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## Abstract

*“Every tone seems to be part of evolution”*

Nick Cave is known for protecting his privacy, yet he conducts a dialogue about life experiences through his texts. At the same time, although he himself denies being a Christian, he uses references to the New and Old Testaments in his work and conveys a message of faith, hope, and love through his generational language of irony and sarcasm. Some of his texts can even be understood as litany, via which he conveys the church's message and makes it accessible to the young generation deviating from moral principles. In my work I compare selected texts from different life stages of the author with biblical stories.

### Key words

Nick Cave, Bible, faith, hope, message, catharsis, preacher

## Abstrakt

*„Každý tón se zdá být součástí evoluce“*

Nick Cave je pověstný střežením si svého soukromí, přesto prostřednictvím svých osobitých textů sděluje osobní životní zkušenosti. Zároveň, ačkoli tvrdí, že není křesťanem, používá ve své tvorbě odkazy na Nový a Starý zákon a generačním jazykem plným ironie a sarkasmu předává poselství víry, naděje a lásky. Některé jeho texty lze dokonce považovat za litanie, jejichž prostřednictvím předává poselství církve a zpřístupňuje je mladé generaci, která se morálních zásad odklání. Ve své práci porovnávám vybrané texty z různých etap autorova života s biblickými příběhy.

### Klíčová slova

Nick Cave, bible, víra, naděje, poselství, katarze, kazatel

## Introduction

The works of Nick Cave are highly distinctive and varied, not only in terms of literary, but also musical composition. Cave began to compose in early seventies, while studying at the private boarding school Caulfield Grammar in Melbourne he formed his first band *The Boys Next Door* and continues to compose and perform to this day. Cave's expression forms formed in parallel with the growth and maturation of the author's personality, influenced by fundamental events in his life.

Over the course of Cave's career, the way the author communicates with his supporters and listeners has undergone remarkable changes. At the very start, the form of communication was by-and-large comprised of one-sided, rude, and even sadistic utterances spewed at the audience. During this period, the major themes were violence, crime, and the apocalypse in general. In a following phase the themes turned more towards examining human relationships, the confusions of desire, lust, and loss. In the later part of the author's work, the texts deal not only with the faded beauty of romances in the form of love songs, but above all with a connection to faith, hope, and divinity.

Since 2018 the author communicates with his followers directly and personally through his internet platform *The Red Hand Files* (henceforth RHF), where he answers the questions received, discussing his personal as well as professional life, undertaking the role of a mature mentor. Throughout the author's work, there are links to the biblical pattern leading to the legacy of hope and faith, the longing to redeem. Cave's visions of the terrestrial life are full of pervasive suffering, atrocities, lust, and depravity on one side; on the other, the tender or gloomy love songs filled with woe, unfulfilled desires and wasted hopes are recognizable in most of his work.

The aim is to review the lyrics of Cave's songs from various periods of his life and identify the links to biblical texts. The goal is to evaluate the Bible as the predominant source of inspiration for specific part of the author's work, through which he passes on to his followers a legacy directly linked to the sacred texts of the Bible. As a biblical pattern will be considered any textual element found in the Old or New Testament. The term biblical pattern can therefore include specific names of characters, locations, stories, or their fragments, but also relatively general terms, which can be considered as biblical based on context.

In the first part will be reviewed the texts from the seventies till the late eighties. In the second part will be reviewed latter texts. The third part will examine Cave's thematic texts from RHF, his published essays on biblical themes, and the development of his communication style.



## 1. Dense Apocalyptic Youth

Nicholas Edward Cave was born in Australia, Warracknabeal, in 1957. His father was a teacher of English literature, his mother a librarian (Johnston 2009, p. 25). From the age of eight, he sang at the Wangaratta Church choir and attended extracurricular religion classes, where he listened to stories about Christ's teachings and miracles (Johnston 2009, pp. 26-27). During his school years, he proved to be a complicated individual with his own specific perception of the world around him, yet he demonstrated an interest in art history classes and religious paintings by old masters, which to him, unlike contemporary art, raised arguments about perception and the nature of art. Cave (2013, p. 6) reflects and explains that the unexpected passing of his father was the impulse to start writing, to relieve the flow of his imagination, and to write God into existence. The powerful influence of Cave's father, who encouraged him to study literature from a young age, is explained by Cave in the documentary *20,000 Days on Earth* (2014), where he recalls how Nabokov's *Lolita* part was read aloud to him with the remark “*within that chapter great writing existed*”. He recalls his early Caulfield studies in the context of reading Russian classics, particularly Dostoevsky, and how impressed he was by the concept that “*the world is divided into the ordinary and the extraordinary and that the extraordinary should not have to live under the dictate of the ordinary majority*” (Johnston 2009, pp.30-31). In the 2003 documentary *Nick Cave - The South Bank Show*, he cites Johnny Cash and Nina Simone as essential artists who inspired his literary expression.

In the early eighties, Cave moves with his band to London, since 1984 he lives and works for five years in Berlin. In a filmed interview with Jacobson (Straight to You 1994), Cave evaluates his stay in Berlin as important in that he gained confidence in himself to go ahead and do exactly what he wanted to do, without worrying about other people's opinions. Mick Harvey, who has met Cave in 1971 at Caulfield's Grammar School in Melbourne and played with him since then, comments on the Berlin period as heavily influenced by his addiction, when Cave was unable to work and create coherently (Johnson 2009, p. 241; Snow 2011, p.216). In a later documentary (Nick Cave - The South Bank Show 2003), Cave himself confirms that during his Berlin period he was absorbed in reading the Old Testament and saw the world as a kind of punishing place, a bad place full of chaos, which was reflected in his work at the time. Biblical stories became a kind of compositional concept, a source of inspiration for the writing of literary and musical texts subsequently combined with the

reality of observed events. Cave comments in one of his interviews “*The thing about my songs is they’ve all got the kitchen sink thrown into them!*” (Snow 2011, p.218).

### 1.1. Tupelo

*Tupelo* (Cave 2013, pp.101-103) is the opening song of the album *The First-born is Dead* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1985), the album name refers to Exodus 11: 5-10, where Moses announces to Pharaoh another act of the Lord that seeks to force the release of the people of Israel from Egypt: “*and all the first-borne in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-borne of Pharaoh that sits on the throne, even to the first-borne of the slave-girl that is behind the mill, and the first-borne of animals*”.

In a documentary *Nick Cave - The South Bank Show* (2003), Cave explains that he was inspired to compose the song by hearing a song *Tupelo Blues* from the album *The Country Blues of John Lee Hooker* (Hooker 1959), which he first heard when he was reaching his twenties, and the way Hooker delivered the laconic lyrics through the distinctive sound of his guitar redefined the ideas Cave had of music up to that time.

*Tupelo* lyrics depicts the apocalyptic flood narrative described in Genesis 6-9 (Boer 2013, p. 10; Dalziell 2009, p. 154; Johnston 2009, p. 171)

*“And the black rain come down. Water water everywhere. Where no bird can fly no fish can swim. Where no bird can fly no fish can swim. No fish can swim.*

*Until The King is born!”*

This song has various interpretation. Tupelo is a small town in Mississippi, the birthplace of Elvis Aaron Presley. Concurrently Tupelo is the name of an American black gum tree growing in the swamp area of Mississippi, its name comes from the language of a Native American tribe Muskogee “*eto opelwv*” and it means “*swamp tree*” (Online Etymology Dictionary 2022). Elvis Presley, dubbed the King of Rock and Roll, was born in Tupelo. His identical twin brother, Jesse Garon Presley, was delivered before him, stillborn (Graceland 2022).

Cave mentions in the *Tupelo* lyrics:

*“Well Saturday gives what Sunday steals. And a child is born on his brothers heels. Come Sunday morn the first-born dead. In a shoe-box tied with a ribbon of red”.*

And further on in the last stanza of the song

*“O God help Tupelo! Mama rock your lil one slow. The lil one will walk on Tupelo. Tupelo-o-o! Yeah Tupelo! And carry the burden of Tupelo. Tupelo-o-o! O Tupelo!*

*Yeah! The King will walk on Tupelo! Tupelo-o-o! O Tupelo! He carried the burden outa Tupelo! Tupelo-o-o! Hey Tupelo! You will reap just what you sow”*

expresses, that baby born, as suggested the King, will carry the burden of Tupelo. This can be understood as a link to Elvis Presley, who was born into a poor family and most of his childhood suffered, later became the King of the Rock and Roll. At the same time the King can be considered as son of God, carrying the sins of the world.

The last phrase of the song “*You will reap just what you sow*” links to the Bible, where in Proverbs 22:8 “*He who sows iniquity shall reap vanity*” and the Galatians 6:7-8 “*for whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap. For he that sows to his own flesh shall reap from the flesh everlasting misery. But he that sows to the Spirit shall reap everlasting life from the Spirit*” is captured the reference with the message of do good to others and others will do good to you.

## 1.2. The Mercy Seat

The lyrics of the song *The Mercy Seat* (Cave 2013, pp.137-140) from the album *Tender Prey* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1988) are ambiguous and its title links to the narrative of the song in the form of a monologue by a prisoner awaiting execution in the electric chair, with a parallel reference to the Bible (Exodus 25:10-22) where God commissions Moses to construct a mercy seat in which the God's testimony will be kept. The idea of the electric chair as a place of mercy is debatable, albeit with a bit of hyperbole it can be declared that, in addition to the suffering of those being executed, it provides definite liberation from earthly woes. A death row convict, the narrator of the song, contemplates his innocence and repeats the mantra “*I am not afraid to die*”, indicating his expectation of religious salvation.

In the first stanza is mentioned “*the face of Jesus in my soup*”, suggesting that the reflection of the prisoner's face invokes the similarity of their fate, as he believes he will be executed for a crime he did not commit. The third stanza hints by the irony that Jesus, a carpenter by trade (Mark 6:3), was nailed to a wooden cross. The following verse contrasts the electric chair made of wood and wire with God's mercy seat in Heaven (Boer 2013, p.12), which should be made of acacia wood and richly decorated with gold (Exodus 25:10-11), and from which “*all history does unfold*”, referencing the mercy seat as a place to store God's laws and the Ten Commandments so that Moses could teach them (Exodus 24:12). Alternatively, the mentioned beginning of history can be interpreted as the moment of creation of the world by God, as it is described in the Bible, in the first part of the book of

Genesis. At the moment when the prisoner is seated in the electric chair, his mind is further preoccupied with the idea that his soul will wander to God's eternal brightness as a moth to the light. The narrative progresses with a refrain repeatedly sung by the chorus with slight variations of the text, where the prisoner longs for the completion of the execution:

*“To be done with all this measuring of truth  
An eye for an eye  
A tooth for a tooth  
And anyway I told the truth  
And I'm not afraid to die”*

which is related to the call to humility in front of God, as appears in the Bible:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for Eye and tooth for tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist evil. But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (...) But I say to you, Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. And pray for those who insult you and persecute you: so that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on evil and good. And He sends rain on the just and unjust” (Matthew 5:38-45).*

In the course of the execution, self-reflection gradually emerges through variations of the text, in the form of doubts as to whether the declaration of innocence was merely his subjective view as the prisoner nears expected eternal confession to God and reconsiders his eligibility for eternal life (Proverb 12:28). That is consistent with the interview of Jacobson (Straight to You 1994), where Cave comments on the song that he is disturbed by the idea of an afterlife and tends to believe that there must exist some system of a balance that should in some way make each man pay for all the trouble caused.

### 1.3. Mercy

According to Boer (2013, p.12) and McCredden (Dalziell 2009, p.174) the lyrics of the song *Mercy* (Cave 2013, pp.148-149) from the album *Tender Prey* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1988) are reference to the story of John the Baptist described in the Bible (Matthew 14: 1-12; Mark 6: 14-29; Luke 9: 7-9). The song is a narrative about the prophet John the Baptist, who in one of the sermons condemned Herod for rejecting his wife and marrying his own brother's wife He-ro-di-as. Herod captured John for this criticism; at the request of his wife He-ro-di-as, mediated by her daughter Salome, he had John the Baptist beheaded.

The lyrics demonstrates the inner monologue of the Prophet John the Baptist, who is expecting Herod's judgment captured in prison. In the first stanza he recalls the baptisms in the Jordan River, then how he was abandoned by his disciples who followed Jesus, exactly according to his prophecy. The second stanza mentions temptations from the devil John the Baptist faced, and in the third one reminiscence of Jesus helping to vulnerable, now wondering whether Jesus will find him "*My cousin was working miracles, I wondered if he'd find me*", pleading for mercy of God.

Jesus and John the Baptist were related, albeit the Bible does not provide enough evidence to determine how close relatives were, but as Cave mentions in his text it is possible that they were cousins. According to the Gospel of Luke 1, Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visits Elizabeth in the advanced pregnancy expecting John the Baptist and spends three months with her. Both women were heralded by the archangel Gabriel with the pregnancy and the birth of their sons.

Overall, the lyrics of *Mercy* express isolation, helplessness and futility, feelings the author himself was dealing with at the time as a result of the loss of his father, whom he adored, and personal insecurities stemming from drug abuse.

#### 1.4. City of Refuge

There were six cities established by the will of God as a city of refuge "*so that the slayer who kills any person through error, in ignorance, may flee there. And they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood*" (Joshua 20). City of Refuge sheltered the manslaughter until he could stand before the congregation, where only multiple testimonies could prove the unintentionality of the act. This would allow the manslaughter to live protected from blood vengeance in the city where he had taken refuge.

The chorus of the song *City of Refuge* (Cave 2013, pp.150-151) from the album *Tender Prey* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1988) urges a man to run to a shelter in the city of refugees. In the first verse, he describes a scene where a man kneels over the lifeless body of a woman.

*"You stand before your maker  
In a state of shame"*

is suggesting the first awareness of the act committed, that was possibly hidden from the eyes of other people but is seen by God (I Samuel 16:7). This is reconfirmed in the third stanza, that even if the crime is concealed and not judged on earth, the degree of wrongdoing will be

judged by God. Here Cave uses a motif of evaluating misdeeds through the final confession to God, who can decide on either eternal life or damnation as is described the final judgement of God in the Gospel of Matthew 25:31-46. This idea was similarly expressed in the lyrics of the song *The Mercy Seat*.

### 1.5. The Good Son

The second track from the album of the same name, *The Good Son* (Cave 2013, pp.169-170), is based on the biblical story of the fratricide between the sons of Adam and Eve as stated in the fourth part of Genesis (Baker 2013, p.229).

The first-born Cain became a farmer, the second-born Abel a shepherd. Both offered a sacrifice from their harvest to the Lord, who looked upon Abel and his offering while paid no attention to Cain, who blushed with indignation at this unequal treatment. The Lord asks Cain the reason for his indignation:

*“If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin crouches at the door - and its desire is for you, and you shall rule over it”* (Genesis 4:7).

Cain disobeys the Lord’s advice, kills Abel, is marked by the Lord, and banished from Eden. In the biblical stories, this is the very first murder in its history. The repetition of the refrain in the final part of Cave’s text *“one more man gone”* is an emphasis on the subsequent frequent repetition of a similar event.

The text can be considered a general call to self-control, humility and reverence, a call to do good, to avoid hasty acts even if good actions are not immediately recognized or appreciated.

The above annotated texts from the first period of the author’s works are based on specific biblical stories and convey a biblical prism, thematically focused on introspection, retribution, redemption, and the filial relationship. They guide the listener to a perspective of a higher righteousness that should recognize and elevate the just and the faithful despite suffering secular woes.

## 2. Aching Noble Heart

After several attempts to overcome an addiction that was already too disturbing to his work, Cave manages to complete European and American tour for the *Tender Prey* album, meets a new partner at a concert in Brazil, and moves to Sao Paulo (Johnston 2009, pp. 244, 251-259; Snow 2011, p.221; Boer 2013, p.74). In an interview from the documentary *Straight to You* with Jacobson (1994), Cave confirms that the feeling of alienation from everything and his solitariness changed, it was a turning point in his creative life: “*The experience of Brazil, meeting Vivian, and Luke, it changed things. It changed the sensitivity to the world. I feel a bit more part of the world*”.

This change in the antagonistic lifestyle is gradually projected into Cave’s work and into the form of his performance. The lyrics shift from their original apocalyptic, aggressive, and brutal narratives to a more emotional and focused content, and in some songs an intense nostalgia after drug withdrawal can be detected. Biblical stories are no longer the dominant foundation of the composition, albeit references to the Bible or direct quotations continue to appear in the lyrics. Cave uses a more personal narrative form, reflecting his own life experiences in the lyrics, talking about his personal perception of the world, and disclosing his feelings. Images of a sorrowful world continue to be one of the main themes, albeit in a less aggressive form, balanced by the perception of the inner self, beauty, and divinity. This stylization further serves to convey a message to the listeners, the lyrics encourage self-awareness, reflection, and enlightenment, and can be seen as a basis for individual introspection of the lifestyle, as a basis for a subjective mini meditation on the personal attitudes for anyone of the audience.

### 2.1. Papa Won’t Leave You, Henry

As Johnston (2009, p. 276) explains, the songs on the album *Henry’s Dream* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1992) began to contain a personal dimension. The chorus of the album’s first song, *Papa Won’t Leave You, Henry* (Cave 2013, pp.187-191), was originally sung by Cave to his son before his birth as a lullaby, with the name Henry being one of the possibilities for naming him (Snow 2011, p.144). The refrain is a repeated assurance that the father will take care of his son’s safety despite the obstacles and will never abandon him, which contrasts with the epic text of the verses describing the horrors of the surrounding world, arrogance,

malice, fornication, greed, and indicates a willingness of the protagonist not to stray from the intended path. In the refrain is a hint of fear of failure:

*“Well the road is long  
And the road is hard  
And many fall by the side”*

further distracted by a solid determination of the protagonist to devote himself to his chosen mission, which he aims to accomplish with dedicated focus and firmness of willpower.

## 2.2. Let Love In

Following the nomadic existence echoed in previous works, the album *Let Love In* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1994) was composed after Cave and his new family settled in London (Johnston 2009, p. 292). This ephemeral transposition allowed Cave to work concentratedly on the album where the longing for love is no longer the leitmotif, the lyrics primarily portray the antagonists in a combination of the wicked and irony. The third song of the album, *Loverman* (Cave 2013, pp. 218-220), features a refused lover presenting himself as a victim, his demands for fulfillment graduating into a terrifying image of the destructive power of lust. Cave uses religious quotes to emphasize the fatality of the predicament, as in the first chorus:

*“Loverman! Since the world began  
For ever, Amen ‘til the end of time”*

asserting at the end of each chorus, “*Cause I am what I am, what I am what I am*”, inspired by God instructing Moses in Exodus 3:14 on how to declare God's name to the enslaved people of Israel whom he is tasked with leading out of Egypt. The song vividly portrays the gradual culmination of passive aggression and manipulation to achieve a desired goal, and the playful ambivalence expressed by lust, which is represented in the song in the context of love obsession, can appear in various forms, such as fanaticism or any kind of addiction. For the listener, this song is an intense and rhythmic warning against any form of bullying, whether from the environment or oneself. It is a call for introspection and reflection before we take the next step towards the antagonist of life, whatever form it may take.

The title of the fifth track *Red Right Hand* (Cave 2013, pp. 223-224) comes from an epic poem *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (Greenblatt 2018, p. 1853), where “*the red right hand*” represents the vengeful hand of God. Cave used the same phrase to title his website designed for correspondence with the public.



The beginning of the textual narrative invites us to walk to the edge of the city across the tracks, symbolizing the boundary between good and evil, with the warning repeated in every stanza that unless you change direction, there is no turning back, and your destiny will be damnation. In the song, the sense of doom and condemnation is enhanced by the sound of the bell. In the subsequent section of the lyrics is an encounter with the darkness that is healing hardships, albeit accompanied by a caution about a hidden red right hand. The final section describes the deprivation of personal freedom, the loss of the ability to control your own destiny highlighted in last two lines:

*“You’re one microscopic cog in his catastrophic plan  
Designed and directed by his red right hand”.*

The song carries a similar message to the *Loverman* lyrics analyzed above, as it conveys a gloomy warning of the darkness that could take control over one's life. In Cave's particular case, a connection to his heroin addiction is suggested. Specifically, heroin initially saturates its user by covering all of life's expectations and needs, but the quickly emerging addiction and physical need for the drug negates the pleasurable feelings and the addicted individual becomes a servant to the drug to which sacrifices possessions, relationships and often even life (AddictionCenter.com 2022). As Johnston (2009, p. 296) has suggested, the narrative of the song is a blatant warning against accepting those who outwardly show a benevolent concern for others while furthering their own selfish interests. This darkness can be related to addictive substances, as described above, but can also be linked to toxic relationships or sectarianism, which the audience may identify with in the context of the distress they are experiencing.

### 2.3. The Boatman's Call

*The Boatman's Call* album (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 1997) is the author's personal confession about relationships that he dealt with at the time, in the course of listening to the album we are not only overwhelmed by the longing for a love that has faded, but also by the images of a lamented ideal who has “*a godly body, a happy heart-shaped face, black hair and eventually green eyes*” (Snow 2011, pp. 86-87, 181-182). Cave comments himself, that the album was in a way “*ordinary stuff magnified to heroic proportions in the most melodramatic way*”, and “*sometimes it sounds like the moaning of a dying insect*” (Snow 2011, p. 113). For our purpose, the album is essential that Cave opens up and communicates

to the audience for the first time his personal feelings, and most importantly the described manner in which he finds consolation.

In the fourth song of the album, *Brompton Oratory* (Cave 2013, p. 278), narrator seeks solace in the church. It's symbolic; the faithful visit church for prayer and confession, seeking relief and salvation after confessing the failings to God. Similarly in the song the narrator seeks solace after a painful denouement in the church he enters during the celebration of the Ascension on the seventh Sunday after Easter, which is explained in the opening of the second stanza by the reading from Luke 24. The third and fourth stanzas can be understood as a confession to the beloved, as well as a demonstration of admiration to God. The last two verses describe a painful and exhausting process of spiritual farewell, relief after confession, the narrator implies a cathartic experience.

The following song *There is a Kingdom* (Cave 2013, p. 279) is an ode to the greatness of the kingdom of heaven, praising faith and love in the first verse, righteousness, and the poignant transience of each moment in the second. The simple and direct chorus:

*“There is a kingdom  
There is a king  
And He lives without  
And He lives within  
And He is everything”*

suggests the existence of heaven and the omnipresent God (Dalziell 2009, p. 173). Billingham (Baker 2013, p. 19) explains the first verse with the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, where Jesus is described as the eternal light that enlightens all human beings born into the world. *There is a Kingdom* can be considered for a Christian hymn suitable for any occasion.

On the album it is followed by a versatile heart-opening love song (*Are You) the One that I've Been Waiting For?* (Cave 2013, p. 280) expressing the gradation of tension and excitement at the approach of the desired person, emphasizing the fatality of the situation, with a climax in the refrain

*“O we will know, won't we?  
The stars will explode in the sky  
O but they don't, do they?  
Stars have their moment and then they die”*

highlighting the poignant transience of the moment. In the last stanza Cave mentions the man who spoke wonders, similarly to the man who was working miracles in the song *Mercy* (Cave

2013, pp. 148-149), meaning Jesus, who preached “*He who seeks finds and who knocks will be let in*”. This quotation from Matthew 7:8 is used in a remarkable connotation referring to the attainment of sexual intercourse between lovers. The physical act expected to happen, which is the unstated climax of the song, is given a spiritual dimension thanks to the quotation and emphasizes the devotion to the moment, the fulfilment of longing and anticipation.

The tenth song of the album called *Idiot Prayer* (Cave 2013, pp. 285-286) is a farewell to a loved one who has parted. The title suggests the foolishness of the narrator who bids farewell to the prospect of an uncertain reunion. To poetically emphasize the painful moment, the author works with the idea of the existence of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) and symbolically discusses the possibility of eternal life in heaven or damnation in hell, contemplating the probability of another encounter of separated lovers after they die. The narrator is evaluating his own deeds and admits a reunion in hell as the only possibility. The uncertainty of the encounter with the lover stems from the fact that her deeds are not judged by the narrator himself; he knows that they will be judged by a higher instance, that will decide whether she wanders to heaven or hell. In the last stanza of this solemn confession, which is addressed to an object of worship, the separated beloved, are mentioned various clarifying motifs:

*“An idiot prayer of empty words  
Love, dear, is strictly for the birds  
We each get what we deserve  
My little snow white dove  
Rest assured”*

The first two lines of the verse reveal that the narrator is aware of the foolishness of his confession, which will not modify or influence the course of events, and further explains, using the symbolism of the bird, that love involves mutual esteem and liberty. The third line is balancing of responsibility and guilt for the state of affairs, a reference to Galatians 6:7-8 “*for whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap*”. On the following line Cave addresses the separated lover as a snow white dove, which is in Christianity the symbol of the Holy Spirit and God's chosen messenger between the physical and spiritual realms, a reminder of God's eternal love. In Cave's song, the snow white dove symbolizes meekness, innocence, peaceful reconciliation, and alignment, which is the overall message of the story told regardless the broken heart.

In one of responses published through the RHF (Cave 2019, #57), Cave comments on The Boatman's Call album as an artistic breakthrough, that not only compensated for relationship disappointments but taught him how to write about ordinary human events in an open, courageous, and meaningful way: *"It was a growth spurt that pushed me in a direction and songwriting style that has stayed with me ever since - albeit in different forms"*.

## 2.4. No More Shall We Part

On the recording *No More Shall We Part* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 2001), the provocative ambivalence towards Christ and Christianity in general no longer appears but has dissolved into a maturity that reflects on spiritual matters. In contrast to his previous album, *The Boatman's Call*, where Cave first laid himself bare and presented his painful personal themes, on *No More Shall We Part* he presents personal themes with lightness and addresses his listeners with the honesty of an artist and a human being. As Calkin suggests in his article *Let There Be Light*, the album is a love confession to Cave's second wife and mother of twin boys, Susie Bick, whom he married in 1999 (Snow 2011, p. 113). While working on this album, Cave changed his songwriting style, beginning to follow a strict nine-to-five composing routine in a rented office (Snow 2011, p. 111, p. 129), and these efforts, combined with saturating the emotional deficit by finding an ideal companion, resulted in an album with a broad musical range conveying a message about love's ability to survive in the world, but this time without the threat of a cataclysmic ending.

In the opening song of the album *As I Sat Sadly By her Side* (Cave 2013, pp. 313-314), a couple sits by the window, their faces pressed against the glass, calmly observing the bustling life of the street. She is moved by the perceived idealistic world full of beauty and transience seen from its surface. He gently draws her attention to deeper connotations, overseen hardships and selfishness of individuals, the uncontrolled chaos *"For each is concerned with their immediate need"*, whereupon he attempts carefully to make her perceive better:

*"With trembling hand I turned toward her  
And pushed the hair out of her eyes"*.

She refuses to see by drawing the curtains, dismissive and denying, and to protect her isolated dreamy world from sorrows of the reality says, that God does not care for benevolence of people as well as he does not care for the opinions on the world He created *"while sorrows pile up around you, ugly, useless and over-inflated"*. Her last words confirms

that her companion managed to move her point of view to a wider perception, that brought her to tears:

*“At which she turned her head away  
Great tears leaping from her eyes  
I could not wipe the smile from my face  
As I sat sadly by her side”.*

Primarily, Cave points out that the true beauty of a person lies largely in the heart of each person, not obvious at a glance, and in kindness to others, not in isolated and superficial perception, but in sharing.

The inspiration for the album's sixth track, *God is in the House* (Cave 2013, pp. 324-325), came from the small towns of the American South that the author drove through on his honeymoon (Nick Cave - *The South Bank Show* 2003). With his own style of mockery, Cave neatly portrayed the small, all-white, immaculate, quiet, and clean town, commenting on its hypocritical way of life, refusing to accept any individual distinction, the manifestation of own personality through either weaknesses or strengths, individuality of a man as such. The text is highlighting the moral depravity of the authorities, the racism, the homophobic ignorance, the hypocrisy of abstinent bigots and religious organizations. In the described town of misguided moralizing, citizens claim *“we have bred all our kittens white”*, a twist on the proverb *“all cats are grey in the dark”* originally meaning that under some circumstances, individual distinctions no longer matter (Lexico.com 2022). The unoptimistic ironic ending of the text:

*“There's no fear about  
If we all hold hands and very quietly shout  
God is in the house”*,

indicates a terrifying unwillingness of the town citizens to change the described arrangement. They aim to remain in ruthless isolation, hidden from the presence of any manifestations of individualism and to continue ignoring Christian values such as helpfulness and kindness. The irony of the existence described can cause anxiety and panic in humans, during which horrified people are not able to produce a sound, they can solely *“very quietly shout”*. The oxymoron used in the final verse for the practice of silent group prayer could equally be the desperate silent scream of a person in supreme anguish, as depicted in Edvard Munch's famous painting *The Scream*. This song encourages a review and re-evaluation of personal and social philosophy of life, personal attitudes, and behavior in general. For individuals who

feel lonely and alienated, there is an invitation to consider the world from a different perspective; Cave speaks of the hope that resides in the realization that love, and goodness depend on one's willingness to accept them.

## 2.5. Abattoir Blues

In 2002, Cave settled with his family in Brighton, UK, where he enjoyed a conventional family life with toddling twins while maintaining a nine-to-five composing routine (Snow 2011, p. 161). The change in lifestyle has had a direct impact on the themes he discusses in his lyrics on the new double album *Abattoir Blues / Lyre of Orpheus* (Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds 2004). As Cave himself comments, he leaves aside the periods of the beginning and end of love and tries to write about the in-between periods (Snow 2011, pp. 170-173). With his own irony, he points out the limitations and disappointments that the ordinary person faces in life, how the daily routine, adverse macroenvironmental developments, and consumerist lifestyle limits the creativity and imagination of the individual.

The opening song of the album's *Abattoir Blues* section, called *Get Ready For Love* (Cave 2013, pp. 383-384), is an alarming statement about the futility of existence that the routine person from time to time experiences. In the first two verses, Cave rhythmically contrasts the higher things that the common man usually aspires to, to a conventional existence where unfulfilled expectations bring disappointment. The repetitive refrain emphasizes the mindless mechanical living of the current population, which praises the fulfillment of their desires and demands, while the last verse can be seen as a lesson, emphasizing the fact that while seeking the false fulfillment of living happiness, the essential surrounding us is often overlooked:

*"I searched the Seven Seas and I've looked under the carpet  
And browsed through the brochures that govern the skies  
Then I was just hanging around, doing nothing and looked up to see  
His face burned in the retina of your eyes".*

Similarly, the song carrying the same name as the album, *Abattoir Blues* (Cave 2013, pp. 397-398), describes the oppressive uncertainty and frustration of doubting the meaning of life and the perceived insignificance of one's own power to influence events in the world around us. The narrator seeks reassurance from his life-partner about whether she also feels the futility of existence, and wonders whether change can be achieved. *Abattoir Blues* captures the mood of a man dissatisfied with a meaningless existence in a world mired in

consumption, ecological and moral extinction. This offered critical self-reflection of personal status is ironically symbolic of the meaning of abattoir, where in a religious sense it represents the culture of sacrificing the slaughtered prey to the Lord in thanksgiving for life.

Generational transformation is addressed in the last song *O Children* (Cave 2013, pp. 418-420) from the second section of the album, *Lyre Of Orpheus*. The song evolves gradually, beginning with the first disappointments associated with the recognition of self-identity during adolescence, followed by the transmission of a legacy in the form of the social patterns and lifestyle of the generation of parents symbolically called “*The keys to the gulag*”. In the process of transition, the ruling older generation hypocritically hides behind its pseudo-successes the facts of its failures, which have a direct impact on the future of the next generations. Adolescents in the lyrics are symbolically “*all jumping on the train that goes to the Kingdom*” without fear, blindly start their secured comfortable journey into adulthood, without realizing the responsibility, reveling in the first moments of the freedom of adulthood, “*We're happy, Ma, we're having fun, and the train ain't even left the station*”. The song foretells the approaching bitter aftertaste of the realization of personal responsibility in life.

## 2.6. Bellringer Blues

The book of Revelation 6:1-8 describes John seeing the first four of the seven seals on the scroll given by God to Jesus gradually broken, and those seals heralds the arrival of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The first one was seated on a white horse, carrying a bow and a crown. This rider symbolizes Pestilence and is also called the Conqueror.

In the last song *Bellringer Blues* (Cave 2013, p. 497-498) of the album *Grinderman 2* (Grinderman 2010) the rider Conqueror and angel Gabriel, the God's herald, are having a conversation. Gabriel approaches the Conqueror, who rings the bell, and asks the reason. When he learns of the search for the missing companions, he replies not to bother. The second stanza describes how Gabriel tries to bargain the sale of the Bible, but the Conqueror refuses because it contains stories that are too harsh. The last stanza, in its first half, suggests that people have only a shallow interest in understanding Scriptures and living by its rules, which is why the Conqueror's challenge opens in the second half of the stanza. God had ordained these four riders of the Apocalypse for the people to secure victory over falsity; they were to damn all, but the honest and true would overcome in eternity.

The final repetitive line of the song, “*It's okay Joe it's time to go!*” is a prompt for the riders of the Apocalypse to launch their mission and, simultaneously, Cave's call for the audience to self-reflect on how honest and true their life really is. Joe is a possible reference to the Old Testament story of Joseph, Jacob's beloved son who had the ability to foretell according to his dreams and who was sold into slavery by his brothers out of jealousy. After the hardships, Joseph was appointed by Pharaoh as the governor of Egypt and wisely prepared the country's food supply for the predicted time of famine. During the famine, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt asking for supplies. Unbeknownst to the brothers, Joseph first made sure they were reformed, and then revealed his identity to them. He forgave them and invited his father and brothers to settle in Egypt (Genesis 37:39-45). As a result of similar features and life events in the biblical narratives, Joseph is frequently considered the Old Testament equivalent or prefiguration of Jesus.

## 2.7. Push the Sky Away

One possible interpretation of the lyrics of the song *Push the Sky Away* (Cave 2013, p. 516) may be related to the burden of human suffering and worry that can drive a man to despair; in Cave's song, the weight of such a burden is simile to a collapsing sky that could shatter a person. From a faith perspective, life on earth and overcoming life's hardships are the path to redemption and eternal life in the kingdom of heaven. Human suffering takes many forms, and as each person is an individual, their capacity to absorb pain and misfortune varies. The weight of worry and circumstances that one carries on one's shoulders, whether it is life's disappointments, death, betrayal, or accumulation of other daily events that become unbearable to the point of directing one to the final solution, an early exit from life by one's own hand. From the perspective of faith, suicide is contrary to the Ten Commandments and a sin that will deprive a person the eternal life in heaven. Giving up on living is simply forbidden.

In the context of the aforementioned interpretation, the song *Push the Sky Away* is a call for people to not give in to despair, to go on their way and move through their worries. The form of delivering the message is accompanied by a simple melody backed by a minimalist drum and a keyboard, and the chorus “*You 've gotta just keep on pushing, Push the sky away*”, is accented by a children's choir singing. The simple musical form of the song can be paralleled to a hymn sung during masses in sermons. Through his performance, Cave conveys



to his listeners the courage and strength to raise their head and continue life's path despite the suffering they are experiencing.

A similar metaphor is used in the song *Blues o lásce a rumu* (*Blues about love and rum*) by Jan Spálený & ASPM from the album „...Až srdce usedá” (1999), where the weight of circumstances is equated to a falling ceiling:

*“The ceiling’s collapsing  
The beams are falling on me  
‘don’t love you, Boulder’  
was the verdict of the lady”*

The connotations of the lyrics (stated in my own translation) vary, as the man under the falling ceiling passively surrenders to the weight of disappointment from rejection and does not fight misfortune. In contrast, Cave's lyrics are a call to overcome adversity.

In a 2004 interview (Snow 2011, p. 173), Sutcliffe suggests that Cave is bringing answers to people in his recent works, and while Cave admits to an element of preachifying, he subsequently explains that he has no ambition to preach as he does not feel the authority to do so, *“the thing I value most about my work is that there is a certain amount of mystery about it. To me, that’s more affecting than having someone point the finger at you and tell you, This is what you should believe, this is what you should support. But I do see it as my duty in some way to put forward my own notion of God”*. This mentioned *“certain amount of mystery”* in Cave's texts causes ambiguity of interpretation on the side of listeners, as each individual understands the context and connotations according to subjective perception influenced by personal life experiences, which corresponds to the reception theory of Iser (Pepník 2004, p. 196).

Textual analysis reveals that in the second phase the author addresses more personal themes, reflects on his own life experiences, and reveals his feelings to his listeners. He focuses on conveying inner experiences and this stylization is a stimulus for listeners to introspection and self-reflection, the overall message communicated directs listeners to revise their philosophy of life according to a biblical prism.

### 3. Brand new preacher

In response to one of the inquiries Cave received from the public through the RHF website, he stated that as an elementary school student, he responded to his teacher's question about his future desired occupation by claiming that he wanted to become “*a cult leader*”, and further reflected that as a young boy he had a strong belief in his awesomeness and dreamed of achieving some form of world domination (RHF 2018, #138). This high level of self-confidence possibly sown by parental care did not dissipate even with the complicated maturation of his personality, his drug and alcohol abuse, and the loss of the father he looked up to and to whom Cave primarily wished to demonstrate his abilities (Snow 2011, p. 207). He truly left Australia to conquer the world with his literary and musical work.

#### 3.1. Not only for those who believe

The analyses of his textual output in the two preceding chapters demonstrate that Cave was extensively thematically concerned with the biblical stories and their moral. At a pivotal time in his life, when he was turning from his alienation from the world to family life in England, he wrote two essays closely related to faith that were primarily addressed to believers.

In the essay *The Flesh Made the Word* (Nick Cave *The Secret Life of the Love Song/The Flesh Made Word* 1999), originally written for BBC Radio 3's Religious Services in 1996, Cave reflects on his religious formation in his youth and the influence of his late father. He explains his gradual study of the Bible, his acceptance and understanding of it, and how the Bible guided and supported his creative development. The early phase of his work reflected his understanding of the nature of the Old Testament, where poor humanity suffers under a despotic God. However, the perceived audience reaction to his performances caused him to modify his approach. His sudden awareness of the interrelationship and the reality of sharing energy through his work with his audience made him change the attitude. In the next stage of his work, he moved to the New Testament study and through his texts created a more gracious image of Jesus. In the text, Cave repeatedly mentions that God spoke through him during the performance, this time “*the voice that spoke through me was now softer, sadder, more introspective*”, further explaining that God exists thanks to man's imagination and creativity. In the text, Cave outlines his resemblance to Jesus, which he supports with the

memory of his father, who asked him what he had done to assist humanity. His own father argued a similar question by publishing two short stories of his own, which Cave comments on with the sentence those “*two stories were tiny seeds planted in a garden that did not grow*”. Cave argues that, like Jesus, he “*came to right the wrongs of his father*” and “*like Christ, he comes in the name of his father to keep God alive*” and, as Welberry (Dalziell 2009, p. 57) suggests, he considers himself an advanced version of the father in his personal Oedipal drama. This is understood as a productive form of messages that Cave conveys through his extensive literary, musical, and cinematic output.

Two years later Cave wrote another essay with religious theme, *An Introduction to the Gospel According to Mark* (Cave 2010), explaining his relation to the religious texts of the New Testament, that was published as a part of the Pocket Canon edition. Similarly, to the previous essay, he states that during the maturation process, when youth becomes adulthood, one learns to forgive oneself and the world for all failures. This process of transmutation in the human heart makes one open and warm towards the world. In the essay, Cave discusses Christ's journey as described in the Gospel of Mark, emphasizing his divine inspiration and creativity in the contrast with the dull rationalism and incomprehension of others, including Christ's disciples, highlighting the loneliness, stating “*Christ, it seemed to me was the victim of humanity's lack of imagination, was hammered to the cross with the nails of creative vapidty*”. Further, he criticizes the church for misinterpreting Christ as a placid savior who died on the cross for the sins of mankind, denying his humanity. According to Cave, the Christ of Mark should be understood by people as a source of inspiration for a liberating path of imagination and creativity, not as a blindly and knee-worshipped idol.

In both essays Cave explains his understanding of the Bible and faith, emphasizes that he perceives the Bible as a narrative of humanity with lessons concerning the fundamental dimensions of human life that could only have been scripted through human imagination and creativity. In the same way, he defends the position of Christ as a misunderstood preacher who conveyed a message of love, benevolence, and faith. He even identifies himself with the figure of Christ, drawing on his own individualism, solitude, and mission to convey related message.

The Bible is a unique book, especially in terms of its authoritativeness scope and wide readership. In Christianity and Judaism, the Bible is considered sacred scripture and its narratives have been retold across generations since its inception carrying the moral standards of society. As with folktales and myths, storytelling not only develops ethical and cognitive

competencies, but it is also therapeutic. Therapeutic in the context of the opportunity to identify with the narrative, which enhances emotional processing and provides a cathartic transformation in the sense of Aristotle's Poetics (Peprník 2004, p. 12). It is primarily through human imagination that all the progress of mankind is generated, and it is also from imagination that art is born, which gives an integral dimension to human existence (Černoušek 2019, pp. 18-29; Peprník 2004, pp. 11-16; Wellek 1996, pp. 269-270). Cave works with this phenomenon in his work, which will be discussed in the coming chapters.

### 3.2. Not only for those who share

In documentaries and interviews, Cave repeatedly mentions his fascination with the performances of several artists he worships as idols. In the case of Johnny Cash, he mentions how he was impressed by rock'n'roll music, his bad man image, when he watched *The Johnny Cash Show* on television with his parents as a boy (Nick Cave - The South Bank Show 2003; Snow 2011, p. 163, p. 188). Thenceforth, he listened to his music and during the latter part of his career they were involved in collaborative projects. The lyrics of both authors similarly deal with redemption and retribution, accompanied by melancholic music with a hint of evil.

The biography and works of Elvis Presley are an inspiration embedded in many of Cave's works, however, this cultural obsession is discussed in detail in the essay *Oedipus Wrecks: Cave and the Presley Myth* (Dalziell 2009, pp. 153-165). Significant to the purpose of this thesis is Cave's commentary on his viewing of the documentary *This Is Elvis* (1981) and his captivation by footage of Elvis's final performance, where, exhausted by his lifestyle, he sings at the piano with tears in his eyes, his desperate appearance evoking for Cave the image of Christ's suffering on the cross, reconciliation and resurrection (RHF 2018, #34). In the same response, he mentions Johnny Cash, Shane McGowan, and Nina Simone alongside Elvis, and talks about the transformative moments of a religious nature that are seen in their performances and are analogous to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to Cave, the cathartic moment, which occurs repeatedly in human life, is "*most beautifully captured within the musical performance itself*" (RHF 2018, #34). Cave describes this observation in the most detail with Nina Simone, whom he introduced on stage at the 1999 Meltdown festival he hosted and had the opportunity to meet backstage before her performance, describing the transformation of a furious, belligerent woman with her first few piano strokes into a playing goddess (Nick Cave - The South Bank Show 2003; 20,000 Days

On Earth 2014). This transformation is enabled by the message conveyed to the audience and its understanding, a particular harmony with the performer, a flow of mental energy exchanged between the performer and the audience. And further, Cave comments on the awareness of this transformation transmitted to the audience in a 2008 interview: “*Language itself can have a hugely beneficial effect on you in the same way the music can. Music can change the way you are, the way you move around in the world and do an enormous amount of good for a person. For me language is about the same thing on a level that’s not necessarily intellectual; it’s about the music and the rhythm of the words that operate on some other level*” (Snow 2011, p. 218) and in 2004 interview: : “*from the moment you put on the song – within three minutes you can be a changed person, your whole body chemistry will change, your mood, your perspective*” (Snow 2011, p. 174). Aware of the shifting power of words enhanced by musical accompaniment, Cave progressively adjusted the form of his performance, from an initial antagonistic stance, through the arousal of feelings via sombre love songs, to a more sophisticated and implicit form of presenting thoughts and stories from everyday life that listeners can comfortably relate to. To preserve the spiritual qualities of his work, Cave avoids selling his works for commercial purposes in the advertising industry, not wanting to dishonor the work that his listeners use for personal rituals (Snow 2011, pp. 109 – 110, 118).

### 3.3. Not only for those who live in grief

Cave’s late work was affected by the sudden death of his teenage son during the recording of the album *Skeleton Tree* (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 2016) and the whole album is laced with the sadness and grief. The recording of the album is documented in the film *One More Time With Feeling* (2016), in which Cave describes how a catastrophic event affects and permeates the personality. Similarly, the album *Ghosteen* (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 2019) expresses memories of a late son, sadness, and a longing for healing of a grieving soul. This shared grief returns to Cave in the form of responses from listeners via the RHF platform, where they describe how listening to his music has helped them overcome their pain of personal loss, allowed them to process their grief, to experience catharsis (RHF 2018, #45, #73, #85, #111, #119, #132). The bleak times continued and expanded with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, which forced cancellation of all public events. Cave parlayed this period of global isolation into an album and a ninety-minute documentary of

his intimate solo piano performance, *Idiot Prayer: Nick Cave Alone at Alexandra Palace* (Cave 2020).

Few months after the album was published the modern opera album *L.I.T.A.N.I.E.S.* (Cave and Lens 2020), to which Cave wrote libretto, and described it as twelve lyrical compositions, litanies, that deal with the birth, blossoming, brokenness and rebirth of the human being, pleas to a divine creator for a kind of cosmic recognition which is found in the beautiful music Nicholas Lens has composed (Georgievski 2021). The following album, *CARNAGE* (Cave and Ellis 2021), was composed and released during the lockdown period due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its essence can be equated to the previous albums *Skeleton Tree* (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 2016) and *Ghosteen* (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 2019), which feature Cave's sombre lyrical meditations with discreet musical accompaniment, though this time the lyrics convey hope and optimism combined with the spontaneous energy of the authors.

In summary, the production period described in this chapter is permeated by a personal crisis caused by the loss of his son, which Cave deals with through the writing out of grief in the composed works. He finds understanding, acceptance and sharing of grief in the form of reciprocal responses from his audience. A reciprocal healing is in progress, a process of emotional catharsis for both parties involved.

In April 2022, Cave announced on his official Facebook page the release of a new album, which is scheduled for June of that year “*Seven Psalms by Nick Cave – Seven spoken word pieces set to music by Nick Cave in collaboration with Warren Ellis available to pre-order now on limited edition 10” vinyl*”, with a note that those who pre-order will receive an exclusive prayer card. Cave further explains “*While in lockdown I wrote a number of psalms, or small, sacred songs—one a day for a week. The seven psalms are presented as one long meditation—on faith, rage, love, grief, mercy, sex, and praise. A veiled, contemplative offering borne of an uncertain time*”. The design of the album resembles the cover of a prayer book with the title and a crucifix in metallic gold on a petrol blue background (Nick Cave Facebook 2022).

### 3.4. Not only for those who question

Cave's style of communication with his audience has evolved considerably over the course of his creative career. In the early period, it was an introverted and insecure communication influenced by excessive use of stimulants, however, even at this early stage

of the artist's development there were recommendations to those going through a similar development, such as the following from an interview in 1988: *“That’s my advice to all those who feel that there is nothing to live for. I must say that I tend to agree with them on that point but one way to feel that there is something is to immerse yourself into a hard work, and that’s what I do”* (Csakjutka 2014). In the subsequent phase of his life and work, defined by his paternal role, Cave opens more towards the world. This change is addressed in the second chapter of this thesis, in relation to the conceptual shift in his work, as Cave begins to share his authentic subjective predicaments and views through his lyrics, a shift that is in the latter period even compounded by the sudden loss of his teenage son. This unfortunate event led Cave to launch a website *theredhandfiles.com* in 2018, an online platform for direct communication with the public through which ideas are shared via letters sent to Cave, who publicly responds to selected questions (RHF 2018, #166). As Cave himself explains, the platform is a place for him to offer existential notions, religious meditations, advice, and general obscurities while extending human kindness and compassion (RHF 2018, #89), providing the remarkable curative power of the combined acts of telling and listening (RHF 2018, #166). In issue #157 (RHF 2018), Cave further explains that RHF is *“a spiritual practice for him, like church, like prayer, which requires him to regularly spend time in the better, more compassionate end of his nature, experiencing a sudden shrinking of the self but a rapid expansion of the soul”*. From the published RHF correspondence, it can be inferred that this is a reciprocal spiritual practice of both sender and recipient that allows for the relief of distress via sharing not only through RHF correspondence but also by way of Cave’s works and performances (RHF 2018, #6, #23, #55, #74, #126, #151, #187).

To an intensely personal inquiry from issue #100 (RHF 2018) Cave advised a mother asking for an engraving text for the ring to her son to have *“I am beside you”* inscribed. This symbolic phrase expressing the will to be close to beloved one forever is used in Cave’s two songs from the album *Ghosteen* composed while mourning his late son.

In his recent RHF answer (2018, #196) to the question *“what is God?”*, which is the first published letter after the announcement of passing of another son, Cave responds everyone yearns for love, love is God, we must love each other. This is a leitmotif of Cave’s letters published on the RHF website and is the intertext to the biblical phrase *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27).

#### 4. I am beside you

The early part of Cave's work, the texts analyzed in the first chapter of this thesis, demonstrate a paramount intertextual relationship with the Bible; the themes communicated are primarily concerned with retribution, redemption, higher justice, and filial relationships. In the creative period analyzed in chapter two, the author is primarily inspired by his own life experiences and deliberately focuses on motifs in the narrative. He stylizes the narrative in such a manner as to use the text to encourage introspection and self-reflection and to challenge the listener to evaluate his own lifestyle and attitudes towards society. The texts function as a stimulus or prompt to overcoming adversity and hardship, they provide enlightenment and for some listeners have a therapeutic dimension, which is activated through their identification with the nature of the experience being described. For the author, this is a form of compensatory creativity; in the work he denounces his own traumas, shares them with the audience through performance, and provides reciprocal possibility of transformation in the form of catharsis. The biblical intertextuality is not as evident as in the author's first productive period, though the biblical message is communicated.

The analysis of the selected works confirms the hypothesis that Cave stylizes his texts to emphasize moral transference and convey a biblical prism.

The form of Cave's communication with his audience has gradually evolved from his initial monologues to a public dialogue with his audience through published correspondence, which can also be considered a form of mentoring (RHF 2018). The RHF are a testament to the influence of the author's lyrics on the listener; through this platform, Cave listens, and provides understanding, solace, guidance, conveying a positive message of hope and love, emphasizing spirituality over contemporary secular lifestyles.

In the filmed documentaries, Cave does not present himself to the audience as an idol, but as an ordinary vulnerable human being who confides his intimate feelings, the way he composes, and explains his motivation. Repeatedly returning to his father's questioning of his contribution to humanity, he defends his lifelong work with a specific aesthetic and symbolic dimension, focusing specifically on a social dimension that positions him as a mentor to those who suffer or doubt.

Biblical texts function as sermons, pointing out what is right and wrong, in other words, through the stories of humanity they establish moral rules for society and point to a higher authority that governs the human destiny. The purpose of communicating the biblical



message is to cultivate society. Its uniqueness also lies in the form of the widespread transmission of its message from generation to generation through the spoken word, which constantly shapes society through its narrators. In the course of his life's work, Cave has transformed himself from a Bible-inspired artist into an artist who shapes his audience by spreading the messages of the Bible, and therefore he can be considered a contemporary preacher.

This thesis has examined selected texts representing the entire spectrum of the author's career as a composer, but does not reflect his complete musical, literary and cinematic works, which could be the subject of further research.

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## 6. List of Abbreviations

RHF            - The Red Hand Files

## 7. List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: Tupelo
- Appendix 2: Mercy
- Appendix 3: City of Refuge
- Appendix 4: The Good Son
- Appendix 5: Papa Won't Leave You, Henry
- Appendix 6: Loverman
- Appendix 7: Red Right Hand
- Appendix 8: Brompton Oratory
- Appendix 9: There is a Kingdom
- Appendix 10: (Are You) the One that I've Been Waiting For?
- Appendix 11: Idiot Prayer
- Appendix 12: As I Sat Sadly by Her Side
- Appendix 13: God is in the House
- Appendix 14: Get Ready For Love
- Appendix 15: Abattoir Blues
- Appendix 16: O Children
- Appendix 17: Bellringer Blues
- Appendix 18: Push the Sky Away
- Appendix 19: RHF #100
- Appendix 20: RHF #196

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<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2022

<b>Název práce:</b>	Biblické odkazy v díle Nicka Cavea
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<b>Title of Thesis:</b>	Biblical references in Nick Cave's works
<b>Annotation:</b>	This bachelor's thesis is focused on comparing the textual production of author Nick Cave with biblical stories and the development of the author's form of expression in relation to life circumstances. The thesis aims to identify the Bible as the author's primary source of inspiration. Each chapter chronologically examines a selected part of the work and the development of the author's communication style with his audience.
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