[88] The Libertines spent touring, writing, and recording new songs in America, I am interested in the way in which Doherty works the same strategy Dickinson employed in so many of her poems, that is, slighting an economic logic by producing an elongated metaphor that includes a nod to the price of existence, life itself or an idea of eternity. Here, Doherty harshly criticises his addressee, stating that he sold his soul and bought new shoes with the proceeds. While many of the poems I have already addressed in this section work in a similar manner, this is a strategy Dickinson establishes with poignancy in "Some – Work for Immortality –" (Fr536). In this poem, the speaker openly contrasts the "gold" earned in commonplace labour with "the Currency/of Immortality":

> Some – Work for Immortality –
> The Chiefer part, for Time –
> He – Compensates – immediately –
> The former – Checks – on Fame –
>
> Slow Gold – but Everlasting –
> The Bullion of Today –
> Contrasted with the Currency
> Of Immortality –
>
> A Beggar – Here and There –
> Is gifted to discern
> Beyond the Broker's insight –
> One's – Money – One's – the Mine –

While the speaker's underlying criticism permeates the poem, Dickinson is cunningly ambiguous in the metaphors as well as in her employment of dashes and suggested pauses, to the point that it is sometimes difficult to make sense of her meaning. The Gold is both "Everlasting" and "The Bullion of Today", which is subsequently contrasted with "the

[88] As I have discussed in Chapter 1, this tour was a tipping point for the band, both straining Doherty's relationship with his bandmates and jeopardising his mental health. In her book, his mother Jacqueline wrote of how much he dreaded the trip: "AmyJo was concerned because he'd told her he didn't really want to go to America. By late afternoon- early evening, therefore, we were all packed and on our way to London. She was worried that he might miss his flight unless we took him to Heathrow direct. It was obvious that Peter was not at ease." (J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 13)

Currency of Immortality", signalling that everlasting as it may be, it is merely material. Though predominantly bleak and ominous, the lyrics to "Plan A" also accommodate Dickinsonian ambiguity: "Like to craft the songs/State where you belong/And if you come from nowhere/You'll end up straight back there/You may as well/Carve, carve, carve it into something/Carve it into something new". Here, the speaker opens the stanza by alluding to not simply writing, but crafting songs, signalling that he looks at his trade as an art form, already here setting himself apart from one who would sell his soul to buy new shoes. He then moves to affirm this person likes to "State where you belong". At this point, Doherty's "nowhere" hangs in the air for a second before he harshly disregards it. While one might like to find and state belonging, this is merely a façade: one who came from nowhere does not wish to return there, so is willing to give up said identity and sense of belonging in exchange for a new life. Thus, the speaker instructs his addressee to keep mechanically "carving it into something new".

Doherty's inability or unwillingness to conciliate his craft as an artist with the demands and practices of the music industry transpire in many other songs. In "Skag & Bone Man" (Doherty/Barât), the speaker states this – the music industry – is a place in which "They'll pawn your soul to be number one"[89]. In "Never Never" (Doherty/Barât), Doherty once again resorts to the Dickinsonian practice of yoking together ineffable elements and monetary price. Here, slot machines sell back dreams: "I was sucking on a cigarette/Where did that crowd come from?/There all the pennies for the slot machines/Sells you back your dreams/It's fine in hell, boy/It's fine with you". In "Killamangiro"[90], Doherty's speaker openly questions the workings of fame and of the music industry, inquiring "why would you pay to see me in a cage?/Some men call a stage", while also denouncing in the chorus that a man was killed for his "giro". The speaker cryptically adds the killing "Wasn't very gay, I didn't mind/I wasn't money mad anyway/They killed a man for his giro today". Besides dealing with Doherty's tensions in regard to public exposure and tensions in relation to the stage experience and fame, this song also alludes to the aftermath of The Libertines' break-up. The

[89] "On and on/Like you even know what's going on/Into this world that I'm drawn/They'll kill you before you're born/They'll pawn your soul to be number one/You say it's the old fashioned same old song/That's how your mother likes it all night long".

[90] The song's title is a play on words which means "Kill a man for his giro" but shortened to look like "Kilimanjaro", the African mount. In the lyrics, the speaker states "they killed a man for his giro today". It should be understood that, while a giro is merely a payment transfer from one bank account to another bank account initiated by the payer, before the use of electronic transfers of payments became the norm in the United Kingdom, the fortnightly "giro" payment was the normal way of distributing benefit payments. When unemployment peaked in the 1980s, large numbers of people would receive their benefit payment on the same day, leading the concept of Giro Day. In the context of the song, Doherty is alluding to the benefit payment, thus denouncing that a man was killed for a considerably small amount of money.

lyrics are charged – as in "Gang of Gin" – with the writer's frustration in relation to his former bandmates and the workings of the industry as a whole. This is a theme that returns, charged with mercantile metaphors, in another song from *Down in Albion.* In "8 Dead Boys", the speaker laments that "The life that you wanted was not in store/You're gonna be in the dark once again"[91], reaffirming his alienation from the music industry marketplace. At this point, the expectations that came with "Plan A" are declared to be fully frustrated as Doherty's speaker reaffirms the denunciation he established in "Gang of Gin" by declaring "They'll give you a line, and then call you a waster" and lamenting that "When it suits you, you're a friend of mine". Doherty's denunciation of the music industry returns in Babyshambles' second studio album, *Shotter's Nation*. In "Unstookie Titled", the speaker complains that "They sold my name after they stole my shame/Sold my name ah yeah...". Finally, Doherty employs this type of economic metaphor in "A Spy in the House of Love", a song from his second solo album, *Hamburg Demonstrations* (2016). However, the metaphor resurfaces here with a fundamental shift. While in all the other examples collected and presented in this section Doherty's speaker denounces an external force's attempt to trade his soul or his name for money, here the speaker declares he almost did so himself. After alluding in the first stanza to the grief tabloid persecution has brought him and his family, the speaker proceeds to declare in the following one that he "nearly sold the soul to show".

In the second group of song lyrics I am going to address in this section, Doherty does not employ an economic logic to expose the influence of the music industry on an artist's mental health and well-being, but rather like Dickinson, he approximates poetic, subjective elements of unmeasurable value and objective, financial price, precipitating on the listener/reader the starkness of their incongruity and underlining the unsuitability of their connection. The logic deployed in these lyrics is congruent with that observed in Dickinsonian poems such as "The Auctioneer of Parting" (Fr1646), in which the speaker enacts usual auction events practice – even including in the poem the auctioneer's indication of a sale, that is, his saying "going, going, gone" followed by the bang of his hammer ("The Auctioneer of Parting/His "Going, going, gone"/Shouts even from the Crucifix,/And brings his Hammer down –") – before announcing that the product he sells is "the Wilderness". The currency of exchange is expressed as "the prices of Despair" ("The prices of Despair/Range from a single human Heart/To Two – not any more –"), making it clear that the auction the

[91] This notion of a dream world that is not available, and thus never comes to be, reappears in Doherty's and Barât's "The Milkman's Horse" (2015) : "They just don't make that kind of license anymore/For that way of life anymore/That type of world anymore".

speaker builds in the beginning of the poem is not a literal one. Departing from a similar logic, in “A’Rebours” Doherty’s speaker asks his addressee if, in case he slips away from the sense of hope and freedom he announces a few lines earlier, they would be willing to pay a debt he owed to sorrow: “But if I should fall/Would you vow today to pay tomorrow/The fuck off big debt I owe to sorrow”. These lyrics may be read in consonance with those from “Beg, Steal Or Borrow”, a song in which the speaker announces he has “already seen/All the sorrow that’s in store” before considering begging, stealing or borrowing to deal with a choking sense of sorrow:

> But if I beg, steal or borrow
> Just to hold on tighter
> To all the sorrow
> Tries to choke
> If I change my tune
> Maybe I won't be bound to doom
> And I won't be bound to doom
> And I won't be bound to
> (BABYSHAMBLES, 2006)

In “New Love Grows on Trees”, Doherty builds a metaphor that much resembles Dickinson’s in “I took one Draught of Life –” (Fr396). If in the poem – which, as I have discussed in the first section of this chapter, Doherty has cited in “At the Flophouse” – Dickinson claims to have paid “Precisely an existence/ The market price, they said.” for one “draught of life” that she took, in this song Doherty’ speaker likewise complains of “The price of being free these days”, classing it as “ridiculous”. Speaking of his citation of Dickinson’s verses in “At the Flophouse”, Doherty stated that he “nicked one or two of her lines” (BARTON;PETRIDIS, 2006) and it is interesting that he classes his relationship with her works – as well as the conversation he establishes with a particular poem built upon mercantile metaphors – in those terms. Some of Doherty’s lyrics embrace this poetics of stealing. In “The Ha Ha Wall” (Doherty/Barât), the speaker announces in the second stanza: “Well I've been thieving/I stole the light from the dawn” (a metaphor that is also interesting when we consider Dickinson’s and Doherty’s propensity towards sun-related metaphors). In “Narcissistic Teen Makes First XI”, the same metaphor resurfaces, with the speaker now referring to having stolen “no kisses/Just some books and the odd cigarette”. A similar kind of playful, poetic stealing appears in some of Dickinson’s poems, such as “I stole them from a Bee –” (Fr226), “Not one by Heaven defrauded stay –” (Fr1296), and “We should not mind so small a flower” (Fr82). Ultimately, then, Doherty’s treatment of this metaphorical complex

presents several points of contact with Dickinson's explorations of the production of meaning through an economic logic.

4.2.2 Dickinson's and Doherty's Employment of the Sun as a Metaphor

In *Lunacy of Light: Emily Dickinson and the Experience of Metaphor* (1987), Wendy Barker explores and analyses Emily Dickinson's ample employment of metaphors of light and darkness, dedicating special attention to how the sun appears throughout her extensive oeuvre. Arguing, as Cristanne Miller has also done, that Dickinson did not write in a "cultural vacuum" and that thus, besides Dickinson's own usage of these metaphors, the context in which she wrote her works must be considered, Barker turns to "the pervasiveness and complexity of Dickinson's metaphorical associations and their correspondences to similar metaphors occurring in the works of other writers" (BARKER, 1987, p. 3-4). While the critic seeks to establish how Dickinson took ownership of those metaphors as compositional tools, she does not recoil from recognising the ties between the poet's own usages and "the enormous power of these images as metaphors throughout history, throughout the culture which Emily Dickinson inhabited" (ibid.). While Barker subscribes to a feminist reading of light/dark metaphors in Dickinson, arguing that light usually appears as an element that stuns female mobility and causes "powerlessness" (BARKER, 1987, p. 16), associating this with the fact the poet worked in her father's household during the day and wrote throughout the night, she recognises "the painful ambivalence that characterizes the light/dark images of Dickinson" (1987, p. 16). This is a view I subscribe to in this analysis. The only unquestionable truth about the sun as a metaphor in Dickinson is that she employed it often and explored it throughout her long writing career in a manner that does not indicate that she saw it as a masculine, alien sign.

Barker's critical efforts align Dickinson with a "female metaphoric tradition in which women writers have covertly expressed their views of societal and sexual realities in terms of light and dark" (BARKER, 1987, p. 21). Partaking in this tradition are "writers as Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning", who, according to the critic, "imply that the very light of their culture was hostile to intelligent women" (BARKER, 1987, p. 21). Their literary means of denouncing the patriarchal oppression of their culture was crafted by "yoking sun imagery with the repression

of female energies" (BARKER, 1987, p. 21). However, recognising the instability of this metaphorical complex in Dickinson, Barker concedes that while the poet "rejoices in a night associated with an ability to muse" (1987, p. 26), "this same sheltering darkness can also lead to despair, blindness, or even death" (1987, p. 27). Ultimately then, the critic recognises that this ubiquitous metaphor is, as most elements in Dickinsonian poetics, treated with ambiguity by the poet. This is, I argue, part of what I have called Dickinsonian thought in Chapter 1. Emily Dickinson practices a poetics of uncertainty and open-endedness, in which the reader not only is invited to take part but feels almost compelled to navigate through her lack of certainty. This is an element I further discuss in the next section, but for now it suffices to say that Peter Doherty, as a reader and adapter of Dickinson, takes part in this exploration of ambiguity in light/darkness metaphors, especially when it comes to the sun.

The word "sun" and related nouns and adjectives (i.e. sunshine, sunrise, sunset, sunny) appear in a total of 223 of Dickinson's poems, with nearly 300 occurrences throughout. If one reads through the poet's entire poetic production, it becomes clear that Dickinson does not apply a single meaning to the sun or daylight as a metaphor, nor does she do that when she works with night-time imagery. The most emblematic employment of the sun as a metaphor in Dickinson's oeuvre appears in "The Sun is gay or stark" (Fr922), a short poem in which the speaker suggests that the meaning and significance the sun assumes is directly related to one's own fancies and purposes:

> The Sun is gay or stark
> According to Our Deed –
> If merry, He is merrier –
> If eager for the Dead
>
> Or an expended Day
> He helped to make too bright
> His mighty pleasure suits Us not
> It magnifies Our Freight

This poem, which can be taken as metapoetic commentary on Dickinson's own extensive work with the sun as a powerful metaphor admits that a word or a concept bears only the meaning and strength the poet imbues it with. This is a claim that is backed by the hierarchy Dickinson establishes in "I reckon – When I count at all –" (Fr533) as the speaker proceeds to enunciate a list in decrescent order of relevance that is topped by poets, who are followed by the sun: "I reckon – When I count at all – / First – Poets – Then the Sun – / Then Summer – Then the Heaven of God – / And then – the List is done –". Wendy Barker is correct to propose that Dickinson's exploration of the sun as a metaphor goes beyond the

usual stock conventions related to it. Nevertheless, it appears that to support her claim that it merely stands as a symbol for an oppressive patriarchal order would mean to ignore the fact that Dickinson never attaches one single symbolic function to it nor does she do that when exploring darkness as a metaphor. Cristanne Miller compares "I reckon – When I count at all –" to Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, associating Dickinson's Summer to the one the Bard's speaker claims "shall not fade" "as long as his poem survives" (MILLER, 2016, p. 762). Reading Dickinson's poem under that light and taking it as a description of how she organises her metaphorical complexes, it becomes clear that the sun and the sky are obliged to obey the Poets' will. If the sun and summer belong to her speakers, Dickinson is not oppressed by those elements at least where her poetry is concerned, something she demonstrates by exploring this imagery to exhaustion throughout her oeuvre. The fact she does the same with Christian imagery in general – heaven included – strengthens this claim. Dickinson's refusal to settle for one single function for sun-related imagery is part of her try-to-think poetics as posited by Deppman. The poet refuses to jump to stable synthesis, choosing to push the boundaries of meaning available to this metaphor, continually rethinking it.

In Emily Dickinson's poetry, the sun and daylight are often associated with birdsong[92]. Examples of that abound. In "There is a morn by men unseen –" (Fr13), Dickinson's speaker describes the birds that "sought the sun/When last year's distaff idle hung/And summer's brows were bound". In "A feather from the Whippowil" (Fr208), the bird "that everlasting sings –" has "Sunrise" for "Galleries". The sun's association with the work of the poet is hinted at as Dickinson enlists "the Springs" as his "Stanzas" ("Pine Bough./A feather from the Whippowil/That everlasting sings –/Whose Galleries are Sunrise –/Whose Stanzas, are the Springs –"). Daylight signals the time for the singing of birds and poetic language in poems such as "A Drop fell on the Apple Tree –" (Fr846), "The Bird did prance – the Bee did play –" (Fr1147) and "The Birds begun at Four o'clock –" (Fr504). Other poems, such as "The Doomed – regard the Sunrise" (Fr298), besides associating the song of the birds with sunlight, thematise death and the passing of time. In "'Heaven' has different Signs – to me –" (Fr544) the speaker describes her awe and perception of the divine while noon appears as "but a symbol of the Place –" and at dawn "A mighty look runs round the World / And settles in the Hills –". Daylight is described in terms of intense delight for the

[92] Which, in turn, often stands as an image of the poet: "Dickinson herself frequently refers to poems as songs and imagines birds as like poets in 'The Robin's my Criterion for Tune –' (F256), 'The Robin is the One' (F501 C), 'The Birds begun at Four o'clock –' (F504 B), 'The Robin for the Crumb' (F810 B), and 'At Half past Three, a single Bird' (F1099 B), to give just a few examples of poems where birds produce 'reports,' 'Miracle,' 'Chronicle,' or 'Experiment.'" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 50)

birds: “The Orchard, when the Sun is on – / The Triumph of the Birds”. The entire experience of the day is recounted as a marvel at least as intense as the Christian paradise as, once again, the speaker reinforces the notion of “First – the Poets” by destabilising religious hierarchy:

> The Rapture of a finished Day [of] Concluded Day –
> Returning to the West –
> All these – remind us of the place
> That Men call “Paradise” –
>
> Itself be fairer – we suppose –
> But how Ourself, shall be
> Adorned, for a Superior Grace –
> Not yet, our eyes can see –

In “The Sun went down – no Man looked on –” (Fr1109), the speaker and the Earth are the Sun’s sole witnesses as it sets:

> The Sun went down – no Man looked on –
> The Earth and I, alone,
> Were present at the Majesty –
> He triumphed, and went on –
>
> The Sun went up – no Man looked on –
> The Earth and I and One
> A nameless Bird – a Stranger
> Were Witness for the Crown –

Later, as the Sun rises, they remain awestricken witnesses of his “Crown” but are joined by a “A nameless Bird – a Stranger”. Again, the day appears as the territory of singing and joy of carefree birds. If one associates this poem with “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” (Fr260), this bird’s association with the image of the poet gains strength, as does his status as a stranger. Interestingly enough, Doherty established his dialogue with “I took one Draught of Life –” (Fr396) by naming the sense of estrangement between the speaker and a world governed by an economic, mercantile logic set into place by men such as those who would not “look on” in “The Sun went down – no Man looked on –”.

In many of Dickinson’s poems, the sun appears as a marker of the passing of time, an intermediary place between this life and the next one or even, at times, as heaven itself. In “How dare the robins sing,” (Fr1782), the sun is described as insulting “To him whose mortal light/Beguiled of immortality/Bequeath him to the night.” In “She died – *this* was the way she died.” (Fr154), the speaker describes how a woman took her last breath, “Took up her simple wardrobe/And started for the sun –”. In “You’ll know it – as you know ’tis Noon –” (Fr429), the speaker compares the way in which her addressee is aware of the “Glory” of the Sun she

knows in life and the "Glory" she will recognise once she arrives in Heaven and sees "God the Father" and "the Son" to some unnamed, elusive knowledge she does not describe. Dickinson's use of *rime riche* accentuates the open-endedness of this poem, in which she points to some ineffable certainty she does not put into words. In the following stanza, she appeals to her addressee's intuition in relation to some quality she names as "omnipotence" in the last stanza:

> By intuition, Mightiest Things
> Assert themselves – and not by terms –
> "I'm Midnight" – need the Midnight say –
> "I'm Sunrise" – Need the Majesty?
>
> Omnipotence – had not a Tongue –
> His lisp – is Lightning – and the Sun –
> His Conversation – with the Sea –
> "How shall you know"?
> Consult your Eye!

In the poems that connect with death and after-death experiences, the Sun also appears as a token of epiphany; in "Struck, was I, nor yet by Lightning –" (Fr841), the speaker makes a bold claim: "I love the Cause that slew Me –" and concludes: "Often as I die/Its beloved Recognition/Holds a Sun on Me –". The sun is equally a sign of a powerful, unnameable power that cannot be transcoded into verse in this poem, in which the speaker laments her limitations: "I found the words to every thought/I ever had – but One –/And that – defies me –/As a Hand did try to chalk the Sun" (Fr436). In "Love – thou art high –" (Fr452), the speaker addresses "Love" as a destination one cannot reach alone, but only when accompanied by someone else, a nod at the impossibility of fulfilment offered by unrequited love. When she conjures up in the second stanza the possibility of reaching a place "Nicknamed by God –/Eternity", the speaker rejoices in the possibility of reaching the Sun: "Love – thou art deep –/I cannot cross thee –/But, were there Two/Instead of One –/Rower, and Yacht – some sovreign Summer –/Who knows – but we'd reach the Sun?".

In "Because I could not stop for Death –" (Fr479), the Setting Sun appears as a milestone towards Eternity. While the speaker describes the places she passed along with Death ("We passed the School, where Children strove/At Recess – in the Ring –/We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –/We passed the Setting Sun –"), in his carriage she no longer has the same control as in "First – the Poets": she corrects herself after claiming to have passed the Sun, recognising his agency: "Or rather – He passed Us –". The opposite movement takes place in "My Faith is larger than the Hills –" (Fr489) as the speaker describes how the Sun's

"Golden Will" must submit to the strength of her faith as guide once the Hills, his usual compass, decay:

> My Faith is larger than the Hills –
> So when the Hills decay –
> My Faith must take the Purple Wheel
> To show the Sun the way –
>
> 'Tis first He steps upon the Vane – You see [He]
> And then – upon the Hill –
> And then abroad the World He go
> To do His Golden Will –
>
> And if His Yellow feet should miss –
> The Bird would not arise – [The] Day
> The Flowers would slumber on their Stems – [would] sleep upon – [their]
> No Bells have Paradise –
>
> How dare I, therefore, stint a faith
> On which so vast depends –
> Lest Firmament should fail for me – [Lest] Universe – • Deity –
> The Rivet in the Bands

The idea of the poet as a creator of worlds is also explored in "I send Two Sunsets –" (Fr557), in which the speaker openly competes with the day, pointing out reality's limitations:

> I send Two Sunsets –
> Day and I – in competition ran –
> I finished Two – and several Stars –
> While He – was making One –

In the second stanza, she recognises that the sunset conjured up by the Day was "ampler", but ultimately laughs at it, stating the superiority of her sunsets as, unlike the ample one that took place during the day, hers was "more convenient/To Carry in the Hand –". In "It's easy to invent a Life –" (Fr747), Dickinson plays with the idea of the Poet as Creator of life, which appears in the form of the Sun, enacting in the poem the easiness with which one can "invent Life" ("But His Perturbless Plan/ Proceed – inserting Here – a Sun –/There – leaving out a Man –"). The sun can be easily "shoved away" by one's "wrinkled finger" in "the World you colored" (Fr1203).

Positive representations of the sun are common in Dickinson's poetry. In "Besides the Autumn poets sing" (Fr123), the speaker asks that a "sunny mind" be granted to her to bear the Lord's "windy will" ("Grant me, Oh Lord, a sunny mind –/Thy windy will to bear!"). In

"Make me a picture of the sun –" (Fr239), the speaker asks for an image of the sun so she can enjoy its presence by hanging the picture in her room (she asks for a picture of a robin in the same poem, once more aligning and approximating the daylight and birdsong which, in turn, aligns the sun with poetry). The speaker talks of the sun in almost lovesick terms in "Had I not seen the Sun" (Fr1249): "Had I not seen the Sun/I could have borne the shade/But Light a newer Wilderness/My Wilderness has made –". In "There is a flower that Bees prefer –" (Fr642), the Sun appears as a provider of life for the flower which, in turn, is "cancelled by the Frost –". In "There is a Zone whose even Years" (Fr1020), the speaker dreams of eternal summer and "perpetual noon" ("There is a Zone whose even Years/No Solstice interrupt –/Whose Sun constructs perpetual Noon/Whose perfect Seasons wait –"). Other poems in which the Sun stands as a metaphor for joy or is used as an image connected to revelry include "The Trees like Tassels – hit – and swung –" (Fr523), "Ourselves were wed one summer – dear –" (Fr596), "I think To Live – may be a Bliss" (Fr757), "To see her is a Picture –" (Fr1597), "I'll tell you how the Sun rose –" (Fr204), and "The *Sun – just touched* the Morning" (Fr246). In "Time does go on –" (Fr1338), the Sun appears as a promise of more auspicious times after a great sorrow. Finally, one should note that the night and the darkness do not always appear under a positive light in Dickinson's poems nor do they unequivocally represent freedom and poetry as Barker proposes. In "I sing to use the Waiting," (Fr955) the speaker and her addressee "journey to the Day" and sing together "To keep the Dark away". While in "We learn in the Retreating" (Fr1045), the speaker laments the lack of daylight produced by a now "Perished Sun" and misses his "Golden presence", in "Soft as the massacre of Suns", the Evening "slays" and victimises daylight:

Soft as the massacre of Suns	[massacre]s
By Evening's sabres slain	[Evening's] sabre

Dickinson uses the Sun to build negative metaphors and imagery in several instances, however. In "I never told the buried gold" (Fr38), the sun appears as a plunderer who "crouch[es] low to guard his prize". The speaker describes a "pedantic sunshine" in "Portraits are to daily faces" (Fr174). In "Rearrange a "Wife's" Affection!" (Fr267), daylight conveys entrapment. Freedom ensues as the sun sets: "Burden – borne so far triumphant –/None suspect me of the crown,/For I wear the "Thorns" till *Sunset* –/Then – my Diadem put on." In "The Sunset stopped on Cottages" (Fr116), the speaker gazes at the Sun's movement throughout dusk and addresses it by calling him "Supercilious". Wendy Barker dedicates particular attention to "The Sun and Fog contested" (Fr1248), a poem she describes as a

"forceful image of the sun's victory over the poet" (1987, p. 70). To the critic, the Sun's whip represents a phallic symbol that oppresses women, and, specifically, Emily Dickinson herself. The short lyric reads:

> The Sun and Fog contested
> The Government of Day –
> The Sun took down his Yellow Whip
> And drove the Fog away –

Barker's take on this poem is based on supposed biographical circumstances and religious imagery. She states that Dickinson's "coded imagery" (1987, p. 70) tells us that "this is how women are defeated" (ibid.). Here the fog, supposedly "a female image" is defeated by a phallic symbol, the Sun's "Yellow Whip", with which the male entity will "invariably win the contest that decides which force will rule the day or perhaps life itself" (ibid.). Barker goes on to associate this poem with an occurrence in which "Vinnie apparently told a story that Emily at one time registered fury and horror, 'screaming to the top of her voice' at their father's whipping the family horse" (ibid.). While the critic is often vocal on her criticism of Edward Dickinson, there is no indication one should make biographical associations when reading this poem. This is a singular way of approaching the poem, one that is relevant and thought-provoking in its own right. However, it should be presented and understood as a particular interpretation that does not adhere to a contextual reading. While it is politically important to reread the canon through the concerns of our own day and age, it is problematic to project one reading as a generalised (and indeed generic) idea of figurations of the sun in Dickinson as analogous to patriarchal oppression[93].

Finally, I believe that the sun matters to Dickinson as do many of the metaphors and images she explores most; that is, as a tool to build her poetics of openness and uncertainty. The poet does not imbue the sun with only one meaning; rather, it signifies differently as she adapts her metaphor to the purpose of each poem. In "The pattern of the sun" (Fr1580)[94], for instance, the speaker recognises the sun's nature is *sui generis*, one not fully matched by any of the comparisons the poet builds throughout her extensive oeuvre. Dickinson's poetry never settles for one meaning nor for one truth and so both daylight and darkness ultimately appear

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[93] Especially considering that Dickinson often established an association between the sun and circumference, a concept that is key to her poetics. Poems that correlate the sun and circumference include: "'Twas awkward, but it fitted me –" (Fr900), "The Poets light but Lamps –" (Fr930), "Always Mine!" (Fr942) and "Two Butterflies went out at Noon" (Fr571).

[94] "The pattern of the sun/Can fit but him alone/For sheen must have a Disk/To be a sun –"

as passing states that “never stop at all” (Cf. Fr314), as the poet succinctly conveys in this poem:

> Presentiment – is that long shadow – on the Lawn –
> Indicative that Suns go down –
>
> The notice to the startled Grass Monition – [to]
> That Darkness – is about to pass –
> (Fr487)

Two conversational poems Dickinson wrote in 1862 enact the poet’s unwillingness to choose day or night. In “Good Morning – Midnight –” (Fr382), written in the autumn, the speaker greets Midnight and declares she is “coming Home” to it as the Day “got tired” of her. The same cannot be said about her, however, as she declares sunshine “a sweet place,” although “Morn” did not want her anymore. Although she chose Day, it turned away from her, so now she must plead with Night, asking for it to welcome her:

> Good Morning – Midnight –
> I’m coming Home –
> Day – got tired of Me –
> How could I – of Him?
>
> Sunshine was a sweet place –
> I liked to stay –
> But Morn – didn’t want me – now –
> So – Goodnight – Day!
>
> I can look – can’t I –
> When the East is Red?
> The Hills – have a way – then –
> That puts the Heart – abroad –
>
> You – are not so fair – Midnight –
> I chose – Day –
> But – please take a little Girl –
> He turned away!

The speaker of “I see thee better – in the Dark –” (Fr442), on her turn, embraces the night and its darkness, declaring she can see her addressee better in it. The Night is shrouded in a riddle this speaker prefers to the clarity of daylight – the “Miner’s lamp” her only source of clarity – as she renounces the Sun and the Day. It should be noted this poem was written in late 1862, likely at the beginning of winter:

> I see thee better – in the Dark –
> I do not need a Light –
> The Love of Thee – a Prism be –

Excelling Violet –

I see thee better for the Years
That hunch themselves between – [That] pile themselves –
The Miner's Lamp – sufficient be –
To nullify the Mine –

And in the Grave – I see Thee best –
Its little Panels be
A'glow – All ruddy – with the Light
I held so high, for Thee –

What need of Day –
To Those whose Dark – hath so – surpassing Sun –
It deem it be – Continually –
At the Meridian?

It is precisely the variety of meanings Dickinson embraces while exploring the potentialities of the sun as an image in her poetry that Doherty instils into his songwriting. As in Dickinson, the sun comes as a recurring metaphor in his written works, at times under a positive, constructive light, at others as a source of destruction and a past his speaker aims to leave behind. At least twenty of Doherty's recorded songs allude to the sun in some way. Eighteen of those are his original compositions, while two others are covers of songs by other artists that refer to the sun. Throughout the years, he explored a myriad of meanings, often referring to and criticising tabloid media by employing figurations of the sun – after all, one of the outlets that most often published derogatory pieces about him is titled *The Sun.*

In 2003, The Libertines released "Don't Look Back into the Sun," a single that would become one of the band's biggest commercial successes[95] as well as a favourite among fans. Doherty and Carl Barât share credits on this song, the latter having reported that they were influenced – in its title and lyrics as well as in its chord progression – by two songs: Oasis's Britpop anthem "Don't Look Back in Anger" (1995) and Velvet Underground's "Ride Into the Sun" (1969/1986). This consideration takes particular significance under the light of the release of the self-titled album released by Doherty and his band, Peter Doherty & The Puta Madres, in 2019. While most of the songs in it are original compositions by Doherty (some of them co-written with other musicians), the track "Someone Else to Be" constitutes a mashup cover of both "Ride Into the Sun" and "Don't Look Back in Anger". In the 2003 song, the expression "Don't Look Back Into the Sun" suggests that one should not look into a hurtful circumstance or past event, conveying both the literal consequence of being blinded by

[95] According to the Official Charts Company, the single fared well in the UK charts, peaking as number one in the UK Independent Singles Chart (2003) and reaching number eleven in the UK Singles Chart. The release was certified gold in 2018 by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI).

looking directly at the sun and the notion of dwelling on something that is already past. This is suggested both by the lyrics that open the first stanza: “Don’t look back into the sun/Now you know that the time is come/And they said it would never come for you” and by the chorus, which alludes to a sense of entrapment: “They'll never forgive you, but they won't let you go (let me go!) / She'll never forgive you, but she won't let you go, oh no!”. If we accept this as the foundational use of the sun as a metaphor in Doherty, it becomes clear how it branches out throughout his work, alternating, as in Dickinson, between positive and negative meanings. In a way, it seems that every time the sun appears in Doherty’s lyrics, the writer hints at an instance of intertextuality between the work in question and “Don’t Look Back into the Sun”. I argue here that Doherty works and reworks this metaphor in his oeuvre throughout the years only to return to it in his most Dickinsonian release, his 2019 album *Peter Doherty & The Puta Madres*, in which he breaks down the meaning of the sun in his oeuvre back to its earliest origins, recording his own version of the two songs that inspired “Don’t Look Back Into the Sun”.

As Doherty’s relationship with The Libertines further deteriorated throughout 2004, he formed another band called Babyshambles with Drew McConnell (bass), Patrick Walden (lead guitar) and Gemma Clarke (drums). In the same year The Libertines released their self-titled album, Babyshambles released two singles: a self-titled one in April and a second one in November. Titled *Killamangiro,* the latter included both the eponymous song and “The Man Who Came to Stay” (Peter Doherty/Patrick Walden). While in both songs Doherty explores themes of entrapment and psychological tensions propelled by fame and public exposure as a successful musician, in the latter he specifically addresses the fickleness of the music industry, as the speaker tells the story of a man who replaced a boy who “disappeared without a trace”. The likely inference that both the man and the boy are images of the speaker himself are confirmed as he shifts to the first person in the third line, accusing this man of stealing all his songs and style. As he found no resistance, this speaker tells us this man “was king for a day”[96] before warning his addressee: “If you sail to the sun/Beware the eyes of green”:

> There's a man who came to stay
> The boy he replaced, disappeared without a trace
> Stole all my songs and my style away
> No-one would say what they wanted to say
> So he was king for a day

[96] This line can be read in the context of two songs Doherty co-wrote with Carl Barât: “Tell the King” (*Up the Bracket,* 2002) and “The Man Who Would Be King” (*The Libertines*, 2004), both of which thematise tensions within the band and in their relationship with fame, success and public exposure.

> If you sail into the sun
> Beware the eyes of green
> And if the whole room tells you 'you are the one'
> I defy you not to believe them, my son
> (BABYSHAMBLES, 2004)

In the context of this song, the sun appears as a metaphor for the place the speaker has gone to, being misled into signing up for something that made him feel estranged from himself. This is confirmed by the lyrics of the third stanza: "Every single gig I play/Something's not right inside/Paranoia and pride, nowhere to hide". The speaker's sense of self was shattered by the room full of people who told him "he was the one". Doherty's use of *rime riche* in this song (sun/son) is evocative of Dickinson's employment of the same device in "You'll know it – as you know 'tis Noon –" (Fr429). It is particularly interesting that both Doherty's lyrics and Dickinson's poem thematise glory; while she focalises Christian, heavenly glory, Doherty's focus is on fame and success – a tale very much like the one he explores in "Gang of Gin".

While the first two occurrences[97] of the sun as metaphor in Doherty denote a dreaded past, and point to uncertainty and danger as the speaker refers to a loss of control within his own self as the forces involved in his fame and success take hold of him, the release of Babyshambles' first studio album magnified this sense of exposure and insecurity. By the time *Down in Albion* was recorded and released, Doherty had been turned into one of the most harassed and talked-about celebrities by British tabloid media not only due to their coverage of the artist's drug abuse, but due to his relationship with a famous, high-profile model. Thus, in this album, references to "the sun" gain a new dimension as Doherty reacts to the headlines said tabloid would frequently publish about him. In "Sticks and Stones" (Peter Doherty/Peter Wolfe), a song that appears to allude both to the strained relationship between Doherty and his former band[98] and to the way the media portrayed him, the speaker announces he is about to tell a tale about "Blood lust theft and oh sweet love/And a very, many things I do so well". Reporting he will begin to tell the story "right at the end", the speaker reports that "they" – presumably the media – "said that I was as good as dead" and, alluding to the toll such

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[97] It should be noted that I am considering the release dates of Doherty's songs to refer to them chronologically. Nevertheless, some songs (i.e. "You're My Waterloo", "She Is Far", "All at Sea") were released much later than they were written, and some were widely known by fans from jam and recording sessions available online and live performances. In a way, Doherty's unreleased songs resemble Dickinson's unpublished poems in their "provisional" (Cf. GORDON, 2010, p. 140) character.

[98] Although this song was officially released with the Babyshambles, Doherty played this song with The Libertines live and recorded it in the The Branding Session, which is also credited to the band. (UP THE ALBION, 2019).

exposure takes on one's mental health, the speaker goes on: "Schizoid... fame on the run" before warning the addressee both in an allusion to The Libertines' song and to the tabloid newspaper: "Don't look back into the motherfucking sun, no". Ultimately, he observes, subverting the popular dictum that "Sticks and stones/May break my bones/Oh but your words/They really hurt me". In the same album, the song "Pipedown" (Peter Doherty/Patrick Walden) also alludes to the tabloid newspaper as the speaker claims in the third stanza that "Oh on The Sun/They make you out to be a tearaway":

> Do your sums
> Work out a fairer way
> If it comes undone
> Just paper over the cracks
> And there ain't no turning back
>
> Oh on The Sun
> They make you out to be a tearaway
> Comes undone
> Ahh I just spoke to matt
> pat,they want the money back
> (BABYSHAMBLES, 2005)

Doherty's writing is particularly clever – and reminiscent of Dickinson's – as he establishes two quintains that rely on consonantal and assonantal rhymes (sums/undone, cracks/back, Sun/undone, matt/back), but that echo one another, with the third stanza reproducing the end-sounds of each line forming mostly full-rhyme pairs (sums/Sun, way/tearaway, undone/undone, cracks/matt, back/back). The songwriter's pairing of "sums" and "The Sun" is particularly relevant as he associates an economic logic with the newspaper's activity of "making you out to be a tearaway". Finally, it should also be observed that, while Doherty sings "comes undone" in the track from the album, the handwritten lyrics in the album booklet read "scum… I just spoke to Matt Pat they want the money back …". In live performances (such as Babyshambles at Glastonbury 2007, Babyshambles live at S.E.C.C. 2007) Doherty also usually sings "scum" instead of "comes undone", presumably referring to *The Sun*[99].

While up until *Down the Albion* (2005) Doherty established negative associations with the sun as a metaphor, the songwriter expanded his range of possible meanings – as Dickinson did – with the Babyshambles' 2006 release of *The Blinding EP*. In "Sedative", a song credited to Doherty alone, the writer establishes the sun as a positive metaphor for better days. The

[99] In Babyshambles' performance at Glastonbury 2005, Doherty actually replaced the lyrics "the sun" with the word "scum".

song thematises addiction and healing. In the first stanza, the speaker establishes “sedative” as his past hero (“Sedative / It's a sedative / It was my hero / Oh it was…”) while, in the chorus, he looks into the future and pleads with his addressee to accompany him as he goes out to a much anticipated walk through the morning sun:

> What's it really like now
> It's been a long long time since I've step outside
> To the morning sun now
> Would you take me out
> Take me by the hand now
> It's been a long, long time since I've step outside
> To the morning sun
> (BABYSHAMBLES, 2006)

If in “Don’t Look Back Into the Sun” and in the releases that followed it Doherty establishes the sun as an amalgam of negative aspects – a hurtful past, a source of harsh words and wishes and a land of uncertainty and danger – in “Sedative” the poet opens the door to a ressignifying of this metaphor, putting into practice Dickinson’s words in “The Sun is gay or stark” (Fr922), that is, that is up to us to create the world through poetry. In “Sedative” Doherty subverts the implications of the sun in his works and, in that gesture of opening the metaphor up to other meanings, deflates the hurtful nature it had assumed. Now the sun is no longer a tabloid newspaper or a source of worry, but a metaphor that is up to the poet to mould and employ:

> The Sun is gay or stark
> According to Our Deed –
> If merry, He is merrier –
> If eager for the Dead
>
> Or an expended Day
> He helped to make too bright
> His mighty pleasure suits Us not
> It magnifies Our Freight

In *Shotter’s Nation* (2007), Doherty reworked the metaphor once again in “Crumb Begging Baghead”. In this song, the speaker asks not to be taken for a “sunbeam”, the adjective denoting a bright, positive person. The lyrics to this song are pessimistic overall and the speaker’s tone, self-derogatory. He repeats his request not to be taken for a sunbeam several times and, in the chorus, affirms himself as a “crumb-begging baghead”:

> Don't take me for a sunbeam
> Don't take me for a sunbeam, a sunbeam, a sunbeam

> I'm a crumb beggin' baghead baby yeah
> I'm a crumb beggin' baghead baby yeah
> Bet you say that to all of the girls
> (BABYSHAMBLES, 2007)

The sarcastic observation that closes the chorus (“Bet you say that to all of the girls”) underlines and accentuates the cynical tone of this song as does the fact the speaker reaffirms his nihilist view on his apparently glum circumstances, both denying that those matter at all (“It's just another faction of/Like another fraction of/Another taxer of your life”) and by reaffirming the pointlessness of caring:

> And all the long lost wars
> Any causes worth dying for
> What passing bells for those die like cattle again
> And again and again
> (BABYSHAMBLES, 2007)

Nevertheless, as the song draws to its close, the overall insensibility of Doherty’s speaker is put into question as he addresses his reader/listener: “If you ever smile in the street of crocodiles/I doubt you'll ever smile again”, an observation that puts him closer to Dickinsonian speakers that not only are open to ambiguity even in their most pessimistic manifestation of lack of faith, but also in their addressing of the reader at the other side of the page. While Doherty’s speaker presents an acute nihilistic approach to every aspect he addresses throughout this song – with several repetitions of what he is and what he is not, apparently wishing to leave no doubt as to the way he wishes to be perceived – this final, quiet aside to the reader/listener is a nod to Dickinsonian doubt. It is necessary to feign a sense of worthlessness and carelessness to face “the street of crocodiles”. One that displays any sign of joy in it will certainly never smile again, so the speaker remains guarded. Doherty’s speaker establishes a harsh, ruthless pose and proceeds to educate his listener not only about how to present oneself but also on the fact that the necessity to appear and present oneself in one way does not equate one’s true self. Ultimately, this song’s “sunbeam” is aligned with Doherty’s sun in the previous songs. That is, while in some of then the sun appears under a negative light (“Don’t Look Back Into the Sun”, “The Man Who Came to Stay”, “Pipedown”) and under a positive one in others (“Sedative”), sunlight is always associated with the speaker’s relationship to his public image and the tensions generated by the expectations fame and exposure impose on him. Doherty’s views on this are clearly ambivalent and so the sun appears as a pliable metaphor in his hands, one that he adapts

according to the mood and stance each song takes. The sun can be a foe, a cherished source of tenderness and joy, or a metaphor for the poet himself.

In 2009, Doherty released his first solo album and though the artist had played shows and toured solo for years, this was the first official release that featured his songs under his own name. Perhaps because the artist no longer had to conciliate wills within a band, this was the first album that had him fully evade the musical genre that made him famous. With predominantly acoustic arrangements that embraced this album's "diverse range of styles" (ENNEVER, 2009), this was the first time Doherty dared to stray from Pootschi's and Rough Trade's guidance to maintain a rock'n'roll sound and presentation when it came both to his work and to his stage persona (Doherty was accompanied by two ballet dancers onstage throughout *Grace/Wastelands*'s tours). Reviewing the album for the BBC, Liz Ennever praised *Grace/Wastelands* for what she called "Doherty's heartfelt 'poetry'" which, according to the critic, spans all the tracks, providing them with a "universal theme of 'this is the real me'" to what could, according to her, seem like a "slightly disjointed and incoherent album" (ENNEVER, 2009). Although she frames those words as a negative reaction to the album's plural sounds, Ennever's first impression appears to be the one that best captures the character of *Grace/Wastelands* and the part it plays out in Doherty's discography. It is precisely this slight disjunction and apparent incoherence – a lack of homogeneity – that best expresses the Dickinsonian sentence in Doherty's voice. If in previous albums he could only hint at this through songs he insisted were part of the tracklist – such as "Radio America"[100] in *Up the Bracket*, "Music When the Lights Go Out" in *The Libertines*, "Albion" in *Down in Albion*, and so on – as *Grace/Wastelands* marks a shift in the way the artist presents himself and his works publicly, now taking full authority by presenting the songs under his own name, Doherty is more open to display his songs not as a homogenous list of tracks but precisely as thought experiments, open artworks. There is a lack of unity that best represents a strain of Dickinsonian try-to-think poetics in which, as Deppman told us, the poet's "mind repeatedly stretches, fails, realizes it fails, regroups, rewords, and reaches its limit again" (2005, p. 89).

Upon the album's release, Doherty spoke of *Grace/Wastelands* in pictorial terms, describing it as a "snapshot of a moment in time" (NME, 2009a). The fact that all but one of

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[100] The connection between the treatment the songs in *Grace/Wastelands* received and that of "Radio America" was recognised by *Pitchfork*'s reviewer Ian Cohen: "Imagining an alternate reality where 'Radio America' was the jumping off point for the rest of his career, Grace is a record that splits the difference between its collaborators: Though largely acoustic and peppered with plenty UK signifiers of string pads, light drums, horns, and shuffle/skiffle tempos, its production resembles that of any Coxon solo record, closely mic'd to the point where everything sounds smudged. As Doherty's voice continues to take on a sort of empathetic piteousness, this sort of unkempt sonic rendering adds a humanizing touch" (COHEN, 2009).

the songs were known by Doherty's fans for some years from live performances and leaked jam sessions suggests the writer does not refer to the process of writing the songs but of a stance he took on when he decided to release them. While I addressed the overall arrangement of Doherty's oeuvre in Chapter 3 under more detail, it is interesting to underline this shift in the way the artist opened up to interrogate and explore different sounds to suit his songs in *Grace/Wastelands* as one looks to find out how the sun – a metaphor that had been present in every album the artist released – under this new approach. Light and darkness imagery are explored in songs such as "Salome" and "Sheepskin Tearaway" in this album, but it is in "I Am the Rain" (Peter Doherty/John Robinson)[101] – the only song in *Grace/Wastelands* previously unheard – that we see a return of the sun, now personified. The lyrics to "I Am the Rain" establish and explore relationships between the speaker – who identifies as the Rain – and other dwellers of "the sky", such as the wind, the cloud, the snow, and the sun. The relationship structure of Doherty's song is reminiscent of Dickinson's poem "A wild Blue sky abreast of Winds" (Fr1418):

> A wild Blue sky abreast of Winds
> That threatened it – did run
> And crouched behind his Yellow Door
> Was the defiant sun – sat [the]
> Some conflict with those upper friends
> So genial in the main
> That we deplore peculiarly
> Their arrogant Campaign – this [arrogant]

In this single-stanza poem, the Blue sky itself is a character, running from Winds that threaten it. The sun, however, does not yield to the Winds' threat, defiantly observing his foe's movements from "behind his Yellow Door". Dickinson's speaker recognises the conflicts that affect the dynamics of "those upper friends" in what can be interpreted as an allusion to the Olympian gods, each of whom represented an element of his or her own. In Doherty, the Sun appears as the speaker's rival: while the Rain is "held in disdain", the Sun is "feared and revered". In the first stanza, the speaker introduces himself to us:

> I am the rain
> Held in disdain
> Lotions and potions just add to my fame

[101] Explaining the writing process for "I Am the Rain" in an interview for *Clash Magazine*, Doherty said: "He's [John Robinson] had a song for a while called 'I Am The Rain', which we used to play backstage and in hotel rooms and at bus stops back in the days when The Bandits used to play with The Libertines. I always wanted to do it, so we worked on it a bit together, changed a word, nicked a third..." (CLASH MUSIC, 2009).

> The rime that in Spain
> Fall on the plain
> The truth is I'm ruthless
> I can't be contained
> (DOHERTY, 2009)

Already at this point, the Rain denounces what he perceives as a misconception about himself. That is, perhaps, the reason he chooses to address us through a song. By alluding to "The Rain in Spain" (Frederick Loewe/Alan Jay Lerner), one of the most popular songs from the musical *My Fair Lady* (1956), Doherty establishes an instance of extended intertextuality with George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1913) which inspired the musical and, in its turn, was a stage adaptation of the Greek myth of Pygmalion. Ultimately, the speaker aims to counter the disdain that taints his fame by ascertaining he cannot be contained. While most of the other stanzas in the song are dedicated to introducing other characters that dwell in the sky, both the chorus ("Up in the sky, we've demand to supply/I am necessity, base of the recipe") and the description of the cloud ("My mother the cloud/In widow's black shroud/Gives birth to the earth/Before fields can be plowed") reaffirm that while the sun is usually perceived as the ruler of sky and earth, it is really the rain that maintains and allows for life to bloom. The sun, on its turn, gives continuity to the process the rain initiated by "ripening the plum":

> My rival the sun
> Who ripens the plum
> Is feared and revered
> He gives sight to the gun
> (DOHERTY, 2009)

Considering the other occurrences of the sun as a metaphor in Doherty, it seems interesting both that his speaker presents himself as the sun's rival and that the star is presented both as somewhat opportunistic, and associated with violence. The line "He gives sight to the gun" appears as a possible allusion to Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942), a novel in which the Algerian sun appears as a motif for society's expectations and impositions upon Meursault, ultimately leading him to shoot the Arab in an attempt to dissipate sunlight itself. If we consider that it is somehow this sun that is featured in Doherty's song, the rain's claim that it is "ruthless" and that it cannot be contained seem like a reaction against societal expectations in the same vein of songs like "The Man Who Came to Stay" and "Crumb Begging Baghead", in which the speaker ascertains his own uniqueness and refusal to conform by acting out or warning against the sun. In each song, however, Doherty adheres to

a different strategy and employs different tropes to establish his metaphorical complexes. “I Am the Rain” echoes Dickinson’s “A wild Blue sky abreast of Winds” (Fr1418) not only in its enactment of a conflict amongst sky-dwelling entities in which the sun poses as pertaining to a superior, privileged position, but also in its sound. Doherty’s end-rhymes in the first stanza (rain/disdain; Spain/plain; contained/rain) echo one of Dickinson’s rhyme pairs (main/Campaign).

Doherty often refers to his 2019 album *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres* as a particular achievement as an artist, even going as far as to say that this was the first time he produced an album he had felt pleasure listening back to after recording (Cf. NME, 2019) and that it was the “first time I’ve dug in and done the promo with enthusiasm and yeah… and pleasure and it’s the first time I’ve actually got reviews where people seem to actually listen to the record. Yeah, I’m quite intrigued by the whole process now as opposed to avoiding it” (TAGGART; DOHERTY, 2019). As I have discussed in Chapter 3, this is Doherty’s most Dickinsonian record as he exercised Dickinsonian thought. In this album, Doherty’s sun metaphors come full circle as he returns to the two songs that inspired “Don’t Look Back Into the Sun” and, by exploring and joining them together as a single track in this album, titled “Someone Else to Be”, he exercises Dickinson’s try-to-think compositional methods.

This Dickinsonian predilection for an unwillingness to choose a single truth, and open-endedness is also present in another song in which the sun is mentioned in this album, “Narcissistic Teen Makes First XI”. Originally titled “Love Reign O'er Me”, this song’s demo was posted online circa 2003-2004 and Doherty has been consistently playing it live in his concerts since the mid-noughties. The main difference between the version Doherty had been playing live throughout fifteen years and the one in *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres* is that he replaced the line “I never liked South-London anyway” (which was sung twice) with “I never liked choruses anyway/I never lacked choruses anyway”, an interesting choice as this is the section of the song that would traditionally correspond to a chorus. Here, Doherty refrains from elaborating one. His speaker ascertains his dislike for this structure while ascertaining his ability to build one in case he wanted. Doherty has experimented with deviating from the standard pop song structure throughout the years and that is something he particularly explores in this album. In “Narcissistic Teen Makes First XI”, the sun appears to signal the speaker’s unwillingness to surrender to a single version of events. Throughout the lyrics, he tells his addressee of the different takes they have on their own relationship:

> I'll never really understand why I
> believe you
> You're so sly and under hand I think I'll
> leave you
> And everything I stole since we met
> I stole no kisses just some books and the
> odd cigarette
> It's raining
> And now it's sunny
> Oh well you scuppered all my best laid
> plans
> I can't believe you
> You dismissed my pleas right out of hand
> (DOHERTY; THE PUTA MADRES, 2019)

Here, the observation "It's raining/And now it's sunny" appears as a symbol for the oscillations in the relationship portrayed throughout the song. In the second half of the lyrics, the speaker seemingly surrenders to outsiders' views on the relationship as he accepts their claim that it is raining without observing that the phenomenon quickly shifts as sunlight becomes prominent again:

> I can't believe you
> You listed everything I stole since we
> met
> But I stole no kisses just some books and
> a butterfly net
> It's raining
> And now it's sunny
> I never liked choruses anyway
> I never lacked choruses anyway
> It's true what they say
> its Raining
> It's true what they say
> (DOHERTY; THE PUTA MADRES, 2019)

Nevertheless, while the speaker ceases from adding that "now it's sunny", he never embraces what "they" say as his own view, marking that this is a third-party's view. The sun appears as a positive metaphor in this song, both as a contrast to the rows between the speaker and his addressee – imagined as rainy days – and as a sign of the easiness with which such status shift amongst themselves. Ultimately, the sun – always presented in relation to the rain – is a symbol of alternance and mobility, one of the main questions this song addresses. In Doherty, as in Dickinson, the sun often signals an unwillingness to choose just one side, version or status. This is observable in this song but takes its full potential in the last song this section will address, "Someone Else to Be".

If Doherty and Barât were inspired by both "Don't Look Back in Anger" and "Ride Into the Sun" to write "Don't Look Back Into the Sun" in 2003, combining the songs' titles

and making use of their chord structure, it is interesting to think of the way Doherty returned to both those songs with his band The Puta Madres. In “Someone Else to Be”, the songwriter combined aspects of those songs in a different way, returning, perhaps, to the original meaning of Lou Reed’s metaphor in “Ride Into the Sun”, but incidentally creating his own understanding in the process of adaptation. In *A Theory of Adaptation,* Linda Hutcheon argues that when one approaches adaptations not as standalone artworks, but as adaptations *per se*, one must recognise their “inherently ‘palimpsestuous’” (2013, p. 6) nature, that is, while every work of art is a part of a larger tradition with which it converses, adaptations are “haunted at all times by their adapted texts” (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 6). If we look at “Someone Else to Be” as an adaptation, rather than a cover, the palimpsestuous nature of the work offers us a wider understanding of how much the adapted texts haunt not only this piece, but apparently also the artist that is never finished working with them, in a practice that much resembles Dickinson’s try-to-think poetics. That is, there is a sense that the artwork – a song that is constantly readapted or a poet that is continuously rewritten – is definitely open-ended, the artist never daring to put a final say to it. The process of Doherty’s recording of “Someone Else to Be” supports my understanding of this track as an artwork in itself – an adaptation, rather than a cover.

In an interview for the *NME* in 2019, Doherty explained that he was prevented from using Lou Reed’s original title in the track list for his album *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres* because he made a significant change to one of the lines of the original song. While the lyrics to “Ride Into the Sun” say “Looking for another place/Somewhere else to be/Looking for another chance/To ride into the sun”, Doherty sang “Looking for another chance/Looking for someone else to be/I’m Looking for another chance/To ride into the sun”. Speaking of this modification in the aforementioned interview, Doherty said: “[The album] has got a Velvet Underground cover on it, but (...) we're not allowed to call it ‘Ride into the Sun’ because it's too different from the original. It’s only because I misheard Lou Reed's lyrics. I thought he was saying something else completely” (NME, 2019). Doherty’s words transpire the fact that, although he is singing “Ride Into the Sun” in his album, what he sings is his own version of the song, one that springs for a misapprehension of Reed’s original lyrics and which resulted in the production of a radically different meaning. While Reed’s speaker merely seeks for “somewhere else to be”, Doherty’s wants to reinvent himself altogether in a search that sounds curiously Dickinsonian: he looks for “someone else to be”, in an understanding that identities are moveable, changeable – signalling here some of the elusiveness of Dickinson’s “Nobody” (Fr260). While Reed’s “Ride Into the Sun” seems to

point to a physical place, a change of scenery, Doherty's rendition of the song is more pointed in its need for a complete reinvention. To ride into the sun is to look for a different version of oneself. Thus, allegedly accidentally, Doherty creates a different version of the song – he reinvents it and fills it with his own understanding of it. It is intriguing that he makes a point of explaining that this new understanding results, in fact, from a misunderstanding originated by his subconscious alterations to the lyrics in the act of listening to the song, for it is a new (mis)understanding that he chooses to record, not to correct. It is not far-fetched to affirm that this episode, still authorial even if originally accidental, reveals how hearing and reading, for Doherty, are open gateways to creation, adaptation, interpretation and continuation of his own palimpsestuous oeuvre.

The lines Doherty cited from "Don't Look Back in Anger" are also relevant to the structure of the new song he constructs as well as to the meaning of the sun in it. While most of "Someone Else to Be" is composed of verses directly cited or adapted from Lou Reed's song, the lines Doherty quotes from Gallagher's lyrics are particularly interesting from the metaphor I am discussing here:

> Take me to the place where you go
> Where nobody knows if it's night or day
> Please don't put your life in the hands of a rock'n'roll band
> And throw it all away
> (GALLAGHER, 1995)

Considered under the light of Doherty's speaker initial desire to move to a place where he can shift his identity and become someone else when adapting Reed's words, Gallagher's lyrics read like a nod both to "Don't Look Back Into the Sun" and to Doherty's previous experiences as a member of The Libertines. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, Doherty explores and deconstructs his rock'n'roll persona in *Peter Doherty and the Puta Madres*, even going so far as to mock it in "Who's Been Having You Over". In this section of "Someone Else to Be", Doherty quotes precisely the lyrics to one of the most famous songs of one of the most successful rock and roll bands of the last thirty years, in which the speaker asks his addressee – or any of his listeners – not to take any rock'n'roll band too seriously. In a way, through this, Doherty's speaker succeeds in reinventing himself. If in "Don't Look Back Into the Sun" the sun appears as a painful experience one must not look back into in order to move on, Doherty's speaker is now able to look back into both this song and to The Libertines – and rearrange the songs that influenced him to produce new meanings. Now it does not matter anymore if it is night or day – if one looks back into the sun or not – because he knows better

than to take any of it too seriously. Now, Doherty's speaker longs to "ride into the sun" and to find new ways to look back into old words, much like Dickinson did when producing new variants for her poems throughout the years.

Two radically different connotations spring from the same sources of inspiration, signalling Doherty's unwillingness to commit himself to a single usage or understanding of this metaphor in his works. While in "Don't Look Back Into the Sun" the combination of the two earlier song titles provides the writers with the sun as a negative metaphor, when Doherty returns to the same songs years later to explore them, he does so by finding a new way to combine them, one that produces new meanings. If Jedd Deppman proposes that we look at Emily Dickinson as "a Derridean *bricoleuse*, mixing and radically extending contemporary religious, literary, scientific, and other vocabularies along with their metaphysical presuppositions" (DEPPMAN, 2005, p. 88), it appears that one can think of Doherty's dialogue with Dickinson – as well as his exploration of this particular metaphor – as taking place in this same territory.

4.2.3 The Poet as Birdsong: Entrapment and Liberty in Dickinson and Doherty

In *Lunacy of Light: Emily Dickinson and the Experience of Metaphor* (1987), Wendy Barker points as "one of the great ironies of Dickinson's career" (1987, p. 114) the fact that the poet could find freedom through her poetry while nobody in her surroundings could appraise the level in which her writing provided her with an escape from the limitations of her position in the world as a woman, a daughter, and a sister in Calvinist Amherst. In Barker's words, Dickinson's "'captivity' in prosy life is no more imprisonment than that of a bird impounded as a stray; the bird can fly off, just as the poet can fly, through poetry, through art, and transcend a life of 'prose'" (BARKER, 1987, p. 114). Entrapment and the anguish for freedom is a recurrent theme in Dickinson's writing, one that I could say, following Barker's line of thought, the poet worked through her pen. That is, if a sense of entrapment permeates Dickinson's writing, one does not need to dwell on biographic analyses to apprehend that this sense might have worked as a trigger that led Dickinson to turn to writing to work this into poetry. Incidentally, not only her poems often enact, semantically, an escape towards freedom, but the very act of producing her work allowed Dickinson to move past any limitations her station in life might have imposed on her. Among Dickinson's poems that

build a sense of entrapment and an anxiety for liberation, one of the most well-known is “I never hear the word ‘Escape’” (Fr144). In the first stanza, the speaker describes her delight in the expectation of “A flying attitude” before deflating in the second stanza, realising that while she “tug[s] childish at [her] bars”, she still fails by the end of the poem:

> I never hear the word “Escape”
> Without a quicker blood,
> A sudden expectation –
> A flying attitude!
>
> I never hear of prisons broad
> By soldiers battered down,
> But I tug childish at my bars
> Only to fail again!

While this poem addresses a sense of entrapment through a straightforward metaphor – placing the speaker behind prison bars – Dickinson would often build this sense by partaking in the songbird tradition. That is, Dickinson would conflate the image of the poet with that of a songbird, handling the tension of freedom and entrapment by, at times, underlining the freedom of the bird, and, at others, by entrapping it. Discussing the relevance of the relationship between poet and songbird in Dickinson, Cristanne Miller turns to a letter in which the poet scolded “Elizabeth Holland for not writing” (MILLER, 2012a, p. 194) to her. In a parable the letter enclosed,

> Dickinson claims to have asked a bird “wherefore sing…since nobody *hears*?” She then imagines the bird responding: “One sob in the throat, on flutter of bosom – ‘My business is to *sing*’ – and away she rose!” The letter concludes with “cherubim” who, “once, themselves, as patient, listened, and applauded her unnoticed hymn” (L269, “summer 1862?”). Here, using her favored metaphors of poet as songbird and poetry as song, Dickinson imagines the possibility of both a vocation for singing and an applauding audience unperceived by the singer – in addition to more immediately implying that someone must appreciate her letter writing even if Elizabeth doesn’t. (MILLER, 2012a, p. 194-195)

Dickinson’s business as a poet, as the bird’s, is “to sing”. Here, Miller underlines the fact that this is phrase is a nod to one that appeared in a novel by Elizabeth’s husband, Josiah Holland, which read “My business is to love”. Dickinson’s adaptation of it into her story both “indicates her affectionate attentiveness to Josiah’s writing” (MILLER, 2012a, p. 195), and “makes the claim her own” (ibid.) with the alteration. Furthermore, Dickinson’s treatment of the question of an audience tells us something about the way she dealt with her own poetry, often ensuring selected readers had access to poems she enclosed in letters but ultimately turning away from opportunities for publication when those were available to her. To Miller,

"Dickinson eschews the 'business' of publishing and the opportunities for broad circulation of her poetry among her 'day & generation' (as Jackson puts it), and she dramatically changes her practices of writing and circulating poems during her lifetime" (MILLER, 2012a, p. 194-95). She does so, however, without ever "abandon[ing] her vocation 'to sing'" (ibid.).

To discuss the relevance of the songbird in Dickinson's writing, one must consider the poet's historical context. As Judy Jo Small argues, "in depicting herself as a songbird, Dickinson is aligning herself with the contemporary female poets, who were commonly referred to as little birds sweetly chirping spontaneous lays" (1990, p. 31). The metaphor, Small underlines, derives "from the time when poetry and song were in fact one art" (ibid.). While there is a gender issue entwined with the metaphor the poet so often explored, Small asserts that this does not mean Dickinson saw herself as a member of "an exclusively female tradition", reminding us that she wrote "of herself and Robert Browning as singers" (ibid.). Nevertheless, to Small, the manner in which Dickinson explored this metaphor – often writing of a bird that sang "sweetly or 'too loud'" (ibid.) evokes the poet's recognition and discomfort in relation to the "standard image of the nineteenth-century poetess" (ibid.). Small concludes that "though indeed her writing should be viewed in the context of a flourishing subculture of women writing and publishing popular lyrics, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Dickinson's use of gender stereotypes is frequently subversive" (SMALL, 1990, p. 32).

The poet as birdsong also appears in Doherty, with the songwriter employing this metaphor to address freedom and entrapment. Dickinson's influence over Doherty in his usage of the songbird is particularly thought-provoking if we consider the imagery of the official music video for Doherty's "Broken Love Song" (2009). If Dickinson's speaker contrasts dreams of escape with her "childish" tugging at her poetic prison bars in "I never hear the word 'Escape'" (Fr144), Doherty's song reflects on the artist's real-life experience with imprisonment. Doherty wrote the lyrics to "Broken Love Song" (Peter Doherty/Peter Wolfe) in 2008, throughout the 29 days he served at Wormwood Scrubs prison in London[102]. The song was inspired not only by Doherty's sense of isolation throughout this period, but also as a reaction against hate mail he received while there: "People writing, saying they'd like to see me swinging. Hard when you can't see the light fittings" (NME, 2009b), he said. The music video for this song, directed by Douglas Hart, shows Doherty lying on a bed, singing inside a prison cell on a rainy night. Several paper clippings and photographs fill the wall behind him, but Emily Dickinson's face stands out amongst them, suggesting the poet not

[102] Doherty even names Wormwood Scrubs in the lyrics: "By the Westway/Inside the Scrubs".

only was on his mind throughout this period, but her influence on this particular song. Furthermore, it shows Doherty associated her with his desire for freedom throughout his ordeal. Doherty moves from the bed to the window several times throughout the video, suggesting his restlessness as a heap of letters lie on the window ledge. He also turns to his typewriter several times, attempting to write. However, as his anxiety grows more urgent, he ultimately crashes the machine unto the floor. As he calms down, Doherty opens one of the envelops and turns to one of the messages sent to him, but it reveals itself to be one of the "Letters from faceless haters/Who'd love to see me swinging in my cell" and he gets increasingly restless again. By the end of the song, however, he is somewhat resigned to the fact freedom is not within his grasp in any possible way. He remains shut inside the prison cell, he cannot write, and he does not find comfort in the letters people sent him. Throughout all the destruction, however, the photographs and notes on the wall remain undisturbed and, as Doherty lies down on his bed in the video's final shot, Dickinson's face is visible again, as the songwriter settles down and the camera zooms into his face. It appears relevant that the video, Doherty, as well as the lyrics, end precisely in the same way they started. The lines "Take a broken love song/Keep it by your side" open and end the song, suggesting that while the speaker finds himself in an unreachable state of loneliness and angst, physically and mentally trapped, his only solace is found in a song that never falters or leaves him, as the lyrics that follow these lines in the first stanza convey: "Never be lonely/Find a place to hide"[103]. By following these instructions, the speaker will be able to evade his current state of despair, in which he continuously fears for his life: "How long must we wait/For them killing us?/Killing us". In the third stanza, Doherty explores the songbird metaphor:

> Through my cell window
> Hear the loft-boy sing
> "Come on, you R's"
> Carried on the wind
> Every morning I'll be singing
> Like a caged bird you might say
> John, Paul, George and Ringo
> Help pass the hours away
> Free as a bird will I be
> Another dawn creeps up on me
> On me
> (DOHERTY, 2009)

[103] In an interview included in his book *From Albion to Shangri-La* (2013), Doherty remarks on how he seems to have spent a lot of his creative time contradicting himself, "searching for liberty" whilst imprisoning himself. The notion that he finds freedom through song – both writing, playing, and singing – is reinforced by his consideration that the "process of creativity rejuvenates the spirit, it justifies existence; having a couple of songs on the go, that's fulfilment to me, that's when the soul is healed" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 240).

Feeling cut out from the world as fellow Queen's Park Rangers fans chant their most famous song out on the street, Doherty's speaker clings to his own singing as an act of resistance. Alluding to The Beatles' (John, Paul, George and Ringo) song "Free as a Bird", the poet, as a caged songbird, dreams of his freedom. While further along the lyrics Doherty cites Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", in this particular stanza he establishes a dialogue with Dickinson that is reinforced by the song's music video, but ultimately supported by the materiality of both texts. This stanza subsumes the sense of alienation of the speaker as he listens to others – possible peers – go by his window, but highlights his resistance through song. While he is now "like a caged bird", he is sure his condition will soon change to make him "free as a bird". The stanza ends with the speaker's certainty that his freedom edges closer as another dawn creeps in. This situation is reminiscent of Dickinson's "I shall keep singing!" (Fr270), in which a Redbreast observes the other birds leave "On their way to Yellower Climes" and reaffirms that, while staying behind now, when he does "take [his] place in summer" he "shall bring a fuller tune":

> I shall keep singing!
> Birds will pass me
> On their way to Yellower Climes –
> Each – with a Robin's expectation –
> I – with my Redbreast –
> And my Rhymes –
> Late – when I take my place in summer –
> But – I shall bring a fuller tune –
> Vespers – are sweeter than matins – Signor –
> Morning – only the seed – of noon –

While in Dickinson, the poet as songbird metaphor elaborates questions pertaining to the poet's anxiety with her relationship with her own faith and the expectations of organised religion upon her (i.e. "Why – do they shut me out of Heaven?" (Fr268)) as well as expectations surrounding her station in life and her writing career prospects, Doherty's treatment of entrapment as a theme focuses both on literal incarceration – something that has haunted him for years – and on a tense relationship with fame and public exposure, something I have discussed in Chapter 1. While Doherty and Dickinson do share a preoccupation with the possible commodification of the artwork, each artist at one end of the spectrum at the time of their writing (Dickinson dreading fame, Doherty suffering the effects of it), the convergence I find here lies more on lines of the treatment both arts give to the metaphor, in the fact that their speakers ultimately find freedom from their sources of entrapment through

poiesis, even when all processes and expectations attached to the artworks themselves reinforce their anxiety.

In one of the journal entries included in *From Albion to Shangri-La* (2013), Doherty expresses his aversion to the commitments inherent to a career in the music business and his yearning for more freedom. Speaking of the "extremely pleasant feeling that comes with splendid isolation", he declares: "Love it when there are no engagements, gigs, responsibilities, anything. Only the blank covers of the morning, evening, afternoon" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 26). Dickinson's station in life allowed her to more easily deflect from situations that caused her anxiety, "selecting her own society" then "shutting the door" (Fr409), but the uneasiness that stems from outward pressures gains expression in the recurrence of the theme of entrapment in her poems and letters. Considering his interview for *Poetry Corner Paris*, it becomes clear that performing in public was an issue to Doherty even when it was as a poet that he took the stage. In a 2017 interview, Doherty asserts twice that in the moments that precede going onstage he feels he would rather be anywhere else. The freedom the artistic endeavour offers him becomes clouded by the anxiety provoked by performing before an audience that expects to be entertained. Doherty has also stated that he can feel his "head disappear" when onstage (BLUE BALLS FESTIVAL, 2017), suggesting a withdrawal from the outside world into the subjective creative space of the poet. One could say Doherty escapes this anxiety by "shutting the door" in his own way. Ultimately, then, it appears to me that in both Dickinson and Doherty, the freedom writing provides them is also tensioned against a sense of entrapment that both propels it and, sometimes, results from it. While both artists deal with this theme in a myriad of ways, I have chosen to select the poems and lyrics in which they formulate it through the songbird convention due to the fact that it is a tradition Dickinson subverts and that Doherty seemingly takes up from her.

Doherty revisits the theme of the caged bird – which he had explored in "Broken Love Song" – in "Birdcage", now focalising the sense of entrapment that comes with fame. Once again, we see the trope of the entrapped bird – the artist – looking at the sky through prison bars and taking in his estrangement from the outer world. Here, however, it is fame that alienates him. One could align this song with many others in which Doherty denounces the workings of the music industry (I have discussed some of those in this chapter's previous section)[104]. This is a bird, that, unlike the one from Dickinson's "Why – do they shut me out of Heaven?" (Fr268), is entirely compliant to authority. If in Dickinson's poem the

[104] Doherty's allusion to fame and the music industry is reiterated in a line that asserts that "only love can heal the sickness of celebrity".

bird/speaker is “shut out of heaven” for “singing too loud”, pleading with the angels to be let in and questioning the judgement of “the Gentleman in the White Robe”, Doherty’s sings along “under their instruction”, his captivity making him obedient. The tone here differs radically from the hopefulness we see in “Broken Love Song”. Freedom seems like a far-fetched dream as he “stares at the stars”:

> Little bird
> In a cage
> You’ve been turning heads around
> Yeah you played your part
> You sang along
> Under their instruction
> Looking through the bars
> Staring at the stars
> (DOHERTY, 2016)

Doherty’s lyrics can be read in consonance with those from “Flags of the Old Regime”, a song he dedicated to the memory of Amy Winehouse, his friend and an artist who had a very public struggle against the viciousness of tabloid media and the pressures that come with worldwide fame. If in “Flags” Doherty’s speaker describes how Amy – who is explicitly referenced and addressed in the lyrics – had little to no control over her singing as she was violently “stoned” with fame (“The fame they stoned you with/You soldiered it/And you made your fortune/But you broke inside”), ultimately standing “up there in front of the whole world/And you don't feel them songs no more”, in “Birdcage” the speaker questions why the songbird submits himself to the will of kings:

> Why, the caged bird always sings
> Through the ages for the pleasure of the king?
> Kneeling you down with a thorn in your crown
> Calling out your name, you slip away
> (DOHERTY, 2016)

Dickinson produces tension between the bird’s singing and material elements – such as pay and fame – in some of her songbird poems. In some of them, the attempt to contain – to fully grasp, or control – the bird is expressed in somewhat violent terms. In “Split the Lark – and you’ll find the Music –” (Fr905), the poet takes a critical stance towards those who would attempt to objectively control or understand the bird – or the poet – as she graphically describes what one would find after “splitting the lark”, defiantly ending the poem with a question that implies a criticism of her addressee’s intent to claim property over the bird: “Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?”. Judy Jo Small reads this poem as “a warning

against improper scepticism" (1990, p. 38) as the song "is impalpable, not contained in the physical mechanism of the bird's body, and it cannot be separated from the secret of its life" (ibid.). The critic also reminds us that, in her first letter to Higginson, Dickinson "besought him to tell her if her poetry was 'alive,' if it 'breathed'" (ibid.), thus approaching this poem, as I am doing now, as a manifesto against external actors that stifle the poet:

> Split the Lark – and you'll find the Music –
> Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled –
> Scantily dealt to the Summer Morning
> Saved for your Ear, when Lutes be old –
>
> Loose the Flood – you shall find it patent –
> Gush after Gush, reserved for you –
> Scarlet Experiment! Sceptic Thomas!
> Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?

In "The Bird must sing to earn the Crumb" (Fr928), Dickinson deals more directly with the tension between singing/writing and the question of being paid – and previously evaluated and critiqued – for it. Here, the speaker drily proposes that a "Tune" has no merit if it "no breakfast" guarantees. While, we know, Dickinson did not publish under any traditional method and thus did not rely on wages to live, this leads us back to the main theme of "Publication – is the Auction" (Fr788), a poem in which her speaker directly criticises the book trade, sentencing publication as "so foul a thing", only justifiable by poverty. In "The Bird must sing to earn the Crumb", the poet's criticism comes through her ironic tone, that extends itself to the second stanza, in which the speaker relativizes the worth of a rose made superfluous when there is no "Lady's Drawer" for her to occupy:

> The Bird must sing to earn the Crumb
> What merit have the Tune
> No Breakfast if it guaranty
>
> The Rose, content may bloom
> To gain renown of Lady's Drawer
> But if the Lady come
> But once a Century, the Rose
> Superfluous become –

It thus transpires that Dickinson articulated tensions regarding entrapment by exploring the songbird convention. She addressed her preoccupations in relation to fame, the book trade, her own status as a woman and a writer as well as her perceived disruptive position (as a bird who sings too loud) in relation to a Christian culture by establishing the songbird as a metaphor for the poet, both adhering and disrupting current poetic practices, as

Judy Jo Small has showed. While entrapment is a major theme in both Dickinson and Doherty, one that allows for several different approaches and poem/song selections, I have chosen to work with their combination of this theme with the songbird convention to highlight the way in which Doherty has explored and repurposed Dickinson's tone in the poems I have selected, while also pointing out the convergences between their treatment of the theme in their writing.

4.3 **Dickinsonian Thought in Doherty**

In *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson* (2008), Jedd Deppman proposed that Dickinson "used the language of lyric poetry to respond to her most difficult personal and cultural challenges" (2008, p. 11) and that if one "listen[s] carefully and read[s] creatively and contextually," (ibid.) one will find that she "can help us to address and respond questions pertaining to our own time" (ibid.). I argue here that this is an exercise successfully undertaken by Peter Doherty. Evidences of his careful listening resurface in his writing, as I have shown throughout this chapter. The strong relationship Doherty has established with Dickinson appears to be one that she had envisioned while constantly addressing the potential person at the other side of the page, constantly questioning and encouraging her reader to take up an active role while engaging with her poems, thinking of them as creators at their own right. Jedd Deppman underlines the fact that while many takes and approaches on Dickinson have been developed throughout the years, none had yet seriously approached her as a thinker. The critic argues that the poet is often "quoted, nostalgized, pastiched, ironized – anything but heard as if she were in the room"[105] (2008, p. 5). While this is a stance I agree with, as the relationship pop culture has established with Dickinson creates a fertile environment for such approaches, I aim to demonstrate in this section that this is precisely how Doherty's conversation with Dickinson develops. As Dickinson is out of reach for any sort of emulation – something Doherty attempts with several of the writers he admires – he

[105] "Similarly, Allen Tate in 1932 thought that Dickinson's writing reflected an 'ingrained philosophy,' a 'settled attitude' that was even then 'almost extinct,' and suspected that few people could ever hope to understand her on her own terms (153). And today, of course, it is even easier to name circumstances, from our side of history or hers, that make Dickinson seem remote and her popularity an effect of cultural exoticism or canonical inertia. A short list might include terrorism, the war in Iraq, postcolonialism, global warming, overpopulation, genocide, AIDS, computers and other technology." (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 6)

engages directly with the thinking she exercises through her poems. Unable to put his interest in Dickinson down to biographical fascination, Doherty reads and engages with her as if she were in the room.

While Deppman associates Dickinson with postmodern thought, pointing out that her oeuvre can be interpreted as "an early, intense response to the fragmenting epistemological conditions Lyotard identified in *The Postmodern Condition*" (2008, p. 7), I prefer to maintain that Dickinson is an excellent interlocutor for contemporary thinking, as I have established in Chapter 1. Deppman's claim that her poems appear as a response to "the weakening of authoritative Western narratives of history, God, nature, the self" (ibid.) as the poet "refused either to endorse or reject many of the authoritative and explanatory vocabularies of her time" (2008, p. 7-8) can easily remain valid as we approach her as a contemporary in the Agambenian sense. The questioning, sceptical attitude displayed by the speakers of her poems, which reflect Dickinson's own ambivalence towards certainties she could not or would not embrace, remain questions twenty-first century artists, critics and philosophers address. In Dickinson, this uneasiness often appears in the form of her questioning of God and his motives, the nature of heaven and her own willingness to surrender to it.

Throughout the time she attended Mount Holyoke Seminary (1847-1848), Dickinson was put under pressure to confirm her faith. Lyndall Gordon tells us that "on one occasion, Miss Lyon called on all who wished to be Christians to rise. Emily Dickinson remained seated – the only one, so the story goes" (2010, p. 53). Clara Newman Turner, Dickinson's second cousin, reported that the poet recounted such events to her by saying: "'They thought it queer I didn't rise' – adding with a twinkle in her eye, 'I thought a lie would be queerer'" (SEWALL, 1974, p. 270). Gordon relates a similar occurrence, in which Miss Lyon inquired if Dickinson had said her prayers, to which the young girl replied: "Yes, though it can't make much difference to The Creator" (GORDON, 2010, p. 54). Dickinson remained the subject of pressure as "extra meetings took place in Miss Lyon's room and targeted girls were required to indicate in advance, with a note, if they wished to attend" (ibid). She remained unable – or unwilling – to decide and "on 17 January 1848, at the end of her first term, Emily attended a session for those who 'felt an uncommon anxiety to decide'" (ibid.). Her uncertainty is confirmed by a letter she sent to Abiah Root on that same day. While Dickinson begins the missive by telling Root about her journey home for Thanksgiving, describing how, once in Amherst, she and her family "went to church in the morning & listened to an excellent sermon from our own minister, Mr. Colton" (L20) on Thanksgiving day, she shares her anxiety by the end of the letter, stating that "there is a great deal of religious interest here and many are

flocking to the ark of safety. I have not yet given up to the claims of Christ, but trust I am not entirely thoughtless on so important & serious a subject" (L20). Writing to Root once again on 16 May, Dickinson laments not having become a Christian earlier that year, while also reaffirming her difficulty in "giving up the world":

> I tremble when I think how soon the weeks and days of this term will all have been spent, and my fate will be sealed, perhaps. I have neglected the one thing needful when all were obtaining it, and I may never, never again pass through such a season as was granted us last winter. Abiah, you may be surprised to hear me speak as I do, knowing that I express no interest in the all-important subject, but I am not happy, and I regret that last term, when that golden opportunity was mine, that I did not give up and become a Christian. It is not now too late, so my friends tell me, so my offended conscience whispers, but it is hard for me to give up the world. I had quite a long talk with Abby while at home and I doubt not she will soon cast her burden on Christ. She is sober, and keenly sensitive on the subject, and she says she only desires to be good. How I wish I could say that with sincerity, but I fear I never can. But I will no longer impose my own feelings even upon my friend. Keep them sacred, for I never lisped them to any save yourself and Abby. (L23)

Many of Dickinson's poems, written later in her life, exercise this difficulty – and refusal – to choose or embrace one single truth. In the poems Dickinson explores religious questions, we usually find a speaker who, while not able to surrender to religious ecstasy, cannot forsake Christian logic and language altogether.[106] Heaven and the afterlife remain as unsolvable and open-ended as many of Dickinson's own try-to-think poems, on which she worked tirelessly throughout the years, thinking of new alternatives and playing with slight shifts in meaning provided by variant words. Deppman proposes Dickinson as a member of "the nineteenth-century avant-garde of 'accomplished nihilists' in the sense Gianni Vattimo derives from Nietszche" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 21), aligning her with thinkers "who understand, first, that when God dies – becomes an unnecessary hypothesis – the possibility

[106] It has been demonstrated by Jack L. Capps's that Dickinson referred to the King James' Version of the Bible 341 times in her poems and letters (1966, p. 192-3). He stated that in any study of Dickinson "the King James version of the Bible is a basic reference, for its pervasive influence upon both her life and letters is readily apparent" (p. 27). About the influence of this book upon Dickinson's writing, the critic also tells us that: "Her affinity for the idiom of the King James version accounts for the fact that her style and tone are not so easily compared to the writing of her American contemporaries as they are to that of seventeenth-century English divines, whose language was both chronologically and professionally close to that of the newly translated Bible and whose works usually depended heavily upon it as a model. Emily Dickinson relished the antique flavor of the King James version and treated the Bible with the informal familiarity that characterized her references to God. 'Guess I and the Bible will move to some old fashioned spot where we'll feel at Home,' she wrote Mrs. Holland. Fortunately, Amherst proved to be sufficiently 'old fashioned' to allow her the continued companionship of the Bible without having to move. And, as a result of her undiminished preference for the Scriptures, biblical quotations in her letters and poems far exceed references to any other source or author. Of the thirty-eight books of the Bible to which Emily Dickinson referred one or more times in her poems and letters, the Gospels, Revelation, and Genesis are most often cited" (1966, p. 29-30).

of foundational truth dies too, and second, that the resulting nihilistic possibilities can be more than just passive or reactive" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 21). As Dickinson tackles questions "from the perspective of losing or having lost faith in absolutes and 'doctrines'" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 21), she "accomplishes her nihilism by poetizing language in the interest of self-interpretation and self-creation" (ibid.).

Deppman states that if one is willing to accept Dickinson as "a viable philosophical interlocutor for our moment" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 8), "we add to the traditional expressive functions of her poetry a valuable, timely, and interpretable layer of philosophical inquiry" (ibid.) that ranges from hermeneutic questions about "language games, vocabulary selection, and self-creation" (ibid.) to existential ones regarding themes such as loneliness, death, and, one might say, the tensions the individual faces in a capitalist society in which time, art and life itself are reified and reduced to commodities. This is a question that is particularly poignant to contemporary artists that converse with Dickinson's oeuvre.

Deppman argues that Dickinson's poems are ideal for this sort of discussion as "the way her lyrics both postulate and complicate thetic language can tell us a great deal about how we originate and converse with theses, truth claims, beliefs, vocabularies, attitudes, and interpretations in a post-metaphysical age" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 9). Aligning himself with Derrida, the critic claims that "if lyric poetry has provocative philosophical force, then it is not 'hidden in the text like a substance' but must be developed 'in response, in the experience of reading'" (2008, p. 10) and that his goal in approaching Dickinson as a thinker is "not to pry out finished products – information, opinions, beliefs – hidden in the poetry but to explore the thinking of which the poetry is the necessary byproduct" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 10). This is an effort I have sought to establish by suggesting conversational links between Dickinson and one of her contemporary readers and adapters, Peter Doherty, showcasing points of convergence between the two artists while arguing that more than direct citations or even their exploration of similar themes, what approximates them is the way in which the Dickinsonian sentence, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, resurfaces in Doherty's writing.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, Deppman argues that Dickinson was strongly committed to "certain projects of thinking" (2008, p. 18) and that lyric poetry was so instrumental in her engagement with such projects that she invented an "important lyrical subgenre" (ibid.), which Deppman calls the "try-to-think" poem. Claiming that what she produces is a "reader-oriented poetics" (2008, p. 31), Deppman goes on to highlight the conversational aspect of Dickinson's philosophical and poetic project. To him, while "texture of poetry can complicate theoretical conversations," (2008, p. 25), it also renders it easier by

"avoiding what Nietzsche excoriated as philosophers' uncompanionable traits, obstacles such as longwindedness, grandiose architectures of thought, and needlessly technical vocabulary" (ibid.), as poets do not subscribe to a didactic logic when it comes to formulating their thinking, thus reaching us as "fellow travellers offering their thought" (ibid.). As thought is articulated and delivered in the form of a lyric poem, regardless of its attitude or tone, it can encourage us to "to reach the key conversational point of being ready to rethink what we knew, either in the limited sense of reconsidering beliefs and trying on redescriptions or in the deeper one of rethinking how and why we rethink and redescribe at all" (ibid.). Proposing Dickinson as a companion thinker for our times, Deppman turns to Richard Rorty's neo-pragmatism and Gianni Vattimo's concept of "weak thought", proposing to "elevate conversation to new philosophical stature by playing it off against metaphysical modes of reasoning" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 16):

> Although Dickinson shared many of the post-metaphysical and anti-foundational attitudes of Rorty and Vattimo, her lyrics, guided by an Eco-style poetics of openness and a conversational "hermeneutics of friendship," also provide rigorous challenges to the arguments they make about poetry, vocabulary selection, reading as conversation, and other leading postmodern questions. (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 17-18)

Arguing that Dickinson was "deeply invested in the lyric's philosophical promise" (2008, p. 16-17), Deppman argues that the conversational aspect of Dickinson's writing takes shape in different levels as her poems "ask questions, hypothesize, present, test, and extend observations in the confined times and spaces of the short lyric" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 16-17). Here, the poems appear as a kind of apparatus as they "reflect an almost orgiastic capacity to initiate, posit, or offer thought" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 17) while addressing a range of problems, religious, political, domestic and otherwise. Those works "step back from the personal situation and try to comment from a general perspective" (ibid.). The fact that Dickinson practices an "Eco-style poetics of openness" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 17-18) leads the reader to a truth that "is never a fixed position but always a singular event of shared thought" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 17). Ultimately, while some traditional, powerful social and political institutions and actors might attempt to uphold definitive, objective truths, the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, one of Deppman's references, defends that it is only "within conversational frameworks that "preferences (as opposed to objective truths) can be delineated" (VATTIMO, 2002, p. 453), that only within "conversation that preferred interpretations can be proposed" (ibid.). Thus, this string of contemporary philosophy, as

Dickinsonian poetics, ultimately appears as conversational. Under this framework, Dickinson, as well as her readers understand that they "are more poetically responsible for creating [the world]" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 22-23) rather than turning to old certainties to look for it.

Addressing how one can understand the open-endedness found in Dickinsonian poetics, Deppman unpacks her "profoundly conversational, other-dependent conception of poetry" (2008, p. 28). The critic cites the fact that the poet partook in a "lifelong dialogico-epistolary economy" (2008, p. 28), sending hundreds of her poems in letters to friends and members of her family, underlining the conversational devices present in the poems, such as "quotation marks, reported speech, stichomythia, real-time narration, listener feedback, interruption, turn taking, shared allusions, puns, and other wordplay" (ibid.). While some poems "analyse or comment on specific kinds of conversation partners" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 28.), others "stage conversations between lovers, friends, spirit and body, the heart and the mind, natural phenomena, and other entities" (ibid.). Deppman also reminds us that besides thematising conversation and addressing "offstage interlocutors" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 29), one of the poet's main dialogical strategy lies in the many "'think-again' or 'double-take' structures that fold thought back upon itself as if in reply" (ibid.) in poems such as "For Death – or rather" (Fr644). Ultimately, however, Dickinson's conversationalism finds its strongest expression – and, according to Deppman, its philosophical value – in the open-endedness of the poems that invite readers to write with her, be it through exploring her variants, or by attempting to join the conversation by completing her gaps and responding to her many questions – something that, I argue, Doherty has done not only through his direct citations and theme convergences, but by often endowing his song lyrics with the same sense of unfinishedness.

Deppman analyses Dickinson's poems as "open works" under the light of Umberto Eco's (1989) definition of the term. As her "creative process rarely eventuated in final or monological expression" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 30), Dickinson's oeuvre eschews from what Eco defined as "the banal kind of openness exhibited by any work of art in its ongoing susceptibility to new performances and interpretations" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 30). Deppman instead associates her oeuvre with a "more radical kind" (2008, p. 30) of openness, defined by Eco as one in which the artwork is intentionally "passed on to the addressee in an unfinished state" (ECO, 1989, 4). Ultimately, as Eco explains, an artist that produces open works subsumes openness "into a positive aspect of his production, recasting the work so as to expose it to the maximum possible 'opening'" (ECO, 1989, p. 5). While both Eco and Deppman agree that every artwork bears a certain degree of openness in the level of

reception, the key distinction between those works and the ones produced by an artist such as Dickinson is that while with the former "the reader is free to choose among myriad interpretations" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 30), in the latter one "absolutely must do some of its 'organizing and structuring,'", that is, the reader, creator and adapter "fully collaborates in '*making* the composition'" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 30). Deppman justifies his alignment of Dickinson with the class of artists that cultivate openness by pointing out that "even if we treat the poems conservatively as discrete aesthetic objects, we find ourselves constantly forced to ask and answer questions about the topic, scene, addressee, and other contexts that precede, surround, and follow them" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 30). I would like to argue that this, an aspect of Dickinsonian thought, allows for the transit between Emily Dickinson and Peter Doherty's sentences to take place. As the examples I am going to explore below will demonstrate, Doherty's lyrics, like Dickinson's try-to-think poems, can be approached as thought experiments that do not seek out a stable synthesis. A "reader-oriented poetics" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 31) is identifiable throughout Dickinson's oeuvre, and as Karen Oakes phrases it, the person who engages with her verse is expected to take part in the "recreation of a poem-as-process" (OAKES, 1988, p. 201).

While addressing Dickinson's production that thematise conversation, Deppman lists a "large group of poems" that "analyse or comment on specific kinds of conversation partners" (2008, p. 28), while others stage conversations. I would like to highlight those that "invoke dialogical settings, techniques, and dynamics" (DEPPMAN, 2008, p. 29), focalising Dickinson's "'think-again' or 'double-take' structures that fold thought back upon itself as if in reply" (ibid.). In "For Death – or rather" (Fr644), for instance, Dickinson proposes a thinking exercise that is developed for the sake of philosophical inquiry: while the speaker stretches her mind to list "the things that death will buy" – a theme introduced in the first stanza – she stoically concludes that she is unable to impose an answer upon the bigger question, that is, how the gifts of life measure up against the ones she listed in the second stanza. By including her reader in a collective "We know not", she invites us to produce our own considerations on this theme:

For Death – or rather
For the Things 'twould buy –
This – put away
Life's Opportunity –

The Things that Death will buy
Are Room –
Escape from Circumstances –

> And a Name –
>
> With Gifts of Life
> How Death's Gifts may compare –
> We know not –
> For the Rates – lie Here –

Some of Dickinson's conversational poems, Deppman proposes, appear to originate from an exercise to answer to an implied "What was *that*?" provocative question. This is the case for poems such as "It was not Death" (Fr355), and "It was not Saint" (Fr1052). In the former, Dickinson carefully lists and justifies a series of bleak elements that are not the one she refuses to name throughout the poem. Although it is not death, night, frost, nor fire, this is something that "tasted, like them all". In this highly imagetic poem, Dickinson's object hangs behind a veil she does not fully lift for her readers, instead propelling us to take up an active role in deciphering her meaning. In "It was not Saint" (Fr1052), a more concise lyric, the poet once more turns to describing what her object is not, unsettling her reader and inviting an engagement with a poem that is almost a riddle that cleverly only gives away aloofness as a characteristic:

> It was not Saint – it was too large –
> Nor Snow – it was too small –
> It only held itself aloof
> Like something spiritual –

As Deppman has observed, "often the poems' very brevity can be interpreted as a way of not trying to say everything, of creating time for dialogue, for the reader's breath 'to straighten' and brain 'to bubble Cool' so as to prepare a response (Fr477QA)" (2008, p. 29) and this is certainly the case for "It was not Saint – it was too large –".

In some poems, Dickinson's philosophical propositions elaborate on the question of the afterlife, a theme she often approached in her poetry and letters throughout the years, as we have seen. In "This World is not conclusion." (Fr373), for instance, the poet makes an excellent use of punctuation to reinforce her point. Instead of drawing her reader to a conclusion, she offers it as a thesis on the first line, the only one that brings a full stop (.). Interestingly, Dickinson's only "conclusion" in this poem is that this world is not conclusion. In the following lines, most of them ending in dashes (–), the poet offers her insights on what lies beyond without ever closing the question that "puzzles scholars" and whose answer "Philosophy, don't know":

This World is not conclusion.
A Species stands beyond – a sequel – [stands]
Invisible, as Music –
But positive, as Sound –
It beckons, and it baffles –
Philosophy, don't know –
And through a Riddle, at the last –
Sagacity, must go –
To guess it, puzzles scholars – [To] prove it –
To gain it, Men have borne
Contempt of Generations
And Crucifixion, shown –
Faith slips – and laughs, and rallies –
Blushes, if any see –
Plucks at a twig of Evidence –
And asks a Vane, the way –
Much Gesture, from the Pulpit –
Strong Hallelujahs roll – Sure – [Hallelujahs]
Narcotics cannot still the Tooth [the] Mouse –
That nibbles at the soul –

It should be noted that Dickinson's speaker declares that both philosophical inquiry and religious faith cannot offer a definitive answer that might silence this questioning, or as Dickinson puts it "Narcotics cannot still the Tooth /That nibbles at the soul –". This poem works as Dickinson's exaltation of asking questions and exercising her thinking through them, and as a testament to Deppman's proposition that Dickinson often built her poems as thinking exercises. Here, she proposes that "this world is not conclusion" but has no intention to bare to her reader what lies beyond it, instead choosing to present it as a riddle, a puzzle that is worth working through.

Judy Jo Small disagrees with scholars that have criticised the poet's practice of open-endedness, arguing that "the negative valuation of Dickinson' endings originates in the assumption that a poem should be a static art object that contains a clear meaning and arrives at a stable resolution of whatever uncertainties it arouses" (1990, p. 174). Small, instead, lauds Dickinson's practice, which, she claims "subverts that poetic model in the interest of a more fluid, dynamic art" (ibid.). As Small has argued, "where the insecurities of persistent skepticism and persistent desire endlessly defer thematic resolutions, unclosed endings are stylistically appropriate" (1990, p. 175). Small observes that Dickinson's "irresolution of her endings is consistent not only with a general trend in poetry and the other arts away from firm closure but also with her own aesthetic principles of instability and elusiveness" (SMALL, 1990, p. 174). Discussing Dickinson's handling of endings in her poems, Judy Jo Small observes that the poet "deliberately avoided the authoritative voice that resolves tensions in a grand finale" (SMALL, 1990, p. 175) and that "a recurrent tendency in her poetry is to surprise closural expectations with abrupt stops, anticlimactic deflation, or lingering

unanswered questions" (ibid.). Small proposes that closural disruption and closural suspension "contribute significantly to effects of wit and mystery that are central to the appeal of her poetry" (1990, p. 175). We could also add, aligning ourselves with Small and Deppman, that this is a key element of the Dickinsonian sentence.

In Doherty's lyrics, one can find several examples of Dickinsonian thesis-positing, conversational structures and open-endedness[107]. Nevertheless, while access to his poems are limited[108] (and thus I have chosen to produce an analysis of his relationship with Dickinson primarily as a songwriter), Dickinson's strategy of describing "what is not" is perceivable behind the structure of two of his most well-known poems, "The Bow Poem" (1996) and "Bowhemia" (1999). In the 1996 poem, Doherty thematises a dialogue as the speaker describes miscommunication and estrangement by drawing a picture of a conversation with a girl he could not quite engage. He, presumably an Englishman, states "the language barrier clanged and banged" as the girl's foreign status was denounced by her too "goodly" grammar. Although he states what she is not, this figure remains elusive and undescribed. Before unveiling her to the reader, the speaker's focus shifts as the images related to the only strong reference he provides in this poem – Englishness – "crumble into the sea":

> I knew she wasn't English because she spoke it far too well
> The grammar was goodly,
> The verbs as they should be,
> And the slang was bang on the bell
> So as the language barrier clanged & banged
> I couldn't hear: hear or see,
> England, London & Bow
> Crumbling into the sea.
> (DOHERTY apud. J. DOHERTY, 2006, p. 82)

In "Bowhemia", the "What is it?" that Deppman proposes as an underlying trigger to several of Dickinson's poems appears as the first line. In answer to this question, "Bowhemia" draws a picture of nightmarish London life in the late twentieth century, where "it's tuppence for your philosophy,/And tuppence for your dreams". As I have discussed in Chapter 1, discourses about England and Englishness permeate Doherty's writing. However, unlike Alex Hannaford has argued, what we find in his poems and lyrics is not Doherty's

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[107] In songs such as "Vertigo", "The Good Old Days", "What Became of the Likely Lads?", "The Delaney", "Belly of the Beast", "Unstookietitled", "New Love Grows On Trees", "Lady, Don't Fall Backwards", "All at Sea", "Who's Been Having You Over", and "A Fool There Was".

[108] Peter Doherty has not yet published a collection of his poems, so those are only available in the books containing his diaries (in manuscript form in *The Books of Albion* and in print in *From Albion to Shangri-La*), or scattered either in other publications made by him online or in books by other authors, such as his mother, Jacqueline Doherty.

"rose-tinted vision of an England in which he wished he'd lived" (HANNAFORD, 2006, p. 10), but rather a more complicated take. The England that appears as one of the artist's main themes is far from mere idealisation, even when presented as "Albion". Rather, it appears that Doherty subscribes to Dickinson's try-to-think poetics to handle what remains a key question to him as an artist. If he ends "The Bow Poem" on an oddly elusive note, the tone he employed in the closure of "Bowhemia" is far more ominous. While the speaker and his addressee attempt to relax under the sunlight, away from all the hassle he describes throughout the poem, they still find themselves "tussling" under streetlamps that remain on during the day. They are as entrapped moths who cannot resist the pull of the light – and they shall remain trapped in such a condition until the sun "explodes":

> So let's step out now, you and I,
> Let's go now and stay a while,
> Underneath the sun,
> A council street lamp left on in the middle of the day,
> Tussling with gravity, branding skin,
> And it will tussle and brand, tussle and brand until it explodes.
> Tussle and brand until the sun explodes.

If we turn to the lyrics of "Albion" – which was originally a poem written by Doherty when he was 16 – the same Dickinsonian unwillingness to commit to a single view or conclusion can be found. Doherty builds Albion by weaving together images of well-balanced Englishness and darker undertones that suggest that right below a well-balanced, placid exterior of dreamy villages and big-city multiculturalism, national culture also accommodates violence, small-mindedness and melancholy. The speaker we find in "Albion" is one who is very much aware of the many layers that compose the place he invites us to, but who takes in the place, for all its complexity, without necessarily trying to fix it or propose a solution for it. In a way, Doherty deals with his own understanding of Albion in a very similar way to Dickinson's treatment of heaven and the afterlife. They both establish a dialogue with a large tradition that precedes them but go on to mould their object in their own terms in a manner that does not impose a verdict upon it. Dickinson is consistently ambivalent in her treatment of Christianism, religion and the afterlife. Likewise, Doherty does not commit to a single vision of England/Albion. His poems and songs constitute thinking exercises that vocalise and explore a myriad of what are, often, conflicting views:

> Down in Albion
> They're black and blue
> But we don't talk about that

Are you from 'round here?
How do you do?
I'd like to talk about that

Talk over
Gin in teacups
And leaves on the lawn
Violence in bus stops
And the pale thin girl with eyes forlorn

More gin in teacups
And leaves on the lawn
Violence in dole queues
And the pale thin girl
Behind the checkout

If you're looking for a cheap sort
Set in false anticipation
I'll be waiting in the photo booth
At the underground station

So come away, won't you come away?
We could go to
Deptford, Catford, Watford, Digberth, Mansfield
Anywhere in Albion
(BABYSHAMBLES, 2005)

Throughout the lyrics to "Albion", Doherty yokes together beautiful portraits and aspects of British life (leaves on the lawn, "yellowing classics" as a nod to the country's vast literary tradition), as well as common-place elements that are key to English culture (queuing, tea-drinking, underground stations) with a constant underlying menace of violence and disruption (e.g. "More gin in teacups/And leaves on the lawn/Violence in dole queues/And the pale thin girl/Behind the checkout"). Ultimately, however, it is the complexity of the relationship between those elements that makes Albion such a compelling topic for this speaker, who invites his reader/listener to "come away" to some of England's oldest towns, taking in all they have to offer. As Doherty's speaker navigates the extremes he establishes through the lyrics, he remains passionate about his subject. Furthermore, although his stance is a critical one – never "rose-tinted" as Hannaford proposes –, he remains enthralled by the idea of Albion and does not set himself apart from it.

In his Albion poems and lyrics, Doherty articulates – through different strategies – his anxieties in relation to the underlying tensions between the Britain of his dreams and the estrangement he felt in relation to some of its real-life circumstances. I argue that those works are exponents of Doherty's intense, profound relationship with Dickinsonian thought. They are try-to-think poems as the writer departs from what is, from the outset, an unsolvable question that the poem will not look to exhaust, but rather to unpack and lay open for

discussion, inviting – from its own lack of resolution – different takes from readers. This is a point I have sought to establish throughout this dissertation. Although one can pinpoint Dickinsonian manifestations in Doherty by turning to his direct citations of her or the use of her photograph in a music video, or even turn to their similar treatments of recurring metaphors – some of which I have not addressed in this chapter – the root of this literary relationship, the source that makes all outer manifestations possible, lies in the way Doherty is very alert to the thought processes that propel Dickinson's writing. It is by tuning in to her thinking that he establishes himself as such a competent reader and a contemporary interlocutor to her works.

While I have not exhausted the instances in which Dickinson and Doherty can be affiliated and compared, I believe this dissertation opens the door to ampler conversations not only between these artists, but also regarding their arts. If this work creates a new appraisal of Doherty's take on Dickinson's sentence, I hope it will also prompt readings of Dickinson as a poet that exercises her thinking through poetry, rendering her verses open to new engagements with contemporary artists, critics, students or any other readers whose ears she will continue to reach far into our century.

CODA

In a tour diary included in *From Albion to Shangri-La,* Peter Doherty describes how in that morning a "sense of Arcadia" would surge "like fast shadows up and gone" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 217). He then narrates an encounter with a woman he saw "pushing a shopping trolley down Shaftesbury Avenue, humming (stinking) and humming the theme tune to Beverly Hills Cop" (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 217):

> Bumming copper coins, smiling a cracking 2 tooth gape of a smile that lights up her tired old face somehow like a broken light bulb lights up a dark bun. Until the moment you realise it is fucked, there is a sense of expectation. Could she be an undiscovered literary genius? An English Emily Dickinson, sans the comfortable life? With a rare and remarkable relationship as baggy-rights Maggie-trolley-tripe has with all the pile-up of pigeons down the pedestrianized part of Trafalgar Square. (DOHERTY, 2013, p. 217-218)

It seems significant that an artist who is so enchanted with the biographies of other (mostly male, usually British) writers and poets proposes this intriguing, elusive figure as an "English Emily Dickinson". While her gender certainly plays a part in this, the fact remains that a poetic experience lies very close to the Poet from Amherst in Doherty's mind, which conjures up an instant comparison between the figure that precipitated said experience and Dickinson. This type of alignment that simultaneously approximates and distances one from Dickinson has been produced by Doherty in the past in relation to himself. In the same interview he mentioned having "pinched" two of her lines, as I have introduced it in Chapter 1, Doherty also describes how he once ran away from school with a book of poems by the poet. The narration stops as he "drifts into quietness" (BARTON; PETRIDIS, 2006). When he speaks again, it seems the period spent in silence was dedicated to contrasting himself with Dickinson: "I think she had quite a curious life as well. Not like…more abstinence, wasn't it?" (BARTON; PETRIDIS, 2006). Although Doherty stops shy of the comparison, there seems to be an implied wish to be somehow aligned with her. This is something I always had in mind while developing this dissertation. While his references to her are not always clear to those who are not looking for them, Dickinson's sentence is always an underlying discourse in Doherty.

As I have discussed in Chapter 4, Doherty's Arcadia – which is alluded to in the *From Albion to Shangri-La* excerpt quoted above – is described in "Arcady" using Dickinson's

words. Many years later, in 2016, he posted a video tribute on Youtube[109] after the passing of his friend, the musician Alan Wass. Most of the video is made up of a slideshow of photos of Wass while his song "Getting by, Getting High" plays in the background. However, at 0:56 Dickinson's "There is a pain – so utter" (Fr515) is featured onscreen. The fact this poem about grief is included in Doherty's tribute to his dear friend suggests that her words seemed fitting to his own sense of bereavement. Those and several other elements I addressed throughout this dissertation spiked my interest in Doherty's relationship with Dickinson and its reverberations in his own work. As a reader whose path towards Dickinson's poetry was mediated by Doherty's songs – and, therefore, by his reading of the poems – I felt I was in a privileged position to gauge, describe and analyse this dialogue through tradition via academic research.

In early 2017, I presented Prof. Davi Pinho with an early draft of my research proposal and he offered me precious help in moulding the theoretical framework that would come to sustain it. I believe now as I believed then that this research contributes to a conversation about intermediality and literature, while also recognising Doherty's place as a hybrid artist that produces a relevant body of work in the musical realm but who is also worthy of academic investigation in the literary field. Furthermore, I feel that the reason Dickinson might appear to younger readers as out of touch with contemporary questions is due to the fact that most recent approaches to her in pop culture come in the form of an interest in her biography. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, three fictionalised versions of her life have been released in the past two years. While her poetry is obviously featured in those, its role is secondary to plotlines that mostly stray from what is known of her life. The poetry seems almost like an adornment to give Dickinson an interesting occupation in the midst of all the drama and comedy each of those adaptations produce. It remains uncertain how much of the fascination fans have for such shows and films will translate into an interest to buy a book of Dickinson's poems or even look them up online. Those who get too attached to a Dickinson made fully palatable to Generation Z standards might feel the work of the writer behind the poems, a nineteenth-century poet who was not nearly as rebellious as contemporary screenwriters presented them with, is too distant from anything the character they fell in love with could produce. Creative freedom while delivering fictionalised biographies of Dickinson is perfectly acceptable, of course. The poet has been dead for over a hundred years. Nevertheless, when it comes to introducing her to new generations of poetry readers, works

[109] Available at: https://youtu.be/FOp18R0zLSo. Accessed on: 19 Dec. 2019.

such as Doherty's can be much more helpful is building bridges. Although his dialogue with Dickinson takes place somewhere between Agamben's immemorial and the twenty-first century, Doherty is still a man of his own time, even if he reaches beyond it. That he is capable to speak with Dickinson's words and make them seem new with no mediation from a character – the recluse in white or the rebellious teenager – shows he is truly well-versed in her sentence.

Ultimately, it seems odd that an artist so engaged with Dickinson as Doherty is has not yet attracted the attention of Dickinson's scholars except for a brief mention by Lyndall Gordon in *Lives Like Loaded Guns* (2010). This is a gap I believe my dissertation has filled. Hopefully it will aid other researchers interested both in approaching Doherty as a literature reader and writer and in addressing how Dickinson's poetry resonates in the twenty-first century. I have by no means exhausted either of those questions. Even the relationship between the two artists has ramifications I have not had the opportunity to develop throughout my Master's research. One example of that is Doherty's output as a painter and visual artist, which I believe has often been influenced by his reading of Dickinson. There is also the fact that Doherty often employs Christian and Biblical imagery in his lyrics. It would be interesting to investigate religiosity in Dickinson and Doherty, inquiring if there are points of connection between them. Dickinson has been approached as a war poet (WOLOSKY, 1984; MILLER, 2012a). War, of course, is a theme that has fascinated Doherty from a very early age, having grown up in army barracks. His critical reading of war – and The United Kingdom's part in it – in songs such as "Arbeit Macht Frei"[110] and "1939 returning" is worthy of investigation. Besides the association with Dickinson, his own *oeuvre* also brings many questions worthy of inquiry that I hope to read and write about in the coming years.

This has been a process that has both prepared me to step into a new phase of my academic development as a PhD student and taught me much about my subjects and beyond. I hope the findings enclosed in this dissertation can be useful to my peers in the future and offer a fresh perspective on both artists.

[110] "Arbeit Macht Frei" was included in The Libertines' second album but is credited solely to Doherty. It brings a critical reading of war by highlighting the hypocrisy of the English pride in winning World War II and "beating the nazis" while harbouring racism and intolerance at home: "(her old man) / He don't like blacks or queers / (yet he's proud he beat the nazis? / - how queer...)"

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