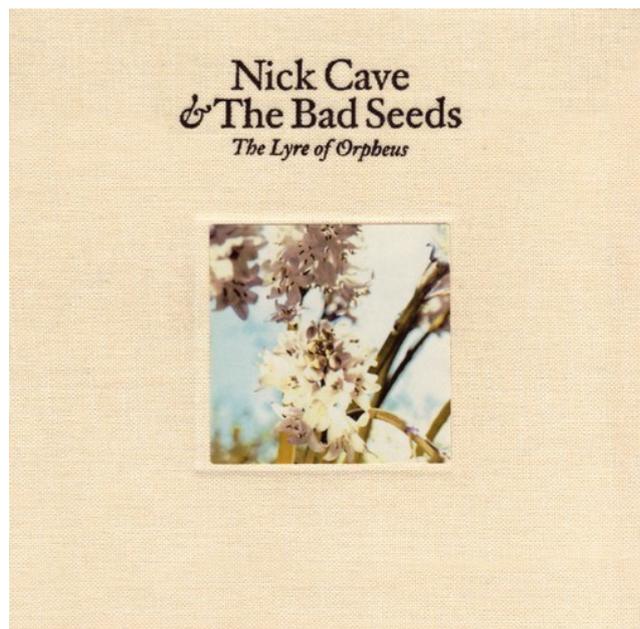
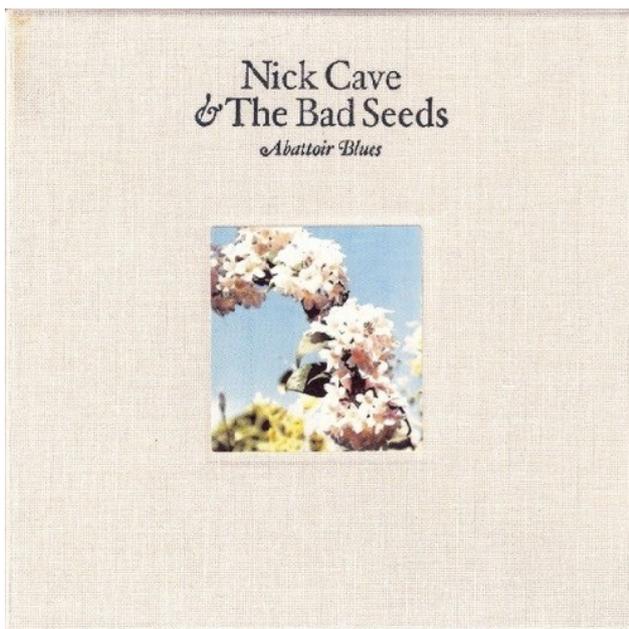


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*Poetical Issues in Nick Cave's Abattoir Blues : A Translation and Commentary of
the lyrics of Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*



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INTRODUCTION

“When I first received this Nobel Prize for Literature, I got to wondering exactly how my songs related to literature. I wanted to reflect on it and see where the connection was.” (Dylan 2017)

This is how Bob Dylan opened the lecture he sent to the Swedish Academy in acceptance of his Nobel, almost nine months after he was actually awarded the honour. The attribution of the Nobel Prize for Literature to the American songwriter and performer in 2016 did raise some eyebrows and created a bit of turmoil within the world of academic literature (BBC 2016). But more importantly, it had the consequence of reigniting the debate of the consideration of song lyrics in regard to literature (Wheeler 2016). Bob Dylan’s award asks or rather brings back into fashion the question of knowing if song lyrics can be considered literature, the artist being the first to ask himself that question after he received the news, claiming he had never asked himself the question (Raji 2016). He then proceeds, almost unsurprisingly for those familiar with his career, to take the opposite position to the one that would have been expected from him and does not answer the question in his 27-minute long lecture. Or rather not really. He reflects instead on the literary and musical heritage that contributed to shape him into the artist he has become, citing in order the influence of Buddy Holly, Leadbelly, Herman Melville, Erich Maria Remarque, Charlie Poole, Homer and John Donne. Can song lyrics be considered as literature? Even if discussions on the matter will probably endure within academic milieus for a long time, it can be considered that the attribution of the Literature Nobel to Dylan answers the question it contributed to raise. The first iteration of the prize to be awarded to a songwriter, Dylan’s Nobel does not come only as a celebration of the artist’s career but also as an acknowledgement of song lyrics as a consideration-worthy field of study. Moreover, the event can be expected to have considerable effect on the advancement of the debate that surrounds the place and approach to give song lyrics’ studies (Wheeler 2016).

Dylan however decided to dodge directly answering the question and rather reaffirms the importance of his songs’ very nature and the way they are meant to be performed:

They’re meant to be sung, not read. The words in Shakespeare’s plays were meant to be acted on the stage. Just as lyrics in songs are meant to be sung, not read on a page. And I hope some of you get the chance to listen to these lyrics the way they were intended to be heard: in concert or on record or however people are listening to songs these days. I return once again to Homer, who says, “Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story.” (Dylan 2017)

By doing so, Dylan resituates song lyrics in direct connection to their musical dimension. That dimension of song lyrics actually comes from the historical development of both the musical and the poetic field. From the time of the poets of Ancient Greece, music has been riming with

poetic, to use Marie Olivier's formula (Olivier 2018), and the two have been intertwining around each other, sharing and maintaining essential and undeniable links. Marie Olivier indeed mentions the affiliation between the two dates back from the oldest accounts of the Muses, in a time when poetry also inevitably implied orality. Daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, the Muses, who were originally deities of music, became the vessel of the link between poetry and music, at a time when poetic performance was inevitably synonymous with music performance too. The relations between the two disciplines have but strengthened over the centuries through many acts of association among which Marie Olivier cites Gesualdo's madrigals and Catholic psalters, religious poems, meant to be sung with the accompaniment of string instruments. Despite their relative divergence from the 17th and 18th century onward, as both genres progressively gained more autonomy from each other (Olivier 2018)¹, the attribution of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Bob Dylan hence appears as but another step in the common history of the two disciplines. Despite the American songwriter's reluctance to acknowledge the potentially broader literary and poetic dimension of his songs, the Swedish Academy's decision arguably does so in his stead. Dylan's award comes verily as a consecration of song lyrics, as a validation of the pertinence of their study and their examination. It places furthermore the genre on an equal level with other traditional literary genres (BBC 2016) and permits the theoretical discussions that accompany the study of song lyrics to progress beyond the fight for the field's recognition.

For a long time, translation and music have met mostly on the grounds of musicals and opera (Laurer 2012, 1). However, in direct connection with the study of song lyrics, the field of song translation has begun to gain more and more attention and recognition in the last decades (Mateo 2012) and one cannot help but consider Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize as indirectly related to this phenomenon. If Dylan has been the subject of many studies for a long time now —leading to the development of dylanology (Dylan 2004) even— the publication in 2004 of a bilingual anthology of his lyrics (ibid.) also seems to underline this connection. However, the main reason behind the recent burgeoning of the discipline is rather to be found in the astonishing boom in music consumption in the past decades. This astounding evolution in our music-related habits has led to an unprecedented reinforcement of the socio-cultural dimension of musical products (Desblache 2019). This phenomenon, alongside music's new networks of dissemination, has engendered in turn a need for translation that did not exist before, or to a considerably lower scale. As Lucile Desblache explains:

1 All content between the two Olivier's mentions is taken from Marie Olivier's article.

While music, the most ethereal of art forms, has traditionally been considered outside spatial and cultural prisms, it is now acknowledged as reliant on exchanges between the local and the global, transnational borrowings, and international circulation, dissemination and reception. Music, shaped by people's expectations and desires, is an agent of various forms of linguistic, emotional, cultural and societal translation. (Desblache 2019, 143)

For Johan Franzon, the reason behind the lack of recognition of the field of song translation comes from the “lack of clarity as to the professional identity of the people who do translate songs.” (Franzon 2014, 374). Since music has become a “transcultural” (Desblache 2018, 309) product by nature, a major portion of song translation is in fact ensured by amateur, non-academic translators. As more and more people have access to songs in foreign languages, who can say he has never, as a child or even later, looked up the lyrics of his favourite song to understand what it was about? Even if it is on a personal level only in this case, the act of translation of the song is still ensured and does therefore happen every time someone proceeds to do so. In the end, the fact is that “songs *are* translated” (Franzon 2014, 374) and have been for a good amount of time, perhaps without academicians being aware of it. And this fact should itself alone justify and legitimate the serious study of song translation, Franzon argues.

The development of the discipline in recent years has led to several theories on how to approach “music-linked translation”, to use Harai Golomb's term (Mateo 2012). At the origin of most theories is the concept of *skopos*, or, to put it simply, what the song is going to be translated for. According to Franzon, “A basic tenet of *skopos* theory [...] is that fidelity follows function: the factor that determines a translator's decisions and choices would (or should) be the intended purpose of the target text.” (Franzon 2014, 375). The translation of a musical text will be conditioned by what it aspires to. The milieu of reception of a text is thus essential. Reinhard Hartmann accordingly defines translation as a “textual approximation” (ibid.): means for the translation to “approximat[e] as much as possible or as little as necessary for the particular situation the formal and stylistic conventions of the text in question” (ibid.). The translator must then always bear in mind what the aim of his work will be .

Some translators choose to focus on how translation and music can be tools to access marginal voices (Desblache 2019) or else on the circulation of music as a socio-cultural good via translation (Fernández 2015), just to give a few examples. Singability appears however as the most recurrent issue song translation scholars have been concerned with. The two most eminent theories to have been evolved in this regard are arguably Peter Low's and Johan Franzon's. Peter Low provides a five-points guide to keep in mind when undertaking song translation. The criteria he lists are 1) singability; 2) sense; 3) naturalness; 4) rhyme and 5) rhythm (Laurer 2019, 5). If singability appears only as one of the criteria of the list, it is nonetheless the most important since all other

requirements may be accommodated in order to fulfill to the *skopos* of making a singable translation (ibid.). Coincidentally, Franzon also establishes a five-point list of choices a translator has to make when translating a song, which he defines as “a piece of music and lyrics – in which one has been adapted to the other, or both to one another – designed for a singing performance.” (Franzon 2014, 376) These five choices are:

1. Leaving the song untranslated;
2. Translating the lyrics but not taking the music into account;
3. Writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics;
4. Translating the lyrics and adapting the music accordingly – sometimes to the extent that a brand new composition is deemed necessary;
5. Adapting the translation to the original music. (Ibid.)

Here also, Franzon lays the emphasis on singability, which he deems crucial in for a “functional view of song translation.” (Ibid.)

Finally, it seems important to mention Klaus Kaindl’s thesis on song translation. The Austrian linguist starts from the same premise as Lucile Desblache, that music, and especially popular music, has become “part of our daily life.” (Kaindl 2005). It is according to him “a cross-cultural phenomenon and as such, a segment of high-volume translation” (ibid.) that helps shape and articulate trends and cultures. His main argument concerns the interdisciplinary nature of popular songs. He contends that popular songs must not be studied without awareness as to their social and semiotic connections and aims therefore to steer the translation of popular music in the direction of a socio-semiotic approach. If the social dimension of Kaindl’s thesis is not really relevant to this dissertation, his assertion that songs are inter-semiotic elements is crucial.

Encounters and overlaps between different art forms are no new feature, as if the human mind could not comprehend or be satisfied of strictly delimited artistic fields (Adrien et al. 2016). Muriel Adrien, Marie Bouchet and Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud have suggested there are actually two types of intersemioticity: external and internal, the first referring to works that integrate within themselves pieces of work from other artists while the latter concerns the joint practice of two arts as well as the hybrids works that may result of it (ibid.). The study of song lyrics as eminently intersemiotic artifacts seems therefore to imply an interrogation of the hybridity of arts. For after all, the connections of pop songs to other artistic disciplines remain a primordial characteristic of their nature: it is assuredly the encounter of words and sounds —literature and music— that *make* popular songs.

Can song lyrics be considered literature, then? In the same manner that Bob Dylan’s Nobel Prize answers that interrogation, the recognition of song lyrics study and song translation as

compelling fields of research seems to provide a response to that question as well. But if song lyrics belong in the great vast ensemble that is literature, can they not be considered poetry, given how the forms of song and lyrics and poetry resemble each other? One of the aims of this dissertation will be to provide an answer, or at least elements of answer to that interrogation. The first feature that brings poetry and song lyrics close to each other is their formal similarity. If the existence of prosaic forms of both poetry and lyrics cannot be ignored, their classical conception is that of a versified production. Moreover, both seem equally to share some kinship with the discipline of music. As Chris Baldick writes, poetry is indeed:

[a] language sung, chanted, spoken, or written according to some pattern of recurrence that emphasizes the relationships between words on the basis of sound as well as sense: this pattern is almost always a rhythm or metre, which maybe supplemented by rhyme or alliteration or both. (Baldick 2001, 198)

With that in mind, is translating songs not tantamount in the end to translating poetry? With that question comes the following interrogation: is poetry translatable? This question immediately calls to mind Robert Frost's quote: "Poetry is what gets lost in translation." (Bensimon 2011). Traduttore, traditore. Inevitably, the memorable Italian adage has also be reminded here. To translate is to betray or, more literally, the translator is a traitor. Amusingly, even the translation of the saying fails to convey its paronomasia. On par with such declarations, there are many who have declared the translation of poetry impossible but this has not stopped poetry from being actually translated as Paul Bensimon argues (ibid.). In fact, this apparent non-translability of poetry might contribute to making it appealing, according to poet Charles Simic:

Even in this claim that to translate poetry is impossible, I find an ideal situation. Poetry itself is about the impossible. All arts are about doing the impossible. That's they're attraction. How does a poet take an experience, big or small, and convert it into 14 lines? But it's done. (Urschel 2008)

The translation of poetry thus raises many challenges and poses many questions and traductologists have long reflected on how can one undertake such a task. A fair share of the academic reflection rests upon Roman Jakobson's declaration that poetry translation is in essence not possible, but creative transposition is². In line with this idea, Bensimon asserts that poetical translation and poetical creation are in fact twin operations linked by a constant flow of exchange and mutual fertilization (Bensimon 2011). Other translation theorists have put forward what they have named the interpretative model, that Fortunato Israël defines as follows:

2 "La poésie, par définition, est intraduisible. Seule est possible la transposition créatrice" Roman Jakobson (*Essais de linguistique générale* ch. IV : Aspects linguistiques de la traduction. 1963, p. 8 6). Cited in: Bensimon 2011.

Il s'agit avant tout de dégager le vouloir dire du locuteur en vue de le transmettre à un destinataire second. Sens et communication deviennent alors les maîtres mots de l'affaire. D'autre part, cette nouvelle approche se fonde sur le principe de la déverbalisation, c'est-à-dire, une fois l'idée comprise, sur l'abandon des formes initiales lui ayant servi de vecteur et donc sur l'indépendance de la réexpression [...]

En l'occurrence, cela revient à préserver le statut du texte et sa plénitude, tout en ménageant son intégration dans la culture d'accueil, à lui donner la possibilité de fonctionner dans un autre milieu en lui assurant une dimension esthétique et une charge émotive comparables à celles de l'original sans pour autant le naturaliser ni faire oublier son ancrage.³

We have tried within the framework of this dissertation to follow Charles Vigée's advice, that the act of translation must be based at first on a humble listening of the text (Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 42). We have tried as well to apply that notion of humility in the translation of the texts we have proposed, as to follow Maryvonne Boisseau's indications that working on a text cannot go without an open mind nor without attentive listening⁴. Nonetheless, to surpass the natural reverence of the beginner translator to the original text was also one of the goal of this work, or as Mark Polizzotti puts it, to privilege "partnership rather than servitude" (Polizzotti 2018) with the source text. Any translator comes at some point to be faced with the dilemma that opposes the form and the meaning of a text, to put it broadly. This debate is as old as translation as Polizzotti underlines, a debate as old as translation. Already, the first translators of the Bible quarrelled with each other about the appropriate way to reproduce the Scriptures, Saint Jerome opposing to Saint Auguste's desire to remain as canonically close as possible, "the grace of something well said." (Ibid.). In the end, it was Saint-Jerome who became the patron saint of translators. As for us, we have tried to favour Israël's interpretative model in our translations and not to consider form as an end in itself but only a means to produce some effect⁵. We have tried to follow as much as possible Israël's assertion that:

Traduire consiste non plus à reproduire coûte que coûte les formes initiales mais à rechercher dans la langue-culture d'arrivée des équivalences susceptibles d'engendrer chez le lecteur une émotion analogue. (Israël 2000)

Above all, we have tried in all circumstances to approach the text with the "discerning Eye" of Emily Dickinson's poem 620, to use Françoise Delpy's words⁶.

3 Fortunato Israël, "Pour une nouvelle conception de la traduction littéraire : le modèle interprétatif", *Traduire* n° 190-191, 2001, p. 12.

4 Boisseau, Maryvonne. "Conférence de clôture. Du dialogue avec le texte." *La Main de Thôt*, n°5, 14 Feb. 2018. Cited in: Hibbs 2018.

5 "[...] Traduire ne revient plus donc seulement à transmettre un contenu mais à retrouver le même rapport de nécessité entre l'idée et la forme.

Cela ne débouche-t-il pas sur un constat d'intraduisibilité ?

Oui, si l'on sacralise la matérialité de l'expression au lieu de considérer que, dans tous les cas, la forme n'est pas une fin en soi mais le moyen de produire l'effet. Dès lors que l'on considère ce dernier comme le véritable enjeu du transfert, il n'y a plus d'impasse théorique." Israël 2000.

6 "Much Madness is divinest Sense – / To a discerning Eye –" / " Une Folie totale est divine Santé mentale – / Pour un Oeil averti" Dickinson 2020.

Concerning song translation theories, all theories that we came across were studied carefully and had some influence on this work. Yet, it cannot be said that any of them was actively or knowingly applied over the course of the texts' translation as the aim was not to produce a singable translation. Instead, the translations proposed in this dissertation aimed at adopting a more literary approach to the corpus. By fully considering the lyrics as valid poetical works as explained above, our goal became the translation of the texts not as songs but hence as more classic pieces of work. Of course, their nature of song lyrics cannot be overlooked and was indeed taken into account. But in the end, the *skopos* of this dissertation was the study and analysis of the main poetical issues of the texts of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' 2004 double album, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*⁷.

Proposing a summary of Nick Cave's career seems at this point necessary. This contextualization seems indeed indispensable in order to better apprehend and discuss his artistic output. Nick Cave was born in 1957 and grew up in south-eastern, rural Australia. He entered in 1970 the Anglican boarding school of Caulfield Grammar, near Melbourne, where he met Mick Harvey (Hattenstone 2008), who would become one of his main collaborators throughout his career. Six years later, as was 19, Cave lost his father, which created a "great gaping hole" (Cave 1999, 6) in his existence that he learned to fill by writing. He says also that this "vacuum", this "void" is what lead him indirectly to God and to religion (ibid.), which, as will be discussed later in this dissertation, will come to have a considerable impact on his artistic work. Cave and Harvey began playing together as soon as 1973 and, joined by other fellow students, went on to form The Boys Next Door. The band was also later joined by Tracy Pew and Roland S. Howard who would both play later for a short period in the 80's with the Bad Seeds. After acquiring local fame and releasing in 1979 their first album, *Door, Door*⁸, the band decided to move to London in 1980 and change its name to The Birthday Party. The post-punk band rapidly gained fame in the English capital before moving again to West Berlin this time where they acquired a reputation of being "*the most violent band in the world*" (Grice 2014). Between 1980 and 1982, The Birthday Party released three albums, *The Birthday Party* (1980), *Prayers on Fire* (1981) and *Junkyard*⁹ (1982) before dismantling in 1983 most notably following disappointment linked with their stay in London and the inability to gain more fame. Several songs of the band remained moderately successful and marking numbers such as *King Ink*, *Nick the Stripper* or *She's Hit*¹⁰.

7 *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 2004. Mute Records.

8 1979. Mushroom Records.

9 All three albums were released on Missing Link Records.

10 Respectively *Prayers on Fire*, *Prayers on Fire* and *Junkyard*.

From the ashes of The Birthday Party rose what would become the most important act of Nick Cave's career, the Bad Seeds¹¹. From 1984 and the foundation of the band to the present days, the Bad Seeds have released 17 studio albums, toured all over the world and have earned both mainstream success and the critical recognition of being one of the most interesting band in the musical scene of the last 30 years (Deming). The band was originally formed mostly around Cave and Harvey, who kept working together despite the dismantling of The Birthday Party, and experimental German band Einstürzende Neubaten's guitarist Blixa Bargeld. The rest of the personnel was fluctuating from one tour or album to the next but included several famous musicians such as Hugo Race, Barry Adamson or Kid Congo Powers. Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds released their first album, *From Her to Eternity*¹², in 1984. The following years saw the band steadily gain fame and renown with the releases of *The Firstborn Is Dead* (1985); *Kicking Against the Pricks* (1986), a covers' only album; *Tender Prey* (1988), *The Good Son* (1990), *Henry's Dream* (1992) and *Let Love In* (1994). Songs such as *Tupelo*, *The Mercy Seat*, *The Weeping Song*, *Papa Won't Leave You Henry*, or *Red Right Hand*¹³ remain to this day Bad Seeds' classics and fan favourites.

1996 marks a turning point in the Bad Seeds' career as the band released this year their ninth studio album, *Murder Ballads*, which became their highest selling record at that time (Billboard 2013). Perhaps even more importantly, the year also marks the beginning of the collaboration of the band with multi-instrumentalist Warren Ellis who would not leave the group up to this day and became one of Nick Cave's main collaborator. If songs such as *Stagger Lee* and *Henry Lee* which comprises a duet with rock star PJ Harvey, Cave's former lover, have also become Bad Seeds' praised pieces, the most eminent track of *Murder Ballads* remains undoubtedly *Where the Wild Roses Are*. The song, performed with fellow Australian pop-star Kylie Minogue became a hit-single and arguably, at this point in the Bad Seeds' career, their most well-known number.

The Bad Seeds' sound continued to evolve over the end of the 90's and the beginning of the century and the band's two following records, *The Boatman's Call* (1997) and *No More Shall We Part* (2001), marked a departure from the violent, raw sound that had been theirs from their first album but still received critical acclaim as well as global success with songs such as *As I Sat Sadly By Her Side* or *Into my Arms*. Two years later, in 2003, the Bad Seeds released *Nocturama*, their 12th studio album but also the last to feature founding member Blixa Bargeld who decided to devote himself fully to his other band, Einstürzende Neubaten. A year later *Nocturama* and its lukewarm

11 "Tout ce que je fais par ailleurs ne me sert qu'à éviter de diluer le propos des Bad Seeds. Ne garder que le meilleur pour eux, parce qu'ils constituent mon grand œuvre. Le seul qui m'importe. Tout le reste, je m'en fiche un peu.

M'exprimer autrement me préserve du pire accueil : réaliser un opéra rock avec les Bad Seeds !" Cassavetti 2013.

12 All albums of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds up until 2013 were released on Mute Records.

13 Respectively *The Firstborn Is Dead*, *The Mercy Seat*, *The Good Son*, *Henry's Dream* and *Let Love In*.

reception, the Bad Seeds released their thirteenth studio effort, the double album *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*.

From 2008 and the release of *Dig, Lazarus, Dig!!!*, the Bad Seeds released three more albums, *Push the Sky Away* in 2013, the haunted, mourning *The Skeleton Tree* in 2016 and the ethereal *Ghosteen*¹⁴ in 2019, their last album to date. The band is still active nowadays despite the departure of founding member Mick Harvey in 2008. Simultaneously, Nick Cave alongside other Bad Seeds members (Warren Ellis, Martyn P. Casey and Jim Sclavunos) participated in the Grinderman side-project from 2006 to 2013, releasing heavier and more garage-influenced materials in the form of the band's two LPs, the eponymous *Grinderman* (2007) and its eccentrically titled sequel, *Grinderman II* (2010).

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds also have a history with cinematographic appearances. They first appeared in 1987 in Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*. But they most notably featured in the first two of the three films that focus on Nick Cave: *20 000 Days on Earth* (2014), *One More Time With Feeling* (2016) and *Idiot Prayer: Nick Cave Alone At Alexandra Palace* (2020), in which Cave covers alone on the piano an array of songs from the whole of the Bad Seeds' discography.

Cave, as for him, has also participated many other musical projects, including appearances by Johnny Cash¹⁵ or Leonard Cohen¹⁶'s sides and has contributed to numerous soundtracks, often accompanied by Warren Ellis. He has also published several books and poems or lyrics collections, most notably *King Ink* (1988), *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1989), *The Death of Bunny Munro* (2008) and more recently *The Sick Bag Song* (2015). In 2013, after the release of *Push the Sky Away*, an anthology of his song lyrics was also published (Cave 2013).

Nick Cave's career thus spans across more than 40 years and has earned him special, perhaps unique even, feelings of devotion from his fans (Heller 2017). His style and sound have never ceased to evolve, even to this day. *CARNAGE* (2021), recorded with long-time collaborator Warren Ellis during the COVID-19 lockdown and his most recent album, received global praise upon its release¹⁷, among other things for its originality¹⁸. But there are some common features that link all of Cave's musical acts together: most notably, the acute ability to craft songs that resemble

14 All three albums released on Bad Seed Records.

15 On Johnny Cash's 2002 *American's Recordings IV : The Man Comes Around*. Nick Cave accompanies Cash for a cover of Hank Williams's *I'm so Lonesome I Could Cry*.

16 Nick Cave appears in the documentary/concert film by Leonard Cohen *I'm your Man* (2006). He performs versions of Cohen's *I'm Your Man* and *Suzanne*.

17 "'Carnage' is arguably Cave and Ellis' best record since The Bad Seeds' latter day reinvention on 2013's 'Push The Sky Away', or maybe even 'Abattoir Blues'. It's certainly two master craftsmen at the peak of their melodramatic powers." Trendell 2021.

18 "'CARNAGE' instead stands as something unique, the sound of two vastly experienced musicians removing themselves from expectations." Murray 2021.

no other. He was labeled a “visionary maker of songs, stories, books, films and poetry”(AAP 2010) as he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Dundee in Scotland, one of the many prizes and awards delivered to him through his career. Professor Kirsty Gunn, who awarded the singer his second honorary degree went further on to address Cave’s accomplishments during the ceremony:

He moves effortlessly between genres and media [...] shadowing us [...] with the reminder of art's dark power, of its life enhancing magic, potency and the sheer crazed wonderfulness of the imagination. (Ibid.)

It will be one of the goals of this dissertation to establish and discuss how these literary qualities are manifested in the songs of Nick Cave. In order to do so, we have chosen to focus on the songs of one album only, the Bad Seeds’ 2004 album, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. In all honesty, the choice of the corpus was kind of a subjective choice. The 2004 double album is a generally praised entry into Cave’s discography and was globally well-received. It does not however enjoy the same reputation as records like *Tender Prey* or *The Boatman’s Call*, from what we could gather from online fans’ forums and discussions. It seems that Cave’s golden age is situated approximately between 1985 and 2001, according to most of his fans. Nonetheless, it is our argument that *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* is a somewhat overlooked and under-appreciated piece of work and can — should? — be seen as one of the Bad Seeds’ most varied, most compelling, best works (Mourgue, Zekri 2012). Moreover, as we hope this dissertation will prove, this album sees Cave at one of his all-time highs, lyrically speaking. His texts there are perfectly valid examples of the literary qualities that are so constitutive of his writing. The structure of the album is in itself interesting, both albums offering different facets of both Cave’s lyrical capacities and the Bad Seeds’ musical versatility, the first being a “*much heavier record*” and the second, “*lied down, more jazzy*.”¹⁹ Finally, the last reason is that *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* has been a record that I have always deeply loved, from when I listened to it when I was still a small child, unable to understand a single word of English to these days as I remain fascinated and still sincerely moved by listening to the gently struck piano chords of *Messiah Ward* or the poignant choirs of *Carry Me*.

We chose to translate ten songs, five on each album, in order to try to provide a view of the record that might be as complete and representative as possible. The songs were chosen according

19 *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus a Short Film.*” Mute Records, 2007.

to their common features but also according to their divergences. The ten songs that will be translated and studied are in bold characters below:

Abattoir Blues

- 01 *Get Ready for Love*
- 02 *Cannibal's Hymn***
- 03 *Hiding All Away***
- 04 *Messiah Ward***
- 05 *There She Goes My Beautiful World***
- 06 *Nature Boy***
- 07 *Abattoir Blues*
- 08 *Let the Bells Ring*
- 09 *Fable of the Brown Ape*

The Lyre of Orpheus

- 01 *The Lyre of Orpheus***
- 02 *Breathless***
- 03 *Babe You Turn Me On*
- 04 *Easy Money*
- 05 *Supernaturally***
- 06 *Spell***
- 07 *Carry Me*
- 08 *O Children***

As mentioned above, one of the main goals of this dissertation will be to emphasize and analyse the literary qualities that characterize Nick Cave's songwriting and that has led him to be compared to emblematic song-writers such as Bob Dylan (Self 2013, xi), Leonard Cohen (Fonarow 2012) or Lou Reed (Larson 2014). What makes Nick Cave's songs lyrics more interesting and "worthy" of study in comparison to other lyrics? Answering this question will be at the core of this dissertation as we will try to demonstrate that it is indeed the literary qualities of Cave's works that justify most notably this study. Let us only cite here Will Self who proposes a first part of the answer to that interrogation: "Cave, as a poetic craftsman, provides all the enjambment, ellipsis and onomatopoeia that anyone could wish for. [...] He stands as one of the great writers on love of our era." (Self 2013, xii)

This dissertation will first propose the translation of the ten songs selected and then a commentary on that translation. Both will aim to highlight the poetic qualities of the original texts and to explicit what are the devices of transmission into the target language. Translation and commentary must be understood here as twin operations, both being secondary (re)writings of pre-existent texts²⁰. Through different methodologies, both exercises actually share a common goal, the overcoming of a text's barriers, be they lexical or semantic. Yet, Maryvonne Boisseau argues that the two practices may come to diverge as the translational work will require at times moving away from the original text (Boisseau 2007). For Julia Peslier and Mathieu Dosse however, the notion of historicity is in the end primordial in the link between translation and commentary:

20 "Traduire et/ou commenter : ce sont là des écritures de la seconde main, qui s'autorisent d'un texte pour le régénérer [...] en une autre langue — langue étrangère, de traduction, ou langue de commentaire, de continuation." Peslier, Dosse 2008.

C'est donner à (re)lire et à relier, d'une langue à l'autre, c'est inviter à rouvrir le texte original dans des jeux de miroirs complexes et foisonnants de sens inédits, qui demeuraient comme en jachère dans l'original. C'est multiplier les palimpsestes afin de régénérer la pensée d'un auteur, et en cela, c'est se prononcer en faveur d'un geste de relance, généreux et humble à la fois, afin de produire un texte second qu'on inscrit dans une certaine historicité. (Peslier, Dosse 2008)

In the end, it is by presenting a commented translation of the lyrics of the Bad Seeds' 2004 album, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*, that this dissertation will try to examine the poetical issues of Nick Cave's texts. The first part of the dissertation will focus on the notion of literary journey that is present within Nick Cave's songs, detailing how he sets up a world in motion and what poetical elements are constitutive of this journey. We will then discuss the structures of the Abattoir Blues world. This will allow us to tackle Cave's fascination with traditional myths as well as to examine what is at the core of the Australian songwriter's texts: emblematic figures and places and their roles within the songs. We will also discuss the shifts in tone and voices that can be perceived and the idea of authorial multiplicity. Finally, the last main element we will analyse over the course of the dissertation is how Cave sets up a universe of contrasts and emotions that are primordial forces ruling over his songs. All these elements will be studied in relation the translation challenges they offer. This dissertation will also aim to show how all these elements contribute to a common goal that seems to be at the core of both the *Abattoir Blues/ The Lyre of Orpheus* album as well as of Cave's career as a whole: the building of a world.

One of the reasons I write is because it allows me the freedom to move beyond the declared world into the uncanny and unfamiliar world. As a songwriter I have made a commitment to uncertainty and to embrace that which I do not know, because I feel this is where true meaning exists. It [...] fills me with a devotion to the mystery of the world with its deep oceans and dark forests. This notion of uncertainty, of doubt, contains an enormous amount of creative power and is always accompanied by a state of yearning for something beyond certitude, beyond comprehension. [...] My duty as a songwriter is not to try to save the world, but rather to save the *soul* of the world. This requires me to live my life within uncertainty, where things make less sense, absurdity is a virtue and art rages and burns: where dogma is anathema, discourse is essential, doubt is an energy, magical thinking is not a crime and where possibility and potentiality rule. The answers to the secrets of the heart may just be there, in the inscrutable dark of the forest, in the unfathomable depths of the sea, at the uncertain tips of our fingers.²¹

21 The Red Hand Files - Issue #66." *The Red Hand Files*, 15 Oct. 2019.

TRANSLATIONS

All lyrics have been taken from the booklet of the *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre Of Orpheus* CD and cross-checked with the texts of *The Complete Lyrics 1978-2013* and online at nickcave.com. All credits are also taken from the booklet.

Personnel:

Nick Cave – Vocals, Piano
Marty P. Casey – Bass
Warren Ellis – Violin, Mandolin, Bouzouki, Flute
Mick Harvey – Guitars
James Johnston – Organ
Conway Savage – Piano
Jim Sclavunos – Drums & Percussion
Thomas Wydler – Drums & Percussion

All words written by Nick Cave
All music written by Nick Cave, except:
Get Ready for Love, Nature Boy, The Lyre of Orpheus, Spell written by Cave, Ellis, Casey and Sclavunos
Abattoir Blues, Let the Bells Ring written by Cave, Ellis
All songs published by Mute Songs Ltd.

Arranged by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds
Recorded by Nick Launay at Studios Ferber, Paris in April 2004
Assistants – Guillaume Dujardin, Laurent Binder
Mixed by Nick Launay with Cave, Ellis and Harvey at Astoria, London in April/May 2004
Assistant – Damon Iddins

Digital editing by Lars Fox

Mastered by Ian Cooper at Metropolis, London

Album Track-list:

Abattoir Blues

01 *Get Ready for Love*
02 *Cannibal's Hymn*
03 *Hiding All Away*
04 *Messiah Ward*
05 *There She Goes My Beautiful World*
06 *Nature Boy*
07 *Abattoir Blues*
08 *Let the Bells Ring*
09 *Fable of the Brown Ape*

The Lyre of Orpheus

01 *The Lyre of Orpheus*
02 *Breathless*
03 *Babe You Turn Me On*
04 *Easy Money*
05 *Supernaturally*
06 *Spell*
07 *Carry Me*
08 *O Children*

SONGS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

Abattoir Blues

Cannibal's Hymn

Cannibal's Hymn

You have a heart and I have a key
Lie back and let me unlock you
Those heathens you hang with down by the sea
All they want to do is defrock you
I know a river, where we can dream
It will swell up, burst its banks
babe, and rock you
But if you're gonna dine with them cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your
animals
And your heart that is bruised but unbeaten
And beating like a drum

I will sit like a bird on a fence
Sing you songs with a happy ending
Swoop down and tell you that it don't make
much sense
To attack the very thing you're defending
Didn't I just buy that dress for you?
That pink paper pinafore that you keep mending
Well, if you're gonna dine with the cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your
animals
And your heart that is banging and beating
And banging like a gong

I can see that they've hurt you, dear
Here is some moonlight to cloak us
And I will never desert you here
Unpetalled among the crocus
Allow me, my love, to allay your fear
As I swim, in and out of focus
But if you're gonna dine with the cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your
animals
And your heart that is bruised but bleating
And bleeding like a lamb
Banging like a gong

Hymne du Cannibale

Tu as un cœur et moi une clef
Étends-toi, laisse-moi le déverrouiller
Tout ce que veulent ces païens, que sur le rivage
tu t'en vas retrouver
C'est te défroquer
Il y a une rivière, où nous pourrons rêver
Dont les flots gonfleront, chérie, et déborderont
sur les berges pour te bercer,
Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici bas avec
tes animaux
Et ton cœur, meurtri mais non défait
Qui bat comme un tambour

Je m'assiérai, tel un oiseau sur une clôture
perché
Te chanterai des chansons aux heureuses fins
Je fondrai du ciel, te dire qu'il est insensé
De s'en prendre à la chose même que tu défends
N'ai-je pas tout juste acheté cette robe pour toi ?
Cette robe tablier en crépon rose que tu ne
cesses de repriser
Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici bas avec
tes animaux
Et ton cœur, qui bat, bat et cogne
Et retentit tel un gong

Je vois, ma chère, qu'ils t'ont blessée
Laissons la lune nous couvrir de ses rayons
Et jamais ici je ne t'abandonnerai
Parmi les crocus, de tes pétales dépouillée
Laisse-moi, mon amour, tes peurs apaiser
Tandis que j'entre et sors de ton champ de vision
Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici bas avec
tes animaux
Et ton cœur, meurtri et geignant
Qui saigne comme un agneau
Qui retentit comme un gong

Beating like a drum

Qui bat comme un tambour

Hiding All Away

Hiding All Away

You went looking for me, dear,
Down by the sea
You found some little silver fish
But you didn't find me
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

You went to the museum
You climbed a spiral stair
You searched for me all among
The knowledgeable air
I was hidden, babe, hiding all away
I was hidden, dear, hiding all away

You entered the cathedral
When you heard the solemn knell
I was not sitting with the gargoyles
I was not swinging from the bell
I was hiding, dear, I was hiding all away
I was hiding, dear, I was hiding all away

You asked an electrician
If he'd seen me round his place
He touched you with his fingers
Sent sparks zapping out your face
I was hidden, dear, hiding all away
I was not there, dear, hiding all away

You went and asked your doctor
To get some advice
He shot you full of Pethidine
And then he billed you twice
But I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
But I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

You approached a high court judge
You thought he'd be on the level

Caché Tout Au Loin

Tu t'es lancée à ma recherche, ma chère
Tu as trouvé des petits poissons argentés
Descendue au bord de la mer
Mais tu ne m'as pas trouvé
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

Tu t'es rendue au musée
Tu as monté l'escalier en spirale
Tu m'as cherché parmi les présages
Qui emplissaient l'air des salles
J'étais caché, chérie, caché tout au loin
J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin

Tu es entrée dans la cathédrale
Au son du glas solennel
Je n'étais pas assis avec les gargouilles
Ni accroché aux cloches balançant en plein ciel
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

Tu as demandé à un électricien
S'il m'avait vu dans les parages
Il t'a touchée de ses doigts
T'a envoyé des étincelles te sauter au visage
J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin
Je n'étais pas là, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au loin

Tu t'en es allée demander à ton docteur
Des conseils à propos de tout cela
Il t'a droguée à la Péthidine
Et t'a facturée deux fois
Mais je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Mais je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

Tu as abordé un juge de la cour suprême
Pensant qu'il serait au niveau

He wrapped a rag around your face
And beat you with his gavel
I was hiding, babe, hiding all away
I was hidden, dear, hiding all away

You asked at the local constabulary
They said, he's up to his same old tricks
They leered at you with their baby blues
And rubbed jelly on their sticks
I had to get out of there, babe, hiding all away
I had to get out of there, dear, hiding all away

You searched through all my poets
From Sappho through to Auden
I saw the book fall from your hands
As you slowly died of boredom
I had been there, dear, but I was not there
anymore
I had been there, now I'm hiding all away

You walked into the hall of fame
And approached my imitators
Some were stuffing their faces with caviar
Some were eating cold potatoes
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

You asked a famous cook if he'd seen me
He opened his oven wide
He basted you with butter, babe
And made you crawl inside
I was not in there, dear, hiding all away
I was not in there, dear, hiding all away

You asked the butcher
Who lifted up his cleaver
Stuck his fist up your dress
Said he must've been mad to leave you
But I had to get away, dear, hiding all away
I had to get away, dear, I was hidden all away

Il t'a entouré le visage d'un torchon
Et t'a battue de son marteau
Je me cachais, chérie, je me cachais tout au loin
J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin

Tu es allée au poste de police du coin
« Il fait encore des siennes » ont-ils affirmé
Ils t'ont lorgnée en proie à leur baby blues
Et ont enduit leurs matraques de gelée
J'ai du m'en aller d'ici, chérie, me cacher tout au
loin
J'ai du m'en aller de là, ma chère, me cacher
tout au loin

Tu as cherché parmi tous mes poètes
De Sappho jusqu'à Auden
Alors que tu mourais lentement d'ennui
J'ai vu le livre tomber de tes mains
J'avais été là, ma chère, mais je n'y étais plus
J'avais été là maintenant je me cache tout au loin

Tu es entrée dans le panthéon
T'es approchée de mes imitateurs
Certains s'empiffraient de caviar
D'autres se contentaient de pommes de terre
sans saveur
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au
loin
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au
loin

Tu as demandé à un célèbre cuisinier
Il a ouvert son four en grand
Il t'a enduite de beurre, bébé
Et t'a fait te glisser dedans
Je n'étais pas là-dedans, ma chère, mais caché au
loin
Je n'étais pas là-dedans, ma chère, mais caché au
loin

Tu as demandé au boucher
Qui a levé son couperet
Il a fourré son poing sous ta robe
Et dit « il doit être fou de t'avoir abandonnée »
Mais j'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, me cacher tout
au loin
J'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au
loin

Some of us we hide away
Some of us we don't
Some will live to love another day
And some of us won't
But we all know there is a law
And that law, it is love
And we all know there's a war coming
Coming from above

There is a war coming
There is a war coming

Certains d'entre nous se cachent au loin
Certains d'entre nous, non
Certains vivront pour aimer un autre jour
Et certains d'entre nous ne pourront
Mais l'on sait tous qu'il est une loi
Et cette loi, c'est l'amour
Et l'on sait tous qu'une guerre va s'abattre
S'abattre du ciel

Une guerre va s'abattre
Une guerre va s'abattre

Messiah Ward

Messiah Ward

I hope you're sitting comfortably
I saved you the best seat in the house
Right up in the front row
The stars have been torn down
The moon is locked away
And the land is banked in frozen snow
You are a force of nature, dear
Your breath curls from your lips
As the trees bend down their branches
And touch you with their fingertips
They're bringing out the dead now
It's easy just to look away
They are bringing out the dead now
It's been a strange, strange day

We could navigate our position by the stars
But they've taken out the stars
The stars have all gone
I'm glad you've come along
We could comprehend our condition by the moon
But they've ordered the moon not to shine
Still, I'm glad you've come along
I was worried out of my mind
Cause, they keep bringing out the dead now
And it's easy just to look away
They're bringing out the dead
And it's been a long, strange day

You can move up a little closer
I will throw a blanket over
We can weigh all the tears in one hand
Against the laughter in the other
We could be hanging around here for centuries

La Pupille du Messie

J'espère que tu es assise confortablement
Je t'ai gardé la meilleure place de la maison
Tout devant, au premier rang
Les étoiles ont été jetées à bas
La lune emprisonnée au loin
Et les terres recouvertes de neige gelée
Tu es une force de la nature, ma chère
Ton souffle s'échappe en volutes de tes lèvres
Tandis que les arbres fléchissent leurs branches
Pour te toucher du bout de leurs doigts
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Et l'on peut ne pas regarder
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Ce fut une si étrange journée

Nous pourrions naviguer à la lumière des étoiles
Mais ils ont enlevé les étoiles
Les étoiles ont toutes disparu
Mais je suis content que tu sois venue
Nous pourrions trouver notre chemin à la lueur de la lune
Mais ils ont ordonné à la lune de ne pas briller
Malgré cela je suis content que tu sois là
J'étais fou d'inquiétude
Et sans cesse sortent-ils le mort à présent
Et l'on peut toujours ne pas regarder
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Et ce fut une longue et étrange journée

Tu peux te rapprocher un peu plus
Je nous jetterai une couverture dessus
Nous pouvons peser toutes les larmes dans une main
Et tous les rires dans l'autre

Trying to make sense of this, my dear
While the planets try to get organized
Way above the stratosphere
But they keep bringing out the dead, now
It's easy if we just walk away
They keep bringing out the dead, now
It's been a long, long day
Look away
Look away

Nous pourrions continuer à traîner ici des siècles
durant
A essayer de démêler tout cela, très chère
Tandis que les planètes tentent de s'organiser
Bien au-delà de la stratosphère
Mais ils continuent de sortir le mort
Mais on peut toujours s'en aller
Ils continuent de sortir le mort à présent
Ce fut une si longue journée
Ne regarde pas
Ne regarde pas

There She Goes, My Beautiful World

There She Goes, My Beautiful World

The wintergreen, the juniper
The cornflower and the chicory
All the words you said to me
Still vibrating in the air
The elm, the ash and the linden tree
The dark and deep, enchanted sea
The trembling moon and the stars unfurled
There she goes, my beautiful world

Ainsi Tourne mon Beau Monde

La gaulthérie, le genévrier
Le bleuet et la chicorée
L'air toujours vibrant, rempli
De tous ces mots que tu m'as dits
L'orme, le frêne et le tilleul
Les sombres abysses de la mer enchantée
La lune tremblante et les étoiles déployées
Ainsi tourne mon beau monde

There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes again

Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il à nouveau

John Wilmot penned his poetry riddled with the
pox
Nabokov wrote on index cards at a lectern, in his
socks
St. John of the Cross did his best stuff
imprisoned in a box
And Johnny Thunders was half alive when he
wrote Chinese Rocks

John Wilmot a écrit ses poèmes rongé par la
vérole
Nabokov, en chaussettes, a écrit à ses lecteurs
sur des fiches Bristol
Jean de la Croix a écrit ses plus belles œuvres
enfermé au fond d'une geôle
Et Johnny Thunders, a écrit Chinese Rocks alors
qu'il était presque mort

Well, me, I'm lying here, with nothing in my
ears
Me, I'm lying here, with nothing in my ears
Me, I'm lying here, for what seems years
I'm just lying on my bed with nothing in my
head

Et moi je suis couché là, sans le moindre air en
tête
Moi, je suis couché là, sans le moindre air en
tête
Je suis couché là, depuis une éternité
Je suis juste couché dans mon lit sans la moindre
idée

Send that stuff on down to me
Send that stuff on down to me
Send that stuff on down to me

Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut
Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut
Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut

Send that stuff on down to me

There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes again

Karl Marx squeezed his carbuncles while
writing Das Kapital
And Gauguin, he buggered off, man and went all
tropical
While Philip Larkin stuck it out in a library in
Hull
And Dylan Thomas, he died drunk in St-Vincent
Hospital

I will kneel at your feet
I will lie at your door
I will rock you to sleep
I will roll on the floor
And I'll ask for nothing
Nothing in this life
I'll ask for nothing
Give me everlasting life

I just want to move the world
I just want to move the world
I just want to move the world
I just want to move

There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes again

So if you got a trumpet, get on your feet,
brother, and blow it
If you've got a field, that don't yield, well get up
and hoe it
I look at you and you look at me and deep in our
hearts know it
That you weren't much of a muse but then I
weren't much of a poet

I will be your slave
I will peel you grapes
Up on your pedestal
With your ivory and apes
With your book of ideas
With your alchemy

Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut

Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il à nouveau

Karl Marx s'est serré la ceinture pendant qu'il
écrivait Das Kapital
Et Gauguin, il s'est barré pour ne plus peindre
que des scènes tropicales
Pendant que Philip Larkin tenait le coup dans
une bibliothèque d'Hull
Et Dylan Thomas est mort ivre, à Saint-Vincent
Hospital

Je m'agenouillerai à tes pieds
Je me coucherai à ton seuil
Je te bercerais
Je me roulerai au sol
Et je ne demanderai rien
Rien dans cette vie
Je ne demanderai rien
Rien que la vie éternelle

Je veux juste faire bouger le monde
Je veux juste faire bouger le monde
Je veux juste faire bouger le monde
Je veux juste bouger

Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il à nouveau

Alors, si tu as une trompette, lève-toi, mon frère
et joues-en un air
Si tu as un champ, qui ne donne rien, eh bien,
lève-toi et retourne la terre
Nous échangeons un regard et savons au fond de
nos cœurs
Que tu n'étais guère une muse mais, alors, je
n'étais guère plus un poète

Je serai ton esclave
Je pèlerai ton raisin
Là-haut sur ton piédestal
Avec ton ivoire et tes singes
Avec ton livre d'idées
Avec ton alchimie

O come on
Send that stuff on down to me

Send that stuff on down to me
Send that stuff on down to me
Send that stuff on down to me
Send that stuff on down to me
Send it all around the world
Cause here she comes, my beautiful girl

There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes, my beautiful world
There she goes again

Nature Boy

Nature Boy

I was just a boy when I sat down
To watch the news on TV
I saw some ordinary slaughter
I saw some routine atrocity
My father said, don't look away
You got to be strong, you got to be bold, now
He said, that in the end it is beauty
That is going to save the world, now

And she moves among the sparrows
And she floats upon the breeze
She moves among the flowers
She moves something deep inside of me

I was walking around the flower show like a
leper
Coming down with some kind of nervous
hysteria
When I saw you standing there, green eyes,
black hair
Up against the pink and purple wisteria
You said, hey, nature boy, are you looking at me
With some unrighteous intention?
My knees went weak,
I couldn't speak, I was having thoughts
That were not in my best interests to mention

Oh, allez
Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut

Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut
Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut
Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut
Envoie-moi ce qu'il me faut
Envoie-le tout autour du monde
Car elle est enfin là, ma belle fille

Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il, mon beau monde
Ainsi tourne-t-il à nouveau

Nature Boy

Je n'étais qu'un garçon lorsque je m'assis
Pour regarder les infos à la télé
J'y ai vu quelques massacres ordinaires
J'y ai vu quelques habituelles atrocités
Mon père m'a dit « regarde,
Il faut que tu sois fort et courageux, à présent »
Il a dit qu'au bout du compte, c'est la beauté
Qui sauvera le monde de l'effondrement

Et elle se meut, parmi les moineaux
Et elle plane, emportée par la brise
Elle se meut, parmi les fleurs
Elle remue des choses enfouies au fond de moi

Je me promenais dans l'exposition florale
comme un lépreux
Frappé d'une sorte d'hystérie nerveuse
Quand je te vis là, tes yeux verts, tes cheveux
sombres
Te tenant devant la glycine violette et rose
Tu m'as dit « Hé, nature boy, ne me regardes-tu
pas
Avec de mauvaises intentions ? »
Les jambes en coton, je ne pouvais pas parler,
me venaient des pensées
Qu'il ne valait mieux pas que je mentionne

And she moves among the flowers
And she floats upon the smoke
She moves among the shadows
She moves me with just one little look

You took me back to your place
And dressed me up in a deep sea diver's suit
You played the patriot, you raised the flag
And I stood at full salute
Later on we smoked a pipe that struck me dumb
And made it impossible to speak
As you closed in, in slow motion,
Quoting Sappho, in the original Greek

She moves among the shadows
She floats upon the breeze
She moves among the candles
And we moved through the days
and through the years

Years passed by, we were walking by the sea
Half delirious
You smiled at me and said, Babe
I think this thing is getting kind of serious
You pointed at something and said
Have you ever seen such a beautiful thing?
It was then that I broke down
It was then that you lifted me up again

She moves among the sparrows
And she walks across the sea
She moves among the flowers
And she moves something deep inside of me

She moves among the sparrows
And she floats upon the breeze
She moves among the flowers
And she moves right up close to me

Et elle se meut, parmi les fleurs
Et elle se mêle à la fumée
Elle se meut parmi les ombres
Elle m'émeut d'un seul petit regard

Tu m'as ramené chez toi
Et fait enfiler un scaphandre de plongée
Tu as joué au patriote, levé le drapeau
Et je me suis tenu au garde-à-vous
Avant que tu nous ne fumions une pipe qui m'a
abruti
Au point d'en devenir mutique
Tandis que tu te rapprochais au ralenti,
Citant Sappho en grec antique

Elle se meut parmi les ombres
Elle plane dans la brise
Elle se meut parmi les chandelles
Et nous avançons à travers les jours et les années

Des années après, nous marchions au bord de
l'océan
A moitié délirants
Tu m'as souri et m'a dit « chéri, nous deux,
Je crois que c'est en train de devenir assez
sérieux »
Avant de pointer le doigt au loin et de dire
« As-tu déjà vu une quelque chose d'aussi
beau ? »
C'est alors que je me suis effondré
C'est alors que tu m'as relevé à nouveau

Elle se meut parmi les moineaux
Et elle marche au travers de la mer
Elle se meut parmi les fleurs
Elle remue des choses enfouies au fond de moi

Elle se meut parmi les moineaux
Et elle plane dans la brise
Elle se meut parmi les fleurs
Et elle se rapproche tout près de moi

The Lyre of Orpheus The Lyre of Orpheus

The Lyre of Orpheus

Orpheus sat gloomy in his garden shed
Wondering what to do
With a lump of wood, a piece of wire
And a little pot of glue
O Mama O Mama

He sawed at the wood with half a heart
And glued it top to bottom
He strung a wire in between
He was feeling something rotten
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus looked at his instrument
And he gave the wire a pluck
He heard a sound so beautiful
He gasped and said O my God
O Mama O Mama

He rushed inside to tell his wife
He went racing down the halls
Eurydice was still asleep in bed
Like a sack of cannonballs
O Mama O Mama

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus
And he plucked a gentle note
Eurydice's eyes popped from their sockets
And her tongue burst through her throat
O Mama O Mama

O God, what have I done, he said
As her blood pooled in the sheets
But in his heart he felt a bliss
With which nothing could compete
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus went leaping through the fields
Strumming as hard as he did please
Birdies detonated in the sky
Bunnies dashed their brains out on the trees
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
He hit a G minor 7
He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep

La Lyre d'Orphée

Morose, Orphée s'assit dans son cabanon
Cherchant que faire
D'un bout de bois et du fil de fer
Et un petit pot de colle
O Mama O Mama

Il scia le bois sans enthousiasme
Et colla ensemble les parties
Il tendit un fil entre les deux
Il sentait quelque chose de pourri
O Mama O Mama

Orphée contempla son instrument
Puis il pinça le fil de fer
Il entendit un son si beau
Que, saisi, il dit « Oh mon Dieu »
O Mama O Mama

Il rentra le dire à sa femme en hâte
Courant dans les salons
Eurydice était encore allongée dans le lit
Tel un sac de boulets de canons
O Mama O Mama

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »
Et doucement joua une note
Les yeux d'Eurydice éclatèrent dans leur orbite
Sa langue explosa dans sa gorge
O Mama O Mama

« Oh mon Dieu, qu'ai-je fait », dit-il
Bien qu'il sentit dans son cœur
Malgré le sang imbibant les draps
Un incommensurable bonheur
O Mama O Mama

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs
Jouant aussi fort qu'il lui plaisait
Les lapins fracassaient leur tête contre les arbres
Dans le ciel, les oisillons explosaient
O Mama O Mama

Orphée joua jusqu'à avoir les doigts en sang
Il fit un Sol mineur septième
Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb

God was a major player in heaven
O Mama O Mama

God picked up a giant hammer
And He threw it with a thunderous yell
It smashed down hard on Orpheus' head
And knocked him down a well
O Mama O Mama

The well went down very deep
Very deep went down the well
The well went down so very deep
Well, the well went down to hell
O Mama O Mama

Poor Orpheus woke up with a start
All amongst the rotting dead
His lyre tucked safe under his arm
His brains all down his head
O Mama O Mama

Eurydice appeared brindled in blood
And she said to Orpheus
If you play that fucking thing down here
I'll stick it up your orifice!
O Mama O Mama

This lyre lark is for the birds, said Orpheus
It's enough to send you bats
Let's stay down here, Eurydice, dear
And we'll have a bunch of screaming brats
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus picked up his lyre for the last time
He was on a real low down bummer
And stared deep into the abyss and said
This one is for Mama

O Mama O Mama
O Mama O Mama

Breathless

Breathless

It's up in the morning and on the downs
Little white clouds like gambolling lambs
And I am breathless over you
And the red-breasted robin beats his wings

Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste domaine
O Mama O Mama

Dieu souleva un gigantesque marteau
Qu'Il jeta d'un tonitruant cri
Il s'abattit sur la tête d'Orphée
Et le jeta au fond d'un puits
O Mama O Mama

Le puits allait très profond
Très profond allait le puits
Le puits allait ô si profond
Oui, le puits menait aux enfers
O Mama O Mama

Le pauvre Orphée se réveilla en sursaut
Parmi les corps pourrissants
Sa lyre bien à l'abri sous son bras
Son cerveau sur le sol gisant
O Mama O Mama

Eurydice apparut couverte de sang
Et dit à Orphée
« Joue de cette saloperie ici-bas
Et je te la ferai avaler »
O Mama O Mama

«Laissons tomber cette histoire de lyre » dit-
Orphée
« Ou cela nous rendra déments
Restons ici-bas, Eurydice, ma douce
Faisons une bande de gamins bruyants »
O Mama O Mama

Orphée prit sa lyre pour la dernière fois
Il se sentait vraiment très, très amer
Il contempla l'abysse et dit
« Ça, c'est pour ma mère »

O Mama O Mama
O Mama O Mama

Le Souffle Coupé

C'est dans l'air du matin et sur les pentes des
bas monts
De petits nuages blancs comme autant
d'agneaux gambadant

His throat it trembles when he sings
For he is helpless before you
The happy hooded bluebells bow
And bend their heads all a-down
Heavied by the early morning dew
At the whispering stream, at the bubbling brook
The fishes leap up to take a look
For they are breathless over you

Still your hands
And still your heart
For still your face comes shining through
And all the morning glows anew
Still your mind
Still your soul
For still, the fire of love is true
And I am breathless without you

The wind circles among the trees
And it bangs about the new-made leaves
For it is breathless without you
The fox chases the rabbit round
The rabbit hides beneath the ground
For he is defenceless without you
The sky of daytime dies away
And all the earthly things they stop to play
For we are all breathless without you
I listen to my juddering bones
The blood in my veins and the wind in my lungs
And I am breathless without you

Still your hands
And still your heart
For still your face comes shining through
And all the morning glows anew
Still your soul
Still your mind
Still, the fire of love is true
And I am breathless without you

Et j'ai le souffle coupé devant toi
Et le rouge-gorge bat des ailes
Quand il chante sa voix chancelle
Car il est sans défense devant toi
Les joyeuses jacinthes inclinent leurs têtes
fleuries
Par la rosée du petit matin alourdies
Jusqu'à toucher le sol des bois
Sous le murmure du ruisseau, sous le babil des
flots
Les poissons bondissent pour jeter un coup d'œil
hors de l'eau
Mais ils ont le souffle coupé devant toi

Calme tes mains
Et calme ton cœur
Car encore ton visage s'en vient faire le jour
Sur tout le matin qui brille à nouveau
Calme ton esprit
Calme ton âme
Car le feu de l'amour encore flamboie
Et je reste le souffle coupé devant toi

Le vent tournoie entre les arbres
Et bruisse dans les nouvelles feuilles
Car il est à court de souffle sans toi
Le renard chasse le lapin dans la forêt
Le lapin court se cacher dans son terrier
Car il est sans défense sans toi
La lumière du jour commence à s'estomper
Et toutes les créatures sur Terre s'arrêtent de
jouer
Car nous sommes tous démunis sans toi
J'écoute mes os tout frémissants
Le sang dans mes veines et l'air dans mes
poumons
Et j'ai le souffle coupé devant toi

Calme tes mains
Et calme ton cœur
Car encore ton visage s'en vient faire le jour
Sur tout le matin qui brille à nouveau
Calme ton esprit
Clame ton âme
Car le feu de l'amour encore flamboie
Et je reste le souffle coupé devant toi

Supernaturally

Supernaturally

Through the windswept coastal trees
Where the dead come rising from the sea
With a teddy-bear clamped between her knees
She says, where can my loverman be?
Well, I'm down here, babe, with the Eskimos
With the polar bears and the Arctic snow
With a party of penguins who do not know
How I can get back to thee
Well I'm gonna ask you, babe
Hey! Ho!
Oh baby don't you go
Hey! Ho!
Oh no no no
Hey! Ho!
Oh baby, don't you go
All supernatural on me
Supernaturally

Once I was your heart's desire
Now I am the ape hunkered by the fire
With my knuckles dragging through the mire
You float by so majestically
You're my north, my south, my east, my west
You are the girl that I love best
With an army of tanks bursting from your chest
I wave my little white flag at thee
Can you see it, babe?
Hey! Ho!
Oh baby don't you go
Hey! Ho!
Oh no no no
Hey! Ho!
Oh baby, don't you go
All supernatural on me
Supernaturally

Now I've turned the mirrors to wall
I've emptied out the peopled halls
I've nailed shut the windows and locked the doors
There is no escape, you see
I chase you up and down the stairs
Under tables and over chairs
I reach out and I touch your hair

Surnaturellement

A travers les arbres battus par les bourrasques
côtières
Là où les morts viennent surgir de la mer
Un ours en peluche entre les genoux fixé
« Où peut bien être mon loverman ? » dit-elle
Eh bien, je suis ici bas, chérie, avec les Eskimos
Avec les ours polaires, sous les neiges arctiques
Avec un groupe de pingouins ignorants
Comment puis-je te revenir
Eh bien je vais te demander, chérie
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, ne t'en va pas
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, non non non
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, ne sois pas
Si surnaturelle avec moi
Surnaturellement

J'étais autrefois l'objet de ton désir
Maintenant je suis le singe accroupi près du feu
Mes mains traînant dans la boue
Tu flottes par ici si majestueusement
Tu es mon Nord, mon Sud, mon Est, mon Ouest
Tu es celle que j'aime le plus
Avec une armée de tanks qui jaillissent de ta
poitrine
J'agite mon petit drapeau blanc devant toi
Est-ce-que tu le vois, chérie ?
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, ne t'en va pas
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, non non non
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, ne sois pas
Si surnaturelle avec moi
Surnaturellement

J'ai maintenant retourné les miroirs face aux murs
J'ai dispersé la foule des salles surpeuplées
J'ai cloué les fenêtres et verrouillé les portes
Tu vois, il n'y a pas d'issue
Je te poursuis dans les escaliers
Sous des tables, par-dessus chaises
Je tends le bras et touche tes cheveux

And it cuts me like a knife
For there is always something
other little thing you gotta do
Hey! Ho!
Oh baby don't you go
Hey! Ho!
Oh baby, no no no
Hey! Ho!
Oh don't you go
All supernatural on me
Supernaturally

Qui me coupent comme une lame
Car il y a toujours quelque autre petite chose que
tu dois faire
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, ne t'en va pas
Hé ! Ho !
Oh, chérie, non non non
Hé! Ho !
Oh, chérie, ne sois pas
Si surnaturelle avec moi
Surnaturellement

Spell

Spell

Through the woods, and frosted moors
Past the snow-caked hedgerows I
Bed down upon the drifting snow
Sleep beneath the melting sky
I whisper all your names
I know not where you are
But somewhere, somewhere, somewhere here
Upon this wild abandoned star

And I'm full of love
And I'm full of wonder
And I'm full of love
And I'm falling under
Your spell

I have no abiding memory
No awakening, no flaming dart
No word of consolation
No arrow through my heart
Only a feeble notion
A glimmer from afar
That I cling to with my fingers
As we go spinning wildly through the stars

And I'm full of love
And I'm full of wonder
And I'm full of love
And I'm falling under
Your spell

The wind lifts me to my senses
I rise up with the dew

Envoûtement

A travers les bois et le givre des landes
Après les haies saupoudrées de neige,
Je m'étends là dans la neige tourbillonnante
Et dors sous le ciel qui se désagrège
Je murmure tous tes noms
Je ne sais où tu es
Si ce n'est quelque part, quelque part, quelque
part par là
Sur cette étoile sauvage et délaissée

Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je suis plein d'émerveillement
Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je succombe
A ton envoûtement

Je n'ai pas de souvenir gravé à jamais
Pas d'épiphanie, pas de trait enflammé
Pas de mot de consolation
Ni de flèche pour venir me transpercer
Rien qu'une faible notion
Un miroitement distant
Auquel je m'accroche avec mes mains
Tandis que nous tournoyons parmi les étoiles
furieusement

Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je suis plein d'émerveillement
Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je succombe
A ton envoûtement

Le vent me tire de ma torpeur
Je me relève couvert de rosée

The snow turns to streams of light
The purple heather grows anew
I call you by your name
I know not where you are
But somehow, somewhere, sometime soon
Upon this wild abandoned star

And I'm full of love
And I'm full of wonder
And I'm full of love
And I'm falling under
Your spell

O Children

O Children

Pass me that lovely little gun
My dear, my darling one
The cleaners are coming, one by one
You don't even want to let them start

They are knocking now upon your door
They measure the room, they know the score
They're mopping up the butcher's floor
Of your broken little hearts

O children

Forgive us now for what we've done
It started out as a bit of fun
Here, take these before we run away
The keys to the gulag

O children

Lift up your voice, lift up your voice
Children
Rejoice, rejoice

Here comes Frank and poor old Jim
They're gathering round with all my friends
We're older now, the light is dim
And you are only just beginning

O children

We have the answer to all your fears

La neige fait place à des flots de lumière
Et la bruyère violette pousse, revigorée
Je t'appelle par ton nom
Je ne sais où tu es
Si ce n'est de quelque manière, quelque part,
dans un moment proche
Sur cette étoile sauvage et délaissée

Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je suis plein d'émerveillement
Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je succombe
A ton envoûtement

Ô Enfants

Donne moi ce joli petit pistolet
Ma chère, mon enfant adorée
Un par un, les nettoyeurs sont en train d'arriver
Tu ne veux même pas les laisser commencer

Ils frappent maintenant à la porte de ta maison,
Ils mesurent la pièce, ils connaissent la chanson
Ils nettoient le sol du boucher où sont
Les morceaux de vos petits cœurs brisés

Ô Enfants

Pardonnez-nous pour ce que nous avons fait
Nous voulions un peu nous amuser
Tenez, avant que nous fuyions, prenez-les,
Les clefs du goulag

Ô Enfants

Haussez la voix, haussez la voix
Enfants
Laissez éclater votre joie

Arrivent Frank et ce pauvre vieux Jim
Ils se rejoignent avec tous mes amis
Nous sommes plus vieux, maintenant, la lumière
se fait infime
Et vous ne faites que commencer

Ô Enfants

Nous avons la réponse à toutes vos peurs,

It's short, it's simple, it's crystal clear
It's round about and it's somewhere here
Lost amongst our winnings

O children
Lift up your voice, lift up your voice
Children
Rejoice, rejoice

The cleaners have done their job on you
They're hip to it, man, they're in the groove
They've hosed you down, you're good as new
They're lining up to inspect you

O children

Poor old Jim's white as a ghost
He's found the answer that we lost
We're all weeping now, weeping because
There ain't nothing we can do to protect you

O children
Lift up your voice, lift up your voice
Children
Rejoice, rejoice

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
The train that goes to the Kingdom
We're happy, Ma, we're having fun
And the train ain't even left the station

Hey, little train! Wait for me!
I once was blind but now I see
Have you left a seat for me?
Is that such a stretch of the imagination?

Hey little train! Wait for me!
I was held in chains but now I'm free
I'm hanging in there, don't you see
In this process of elimination

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
The train that goes to the Kingdom
We're happy, Ma, we're having fun
It's beyond my wildest expectation

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
The train that goes to the Kingdom

Courte, simple, on ne peut plus claire
C'est quelque part par là, dans le secteur
Perdu parmi les choses que nous avons gagnées

Ô Enfants
Haussez la voix, haussez la voix
Enfants
Laissez éclater votre joie

Les nettoyeurs en ont terminé avec vous
Ils s'y connaissent, ça, oui, ils sont dans le coup
Ils vous ont bien rincés, vous êtes propres
comme tout
Ils se mettent en ligne pour vous inspecter

Ô Enfants

Ce pauvre vieux Jim est blanc comme du lait
Il a les réponses que nous avons égarées
Nous pleurons tous, pleurons qu'il n'y ait
Rien que nous puissions faire pour vous protéger

Ô Enfants
Haussez la voix, haussez la voix
Enfants
Laissez éclater votre joie

Hé, petit train ! Tous à bord des wagons
Du train qui part pour le Royaume
On est heureux, M'man, on s'amuse bien
Et le train n'a même pas quitté la gare

Hé, petit train ! Ne pars pas sans moi !
J'étais aveugle mais maintenant je vois
Y a-t-il encore un siège pour moi ?
Où n'est-ce qu'un tour de mon imagination ?

Hé, petit train ! Attends moi, donc !
J'étais enchaîné mais plus maintenant
Ne vois-tu pas que je tiens bon
Au milieu de cette procédure d'élimination

Hé, petit train ! Nous sautons dans les wagons
Du train qui part pour le Royaume
On est heureux, M'man, on s'amuse bien
Bien au-delà de toute prédiction

Hé, petit train ! Tous à bord des wagons
Du train qui part pour le Royaume

We're happy, Ma, we're having fun
And the train ain't even left the station

On est heureux, M'man, on s'amuse bien
Et le train n'a même pas quitté la gare

COMMENTARY ON THE TRANSLATION

I) The poetical and literary journey

Résonnance, connivence, émotion face à la réalité tangible du poème qui naît de la conjonction toujours renouvelée du Sens et du Son : le traducteur est alors engagé dans « cette médiation inventive » [...]. Dans cette exploration des textes et des voix, le traducteur est pris dans les constellations sonores, dans le bruissement de la langue poétique et sa traduction de l'œuvre poétique est une sorte de transposition créatrice. (Hibbs 2018)

This dissertation has for objective, among other things, to shine a light onto the poetic and literary qualities that are clear distinctive features of the work of Nick Cave. It intends to do so by first analysing the journey that is at the core of the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. As this first part will explicit, there is within the texts of the album a strong notion of progression, of advancing through a universe, whether it is on a physical or on a more metaphorical level. A study of the poetical forms of the songs informs us on the textual and literary movements that are important elements both in the genesis and in the performance of the songs. Finally, an attempt at the translation of sonorities in Nick Cave's songs reveals what sort of textual machinery actually creates within the diegesis of the texts under study rhythm and music, two notions strongly associated with that of movement and thus, that of journey.

1) A world in motion

One of the most remarkable features from *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* is the clear visual dimension of the songs. Cave creates a world within his texts and presents it to his listener, like “movies for the ears”²², as Tom Waits, another praised songwriter, once declared. The leader of the Bad Seeds therefore appears as an author who is fully aware of the visual dimension of his writings (Adrien et al. 2016). From *Get Ready to Love* to *O Children*, the Australian songwriter weaves a canvas of striking and noteworthy places, that act not only as a backcloth enriching the world of the song, and thus of the album as a whole, but also as important and constitutive elements from which the songs of the album seem to unfold.

Ensuing from this idea is a sense of movement and trajectory that underlies the intradiegetic world of the album, connecting and animating the places mentioned above. Most of the songs of the album seem to act as accounts of their own characters' deeds and peregrinations, or of that of the

22 “I always thought songs are movies for the ears and films are like songs for the eyes.” Posted on Tom Waits' Twitter account on 19/12/2011. <https://twitter.com/tomwaits/status/148841329424728064>. Accessed 26/10/2021.

narrator's, whether these travels are strictly physical or more metaphorical. *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus* are perhaps the main examples of this process. In the first song, Nick Cave recounts the ordeals the main character has to endure during her quest for the lover she has lost whereas the second one, onto which the second disc of the album debuts, is a retelling of Orpheus's journey through Hell. This is for example perhaps most visibly in *Hiding All Away*:

Down by the sea

Descendue au bord de la mer

You went **to the museum**

Tu t'es rendue **au musée**

You entered **the cathedral**

Tu es entrée **dans la cathédrale**

And in *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

He went racing **down the halls**

Courant **dans les salons**

Orpheus went leaping **through the fields**

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant **à travers champs**

Well, the well went **down to hell**

Oui, le puits descendait **aux enfers**

There She Goes, *My Beautiful World* also holds its fair share of key places but acts on a different level. Being the detailed account of a journey within the psyche of an author — Cave himself? — without inspiration, the song is the perfect example of the metaphorical dimension that can also be the theatre of these movements. Even songs that are not organized around the narration of a journey often resort to the use of key places to anchor the scenes of the song. *Cannibal's Hymn* and *Breathless* appear as good examples of this idea. Here in *Cannibal's Hymn*:

Those heathens you hang with **down by the sea**

Tout ce que veulent ces païens, que sur le rivage tu vas retrouver

I know **a river, where we can dream**

Il y a **une rivière, où nous pourrions rêver**

And I will never desert you **here**
Unpetalled **among the crocus**

Et jamais **ici** je ne t'abandonnerai
Parmi les crocus, de tes pétales dépouillée

In *Breathless*:

It's up in the morning and **on the downs**

C'est dans l'air du matin et **sur les pentes des bas monts**

At the whispering stream, at the bubbling brook

Sous le murmure du ruisseau, sous les bulles des flots

This feature comes of course to be an important element to take into account when working on Nick Cave's texts and raises the question of how to translate trajectory. The first issue one comes to be confronted to in order to do so is the translation of prepositions. These particles, defined as "a word or group of words used [...] to show direction, time, place, location, spatial relationships, or to introduce an object"²³, do indeed act as such in Cave's texts. Vectors of transitivity and of intermediary²⁴, prepositions are eminently abundant within the English language and can be sometimes quite tricky to render in French; they were therefore a crucial point to consider when first approaching the texts and their translations: they are important stylistic tools employed by Nick Cave to animate, to give life and movement to his songs and the actions taking place within.

If there are undoubtedly some cases in which the translation of prepositions is no more complex than finding the appropriate preposition in the target text's language, in a lot of other occurrences, there are no matching prepositions between the two idioms and it becomes necessary to resort to other strategies in order to transfer the sense of direction and trajectory that was delivered by the prepositions of the source text. The use of grammatical transpositions will be the most frequent device in order to do so but it is also worth mentioning that amplifications will often come to accompany these devices of transpositions. Verbs will also often be used to convert the prepositions into French. For example, in the first verse of *Hiding All Away*, translating "Down by the sea" by simply "au bord de la mer" could seem enough and seem to perfectly maintain the idiomacy of the phrase. Yet, adding "Descendue" allows the preservation of the movement that is initiated by the preposition "Down", and the song remains in the end mostly about that: the narration of a journey.

Down by the sea

Descendue au bord de la mer

Sent sparks zapping **out** your face

T'a envoyé des étincelles **te sauter** au visage

In the first verse of *There She Goes, My Beautiful World*, it was also necessary to resort to a process of amplification, mixed this time with a syntactic permutation of the two phrases. "empli" was added at the end of the first line in order to reinforce the spatial dimension of the phrase "in the air" that would have seemed a bit undermined by a simple translation such as "L'air toujours vibrant / De tous ces mots que tu m'as dits".

All the words you said to me
Still vibrating **in** the air

L'air toujours vibrant, **empli**
De tous ces mots que tu m'as dits

23 "Grammar: Prepositions." *Academic Guides*, Walden University"

24 "La préposition matérialise une forme de transitivité, elle joue donc un rôle d'intermédiaire. C'est ce rôle d'articulation entre deux éléments qui caractérise la préposition." (Merle 2012, 251).

More classic examples are featured throughout the song:

And Gauguin, he buggered **off**, man and went all tropical Et Gauguin, il s'est **barré**, pour ne plus peindre que des scènes tropicales

I will kneel **at** your feet Je m'agenouillerai **à** tes pieds
I will lie **at** your door Je me coucherai **à** ton seuil
I will rock you to sleep Je te bercerai
I will roll **on** the floor Je me roulerai **au** sol

Send that stuff **on down to** me **Envoie-moi** ce qu'il me faut

That last example is actually more peculiar and was quite complex. What we have to deal with here is the plea of an uninspired artist, begging a higher entity — a muse, as mentioned in the song? His artistic predecessors? God himself? — to provide him with inspiration. The main difficulty of this phrase lies in the presence of the three prepositions following each other: “on down to”. If the idea of destination is resolved with the use of “Envoie-moi”, the idea of direction expressed with “down” could not be transferred properly. The addition of “ici-bas” or “en bas” did not seem to quite match the meaning of the sentence here.

There are in *The Lyre of Orpheus* several examples of the replacement of a preposition by a verb that conveys a sense of direction in addition to its action. The combination of a verb and a preposition to qualify it are necessary in the source text: “rentra” then allows to transmit the sense of direction given by “inside”; “souleva” transmits the action that God is carrying out; and “s’abattit” also transmits the direction of the movement of the hammer. It is worth noting that in the first case, “rentra” does not carry anymore the manner of Orpheus’ run and “en hâte” thus need to be added in order to do so while in the third case, “s’abattit” permits to also transfer the manner the hammer is thrown onto Orpheus’ head (that is carried out by “hard” in the source text”).

He rushed **inside** to tell his wife Il **rentra** le dire à sa femme en hâte

God picked **up** a giant hammer Dieu **souleva** un gigantesque marteau

It smashed **down** hard on Orpheus' head Il **s’abattit** sur la tête d’Orphée

Another important, although different, example of the importance of prepositions is to be found in *Abattoir Blues’ Nature Boy*. Although the translating process remains the same (the grammatical shift from prepositions in the source text to verbs in the target text), the role of the prepositions within the text is here different as we have to deal with prepositions that are part of

phrasal verbs. Examples previously analysed also included phrasal verbs such as “buggered off”, “send [...] on down” (*There She Goes, My Beautiful World*) or “picked up” (*the Lyre of Orpheus*).

It was then that I broke **down**
It was then that you lifted me **up** again

C'est alors que je me suis **effondré**
C'est alors que tu m'as **relevé** à nouveau

The recurrence of these verbs in the texts can by the way be explained by the very form of the texts themselves: even if the literary and poetic qualities of Nick Cave's songwriting have been widely recognised by now²⁵ and have been praised countless times throughout his artistic career (AAP 2010; University of Brighton 2013), in the end, the texts under study in this dissertation remain songs. Their language register differs from that of “classic” poetry as well as that of “classic” prose, this hybrid nature thus favouring the recourse to phrasal verbs, often considered as markers of informal or oral speech. Moreover, these verbs do testify to the dynamism of the language²⁶ used within the songs and of the songs themselves as well as of the directional values they often transmit (Riguel 2014). A specificity of the English language without direct equivalent in French, the translation of phrasal verbs necessitates cautiousness and often requires lexical flexibility in French in order not to lose the subtleties conveyed thanks to their bi-partite form.

In *Cannibal's Hymn*, for example:

Swoop down and tell you that it don't make much sense **Je fondrai du ciel**, te dire qu'il est insensé

In *Spell*:

Past the snow-caked hedgerows I
Bed down upon the drifting snow

Après les haies saupoudrées de neige,
Je m'étends là dans la neige tourbillonnante

And I'm **falling under**
Your spell

Et **je succombe**
A ton envoûtement

I rise up with the dew

Je me relève couvert de rosée

More generally, the vast number of verbs of movement in the source texts needs to be underlined. Their considerable presence acts as a testimony of the agitation and turmoil that pervade the songs of the album and although they can be most of the time replaced with the lexically equivalent verb in the target text, they still have to be taken into account in the translation process of the songs. *Hiding All Away* is here also a fitting example of the abundance of verbs of movement:

25 “Nick Cave belongs firmly within the canon of profoundly influential musical balladeers and artists.”

“Nick Cave, with his prodigious artistic production in music, film, literature and poetry, is an important figure for serious examination” (Fonarow 2012, 181-183).

26 “a vigorous part of English.” McArthur, T., quoted in Riguel 2014.

You **went** looking for me, dear

Tu **t'es lancée** à ma recherche, ma chère

You **entered** the cathedral

Tu **es entrée** dans la cathédrale

You **went** and asked your doctor

Tu t'en **es allée** demander à ton docteur

You **walked** into the hall of fame
And **approached** my imitators

Tu **es entrée** dans le panthéon
T'es **approchée** de mes imitateurs

So are *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

He rushed inside to tell his wife
He went racing down the halls

Il rentra le dire à sa femme en hâte
Courant dans les salons

Orpheus went leaping through the fields

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs

And *Breathless*:

The wind **circles** among the trees
And it **bangs about** the new-made leaves

Le vent **tournoie** entre les arbres
Et **bruisse** dans les nouvelles feuilles

The fox **chases** the rabbit round
The rabbit **hides** beneath the ground

Le renard **chasse** le lapin dans la forêt
Le lapin **court se cacher** dans son terrier

It is finally interesting to point out the existence of different trajectories from one song to another. If some of the songs' trajectory do not match a clear, definite pattern, others clearly do and some contrasts can be perceived between them. *Hiding All Away*, for example, opens on a descending movement as the main character descends to the seashore looking for her lost companion ("Down by the sea"), but ends with the promise of an upcoming war from some superior entity ("There is a war coming / Coming from above"). The contrast in the song is actually not only perceptible in the oppositions of the prepositions but also as the narrator shifts from detailing the actions of a single person to adopting an omniscient point of view and announcing the imminent arrival of a war that will concern all of us. The song thus seems to adopt rather an upward trajectory. On the contrary, *The Lyre of Orpheus*, opts for the opposite as Orpheus travels down to Hell and the song ends with the mention of a downward glance down into an "abyss". The same idea is also easily identifiable in *Breathless* as the song opens with the rising morning ("It's up in the morning") and closes with the setting sun and the stop of activities it implies ("The sky of daytime dies away / And all the earthly things they stop to play") while *Spell*, as for itself, follows again the opposite trajectory: the narrator lies down under the falling snow ("Past the snow-caked hedgerows I / Bed down upon the drifting snow") only to wake up as the sun rises over him ("I rise up with the dew").

These contrasts can even be situated close to one another within the textual structure of the songs. For example, the last two lines of *Nature Boy*'s final verse are in direct opposition:

It was then that I **broke down**
It was then that you **lifted me up** again

C'est alors que je me **suis effondré**
C'est alors que tu m'**as relevé** à nouveau

Here again, prepositions as well as the contrasts that Nick Cave seems to enjoy disseminating in his texts act as the main vectors of transmission of this sense of trajectory and direction that *moves* the songs, that make the journeys and movements they describe possible within their diegesis. Alongside these, verbs of movement come to be the last tool used by the songwriter to confer his songs the impetus and impulsion that renders them so full of life and animation.

2) Poetical forms and translational issues

There has been, in a way, more than one Nick Cave throughout Cave's career. Musician, performer, author, screenwriter, actor, hidden son of Lee Marvin²⁷, the Australian artist has distinguished himself over and over, in many fields²⁸, and has never ceased to evolve over the course of the past forty years or so. Incidentally, so have the Bad Seeds, transitioning regularly between genres and registers, changing both members of their line-up and artistic orientations as few other groups did during their career²⁹. Nick Cave's career, to put it in a nutshell, is a never-ending process of evolution (Heller 2017). Some things have yet always remained at the core of Cave's artistic output, most notably and above all others, the literary qualities that have always imprinted his songs.

A) Ballad re-utilization: lyric and narrative forms in the songs of Nick Cave

The songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* do indeed comply with that constant of the songwriter's work, they testify vividly of the song-crafting abilities that make the Australian writer such a unique artist³⁰. Among these abilities is Cave's capacity to re-use literary forms to serve the purpose of the songs, in particular that of the ballad. A note about the term itself seems here

27 "The Sons of Lee Marvin is a secret organization. [...] Some of our founding members are myself, Tom Waits, John Lurie. We inducted at one point (musician) Nick Cave, because if you look like you could be a son of Lee Marvin, then you are instantly thought of by the Sons of Lee Marvin to be a Son of Lee Marvin." Jim Jarmusch, quoted in Hertzberg, 2009.

28 "He moves effortlessly between genres and media." (AAP 2010.)

29 "One of the secrets of the Bad Seeds' success is how fluid their membership is. Some 15 musicians have, at some point, formed part of the ever-changing lineup, to freshen up their sound with anew ideas, fresh tics and weirder kicks." (Hewitt 2014.)

30 "Make no mistake: writing is what sets Cave apart from other rock stars." (Leser 2016.)

necessary regarding how the meaning of the word nowadays has to be differentiated from its traditional literary definition. The two are not mutually exclusive though; the modern definition does not contradict the literary definition and a song (or a poem) can thus correspond to both meanings at the same time. In recent years, the genre of the ballad has come to refer most commonly to a “slow, romantic, popular song”³¹, thus differing from its traditional literary definition, as proposed by Grove Music Online’s James Porter: “a short popular or traditional song that normally frames a narrative element” (Porter 2011) or, more extensively, as found in Meyer Howard Abrams’ *Glossary Of Literary Terms*:

A short definition of the popular ballad (known also as the folk ballad or traditional ballad) is that it is a song, transmitted orally, which tells a story. Ballads are thus the narrative species of *folk songs*. [...] Typically, the popular ballad is dramatic, condensed, and impersonal: the narrator begins with the climactic episode, tells the story tersely by means of action and dialogue (sometimes by means of the dialogue alone), and tells it without self-reference or the expression of personal attitudes or feelings.

The most common stanza form—called the ballad stanza—is a *quatrain* in alternate four- and three-stress lines; usually only the second and fourth lines rhyme.

Many ballads employ set formulas (which helped the singer remember the course of the song) including:

- (1) stock descriptive phrases [...],
- (2) a *refrain* in each stanza [...],
- (3) incremental repetition, in which a line or stanza is repeated, but with an addition that advances the story. (Abrams 1997, 18)

Cave is actually very well accustomed to using such a poetical form. Several classics of his, anterior to this album, such as, *Nobody’s Baby Now*³², *Henry Lee*³³ or *Lime Tree Arbour*³⁴ for example, already matched more or less closely, certain elements of the ballad. Moreover, even the Bad Seeds’ most well-known album (along with *The Boatman’s Call* and the recent *Push the Sky Away*, arguably), *Murder Ballads*, refers to the poetic form in its very title, after all. More generally, it is also worth noting that ballads are quite recurrent in pop music and appear in many songwriters’ catalogues, with more or less fidelity to the criteria of the form. Famous examples include Bob Dylan’s *Ballad of a Thin Man*³⁵ or Leonard Cohen’s *Tower of Song*³⁶, just to cite a few.

Yet, Cave’s use of the ballad is not completely straight-forward and does not strictly comply to the literary rules of the form. Rather than aiming at a strict compliance to the criteria of the form, Cave opts for a looser approach and assimilation of the ballad. Most of the songs that approach the form of the ballad on *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* can not be considered as classic, conform

31 As found in Collins Dictionary Online. Accessed 01/10/2021.

32 *Let Love In*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 1994. Mute Records.

33 *Murder Ballads*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 1996. Mute Records.

34 *The Boatman’s Call*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 1997. Mute Records.

35 *Highway 61 Revisited*, Bob Dylan, 1965. Columbia Records.

36 *I’m Your Man*, Leonard Cohen, 1984. Columbia Records.

examples of the literary form but rather as resemblances, as re-appropriations. The main examples to be found on the album are *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus*. Both songs are indeed built around a narrative process; respectively the quest for a lost lover and Orpheus' musical odyssey. Both also contain a refrain in each stanza (except for the last stanza of *The Lyre of Orpheus*, that stops before the "stanza refrain" only for it to be repeated until the end of the song) and a rhyme scheme within which the second and fourth lines rhyme. It can be seen below in *Hiding All Away*:

You went looking for me, dear,
Down by the sea
You found some little silver fish
But you didn't find me
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

Tu t'es lancée à ma recherche, ma chère
Tu as trouvé des petits poissons argentés
Descendue au bord de la mer
Mais tu ne m'as pas trouvé
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

You asked the butcher
Who lifted up his cleaver
Stuck his fist up your dress
Said he must've been mad to leave you
But I had to get away, dear, hiding all away
I had to get away, dear, I was hidden all away

Tu as demandé au boucher
Qui a levé son couperet
Il a fourré son poing sous ta robe
Et dit « il doit être fou de t'avoir abandonnée »
Mais j'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin
J'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au loin

And here below in *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

He sawed at the wood with half a heart
And glued it top to **bottom**
He strung a wire in between
He was feeling something **rotten**
O Mama O Mama

Il scia le bois sans enthousiasme
Et colla ensemble les parties
Il tendit un fil entre les deux
Il sentait quelque chose de pourri
O Mama O Mama

This lyre lark is for the birds, said Orpheus
It's enough to send you **bats**
Let's stay down here, Eurydice, dear
And we'll have a bunch of screaming **brats**
O Mama O Mama

«Laissons tomber cette histoire de lyre » dit-Orphée
« Ou cela nous rendra **déments**
Restons ici-bas, Eurydice, ma douce
Faisons une bande de gamins bruyants »
O Mama O Mama

Hiding All Away also features several occurrences of "incremental repetitions", notably in its refrains. Their goal seem to be to provide a little insight onto the past of the man the main character is looking for and for the reasons of his absence, as seen below. "Descriptive phrases", as mentioned by Abrams ("You found some little silver fish"/"Tu as trouvé des petits poissons argentés") are also to be found within the text.

I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

I had to get out of there, babe, hiding all away
I had to get out of there, dear, hiding all away

J'ai du m'en aller d'ici, chérie, me cacher tout au loin
J'ai du m'en aller de là, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin

I had been there, dear, but I was not there anymore
I had been there, now I'm hiding all away

J'avais été là, ma chère, mais je n'y étais plus
J'avais été là maintenant je me cache tout au loin

Some other songs, although they cannot be fully identified as ballads, still incorporate some features of the genre in their texts. *Cannibal's Hymn*, for example, cannot be considered as a “short popular or traditional song that normally frames a narrative element” (Porter 2001) nor does it feature “an essential distillation of plot, character and action or dialogue.”(Ibid.) Yet, the song still features certain elements that are constitutive of the genre of the ballad most notably the combination of stanza refrains with Abrams’ “incremental repetitions”, for example:

But if you're gonna dine with them cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your animals
And your heart that is bruised but unbeaten
And beating like a drum

Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici bas avec tes animaux
Et ton cœur, meurtri mais non défait
Qui bat comme un tambour

Well, if you're gonna dine with the cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your animals
And your heart that is banging and beating
And banging like a gong

Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici bas avec tes animaux
Et ton cœur, qui bat, bat et cogne
Et retentit tel un gong

But if you're gonna dine with the cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your animals
And your heart that is bruised but bleeding
And bleeding like a lamb
Banging like a gong
Beating like a drum

Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici bas avec tes animaux
Et ton cœur, meurtri et geignant
Qui saigne comme un agneau
Qui retentit comme un gong
Qui bat comme un tambour

To a lesser extent, the elegiac *Messiah Ward* too comprises certain textual elements of the ballad, principally in the form of its stanza refrain:

They're bringing out the dead now
It's easy just to look away
They are bringing out the dead now
It's been a strange, strange day

Ils sortent le mort à présent
Et l'on peut ne pas regarder
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Ce fut une si étrange journée

But textual elements are not the only feature that draws these songs closer to the genre of the ballad. The very themes of the songs rather confer them their “balladric” qualities (mainly in the case of *Cannibal's Hymn* and *Messiah Ward*). They all follow the traditional pattern of involving two people, male and female, whose backgrounds and motivations remain unclear and un-

elaborated and, above all, they appear driven and built around the singing *itself*, as explained in James Porter's definition of the genre:

The older traditional ballads are marked by an essential distillation of plot, character and action or dialogue. Often no more than two people are involved, although a third or others may impinge fatefully on their relationship. Apart from battles or conflict between males the focus is usually on a man and a woman, with dialogue leading to decisive action. As a rule the story is not elaborated through explicit motivation or the description of personae or objects; rather, the singing pushes the story along relentlessly, leaping or lingering, sketching the story line economically and using the device of incremental repetition. [...]

Characters are broadly imagined and without complexity. Often they engage each other through confrontation, accusation or challenge of some kind. They are deftly sketched to establish their place in the drama, and any motive is discernible only by means of their speech or actions. (Porter 2001)

This is not without consequences onto the translation of the texts. If the goal of this work is not to try to affirm the possibility of a hierarchisation of the lyrics of pop songs, or rather of the literary and poetic qualities of the texts of pop songs, with Cave's songs being among those at the top of the pyramid, Cave's songs still resonate deeper than most others with literary and poetic qualities that become essential features to save and reproduce in the process of the translation. Hence, replicating the form of the ballad became a crucial element of the translation. The preservation of the rhyme scheme, one of the main factors that contribute to the rhythm of the text (Karsky, 2016), was a major concern, for example, and was assured on several occurrences thanks to textual inversions in the target language. This can be seen in *Hiding All Away*, for example:

You went looking for me, dear,
Down by the sea
You found some little silver fish
But you didn't find me

Tu t'es lancée à ma recherche, ma chère
Tu as trouvé des petits poissons argentés
Descendue au bord de la mer
Mais tu ne m'as pas trouvé

You searched through all my poets
From Sappho through to Auden
I saw the book fall from your hands
As you slowly died of boredom

Tu as cherché parmi tous mes poètes
De Sappho jusqu'à Auden
Alors que tu mourais lentement d'ennui
J'ai vu le livre tomber de tes mains

The preservation of the form was perhaps even more crucial in *The Lyre of Orpheus*. The literary influences that spread through Cave's songwriting have been mentioned numerous times above in this work; they come to rise to the foreground here, as the song is not only reprising codes of the ballad but is also reiterating, very faithfully at times, the form of Ted Hughes' *Song for a Phallus*³⁷. Cave indeed reprises the rhythm and the stanza refrain from Hughes' 1969 poem. On the left, the first two stanzas of *Song for a Phallus* and on the right, the first two of *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

There was a boy was Oedipus

Orpheus sat gloomy in his garden shed

³⁷ Hughes, Ted. *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow*. Faber and Faber, 1970.

Stuck in his Mammy's belly.
His Daddy'd walled the exit up
He was a horrible fella
Mamma Mamma

Wondering what to do
With a lump of wood, a piece of wire
And a little pot of glue
O Mama O Mama

You stay in there, his Daddy cried
Because a Dickybird
Has told the world when you get born
You'll treat me like a turd
Mamma Mamma³⁸

He sawed at the wood with half a heart
And glued it top to bottom
He strung a wire in between
He was feeling something rotten
O Mama O Mama

It is also important to point out that similar methods of line inversions and textual adjustments, as in *Hiding All Away*, were also required in the translation of *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

O God, what have I done, he said
As her blood pooled in the sheets
But in his heart he felt a bliss
With which nothing could compete
O Mama O Mama

« Oh mon Dieu, qu'ai-je fait », dit-il
Bien qu'il sentit dans son **cœur**
Malgré le sang imbibant les draps
Un incommensurable **bonheur**
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus went leaping through the fields
Strumming as hard as he did **please**
Birdies detonated in the sky
Bunnies dashed their brains out on the trees
O Mama O Mama

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs
Jouant aussi fort qu'il lui **plaisait**
Les lapins fracassaient leur tête contre les arbres
Dans le ciel, les oisillons explosaient
O Mama O Mama

This way of doing could also have been applied to the opening stanza of the song. Yet, it felt inappropriate this time to modify the structure of the stanza as either the rhythm of the original text would have been too greatly disturbed (as most stanzas comprise a shorter second verse than the others) or the result would also really not be idiomatic. It also felt necessary to let the song open onto the line that mentions Orpheus. Therefore, the rhyme scheme of the first stanza corresponds to an ABBCDD format whereas the rest of the text is built around an ABCBDD rhyme scheme — the chorus has to be seen as split in two to match to this pattern— that corresponds that of the traditional form of the ballad, as mentioned above in Abrams' definition.

Orpheus sat gloomy in his garden shed
Wondering what to do
With a lump of wood, a piece of wire
And a little pot of **glue**
O Mama O Mama

Morose, Orphée s'assit dans son cabanon
Cherchant que **faire**
D'un bout de bois et du fil de **fer**
Et un petit pot de colle
O Mama O Mama

The third stanza is the only in the song that does not feature this rhyme scheme as none of the lines rhyme, it seemed therefore not necessary to maintain the usual scheme in that case. Such a liberty

38 The extract from Hughes' text was actually copied from :
Hughes, Ted. "Song for a Phallus." *The Transatlantic Review*, no. 32, Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation, 1969, pp. 35–37.

can probably be associated with the nature of the text: a song — a pop song even —, therefore a looser and less strict form, seemingly held by fewer constraints than more “classic” poetry.

In some other stanzas, the rhyme scheme could either not be preserved and only through approximative alliterations was it manageable to approach replication of the rhyme scheme, as can be seen respectively in the fifth (in which the “rhyme” is transferred on an ABBCCDD scheme) and eighth stanzas:

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus
And he plucked a gentle **note**
Eurydice's eyes popped from their sockets
And her tongue burst through her **throat**
O Mama O Mama

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »
Et doucement joua une **note**
Les yeux d'Eurydice éclatèrent dans leur **orbite**
Sa langue explosa dans sa gorge
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
He hit a G minor **7**
He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
God was a major player in **heaven**
O Mama O Mama

Orphée joua jusqu'à avoir les doigts en sang
Il fit un Sol mineur **septième**
Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb
Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste **domaine**
O Mama O Mama

Finally, the tenth stanza also differs from the rest. Its rhyme scheme is built in an ABABCC organization. The stanza, building suspense within the narrative as to the destination of the well Orpheus has just been knocked down in as well as underling the considerable depth of the said well, is centred around short words repetitions and inversion, which made it impossible to preserve the rhyme scheme. Here also, the emphasis has been laid on maintaining the rhythm of the stanza, thus recurring too in target text to a quick succession of few-syllables words but as the last line of the stanza actually meaningfully ends on its destination (“hell”), the choice was made to maintain this idea and thus end the stanza on the corresponding word (“enfers”), which unfortunately did not rhyme with the translation of “well” (“puits”), which was necessary to keep at the end of the second line.

The well went down very deep
Very deep went down the well
The well went down so very deep
Well, the well went down to hell
O Mama O Mama

Le puits allait très profond
Très profond allait le puits
Le puits allait ô si profond
Oui, le puits menait aux enfers
O Mama O Mama

In the end, discussing Nick Cave’s use of the ballad necessitates to adopt a larger point of view and consider the question of the texts’ link with the narrative and the lyric. It feels necessary, also, at this point, to try to provide an answer to the following problematic: defining what is this

thing called lyric. If the definition of narrative is, as for itself, quite self-explanatory³⁹, at least at the level that concerns us for this dissertation, proposing a definition of the lyric reveals itself to be a more complex task. Definitions of the term vary from one scholar to another, and more importantly, have evolved through history along with what it refers to (Burt 2016, 422-423). In his *Glossary*, Abrams defines lyric as:

any fairly short poem, consisting of the utterance by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling.

He adds :

Many lyric speakers are represented as musing in solitude. In *dramatic lyrics*, however, the lyric speaker is represented as addressing another person in a specific situation [...] Although the lyric is uttered in the first person, the "I" in the poem need not be the poet who wrote it. (Abrams 1997, 146)

The *Oxford Companion to Music*, in accordance with Earl Miner and Mark Jeffreys' conception of the lyric (Burt 2016, 429-430), provides us with two interesting definitions, in which the undeniable link with music appears more clearly:

1 Strictly speaking, vocal performance accompanied by the lyre, but in fact broadened in meaning to denote any kind of accompanied vocal music.

2 A short poem, i.e. not epic or narrative. Composers including Grieg adapted this meaning to music. (Latham 2011)

Stephen Burt, when presenting and summarizing Daniel Albright's "nondefinition" (Burt 2016, 428) of the lyric, offers us a compelling take:

A lyric is that which resists definition," [Daniel Albright] wrote in *Lyricality in English Literature* (1985). "The history of lyric," Albright decided, "is the history of incantation," since lyric works resemble "magic spells." Lyric poetry [...] aspired both to accompany, and to imitate, "the passionate inconsequence of music" [...]. These aspirations make "lyric" not the name of a genre but the name of a mode: you can find lyricism in all manner of texts [...], although the texts that are most lyrical, most often, are (unsurprisingly) short poems. (Ibid.)

There are several things to retrieve from these definitions. First and perhaps, most importantly in the matter that concerns us, is that lyric and music share an inextricable connection from the get go. It would also seem that the lyric field endorses the personal, the sentiment; the domain of the interior as opposed to the exterior events that are addressed in narratives. The reason definitions of the lyric so fluctuate from one critic to another, from one school of thought to the next is that it still remains nowadays under study and sparks debates about what it really that still ignite universities, literary reviews and conferences; the lyric definition is bound to remain evolving for a while still. However, in the perspective of this work, it would seem relevant to conclude these

39 "A narrative is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do". (Abrams 1997, 173.)

propositions of clarification of the term with a quote from Stephen Burt, who largely inspired the present section:

The most useful definitions of “lyric” ought to include Taylor Swift, or Bob Dylan, or Nas, or Goliardic song. Some changes in the distance between speech and song, between verse analogous to music and verse readily set to actual music, seem integral to the history of “lyric,” the word, as well as to “lyric,” the poetic kind or mode. These changes in the idea of lyric, and in lyrics, reflect larger historical changes, not least the rise of audio recordings; essays about them would merit another book. (Burt 2016, 437)

In keeping with Albright’s words, Cave’s songs too seem to be rejecting definition, in their own way. For long, scholars and critics have been tearing each other apart in their approach of the narrative and the lyric⁴⁰, firmly and vigorously opposing the two⁴¹. And, as mentioned above, a good deal of Cave’s words do seem to rather match the kind of the narrative. His use of the ballad, as was discussed above, seems indeed to plead in favour of approaching these texts as affiliations of the narrative. And there is no doubt they are. Although his liking for narrative songs has diminished in recent years⁴², countless numbers in his discography (and many on this album too), remain a vivid testimony of what is a key dimension of the Australian artist: his crafting of “story-songs”(Flake 2018). Nick Cave is, as journalist Simon Leser writes:

a story-teller of the old sort, [...] a raconteur who edges closer to spoken word, a theatrical wordsmith with a taste for the grim and the sordid. His songs are unique in the music world because they manage to create scenes, scenarios of uncommon depth. (Leser 2016)

Yet, it would be reductive and biased to consider Cave as an ambassador of the narrative only and look away from the lyrical traits that are as constitutive of his songs as are the narrative elements. Cave’s songs live not only under the patronage of Calliope, the Greek Muse of epic poetry, but also under that of Euterpe, the Muse of music and lyric poetry. If, on one hand, some songs, *The Lyre of Orpheus* most notably, come to match clearly and almost exclusively the narrative mode, a song such as *Spell*, on the other hand, is a good example of the ambivalence that underlies in some of the texts under study. *Spell* is assuredly characterized by the swaying indecisiveness between the two registers, as if the author and his song, refused to fully commit to either camp. If the verses seem at first rather narrative, telling of a man trudging through the snow, with the first chorus the song quickly moves into more lyric and introspective territories:

40 “Lyric is static and narrative committed to change, lyric is internalized whereas narrative evokes an externally realized situation, lyric attempts to impede the forward thrust of narrative, and so on. [...] Such contrasts too often become even bolder? and even balder? when students of lyric generalize about narrative, and vice versa.” (Dubrow 2006, 254)

41 “Critics too often assume that encounters between lyric and narrative are a battleground on which the most powerful army enjoys a clear-cut victory.” (Ibid.)

42 “Cave says he doesn’t have much time for overtly narrative songs these days, that they feel restrictive: “The idea that we live life in a straight line, like a story, seems to me to be increasingly absurd and, more than anything, a kind of intellectual convenience,” he says.” (Mordue 2017)

And I'm full of love
And I'm full of wonder
And I'm full of love
And I'm falling under
Your spell

Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je suis plein d'émerveillement
Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je succombe
A ton envoûtement

Furthermore, the incantatory effects that Albright mentions to be related to lyric texts can be seen through lines such as:

I whisper all your names

Je murmure tous tes noms

or:

I call you by your name

Je t'appelle par ton nom

The second verse actually continues in the direction of the lyric domain, describing the dreamy thoughts of a narrator (that is perhaps suffering of hypothermia) and detailing the process of thought and interior emotions of the narrator, before the song returns to the chorus:

I have no abiding memory
No awakening, no flaming dart
No word of consolation
No arrow through my heart
Only a feeble notion
A glimmer from afar
That I cling to with my fingers
As we go spinning wildly through the stars

Je n'ai pas de souvenir gravé à jamais
Pas d'épiphanie, pas de trait enflammé
Pas de mot de consolation
Ni de flèche pour venir me transpercer
Rien qu'une faible notion
Un miroitement distant
Auquel je m'accroche avec mes mains
Tandis que nous tournoyons parmi les étoiles furieusement

Finally, the last verse returns to narrative action as delimited by the first line:

The wind lifts me to my senses

Le vent me tire de ma torpeur

The shift between the two modes also mirrors, or rather contributes to reinforce a second shift within the song, this time between the consciousness and unconsciousness of the utterer, each state being respectively associated to the narrative and the lyric.

Scholar and author Heather Dubrow's thesis comes to confirm this idea of intertwining of the two modes: that narrative and lyric, instead of opposing or at least, disallowing each other in the same diegesis, can not only function together but can even enable one another in the text, resulting in what she calls "cooperative interactions" (Dubrow 2006, 264). According to Dubrow, these partnerships function through what she labels "anticipatory amalgams":

These amalgams can, then, be defined as types of text, often though not invariably associated with future tense narration, that combine qualities of narrative and lyric by referring to events that generally are explicitly or implicitly flagged as not having occurred in what is diegetically identified as a "real" world and that may and may or may not do so at some point. On some level they take place within the speaker's imagination, and they use devices that emphasize that fact, hence reinforcing their connection to lyric. Whereas these texts often tell stories about the future, they may also blur and displace time sequences. (Dubrow 2006, 265)

Certain temporalities and/or reality of the narrative can thus seemingly set up lyricity, in certain cases. *Abattoir Blues'* fourth entry, the elegiac *Messiah Ward*, can be seen as an example of that phenomenon; without coincidence as elegy⁴³ is often considered a subgenre of the lyric, or at least closely related to it (Burt 2016, 439). The conditional tense that runs throughout the most part of the song, from the second stanza, indeed locates it in a hypothetical, or at least unreal dimension that seems to be taking place mainly inside the speaker's head:

We could navigate our position by the stars

But they've taken out the stars

The stars have all gone

I'm glad you've come along

We could comprehend our condition by the moon

But they've ordered the moon not to shine

Nous pourrions naviguer à la lumière des étoiles

Mais ils ont ôté les étoiles

Les étoiles ont toutes disparu

Mais je suis content que tu sois venue

Nous pourrions trouver notre chemin à le lueur de la lune

Mais ils ont ordonné à la lune de ne pas briller

You can move up a little closer

I will throw a blanket over

We can weigh all the tears in one hand

Against the laughter in the other

We could be hanging around here for centuries

Trying to make sense of this, my dear

While the planets try to get organized

Way above the stratosphere

Tu peux te rapprocher un peu plus

Je nous mettrai une couverture dessus

Nous pouvons peser toutes les larmes dans une main

Et tous les rires dans l'autre

Nous pourrions continuer à traîner ici des siècles durant

A essayer de démêler tout cela, très chère

Tandis que les planètes tentent de s'organiser

Bien au-delà de la stratosphère

Incidentally, these hypothetical excursions are contrasted, and constricted, by the insertions of past events, that appear to be real, as for them. The presence of a future tense ("I will throw a blanket over"/"Je nous jetterai une couverture dessus") on the second line of the last stanza actually anchors deeper the lines into an alternative diegesis than that in which the words are uttered: such situation and events have not yet happened and maybe they will not. Two temporalities hence appear to clash within the song: the bleak diegesis of the utterance, most notably marked by present tense in the introductory line and past tense in the rest of the song, as well as a mix of present continuous and present perfect in the chorus:

I hope you're sitting comfortably

J'espère que tu es assise confortablement

43 "In the seventeenth century the term elegy began to be limited to its most common present usage: a formal and sustained lament in verse for the death of a particular person, usually ending in a consolation." (Abrams 1997, 72)

I saved you the best seat in the house
Right up in the front row
The stars have been torn down
The moon is locked away
And the land is banked in frozen snow

Je t'ai gardé la meilleure place de la maison
Tout devant, au premier rang
Les étoiles ont été jetées à bas
La lune emprisonnée au loin
Et les terres recouvertes de neige gelée

They're bringing out the dead now
It's easy just to look away
They are bringing out the dead now
It's been a strange, strange day

Ils sortent le mort à présent
Et l'on peut ne pas regarder
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Ce fut une si étrange journée

In conclusion, Cave's songs, at least in the case that concerns us, do borrow and bear within themselves elements from both narrative and lyric, as demonstrated above. To a certain extent, they can be seen as results of this hybridation: their essence being composed of key narrative features such as a "set of events (the story) recounted in a process of narration (or discourse), in which the events are selected and arranged in a particular order (the plot)" (Baldick 2001, 165) as well as undeniable lyric qualities in the form, among others, of the "attempt to approximate the condition of music within the slightly alien and prosaic domain of words" (Clausen 1987, 637). After all, the very nature of the songs of Nick Cave is that, the inseparable matching of words and music and vice-versa.

B) The subversion of the epic

The ballad is actually not the only traditional literary form that is reprised by Nick Cave in the album as the Australian songwriter also undertakes to subvert the register of the epic to serve his songs' agenda. Proposing a definition of the epic seems at this point necessary before elaborating further. Abrams defines the epic — he also refers to it as heroic poem— as:

In its strict sense [...] a work that meets at least the following criteria: it is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or (in the instance of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) the human race.

There is a standard distinction between traditional and literary epics. Traditional epics (also called "folk epics" or "primary epics") were written versions of what had originally been oral poems about a tribal or national hero during a warlike age. Among these are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that the Greeks ascribed to Homer; the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*; the French *Chanson de Roland* and the Spanish *Poema del Cid* in the twelfth century; and the thirteenth-century German epic *Nibelungenlied*. "Literary epics" were composed by individual poetic craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the traditional form. Of this kind is Virgil's Latin poem the *Aeneid*, which later served as the chief model for Milton's literary epic *Paradise Lost* (1667). (Abrams 1997, 76-78)

He distinguishes moreover two sorts of epics: the traditional and the literary, with the former relating to written iterations of a what were previously oral texts while the latter refers rather to works that imitate only the form of traditional epics. Yet, it would be quite delicate to classify Cave's texts within either of the categories too hastily, or too assuredly. Due to their ambivalent

nature, it would seem that his lyrics — and all other lyrics?— belong to both categories at the same time, wavering, in a way, between their oral essence of sung texts and their written, literary features. This hesitation may also place the songs closer to what Abrams calls oral formulaic poetry: “poetry that is composed and transmitted by singers or reciters” (Abrams 1997, 200), to put it briefly. Interestingly, this genre, writes Abrams, often comprises textual elements such as set formulas and refrains as well as both narrative and lyric pieces, which contributes to reinforce its closeness to Cave’s songs, as was discussed above. Furthermore, his songs also near the genre of folk songs in the literary meaning of the term, that Abrams defines broadly as including “love songs, [...], religious songs, and many other types of lyric, as well as the narrative song, or traditional ballad” (Abrams 1997, 100), in other words, pieces transferred most notably through oral tradition rather than writing.

Returning to the epic, Abrams lists several constitutive points that are common traits of epic works: 1) the importance of the hero or main character; 2) the scale of events is often very broad; 3) the occurrence of supernatural or superhuman deeds; 4) the intervention of gods or superior beings and 5) a parallel between the tone and the register employed and the grandeur of the acts that are narrated. All of these features are present in the texts of the album. Orpheus, thanks to his literary heritage; the narrator of *Hiding All Away*, whose his importance is granted by the very fact that he is the mysterious object of the quest that is the core of the song; or the addressee of *Messiah Ward* all seem to be conferred superior importance than mere humans, to a certain extent. This is thus epitomized in *Messiah Ward*, for example:

You are a force of nature, dear
Your breath curls from your lips
As the trees bend down their branches
And touch you with their fingertips

Tu es une force de la nature, ma chère
Ton souffle s’échappe en volutes de tes lèvres
Tandis que les arbres fléchissent leurs branches
Pour te toucher du bout de leurs doigts

Songs like *Cannibal’s Hymn*, *Hiding All Away*, *The Lyre of Orpheus* or *Breathless*, then, all seem to take place, if not on a national or international level as is sometimes the case with epics, at least on rather large radius, thanks to the plethora of places that come to be mentioned, most notably. This is the case in *Hiding All Away*:

You went to the museum
You climbed a spiral stair
You searched for me all among
The knowledgeable air

Tu t’es rendue au musée
Tu as monté l’escalier en spirale
Tu m’as cherché parmi les présages
Qui emplissaient l’air des salles

You entered the cathedral
When you heard the solemn knell
I was not sitting with the gargoyles

Tu es entrée dans la cathédrale
Au son du glas solennel
Je n’étais pas assis avec les gargouilles

I was not swinging from the bell

Ni accroché aux cloches balançant en plein ciel

And also in *Breathless*:

At the whispering stream, at the bubbling brook

Sous le murmure du ruisseau, sous le babil des flots

The wind circles among the trees
And it bangs about the new-made leaves

Le vent tournoie entre les arbres
Et bruisse dans les nouvelles feuilles

The sky of daytime dies away
And all the earthly things they stop to play

La lumière du jour commence à s'estomper
Et toutes les créatures sur Terre s'arrêtent de jouer

Superhuman acts often take place in the diegesis of the album, whether they come from the characters or their surroundings, as can be seen in *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus
And he plucked a gentle note
Eurydice's eyes popped from their sockets
And her tongue burst through her throat
O Mama O Mama

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »
Et doucement joua une note
Les yeux d'Eurydice éclatèrent dans leur orbite
Sa langue explosa dans sa gorge
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus went leaping through the fields
Strumming as hard as he did please
Birdies detonated in the sky
Bunnies dashed their brains out on the trees
O Mama O Mama

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs
Jouant aussi fort qu'il lui plaisait
Les lapins fracassaient leur tête contre les arbres
Dans le ciel, les oisillons explosaient
O Mama O Mama

Other good examples of supernatural happenings actually come to be found in the eponymous title of the first album, *Abattoir Blues*, that was not translated over the course of this dissertation (“The sky is on fire, the dead are heaped across the land”) and, of course, in *Supernaturally*:

Through the windswept coastal trees
Where the dead come rising from the sea

A travers les arbres battus par les bourrasques côtières
Là où les morts viennent surgir de la mer

You float by so majestically

Tu flottes par ici si majestueusement

The Lyre of Orpheus (along with the untranslated opening track *Get Ready for Love*) is the most obvious song to cite that includes the presence of a superior being:

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
He hit a G minor 7
He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
God was a major player in heaven
O Mama O Mama

Orphée joua jusqu'à avoir les doigts en sang
Il fit un Sol mineur septième
Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb
Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste domaine
O Mama O Mama

God picked up a giant hammer
And He threw it with a thunderous yell

Dieu souleva un gigantesque marteau
Qu'Il jeta d'un tonitruant cri

It smashed down hard on Orpheus' head
And knocked him down a well
O Mama O Mama

Il s'abattit sur la tête d'Orphée
Et le jeta au fond d'un puits
O Mama O Mama

And finally, the last criterion mentioned by Abrams is a bit more challenging to discern within the texts. This difficulty can be attributed to the ambivalent nature of Cave's songs here also, for despite all their literary and poetic qualities, they remain pop songs' lyrics, thus arguably less strictly bound to the elevated tone and register that is characteristic of classic epic poems as cited by Abrams. Somehow, a sense of elevation in the texts' tone can still be found when comparing not to other works of poetry but perhaps rather to other songs' lyrics, as the leader of the Bad Seeds' texts stand out from most of the other pop lyrics, as was discussed above. Incidentally, Nick Cave is no stranger to the epic. In 1996, already, on the Bad Seeds' *Murder Ballads* opening track, *Song For Joy*, the singer-songwriter already claimed in a way his appreciation for the genre when he directly quoted John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in his text and extensively alluded to him⁴⁴. Perhaps the Bad Seeds' most well-known song since the TV show *Peaky Blinders* began to air, *Red Right Hand* is also a direct reference to Milton's epic poem⁴⁵.

Other definitions tend to agree generally with Abrams' proposition. Carole Pegg and James Porter, for example, while discussing the geographical variations of the epic, summarize the genre as follows:

Narrative songs in which human characters, endowed with superhuman qualities and powers, undertake and execute superhuman tasks. 'Heroes', usually male, are aided by extra-human resources such as magic, divinities or spirits, or animals prompted by supernatural forces. Epics are usually broad in the scale of action time as well as political and cultural geography, are set in historical experience, and often express political or cultural histories. (Pegg and Porter 2001)

The two authors bring nuance to Abrams' words by also tying the epic with "political and cultural" dimensions. However, if the other characteristics of the genre they mention concur with Abrams' and appear in Cave's texts, this additional element does not seem to do so, or else so vaguely that it

44 "Then one morning I awoke to find her weeping / And for many days to follow / She grew so sad and lonely/
Became Joy in name only / Within her breast there launched an unnamed sorrow / And a dark and grim force set
sail / Farewell happy fields / Where joy forever dwells/ Hail horrors hail"

The last three lines are from *Paradise Lost*. Further in the song:

"They never caught the man / He's still on the loose / It seems he has done many, many more / Quotes John Milton
on the walls in the victim's blood / The police are investigating at tremendous cost / In my house he wrote "his red
right hand" / That, I'm told is from *Paradise Lost*"

And, further again, two lines also come from John Milton:

"The sun to me is dark / And silent as the moon"

Taken from *Murder Ballads*' sleeve-notes. *Murder Ballads*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 1996. Mute Records.

45 "What if the breath that kindled those grim fires, / Awaked, should blow them into sevenfold rage, / And plunge us
in the flames; or from above / Should intermitted vengeance arm again / His red right hand to plague us?"

Paradise Lost, John Milton, 1667. Book II, 170-174. Taken from

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost_\(1674\)/Book_II](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost_(1674)/Book_II). Accessed 12/11/2021.

has eluded us in the study of this corpus. Besides, when questioned in 2020 about the lack of open political commitment in the Bad Seeds' catalogue, Cave answered:

They [Cave's songs] are not in the business of saving the world; rather they are in the business of saving the *soul* of the world.

Sometimes my songs speak into the current situation and sometimes they do not. I am mostly happy with that. I am happy that people can come to my songs and — even though they can be challenging or confronting— they do not preach and do not divide and are offered to everyone, without exception.

[...] I guess I could write a protest song, but I think I would, in the end, feel compromised in doing so, not because there aren't things I am fundamentally opposed to — there are— but because I would be using my particular talents to deal with something I consider to be morally obvious. Personally, I have little inclination to do that. It's just not what I do.⁴⁶

If, as demonstrated above, a good deal of the texts under study comprise within themselves one or several elements of the epic, two songs stand out most notably as associating most closely to the genre: *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus*. As a matter of fact, the structure and the form themselves of the songs convey their epic potency. They are both lengthy songs, respectively 6:31 and 5:36⁴⁷, whereas the average length of a pop song is situated around 3:30 in 2019⁴⁸. And the two songs equivalently follow crescendo patterns, both musically and textually, that culminate on the climactic repetition of the chorus of *The Lyre of Orpheus* and the repetition also in “full-on hellfire-and-brimstone mode.” (Petridis 2004) of the last line of the last stanza in *Hiding All Away*. Furthermore, both songs revolve around the epic account of the twists and turns a main heroic figure has to face. By doing so, they also come to epitomize the concept of journey or, as Chris Baldick puts it, developing further on the geographic dimension that is already present in the two definitions that were given above, of “marvellous voyage” (Baldick 2001, 81), that is central to epic narratives. The protagonist of *Hiding All Away* thus moves from one harmful situation to the next:

You went looking for me, dear,

Tu t'es lancée à ma recherche, ma chère

You went to the museum

Tu t'es rendue au musée

You went and asked your doctor

Tu t'en es allée demander à ton docteur

while Orpheus descends into hell in a journey that is here as physical and geographical as personal:

Orpheus went leaping through the fields

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs

Well, the well went down to hell

Oui, le puits menait aux enfers

46 “The Red Hand Files - Issue #102.” *The Red Hand Files*, 23 June 2020.

47 Durations of the songs were taken on Spotify.

48 Kopf, Dan. “The Economics of Streaming Is Making Songs Shorter.” *Quartz*, 17 Jan. 2019, qz.com/1519823/is-spotify-making-songs-shorter/. Accessed 16/11/2021.

This lyre lark is for the birds, said Orpheus
It's enough to send you bats
Let's stay down here, Eurydice, dear

«Laissons tomber cette histoire de lyre » dit-Orphée
« Ou cela nous rendra déments
Restons ici-bas, Eurydice, ma douce

Trying to match the tone of texts was one of the main impacts on translation. As discussed above, if the two texts can be considered legitimate epics — to a certain extent, as will be discussed further —, their register does not quite match that of traditional iterations of the genre, as it balances between its characteristic elevated tone and the simpler, more current language of the pop song. This comes to be illustrated for example in the way *Hiding All Away*'s narrator addresses the song's protagonist, alternating between “*dear*” (to which he resorts in all stanzas) and the more informal “*babe*” (in stanzas 2, 6, 7), a common trope appellation of an incalculable number of pop songs of the last 70 years, at least. This led to the setup of a corresponding alternation in the target language between the formal “*ma chère*” and the more vulgar “*chérie*”, sometimes even within the same refrain:

I was hidden, babe, hiding all away
I was hidden, dear, hiding all away

J'étais caché, chérie, caché tout au loin
J'étais caché, ma chère, tout au loin

I was hiding, babe, hiding all away
I was hidden, dear, hiding all away

Je me cachais, chérie, je me cachais tout au loin
J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin

I had to get out of there, babe, hiding all away
I had to get out of there, dear, hiding all away

J'ai du m'en aller d'ici, chérie, me cacher tout au loin
J'ai du m'en aller de là, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin

In stanza 10, the best solution to translate “*babe*” was to resort to its calque and go with “*bébé*”, as it allowed to preserve the -b alliteration.

He **b**asted you with **b**utter, **b**abe

Il t'a enduite de **b**eurre, **b**ébé

Of course, the choice of variation that we mentioned above can also be attributed simply to the performative nature of the text. In the tradition of antic epics or of old folk songs, the song is here — partly at least — orally transmitted, thus rendering the text more fluctuating than classic written texts would perhaps tend to be. It is crucial to constantly bear in mind that no matter how prominent their other features are, it is lyrics we are studying here, or “the most ethereal of art forms” (Desblaches 2019, 143), hence also possibly the most prone to modifications and improvisations. In comparison to other traditional literary forms, song lyrics appear less set in stone, their written dimension remaining after all secondary to their orality. Odds are that outtakes of *Hiding All Away* actually featured changes, more or less important, to the text of the final version. In the same

manner, live performances of the song almost never feature the exact same words and Cave modifies, or improvises on the moment, different lines or at times even whole stanzas⁴⁹. Here also, this inconstancy of the text draws it closer to the genre of the folk song, as brought up earlier.

If the register of the original text cannot really be considered very elevated in comparison with the traditional examples of the epic from which it draws inspiration such as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, that we already cited, or Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the choice was still made to try to adopt it in the target text. Some amplifications have therefore permitted to achieve that in the target text, as in *Hiding All Away*:

You went to the museum
You climbed a spiral stair
You searched for me all among
The knowledgeable air

Tu t'es rendue au musée
Tu as monté l'escalier en spirale
Tu m'as cherché parmi les présages
Qui emplissaient l'air des salles

You entered the cathedral
When you heard the solemn knell
I was not sitting with the gargoyles
I was not swinging from the bell

Tu es entrée dans la cathédrale
Au son du glas solennel
Je n'étais pas assis avec les gargouilles
Ni accroché aux cloches balançant en plein ciel

Although perhaps less evident, some hints of that choice are also perceptible in *The Lyre of Orpheus*:

O God, what have I done, he said
As her blood pooled in the sheets
But in his heart he felt a bliss
With which nothing could compete

« Oh mon Dieu, qu'ai-je fait », dit-il
Bien qu'il sentit dans son cœur
Malgré le sang imbibant les draps
Un incommensurable bonheur

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
He hit a G minor 7
He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
God was a major player in heaven

Orphée joua jusqu'à avoir les doigts en sang
Il fit un Sol mineur septième
Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb
Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste domaine

This choice of re-inserting, or re-instituting more clearly the characteristic component of epic texts that is the elevation of the language, favours the re-establishment of the context of the source text. If a translated document functions to a certain point as detached from its origin and provenance, this

49 See for example the live version of the song in Manchester, recorded in 2007. *The Abattoir Blues Tour*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 2007. Mute Records.

strategy permits to create a link between the primary and secondary product⁵⁰ that are a text and its translation.

But it is more than just re-employing the form of the epic, that Nick Cave proceeds to do here. Through parodying the genre, it is a subversion of the epic that Cave sets up in his texts, mainly in *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus* here as well. As a result of this challenge to their epic qualities, the texts can come to be perceived in a new light, that of the burlesque that Abrams defines as:

“an incongruous imitation”; that is, it imitates the manner (the form and style) or else the subject matter of a serious literary work or a literary *genre*, in verse or in prose, but makes the imitation amusing by a ridiculous disparity between the manner and the matter. The burlesque may be written for the sheer fun of it; usually, however, it is a form of *satire*. The butt of the satiric ridicule may be the particular work or the genre that is being imitated, or else the subject matter to which the imitation is incongruously applied, or (often) both of these together. (Abrams 1997, 26)

The first vector of this subduing of the epic genre is the instillation within the texts of ridicule and humorously grotesque elements that thus thwart the epic agenda. For, if it is not its most salient quality, in the sense that humorous or funny probably would not be the first adjectives that would come to mind when describing him, Cave does have a sense of humour — often quite dark — and disseminates it into his songwriting, and not only on *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. It could be argued that it appeared as soon as *The Birthday Party*'s first opus, *Prayers on Fire*, on a song such as *Figure of Fun*⁵¹ for example. Later on, albums such as *Murder Ballads* can be seen as containing such grotesque displays of violence that it would become humorous, or at least the incarnation of some twisted, scathing humour. *Guardian* journalist' Alexis Petridis argues that Cave' sense of humour became really prominent on *No More Shall We Part*⁵² and a song as *God Is in the House* seems to indulge him right, with its satirical portrait of the perfect little American town⁵³. The touches of humour in the album rather lean towards the “*Murder Ballads-*

50 “Just like any other cultural good, a translated text “circulates without its context” (Bourdieu 2002) as the imported product sheds the field of production that has shaped it. Therefore, its sense and meaning are determined by the new field of reception, as the displaced product is “accommodated” and “transformed” by its new uses and its new position (Said 1983, 226–227). The decontextualization and recontextualization of the product make it the object of new strategic functions, which need to be understood within the historical structure of the receiving culture, its balance of power, the existing debates and oppositions or the different roles and challenges of the importers (Even-Zohar 1978; Toury 1980; Lefevere 1992).” (Fernández 2015, 270).

51 “I am a figure of fun / Obsessive, dead-pan and moribund / Green at the gills, seasick / I am a figure of fun” *Prayers on Fire*, *The Birthday Party*, 1986. Missing Link Records.

52 “Cave also has a sense of humour [...], a fact that emerged in *No More Shall We Part* and becomes even more evident here. Repeatedly, the lyrics make you laugh out loud. His retelling of the myth of Orpheus ends with everyone concerned profoundly unmoved by his lamentations.” (Petridis 2004).

53 “We have a tiny little Force / But we need them of course / For the kittens in the trees” or “We’ve bred all our kittens white / So you can see them in the night” *No More Shall We Part*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 2001. Mute Records.

type-of-funny” curve, with *Hiding All Away* being rather simply grotesque than funny, as the protagonist undergoes a series of tragic and ludicrous events and the narrative remains devoid of any trace of heroic deeds that make up epic tales. To put it in a nutshell, the epic characteristics in *Hiding All Away* are counterbalanced by violence, often to the point of ridicule. The underlying sexual dimension and innuendos of the text can also be seen as actors of the “de-epic-ization” of the song and thus were important elements to take into consideration into the translation. The choice was made to leave them as implicitly as possible in the target text, as clearer explicitation would harm the damage and the uncertainty they convey.

You asked an electrician
 If he'd seen me round his place
 He touched you with his fingers
 Sent sparks zapping out your face
 I was hidden, dear, hiding all away
 I was not there, dear, hiding all away

Tu as demandé à un électricien
 S'il m'avait vu dans les parages
 Il t'a touchée de ses doigts
 T'a envoyé des étincelles te sauter au visage
 J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin
 Je n'étais pas là, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au loin

You approached a high court judge
 You thought he'd be on the level
 He wrapped a rag around your face
 And beat you with his gavel
 I was hiding, babe, hiding all away
 I was hidden, dear, hiding all away

Tu as abordé un juge de la cour suprême
 Pensant qu'il serait au niveau
 Il t'a entouré le visage d'un torchon
 Et t'a battue de son marteau
 Je me cachais, chérie, je me cachais tout au loin
 J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin

You asked at the local constabulary
 They said, he's up to his same old tricks
 They leered at you with their baby blues
 And rubbed jelly on their sticks
 I had to get out of there, babe, hiding all away
 I had to get out of there, dear, hiding all away

Tu es allée au poste de police du coin
 « Il fait encore des siennes » ont-ils affirmé
 Ils t'ont lorgnée en proie à leur baby blues
 Et ont enduit leurs matraques de gelée
 J'ai dû m'en aller d'ici, chérie, me cacher tout au loin
 J'ai dû m'en aller de là, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin

You asked the butcher
 Who lifted up his cleaver
 Stuck his fist up your dress
 Said he must've been mad to leave you
 But I had to get away, dear, hiding all away
 I had to get away, dear, I was hidden all away

Tu as demandé au boucher
 Qui a levé son couperet
 Il a fourré son poing sous ta robe
 Et dit « il doit être fou de t'avoir abandonnée »
 Mais j'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin
 J'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au loin

Cave's touches of humour are nonetheless more present on the second disc and notably in its title song, *The Lyre Of Orpheus*, in which one cannot help but wonder if this peculiar sense of humour can be attributed to Cave's Australian-ness⁵⁴. Here also, it may originate from the hyperbolically graphic scenes that spread through the narrative:

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus
 And he plucked a gentle note
 Eurydice's eyes popped from their sockets

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »
 Et doucement joua une note
 Les yeux d'Eurydice éclatèrent dans leur orbite

54 “Welberry considers the Australian postcolonial character that mixes serious humour, an ambivalent relationship to British aesthetic traditions, and exile.” (Fonarow 2012, 182).

And her tongue burst through her throat
O Mama O Mama

Sa langue explosa dans sa gorge
O Mama O Mama

Orpheus went leaping through the fields
Strumming as hard as he did please
Birdies detonated in the sky
Bunnies dashed their brains out on the trees
O Mama O Mama

Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs
Jouant aussi fort qu'il lui plaisait
Les lapins fracassaient leur tête contre les arbres
Dans le ciel, les oisillons explosaient
O Mama O Mama

Several occurrences of irony also confer the text its wit and had to be carefully reproduced in the target text. In the eleventh stanza, for example, this irony is conveyed thanks to the discrepancy that emerges from the opposition between one the one hand, the safekeeping of Orpheus' instrument and on the other hand his own state. "Poor Orpheus", onto which the stanza opens, also seems to bear some irony from the narrator, feigning some pitiful feelings towards the musician.

Poor Orpheus woke up with a start
All amongst the rotting dead
His lyre tucked safe under his arm
His brains all down his head
O Mama O Mama

Le pauvre Orphée se réveilla en sursaut
Parmi les corps pourrissants
Sa lyre bien à l'abri sous son bras
Son cerveau sur le sol gisant
O Mama O Mama

In the last stanza, it is a litotes that acts as the vehicle of irony that was recreated in French by resorting to a very informal, almost childish, language register, almost childishly.

Orpheus picked up his lyre for the last time
He was on a **real low down bummer**

Orphée prit sa lyre pour la dernière fois
Il se sentait **vraiment très, très amer**

In fact, the subversion of the epic in *The Lyre of Orpheus* can be perceived from the very beginning. While most classic epics open in media res, sometimes directly onto heroic deeds (Abrams 1997), the song opens here onto a bored Orpheus that does not know what to do. It could be speculated that this presentation of the most renowned musician of all Ancient Greece places him in a state of otium, or rather *skholè* (Sorbier 2021) in Ancient Greek, a state that was considered to favour artistic creativity. This assumption however comes to be rapidly contradicted in the second stanza (an more generally through the rest of the song) as it is immediately associated with more unhealthy traits.

Orpheus sat gloomy in his garden shed
Wondering what to do

Morose, Orphée s'assit dans son cabanon
Cherchant que faire

He was feeling something rotten

Il sentait quelque chose de pourri

By changing the order of the first line and moving the adjective ("gloomy"/"morose") to the very beginning of the line, the translation this time enhances this idea, placing directly Orpheus in this

state of boredom and un-heroism that contrasts so much with the recurring themes of most epics. By doing so, Orpheus also incidentally becomes sort of an antihero, an impression confirmed in the rest of the song in which his acts are far from being heroic. Cave can here also be considered as aware of this feature and appears decidedly interested in this figure of the anti-heroic character. His 2009 novel *The Death of Bunny Munro* also focused on the tale of Bunny Munro, a “pathetic and obsessed anti-hero” (Ahl 2010) as well. The novel described this commercial traveller in search for redemption as a “God-forsaken being, a compulsive sinner, drugged by his own end” (Ibid.).

Finally, the eighth stanza comprises what is arguably the most apparent trait of humour in the whole of the song.

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
 He hit a G **minor 7**
 He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
 God was a **major** player in **heaven**
 O Mama O Mama

Orphée joua jusqu’à avoir les doigts en sang
 Il fit un Sol mineur **septième**
 Il tira Dieu d’un sommeil de plomb
 Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste **domaine**
 O Mama O Mama

The play on word revolves mostly around the opposition between “minor” and “major” in the source text, the latter characterizing the importance of God in heaven while the former is part of the chord description that Orpheus plays. If the translation of the chord turned out to be a straightforward task, the translation of the last line before the refrain was a bit more complex and necessitated the resort to modulation in order to reach a satisfying result. “God”, which is evoked through the passive voice in the source text is thus transformed into an active element in the target text with the insertion of an action verb, “jouait”, instead of the state verb “was”. The end of the line needed some amplification in order to keep the rhyme and, a variety of options among which “au paradis même/d’être suprême/dans son domaine/au jardin d’Eden”, “au céleste domaine” appeared as the best solution as it clearly re-situated God within the said paradise and managed to keep an alliteration that preserves partially the rhyme scheme. Moreover, such an amplification of “heaven” contributed to elevate the register the target text, thus corresponding that of the epic genre more than “au paradis même”, for example. This stanza also strikingly occupies a sort of pivotal role in the song as a change of rhythm of the song occurs on the second “O Mama” of the stanza’s refrain. This “O Mama” is prolonged and Conway Savage plays deep notes on the piano that seem to mimic the awakening of the divine figure, seemingly shaking the remaining vestiges of his deep slumber off of him.

In the end, the ploy of of subversion that is here set up by Cave is just another confirmation of what was mentioned above on several occasions and what is a well-known feature of his artistic

career. Nick Cave's works recurrently display their literary credentials and are almost always pervaded with literary artifices. His subversion of the epic genre comes naturally as an adequate example of this trend. Yet, unlike what he does with the form of the ballad, which serves as a sort of framework, more or less loosely followed that enabled him to set up the narratives of his song, the Australian songwriter proceeds here rather to a surpassing of the traditional literary form thanks to its very subversion. By instilling humorous and grotesque elements within the texts, Cave frees himself from the constraints of the genre and manages to create, through parody, a register that fits better his moods and the nature of his songs. By doing so, Cave transforms the songs that are concerned by his embezzlement of the epic into not only burlesque instalments but more precisely as true travesties⁵⁵ of the genre.

C) Sonorities in the Abattoir Blues poetry

a) Theoretical mentions

It is, if not a truism, stating the obvious at least to say that all texts, from lullabies to gospels via sport anthems, user manuals, university essays and cooking recipes and all the other possible and imaginable forms of textual — as well as oral, for that matter— productions contain some sort of sound qualities.

For, after all, is it not to a certain extent one of the primary characteristic of a text? Are not the combination of sonorities and the acoustic games a text offers, in other words, its music, primordial aspects of any literature? From the beginning and the antic poets, music and poetic have rhymed⁵⁶ and have always intertwined around each other, sharing and maintaining with one another essential and undeniable links. As mentioned in the introduction, Marie Olivier reminds us of the origin of the connection between the two, that finds its roots back in Ancient Greece (Olivier 2018, 2). This legacy from the orality of poetry has remained so vivid to this day (Stephens 2015, 11-12) that for Jessica Stephens, phonemes are but tools for the transfer and the restitution of meaning⁵⁷, as she cites James Stephens who seemed to consider music and meaning formulation as related: “The poet is a fellow who can take hold of a thought and make it sing.” (Stephens 2015, 178). Elsewhere, on the tension that seemingly oppose meaning and form in all translation, she also cites Yves

55 The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines travesty as “a mockingly undignified or trivializing treatment of a dignified subject, usually as a kind of parody. Travesty may be distinguished from the mock epic and other kinds of burlesque in that it treats a solemn subject frivolously, while they treat frivolous subjects with mock solemnity.” (Baldick 2001, 262).

56 “Car poétique rime avec musique” (Olivier 2018).

57 “des phonèmes porteurs de sens” (Stephens 2015, 178).

Bonnefoy, for whom it is actually the form first that renders the reader or the listener interested and implicated in a text:

[...] *la signification n'est nullement ce qui constitue un poème* [...] Non nous aimons un poème, au premier instant, sans savoir ce qu'il y est dit [...] nous l'aimons pour ses mots, ses mots comme tels, ses mots aussi évidents qu'ils sont énigmatiques, nous l'aimons parce que ces grands vocables comme debout dans l'esprit semblent annoncer qu'ils désignent *ce qui est* d'une façon plus immédiate et plus intense qu'auparavant, en vérité d'une façon autre. (Stephens 2015, 15)

The translation of sounds therefore has for consequence to force the translator to confront two debates that are probably as old as translation itself. The first debate, as hinted above, concerns a duality any translator comes to be faced with at some point, the tension between meaning and form. In the 17th century already, Hudar de la Motte raised vivid criticism with his translation of Homer's *Illiad* that proposed a translation that *could* actually be *read*, thanks notably to de veneration, a deconsideration of the original text as a sacred, unmodifiable text (Henry 2002). In this regard, Jacqueline Henry encourages respect rather than deference to the original text and wishes for traductology to rid itself from its Judaeo-Christian heritage that too often forbids progression in translation-related debates (Ibid.). Lance Hewson pleads for the open-mindedness of the translator during his task, who should overlook theoretical debates about if a translation should be more "source-text-oriented" or "target-text-oriented":

The translator is not faced with a choice of "either-or," but of "both." A successful translation is necessarily source-oriented in its inspiration, but target-oriented in its re-creation in the second language. The target text is by definition "distant," but respect of style, or the particular voice of the original, can give it an undeniable "closeness." "Domesticating" and "foreignizing" are two unacceptable options, as both kill off the text as a work of art, one by erasing, the other by voluntarily seeking out a "foreign" tonality, irrespective of the original. A translation cannot be "free" or unfettered, as it is the rewriting of an already existing text. There is no hypothetical "middle ground," which the translator can occupy. There can only be respect of the original and a long battle against the normalizing forces present in the target language. (Hewson 2001, 203)

There is no miracle recipe nor standard applicable procedure in answer to this ongoing debate. This dual tension remains in the end at the very core of the translational work: to translate is among other things to find the right balance between the concerns of semantic transmission and form reproduction, that often amounts instead to form re-creation. One can then only remember Henri Meschonnic's assertion that translating a poem is writing a poem and has to be that before everything else⁵⁸.

58 "Ce n'est pas encore un truisme pour tous que de dire que traduire un poème est écrire un poème, et *doit* être cela d'abord" (*Pour la poétique II*, Poétique de la traduction, 1973, p. 355). Henri Meschonnic quoted in: Bensimon 2011.

The second question raised when engaging in the translation of sonorities that arises is, is that actually possible? Is faithful transposition of the system of sonorities of a text possible when there exists no phonetic bridge between languages that would allow the transmission or at least facilitate it? (Stephens 2015) Jessica Stephens also alludes to the subjectivity of the emotions resulting from a text's sonorities. Given that exact sound reproduction would be in most cases too detrimental to the good transmission of a text, one can only achieve in a translation the construction of a panel of "correspondences" to the original acoustic intricacies of the source text. Re-creation, that is assured by the implementation of a new analogous system in the target text, appears here also as the most viable solution, even if it is inevitably to the detriment of exactitude of the reproduction. The problem, argues Stephens, is that of the ability of this set of correspondences to effectively transmit the emotions that are present in the original system of sonorities (Stephens 2015) or, more simply, do two different sounds produce the same effect? Resorting to several strategies however allows translators to overcome such obstacles. Yves Bonnefoy draws a parallel with the field of music to underline the necessity or flexibility and adaptability in the translator's quest for the reproduction of sound effects from one language to another:

Passer d'une langue à l'autre, retrouver en français les rythmes, les timbres, les champs dénotatifs et connotatifs des grands vocables, qui sont le lieu même de l'invention chez Shakespeare [...] c'est, évidemment, impossible. On ne retrouve pas sur le clavier du piano les sonorités du violon ou de la flûte. Mais les musiciens savent transposer pour un instrument l'œuvre qui a été écrite pour un autre, ou pour tout l'orchestre [...] [C]'est à pratiquer l'instrument de l'autre [...] qu'il faut que le traducteur se dispose. (Amadori 2015, 141-142)

To that parallel Sara Amadori joins in her turn Roman Jakobson's "transposition créatrice" (Jakobson, 1963 : 86). At last, what if translating sound effects, was simply just translating? Is it not after all constitutive of any translation's work to proceed to the transfer of the sonorities and the sensation that emanate from it? (Vincent-Arnaud 2015) That is the question raised by Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud in her translation of poems by James A. Emanuel⁵⁹:

Traduire les sensations, l'oralité, les sonorités ? Et si c'était, tout simplement, traduire ? S'il n'était d'autre traduction valable que celle qui préserve en premier lieu la petite musique d'un texte, qui en est son ossature et sa respiration et qui lui donne véritablement *corps*? (Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 41)

She adds:

La traduction de la poésie appelle ainsi tout naturellement à la recreation, à travers ces *consonnes et voyelles d'emprunt*, d'une véritable grammaire de l'oralité et des sonorités s'élaborant en écho à celle qui parcourt le texte d'origine. (Ibid. 42)

59 Emanuel, James A. *Jazz from the Haiku King*. Broadside Press, 1999.

What if after all translating poetry —and translating in general?— was just the re-foundation of a kingdom made of sound and sense from one idiom to the other?⁶⁰ There are countless essays and articles on the questions that the translation of sonorities engenders that would merit to be cited here. Their abundance not only denotes the complexity and the vastness of the translation of sonorities but also its importance. And it comes as no surprise that there is no categorical solution or set formula that would provide a definitive answer this interrogation other than the trails mentioned above. As Solange Hibbs explains, there is no conclusive answer because every act of poetry translation poses its own problematic and thus necessitates each time new approaches and solutions from its translator⁶¹.

b) Preserving the rhyme scheme

These issues come to be all the more relevant in the case that concerns us: the translation of Nick Cave's songs. Given their hybrid nature, having a foot in both the poetical and the musical world, the translation of sounds seems in that case a deeply crucial feature. As established in the theoretical overview above, there exist between orality, poetry and music irrefutable connections that come to be reflected clearly in the essence of the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. To ignore or to overlook that dimension of the texts would amount to the translational form of suicide, to use Meschonnic's terms⁶².

A trope of both poetry (in many cases) and pop music, rhyme comes to be one of the main elements to pay attention to. Whether considered as carriers of the rhythmic potential (Karsky 2016), alongside other sound devices that will be discussed later, or as markers of the intensity of the text (Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 45), rhymes appear perhaps as the most obvious illustration of the sound games that are established by Cave in his texts. Originally mnemonic tools for the oral performer, rhymes can be considered, for Marie Olivier, as a crucial of what constitutes a poetic text as such:

Le *travail* de la poésie, sa *poétique*, est par conséquent inextricablement lié à sa forme, elle-même caractérisée musicalement : “retour de la rime, [. . .] allitérations et autres jeux de sonorités”, prosodie, etc. (Olivier 2018, 2)

60 “royaume nouveau fait de sons et de sens presque autonomes.” Claude Vigée. (Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 42).

61 “Car il n'existe pas de réponse absolue, définitive à la question : comment traduire la poésie, comment et pourquoi traduit-on de la poésie ? [...] chaque poème implique une présence particulière du traducteur au texte, présence active qui lui permet de révéler « le potentiel expressif du matériau textuel d'origine » (Vincent-Arnaud, 2015 : 44). (Hibbs 2018.)

62 “Dans un texte littéraire, c'est l'oralité qui est à traduire. Toute traduction qui montre qu'elle n'en a pas la moindre idée se juge aussitôt elle-même. Forme traductionnelle du suicide. (1999 : 29).” Henri Meschonnic, quoted in: Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 41-42.

On another level, rhyme, beyond its largely common utilisation, can be also perceived as a testimony of the literary heritage that characterizes Cave’s songwriting, linked notably to his use of forms such as the ballad or the epic as discussed above that emanate from a long oral tradition, and still comport to this day an important part of their qualities. Among the ten songs under study in this dissertation, all ten contain more or less easily identifiable rhyme schemes and in nine of them the rhyme scheme runs throughout the whole song. More broadly, out of the seventeen songs of the whole of the album, only the last track of the first disc, *Fable of the Brown Ape*, is not based on a clear, organized rhyme scheme. Inevitably, many more songs in Cave’s discography also encompass rhyming devices but it is not the point of this work to establish an exhaustive list of these.

It was actually possible in some cases to maintain the rhyme scheme of a song, not by the preservation and reconstitution of the same exact sounds, as that is evidently near impossible as discussed above, but through the substitution of new systems in the target text. Semantic and colloquial adaptations were at times required in order to obtain satisfying replacement of the original rhyme organization. Arguably the song with the stricter rhyme schemes, *O Children* seems the fitting example of that idea, not preserving the AAAB rhyme scheme of the song’s quatrains seemed inconceivable in order to produce a satisfying translation:

Pass me that lovely little **gun**
 My dear, my darling **one**
 The cleaners are coming, one by **one**
 You don't even want to let them **start**

Donne moi ce joli petit pistolet
 Ma chère, mon enfant adorée
 Un par un, les nettoyeurs sont en train d’arriver
 Tu ne veux même pas les laisser commencer

They are knocking now upon your **door**
 They measure the room, they know the **score**
 They're mopping up the butcher's **floor**
 Of your broken little **hearts**

Ils frappent maintenant à la porte de ta maison,
 Ils mesurent la pièce, ils connaissent la chanson
 Ils nettoient le sol du boucher où **sont**
 Les morceaux de vos petits cœurs brisés

There are several things to discuss about the translation of the first two stanzas of the song. The first one is the exemplification of the system of permutation that was explained above. The rhyme in -un/one of the original text is replaced in the target text with a rhyme in -é. In the second stanza, the same process is used again, the rhyme in -oor/ore is replaced with a rhyme in -son. This was made possible by the incrementation in the target text of the verbal phrase “où sont”, reinforcing the location of the pieces of the hearts that is only implicit in the source text. Instead of “où sont” another considered solution was the addition of “des échantillons” after “Ils nettoient le sol du boucher” but it introduced too great of a particularization. It also seemed to introduce too strongly a lexical connotation of the register of the crime novel that is only hinted to in the original text through words such as “gun”/“pistolet” or “cleaners”/“nettoyeurs” or colloquial, informal

expressions such as “they know the score”/“ ils connaissent la chanson” and “They're hip to it, man, they're in the groove”/“Ils s’y connaissent, ça, oui, ils sont dans le coup”.

In bold italics are the rhymes of the last lines of the quatrains, that come to also rhyme from one stanza to the other throughout the song, although their sound switch several times during. In the case of these first two stanzas, rhyming was assured by switching from an -art/earts sound in English to a -ser/sés sound in French. That rhyme was also maintained throughout the rest of the text, changing when it changed in the source text as well. It is also important to notice that Cave does not necessarily resort to the use of strict rhymes; the songwriter has also often recourse to assonances and alliterations to ensure his rhyme scheme (“gun”/“one”; “start”/“hearts”, etc.).

Another example of semantic modification is to be found in the seventh stanza of the text, in which the colloquial expression “white as a ghost” is converted in the target text by a less colloquial form, “blanc comme du lait”, that manages to both transmit the image present in Cave’s text and preserve the rhyme with the rest of the stanza, although it is doubtlessly less idiomatic.

Poor old Jim's white as a **ghost**
 He's found the answer that we **lost**
 We're all weeping now, weeping because
 There ain't nothing we can do to protect **you**

Ce pauvre vieux Jim est blanc comme du **lait**
 Il a les réponses que nous avons égarées
 Nous pleurons tous, pleurons qu'il n'y **ait**
 Rien que nous puissions faire pour vous protéger

An alternative solution that was contemplated required a deeper modification of the stanza:

Poor old Jim's white as a ghost
 He's found the answer that we lost
 We're all weeping now, weeping because
 There ain't nothing we can do to protect you

Ce pauvre vieux Jim est blanc comme un drap
 Il a les réponses que nous avons égarées
 Nous pleurons tous, pleurons qu'il ne soit pas
 En notre pouvoir de vous protéger

However, if this translation had preserved the idiomatic dimension of the colloquial expression of the first line, it would also have resulted in a modification of the AAAB rhyme scheme that would have introduced an oddness into the regularity of the sound effects.

The fourth stanza is the only one to comport a modification, or perhaps rather a perturbation to the rhyme scheme and presents only an ABAC pattern this time. If this seemingly alleviated the constraint of the form in the translation, resorting to an amplification was still necessary in order to match the rhyme scheme. “The light is dim”, on the third line, was hence turned into “la lumière se fait plus infime”. Interestingly, this turned out to be one of the rare cases in which the sound in both languages were exactly matching:

Here comes Frank and poor old **Jim**
 They're gathering round with all my friends
 We're older now, the light is **dim**
 And you are only just beginning

Arrivent Frank et ce pauvre vieux **Jim**
 Ils se rejoignent avec tous mes amis
 Nous sommes plus vieux, maintenant, la lumière se fait
infime

It is important also to note the change in the sound of the rhyme of the fourth line of the quatrain. Moving on from an -art/ear sound, the rhyme is here built upon an -ing sound that turned in the target text into a rhyme in -é that persists in the French text from the fourth stanzas until the seventh included, whereas a sound shift is to be found in the original text between the fifth and the sixth stanzas (the rhyme evolves from a sound in -ing to a -you sound. The third stanza appears somehow isolated from the rest as it is only one whose fourth line does not match any rhyme scheme.

Some specialists have extensively discussed the necessity of the preservation of the rhyme in a translation. The abandonment of the English rhyme into the French text thus seems advisable for Robert Ellrodt for whom its safeguarding might make the target text inferior to its original that might even verge on to the pastiche (Ellrodt 2006). And although he accepts to nuance his stance with the acknowledgement that it would not be “monumentally incongruous”, Ellrodt maintains that the essence of a poem can be preserved in most cases without the conservation of its rhyme scheme⁶³. One of the most eminent translation specialists to tackle the issue of song translation, Peter Low advocates as well against the preservation of the rhyme at all cost, as he considers singability to be the main goal a translated song must strive for⁶⁴.

However, some arguments are also to be found in favour of the preservation of the rhyme scheme. If Marie Olivier, as cited above, has stated the importance of the rhyme in the rhythmic machinery and the sound networks of a text, a crucial argument also emerges from Low’s article. The audience of reception of a work of translation must therefore also be taken into account, according to Low:

Even with poetry translation, not all the important questions concern the source text: some of them concern the needs and expectations of the people for whom the target text is intended. This is not altogether a new thought—the main reason why translators used to turn unrhymed Latin odes into rhyming French or English ones is that the target cultures expected poems to rhyme. (Low 2003, 92)

Applying this idea to the translation of the texts of Nick Cave under study consolidates the choice to preserve their rhyme schemes, as it is arguably what most readers of the translations would expect, as Cave’s songs, need it be reminded, remain pop songs by essence. To extend on Low’s idea, it could even be argued that a dual reading of the translation could actually be the most relevant way to apprehend the target text. Most readers of a song translation may be supposed to approach the

63 “Ne peut-on en conclure que le caractère essentiel du poème peut être sauvegardé sans la rime pourvu que l’impression d’un « retour » soit créée par le rythme ?” (Ellrodt 2006, 5)

64 “It is not surprising, then, that many of these TTs are too badly done to be usable — many are so marred by forced rhymes and unnatural language that performers simply cannot sing them with conviction.” (Low 2003, 105).

translation with a certain knowledge of the original text from the beginning. It could thus be considered fruitful for a better appreciation to advocate for a comparative, or at least, parallel reading of a translation, that would acknowledge both the source text and the target text, as Ellrodt also endorses⁶⁵.

This approach actually mirrors and underlines the dual nature of this dissertation, that of a translation commentary. It consequently bears the stakes of both practices that remain linked from the beginning as secondary writings:

Traduire et/ou commenter : ce sont là des écritures de la seconde main, qui s'autorisent d'un texte pour le régénérer (selon le mot de Goethe cité par Berman1), en une autre langue — langue étrangère, de traduction, ou langue de commentaire, de continuation. (Peslier, Dosse 2008)

Returning to the commentary itself, there are actually many occurrences in which the preservation of the rhyme scheme was a major element that had a noticeable impact on the translation. Textual arrangements have therefore often been required. Examples of these textual adjustments can be divided into two categories. The first category that comes to mind comprises the modifications of the order of the text itself that concern two or more lines, as can be found in *There She Goes, my Beautiful World's* opening stanza:

All the words you said to me	L'air toujours vibrant, emplî
Still vibrating in the air	De tous ces mots que tu m'as dits

Or, as mentioned, in *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus*, respectively:

You went looking for me, dear, <i>Down by the sea</i>	Tu t'es lancée à ma recherche, ma chère
You found some little silver fish	Tu as trouvé des petits poissons argentés
But you didn't find me	<i>Descendue au bord de la mer</i>
	Mais tu ne m'as pas trouvé

Orpheus went leaping through the fields	Orphée s'en alla, bondissant à travers champs
Strumming as hard as he did please	Jouant aussi fort qu'il lui plaisait
Birdies detonated in the sky	Les lapins fracassaient leur tête contre les arbres
Bunnies dashed their brains out on the trees	Dans le ciel, les oisillons explosaient

Breathless presents an interesting combination of both amplification and textual order modification:

The happy hooded bluebells bow	Les joyeuses jacinthes inclinent leurs têtes fleuries
And bend their heads all a-down	Par la rosée du petit matin alourdies
Heavied by the early morning dew	Jusqu'à toucher le sol des bois

65 "Or il est bon que la traduction puisse conduire le lecteur à se reporter au poème source et à mieux l'apprécier : les éditions bilingues sont aujourd'hui entrées dans l'usage." (Ellrodt 2006, 4).

There are actually numerous other examples that could be cited but it would not be pertinent to cite them all as the strategy remains the same in most cases. The third stanza of *Messiah Ward* offered however a challenge that could not be resolved through simple textual arrangement. The song's ten-line stanzas divide themselves in a sextet followed by a quatrain that acts as a refrain, very much alike the stanza refrains of the ballad. If the third stanza follows entirely an alternate rhymes form, the other two both comprise a shift on the fifth and thus correspond to an ABABCB scheme. The same alternate rhymes are also present in all three refrains.

The main difficulty of the stanza lied in the translation of the last stanza before the refrain: "As I swim in and out of focus." The first idea that was contemplated was "Tandis que je vais et viens, hors de netteté." This solution however, if it remained faithful to the idea of "focus", was poorly idiomatic. It was thus chosen to go along with "Tandis que j'entre et sors de ton champ de vision", that allowed to preserve the idea of coming and going that is conveyed with "in and out" in the source text but replaces the photographic, or rather, cinematographic idea of "focus" with "champ de vision", that places instead the emphasis on a notion of perception of the addressee. The notion of "swim" was unfortunately not preserved in the target text as it would have disrupted the rhythm of the text too much. In order to insert a reminder to the rhyme scheme, it was decided to translate the second line with "Laissons la lune nous couvrir de ses rayons" instead of the first idea contemplated that was "de sa lumière" so that an acoustic echo is still set up with "vision":

I can see that they've hurt you, dear	Je vois, ma chère, qu'ils t'ont blessée
Here is some moonlight to cloak us	Laissons la lune nous couvrir de ses rayons
And I will never desert you here	Et jamais ici je ne t'abandonnerai
Unpetalled among the crocus	Parmi les crocus, de tes pétales dépouillée
Allow me, my love, to allay your fear	Laisse-moi, mon amour, tes peurs apaiser
As I swim, in and out of focus	Tandis que j'entre et sors de ton champ de vision

Finally, out of the ten texts under study, only once was the rhyme pattern not reproduced. *Supernaturally* revealed itself an arduous one to translate and this difficulty can be attributed to its considerably free form. Centred around an AAABCCCD pattern, the register of the song resembles more that of the classic pop song than the more elevated tones of poetry; there is a directness in the song that made it hard to translate. The only rhyming organization that was managed in the target text came in the chorus of the song and even there, the succession of short phonemes made it difficult left little space to manoeuvre:

Hey! Ho!	Hé ! Ho !
Oh baby don't you go	Oh, chérie, ne t'en va pas
Hey! Ho!	Hé ! Ho !
Oh no no no	Oh, chérie, non non non
Hey! Ho!	Hé! Ho !

Oh baby, don't you go
All supernatural on me
Supernaturally

Oh, chérie, ne sois pas
Si surnaturelle avec moi
Surnaturellement

c) Acoustic games

Rhymes, however their importance, are not the only component of the richness of sound that characterizes the texts of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. As seen above, there are many citations from authors and scholars alike that underline and bring to the forefront the importance of sounds in a text. And if it would become tedious to draw up a list, it still seems useful to cite Dylan Thomas (who is also cited by Cave⁶⁶) when he declared that “[Poetry] should always be better when read aloud than when read silently with the eyes.” (Stephens 2015, 12). Such a statement reasserts the oral dimension of any poetical work since, even when read silently, the poetical texts still resonates and leads to the production of an internal voicing of the words inside the reader, argues Jessica Stephens (ibid.). Dylan Thomas’ quote seems all the more relevant when applied to song translation, as the oral dimension of the studied texts appears even more meaningful. In the end, the text’s sound games, notably its prosonomasia, also serve a purpose similar to that of rhymes: to fuel the rhythmic machinery of the text.

There are several patterns of sound games that can be discerned within the texts, the first and most obvious being that of phrases repetitions. It is possible to distinguish two categories within these repetitions. The first category is that of separated repetitions; repetitions of a word or a group of words that are distant within the textual space, the main examples being evidently the choruses, bridges and refrains that structure the songs. There are however other noteworthy cases; for example, all stanzas in *Hiding All Away* except the last, open on the second person singular pronoun “you” followed by a verb of action with directional value. The anaphoric quality of this repetition scheme was easily transposable in the target text. In *Spell*, the last lines of the third stanza echo those of the first, testifying of the sense of confusion and wandering that seem to take hold of the narrator. Here also, the repetition could be transposed quite faithfully, although the variations in the repetition made it necessary to develop a bit the penultimate line of the stanza:

I whisper all your names
I know not where you are
But somewhere, somewhere, somewhere here
Upon this wild abandoned star

Je murmure tous tes noms
Je ne sais où tu es
Si ce n’est quelque part, quelque part, quelque part par là
Sur cette étoile sauvage et délaissée

I call you by your name
I know not where you are

Je t’appelle par ton nom
Je ne sais où tu es

66 In *There She Goes, My Beautiful World*.

But somehow, somewhere, sometime soon
Upon this wild abandoned star

Si ce n'est de quelque manière, quelque part, dans un
moment proche
Sur cette étoile sauvage et délaissée

The second category concerns what we can call “neighbour” repetitions: phenomena of repetitions that are situated close to each other in the textual space, this time. The first chorus of *Messiah Ward* thus contains an interesting case of derivation around the same phoneme, -beat, that could not be preserved in the target text:

And your heart that is bruised but **unbeaten**
And **beating** like a drum

Et ton cœur, meurtri mais non défait
Qui bat comme un tambour

The last stanza of *Hiding All Away* is this time a valid example, as it comprises the repetition of several phrases, creating both a sense of imminence, especially coupled with the use of short phonemes in this stanza, and a sense of solemnity and lawfulness that we have tried to reproduce in the target text as well:

Some of us we hide away
Some of us we don't
Some will live to love another day
And **some of us** won't
But **we all know** there is a **law**
And that **law**, it is love
And **we all know** there's a war **coming**
Coming from above

Certains d'entre nous se cachent au loin
Certains d'entre nous, non
Certains vivront pour aimer un autre jour
Et **certains d'entre nous** ne pourront
Mais **l'on sait tous** qu'il est une **loi**
Et cette **loi**, c'est l'amour
Et **l'on sait tous** qu'une guerre va s'**abattre**
S'abattre du ciel

Nature Boy features some similar patterns, in its first and last stanzas. Beyond the apparent musical dimension, the phrase repetition confers the lines a feeling of importance, highlighting the crucial events from which the narrative of the song originates and that bring it to a close:

I saw some ordinary slaughter
I saw some routine atrocity

J'y ai vu quelques massacres ordinaires
J'y ai vu quelques habituelles atrocités

It was then that I broke down
It was then that you lifted me up again

C'est alors que je me suis effondré
C'est alors que tu m'as relevé à nouveau

But the most striking example of these repetition patterns is probably *The Lyre of Orpheus*' tenth stanza. The song already featured a first occurrence of repetition on its eighth stanza (“he woke up God from a deep, deep sleep/God was a major player in heaven”/“Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb/Lui qui jouait d'un rôle majeur au céleste domaine”) that was actually not preserved in the target text as it seemed too heavy, to the detriment of both its rhythm and its idiomacy. But it is truly the tenth stanza, in which Orpheus has just been knocked down a well that descends to Hell, that appears as the culmination of the repetition schemes arranged by Nick Cave.

The well went down very deep
Very deep went down the well
The well went down so very deep
Well, the well went down to hell
 O Mama O Mama

Le puits allait très profond
Très profond allait le puits
Le puits allait ô si profond
 Oui, **le puits** menait aux enfers
 O Mama O Mama

In this case, the repetition takes a chiasmic form and serves to render the well's almost incommensurable depth as well as to build suspense about its outlet: Hell. A few modifications were considered necessary in the French text, however. If the verb "allait" seemed appropriate to render the sense of direction that is at the core of the stanza's first three lines, "menait" in the last line felt more adequate to transpose the idea of arrival that closes the stanza. "Puis" was at one point considered instead of "Oui" as it was the perfect reproduction of the homonymous game that is set up by Cave, but it was discarded as it seemed a bit odd. The "well" of the original text plays the role of confirming the direction of the tunnel and establishing the sense of arrival, a dimension that was much better conveyed with "Oui" than with "Puis", that transmitted rather in that case a sense of succession.

Finally, the last sound-related device used by Cave in the texts of the album concerns the multiple repetitions of similarly sounding phonemes, or in other words, the implementation of many recurrences of assonances and alliterations. Songs are an eminently rhythmic form, the hybridation of poetry and music that Cave's songs embody renders this characteristic all the more important. Dealing with the recurrence of assonances and alliterations thus becomes a crucial feature of the translation in order to transfer the rhythmic potential of the original into the newly created text. For it seems indeed that these figures of sonority impart the text its rhythm, its cadence (Stephens 2015).

Recreating the exact same set of phonemes in the target text would be impossible, strategies of re-creation and re-deployment of the acoustic games are thus necessary in that case also. *Messiah Ward* choruses contain one of the clearer examples of alliteration, with the abundant recurrence of -b and -g sounds. If it was not possible to re-establish all of the repetitions, it was still possible to set up partly corresponding systems in the target text:

But if you're **gonna** dine with them **cannibals**
 Sooner or later, darling, you're **gonna** get eaten
But I'm **glad** you've come around here with your animals
 And your heart that is **bruised** but **unbeaten**
 And **beating** like a drum

Mais si **tu** vas dîner avec ces **cannibales**
Tôt ou **tard**, ma chère, **tu** finiras mangée
 Mais je me réjouis que **tu** sois venue ici **bas** avec tes
 animaux
 Et **ton** cœur, meurtri mais non défait
 Qui **bat** comme un **tambour**

Well, if you're **gonna** dine with the cannibals
 Sooner or later, darling, you're **gonna** get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your animals
 And your heart that is **banging** and **beating**
 And **banging** like a **gong**

Mais si **tu** vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou **tard**, ma chère, **tu** finiras mangée
 Mais je me réjouis que **tu** sois venue ici **bas** avec tes
 animaux
 Et **ton** cœur, qui **bat**, **bat** et cogne
 Et retentit tel un **gong**

Well, if you're **gonna** dine with the cannibals
 Sooner or later, darling, you're **gonna** get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around here with your animals
 And your heart that is **bruised** **but** **bleating**
 And **bleeding** like a **lamb**
Banging like a **gong**
Beating like a drum

Mais si **tu** vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou **tard**, ma chère, **tu** finiras mangée
 Mais je me réjouis que **tu** sois venue ici **bas** avec tes
 animaux
 Et **ton** cœur, meurtri et geignant
 Qui saigne comme un agneau
 Qui retentit tel un **gong**
 Qui **bat** comme un **tambour**

The effect of imitation of heartbeat in the original text is unfortunately mostly suppressed in the target text as the -b and -g alliterations are scarcely reproduced and are more often replaced with a scheme in -t that still manages, however, to confer a sense of cadence to the translation.

There is another example of alliteration to be found in the fourth verse of *There She Goes, My Beautiful World* that seems interesting to discuss:

So if you **got** a **trumpet**, **get** on your feet, **brother**, and
blow it
 If you've **got** a **field**, that don't **yield**, well **get** up and hoe
 it

Alors, si **tu** as une **trompette**, lève-toi, mon **frère** et joues-
 en un **air**
 Si **tu** as un champ, qui ne donne **rien**, eh **bien**, lève-toi et
 retourne la terre

The -t alliteration was partly transposed in the target text in that case. What is more interesting though is the transformation in the second line of the -ield alliteration into an -ien assonance that manages to produce at the same textual location an unsimilar but corresponding musical effect. Whereas in the first line, the alliteration scheme is preserved mostly by the presence of an internal rhyme that matches the one at the end of the line (“mon frère”/“air”).

Finally, *Breathless* is a fitting example of what is at the core of the translational work, the acceptance of the inevitable loss of certain effects and elements of a text. Paul Ricoeur even assimilates translation to a work of mourning: “En traduction aussi, il est procédé à un certain sauvetage et à un certain consentement à la perte” and long before us, Dante himself proceeded to comment on this idea: “Aucune chose de celles qui ont été mises en harmonie par lien de poésie ne peut se transporter de sa langue en une autre sans qu’on rompe sa douceur et son harmonie” (Ellrodt 2006, 1) while Maurice Blanchot had perhaps the most accurate point of view:

Le sens du poème est inséparable de tous les mots, de tous les mouvements, de tous les accents du poème. Il n'existe que dans cet ensemble et il disparaît dès qu'on cherche à le séparer de cette forme qu'il a reçue. Ce que le poème signifie coïncide exactement avec ce qu'il est. (Ibid.)

And although these citations must definitely not be understood as reasons not to undertake poetry translation, as Ellrodt himself acknowledges (*ibid.*), they are nonetheless good testimonies of the challenges one must be ready to face when doing so and of the paradoxical nature of the act of translation: it aims at the research of the best solution possible but perfection is rarely, if not at all, achievable.

The **h**appy **h**ooded **b**luebells **b**ow
 And **b**end their **h**eads all a-down
Heavied by the early morning dew
 At the **w**his**p**ering **s**tream, at the **b**ub**b**ling **b**rook
 The fishes leap up to take a look
 For they are breathless over you

Les **j**oyeuses **j**acinthes inclinent leurs têtes fleuries
 Par la rosée du petit matin alourdies
 Jusqu'à toucher le sol des bois
 Sous le **m**urmure du **r**uisseau, sous le **b**abil des flots
 Les poissons bondissent pour jeter un coup d'œil hors de
 l'eau
 Mais ils ont le souffle coupé devant toi

If the -h alliterations of the original text were managed to be partly reproduced by replacing them with a repetition in -j, the -b alliterations did not make it into the target text in the first part of this extract. They were however successfully reproduced in the second part, with even the preservation of the same phoneme. The transmission of the sound of the water, that is ensured in the source text by this assonance -b but also with the -spre/-stre sounds, was possible thanks to -m and -r alliterations that convey the same effect.

Reproducing the sound fabric of the text is in the end a crucial part of the process of translation that appears at first impossible due to the seemingly insurmountable differences that exist between two languages. Strategies and arrangements can however be found and implemented in order to achieve, not the exact superposition of two systems that is anyway impossible to attain, but rather transpositions that try to transmit as much as possible of the original music of the text. It aspires to do so not by preserving it as such but instead by creating and substituting to the original music a fresh melodic impetus whose aim will be to breathe new life into the target text. Jakobson's concept of creative transposition remains central to this task. The most complete summary of the task that faces the translator in regard to that question is arguably given by Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud:

L'organicité d'un texte poétique – tout ce qui fait sa densité et sa corporalité – implique, de la part du traducteur, de « dissoudre l'intraduisibilité linguistique en traduisibilité poétique » (Bensimon, 2002: 20). Cette dissolution, cette manière d'atteindre une alchimie créatrice, d'« aller vers le sens à travers la matière sonore de la langue, en se laissant conduire par elle, en écrivant à l'oreille » (Maulpoix, 2013: 44), appelle des mises en oeuvre variées qui, au bout du compte, comportent un seul enjeu: offrir au corps vibratoire qu'est le poème un nouvel espace de profération, d'engendrement du sens par enchantement des sens et ouverture de nouveaux chemins sensoriels et cognitifs. (Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 50-51)

II) Structures of the story-telling: old tales, places and characters

Upon the release of *20,000 Days on Earth*, the semi-fictional musical documentary dedicated to his career and the making of the Bad Seeds' fifteenth record, *Push the Sky Away*, Nick Cave looked back upon his work and addressed it in the following terms:

It's a world I'm creating. A world full of monsters and heroes, good guys and bad guys. It's an absurd, crazy, violent world where people rage away and God actually exists. The more I write, the more detailed and elaborate the world becomes. (Forsyth, Pollard 2014)

And what helps to build a world better than myths and reprising pre-existing tales?

1) Fascination with myths and the retelling of old tales

As discussed before, Nick Cave's songs are eminently literary pieces but this feature of his work cannot only be attributed to the poetic qualities that have become the trademark of Cave's song-writing. His texts are literary works also because of the heritage they carry. Like Bob Dylan, Cave has always been a voracious reader, as he acknowledges so himself:

I have always read a lot of poetry. It's part of my job as a songwriter. I try to read, at the very least, a half-hour of poetry a day, before I begin my own writing. It jimmies open the imagination, making the mind more receptive to metaphor and abstraction and serves as a bridge from the reasoned mind to a stranger state of alertness, in case that precious idea decides to drop by.⁶⁷

And it is fair to say that he imports his literary culture within the confines of his songs, here also, in the same manner as Bob Dylan⁶⁸. Cave, one can argue, is a man fascinated by myths. And this fascination is one of the inspirations that fuel his artistic creativity. This is perhaps most discernable in the interest he has manifested throughout the whole of his career towards the stories of the Bible. References to the Scriptures, if they have become a trademark of Cave's songwriting, are not a feature specific to him only, many other songwriters have more than often done so in their texts as well. As early as in the 1930's, blues musicians such as Blind Willie Johnson⁶⁹ or Son House⁷⁰

67 "The Red Hand Files - Issue #25." *The Red Hand Files*, 11 Feb. 2019."

68 "But I had something else as well. I had principles and sensibilities and an informed view of the world. [...] Learned it all in grammar school. *Don Quixote*, *Ivanhoe*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tale of Two Cities*, all the rest – typical grammar school reading that gave you a way of looking at life, an understanding of human nature, and a standard to measure things by. I took all that with me when I started composing lyrics. And the themes from those books worked their way into many of my songs, either knowingly or unintentionally. I wanted to write songs unlike anything anybody ever heard, and these themes were fundamental."

"Bob Dylan Wins Nobel Prize for Literature." *BBC News*, 13 Oct. 2016.

69 1930, Columbia Records.

70 Son House's version was only released in the 1960's but the bluesman had been active on the musical scene since the early 1930's. His version of *John the Revelator* can be found on:

The Legendary Son House: Father Of Folk Blues, Son House, 1965. Columbia Records.

recorded versions of *John the Revelator*, a traditional song referring to John of Patmos, writer of the Book of Revelation. Cave, incidentally, was always influenced by blues music (Webb 2009, 115) — one of the Bad Seeds' early songs was named *Blind Lemon Jefferson*⁷¹, in reference to the blues musician of the same name and more recently, he cited Robert Johnson in one of his most recent records⁷²— and it is a safe bet to assume that, one way or another, these early occurrences of Biblical insertions within songs had some influence on him. In 1965, Bob Dylan cited Jezebel, John the Baptist, Samson the king of the Philistines and Delilah in *Tombstone Blues*⁷³. Some years later, in 1969, Leonard Cohen dedicated an entire song, *The Story of Isaac*⁷⁴, to telling his version of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac at the request of God. This interest in religious spirituality — and the repercussions onto the texts that this interest implies — appears as one element among many of the connection one can draw between Cohen and Cave. For that matter, Cohen has always been an important source of inspiration for the Nick Cave (Webb 2009, 115), the Bad Seeds even covering Cohen's *Avalanche*⁷⁵ on their very first record, *From Her to Eternity*.

In fact, it appears impossible to explore Cave's sources of inspiration without mentioning his spirituality and his relation to faith. And although it is not the ambition of this dissertation to dwell too much on theological considerations, some aspects of Cave's approach to faith and religion still need to be brought up. Some scholars have actually devoted complete articles and academic essays to that dimension of the Australian artist, most notably Zoe Alderton and Lyn McCredden. For Alderton, Cave is “a man with a genuine, albeit idiosyncratic, faith.” (Alderton 2009, 169). She argues that the songwriter entertains a relationship, however distant, with “the God of the Anglican Church” as well as literary rapports to the Bible, although she admits that these stem more likely from literary interests than pure theological engagement. Her main goal seems to be to demonstrate what goals does Cave pursue in his writings and what are their connection with the domain of spirituality. She also establishes a link between inspiration and the Christ on which we will elaborate a bit later. Part of a collection of essays centred around Nick Cave, McCredden's article asserts that “what Cave's lyrics address, in multiple ways, is the sacred.” (McCredden 2009, 167). She details:

Cave's sacred is deeply enmeshed in the human dimensions of flesh, erotics, and violence. The sacred (the holy, divine, purity, justice, mercy) and the profane (violence, taboos, impurity, retribution) do not stand apart in his work. They are in dynamic and sometimes painful conjunction. This interplay creates a sprawling, unsystematic and confrontational dialogue with divine forces that for the narrators in the songs may or may not be 'there'. While institutional

71 *The Firstborn Is Dead*, 1985. Mute Records.

72 *Higgs Boson Blues. Push the Sky Away*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 2013. Bad Seed Records.

73 *Highway 61 Revisited*, Bob Dylan, 1965. Columbia Records.

74 *Songs from a Room*, Leonard Cohen, 1969. Columbia Records.

75 *Songs of Love and Hate*, Leonard Cohen, 1971. Columbia Records.

religion does not fare well in his lyrics, it is not ignored. What we find stamped across his songs, over and over, is the dark, lonely figure of a man caught up in desire for a divine source or balm.

What comes out of such studies, beyond the establishment of theological connections, is the undeniable importance in Cave's career of some form of faith and some interest towards religion. Given how tumultuous some periods of life might have been, Cave may seem to the unfamiliar eye to be the antipodes to notions such as faith and spirituality. Religious references and imagery are nonetheless a most recurring feature of his texts as underlines Zoe Alderton: "the public image of Nick Cave is far from that of reverential piety, yet his song lyrics contain frequent references to Biblical events, places, and theological themes." (Alderton 2009, 169). Moreover, beyond its mere textual presence, Cave's spiritual inclinations are to be perceived as primordially connected to creative inspiration. The singer himself addresses this connection and fully acknowledges the influence the reading of the Bible might have had onto his song-writing:

In Issue 87 I wrote my favourite line from the New Testament: "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained standing there in front of the tomb."

To me, this line seems to sum up, among other things, the process of songwriting. William Blake said "Jesus is the imagination" and these words have always resonated with me. They have bound together the notion of Jesus and the creative act, and lifted it into the supernatural sphere.

A large part of the process of songwriting is spent waiting in a state of attention before the unknown. We stand in vigil, waiting for Jesus to emerge from the tomb — the divine idea, the beautiful idea — and reveal Himself.

Often, the beautiful idea that has formed is at first unrecognisable to us. We don't see it for what it is, because it is new and implausible. Just as Mary Magdalene does not recognise Jesus when He first appears to her outside the tomb, the beautiful idea may emerge dimly and appear peculiar to us, not announcing itself but standing, half hidden and improbable, in the shadows.⁷⁶

The relation he has established between his rapport to God and his artistic creativity is even furthered detailed in the lectures he gave and that come to mostly confirm Alderton and McCredden hypothesises. He first tackled the subject in the lecture he gave on BBC 3 in 1996, that revolved precisely around the way he contemplated faith and spirituality.

Jesus said, "Wherever two or more are gathered together, I am in their midst." Jesus said this because wherever two or more are gathered together, there is communion, there is language, there is imagination, there is God. God is a product of a creative imagination, and God is that imagination taken flight. [...]

I found the stories of the Bible calling to me from somewhere in my subconscious, planted there in the choirboy days in my childhood. I was still writing songs for the band I was in, and I soon found in the tough prose of the Old Testament a perfect language, at once mysterious and familiar, that not only reflected the state of mind I was in at the time, but actively informed my artistic endeavors. I found there the voice of God, and it was brutal and jealous and merciless. For every

76 "The Red Hand Files - Issue #130." *The Red Hand Files*, 14 Jan. 2021.

bilious notion I harbored about myself and the world – and there were a lot of those – there in the Old Testament was its equivalent leaping off the pages with its teeth bared. [...]

As a consequence, my words blossomed with a nasty, new energy. My band, which was called the Birthday Party, was all heavy, bludgeoning rhythms and revved up, whacked out guitars, and all I had to do was walk onstage and open my mouth and let the curse of God roar through me. Floods, fire, and frogs leapt out of my throat. To loosely paraphrase William Blake: I myself did nothing; I just pointed a damning finger and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. Though I had no notion of that then, God was talking not just to me but through me, and his breath stank. I was a conduit for a God that spoke in a language written in bile and puke. And for a while, that suited me fine. (Cave 1996)

It appears all the more so evidently to what extent has the Bible been an influence on the writing process of Nick Cave, not only the Old Testament, to which he says he had gone weary at some point but also the New, which came to rekindle the flame he had once lost about the Old Testament⁷⁷. In his second lecture, *The Secret Life of the Love Song*, he develops again on how writing allowed him to fill the void that was left in him by the death of his father and manifest God into existence, as discussed previously:

Writing allowed me direct access to my imagination, to inspiration and, ultimately, to God.

I found that, through the use of language, I was writing God into existence. Language became the blanket that I threw over the invisible man, which gave him shape and form. (Cave 1999, 6)

In the end, Nick Cave is a man who, to use Christopher Hartney's words, "cannot cease to examine the world through an aesthetic soaked in a particularly potent spirituality." (Hartney 2012, 271)

It seemed in the end necessary to proceed to such a parenthesis as it only helps to better contextualize and approach the texts of Nick Cave. It is after all one of the roles a commentary must assume, that of gloss, of (re)deployment of meaning⁷⁸. If arguably some other albums in his career have been even more concerned with these spiritual aspects — McCredden extensively cites excerpts from *The Boatman's Call* and the album's opening track *Into My Arms* is a very interesting case of study— *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* still features themes that still stem from this spirituality that is key in the understanding of Nick Cave and his songs. The impact of this feature onto the translation of the songs may seem at first sight rather negligible as it does not always engenders direct difficulties as some other aspects might. It seemed nonetheless relevant to us to keep this in mind when proceeding to the task. Translation and commentary cannot be effectively carried out without a certain knowledge of an author's recurrent themes and background in order to

77 Ibid.

78 "Le commentaire comme glose, déploiement de sens, de figure et d'interprétation autour d'un texte consistant, qui fait autorité et qui devient au fondement d'une écriture d'explicitation et de continuation, réflexive et méditative." Peslier et Dosse 2008.

better apprehend their work. Exploring the author's influences seems therefore to be part of the process of the clarification of the opacity of the text and participates in the undoing of its knots of incomprehension, (Boisseau 2009, 3); to study a text is also to strive for its contextualization.

As a result of his strong interest in religious themes, Cave has consequently reprised many Biblical elements within his songs to the point it has become almost a constant of his song-writing. From *Idiot Prayer* to *Hand of God*, not to mention *Hallelujah*, *God Is In the House* or *Jesus Alone*⁷⁹, just to cite a few, even many of his song titles comprise religious references. In the case of the 2004 album that is under study here, the only title to directly comprise a reference to religious concepts is *Messiah Ward*. We would like to take the liberty of a little digression here and linger on the polysemy of this title.

Messiah Ward

La Pupille du Messie

What characterizes the song in our opinion is the uncertainty of what is really happening. This uncertainty is actually two-fold: it is extradiegetical as listeners and readers are easily left confused by the song but it is also intradiegetical as the characters of the song themselves seem lost. The land itself seems under the influence of some strange spell.

We could navigate our position by the stars
But they've taken out the stars
The stars have all gone
I'm glad you've come along
We could comprehend our condition by the moon
But they've ordered the moon not to shine
Still, I'm glad you've come along
I was worried out of my mind

Nous pourrions naviguer à la lumière des étoiles
Mais ils ont enlevé les étoiles
Les étoiles ont toutes disparu
Mais je suis content que tu sois venue
Nous pourrions trouver notre chemin à la lueur de la lune
Mais ils ont ordonné à la lune de ne pas briller
Malgré cela je suis content que tu sois là
J'étais fou d'inquiétude

Now, "ward" can have two meanings and both seem actually to be fitting in this case⁸⁰. The first possible meaning is that of the division of a hospital or of an asylum. One could easily imagine then the song as the preaching of a mad prophet, locked up in a mental health care. We have chosen however to favour the second meaning in our translation, that of a person under the legal control and care of someone who is not his or her parent. The title would therefore bear an explicative

79 Respectively:

The Boatman's Call, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 1997. Mute Records.

CARNAGE, Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, 2021. Goliath Records.

No More Shall We Part, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 2001. Mute Records. (x2)

Skeleton Tree, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, 2016. Bad Seed Records.

80 Definitions were taken from the Cambridge Online Dictionary at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>.

dimension onto the song, detailing the relationship between the narrator and his addressee, whom he would then take care of.

I hope you're sitting comfortably
I saved you the best seat in the house
Right up in the front row

J'espère que tu es assise confortablement
Je t'ai gardé la meilleure place de la maison
Tout devant, au premier rang

You can move up a little closer
I will throw a blanket over

Tu peux te rapprocher un peu plus
Je nous jetterai une couverture dessus

Translations leads at times to knots of residual incomprehension, to use Maryvone Boisseau's analogy⁸¹. And it is the translator's task to proceed to their untying in the target text by elucidating these incomprehensions. The author of the text has sometimes done so himself by commenting upon his work but we could not find any mentions from Nick Cave about *Messiah Ward*. It was thus our role to opt for one solution, even though we could not be entirely sure about the true meaning of the title.

But Biblical references stick out of the song titles to occupy the space of the lyrics themselves. *Into My Arms*, one of his most well-known songs, revolves for example mostly around spiritual interrogations⁸². The first stanza of the album's opener, *Get Ready for Love*, seems to place the album in the direct continuity with Cave's tradition to fill his lyrics with religion-related elements:

Well, most of all nothing much ever really happens
And God rides high up in the ordinary sky
Until we find ourselves at our most distracted
And the miracle that was promised creeps quietly by

This feature comes to be perpetuated in the following songs, more or less extensively. In *Hiding All Away*, the last stanza and final choruses seem to reference the coming of the Last Judgment, indirectly referring to John of Patmos' announcement of an upcoming war and the end of the world in the *Book of Revelation*:

81 "Commentaire et traductions sont confrontés à l'épreuve de la lente élucidation du texte, à son opacité, à ses noeuds d'incompréhension résiduels" Boisseau 2007, 3.

82 I don't believe in an interventionist God / [...] / But if I did I would kneel down and ask Him / Not to intervene when it came to you [...]

I don't believe in the existence of angels / [...] / But if I did I would summon them together
And ask them to watch over you / [...] / To make bright and clear your path / And to walk, like Christ, in grace and love / And guide you into my arms
The Boatman's Call.

Some of us we hide away
Some of us we don't
Some will live to love another day
And some of us won't
But we all know there is a law
And that law, it is love
And we all know there's a war coming
Coming from above

Certains d'entre nous se cachent au loin
Certains d'entre nous, non
Certains vivront pour aimer un autre jour
Et certains d'entre nous ne pourront
Mais l'on sait tous qu'il est une loi
Et cette loi, c'est l'amour
Et l'on sait tous qu'une guerre va s'abattre
S'abattre du ciel

There is a war coming
There is a war coming

Une guerre va s'abattre
Une guerre va s'abattre

In her article, McCredden writes that Cave's songs act as "bridges between earthly and sacred places." (McCredden 2009, 172). This can be seen in songs such *Hiding All Away* whose last stanza connects higher entities and earthly events through the announcement of a war to come:

And we all know there's a war coming
Coming from above

Et l'on sait tous qu'une guerre va s'abattre
S'abattre du ciel

The "law of love" that is mentioned in this stanza might also be inspired by a verse from the Bible, in which can be found the famous citation "you shall love your neighbour as yourself":

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.⁸³

With such references, Cave's texts become infused with an additional sense of solemnity that was important to preserve in the target text. Using in French "l'on" instead of simply "on", which could have been more adapted to fit the register of the pop song, was for example a good way to elevate the tonality of the text in the translation.

But we all know there is a law
And that law, it is love
And we all know there's a war coming

Mais l'on sait tous qu'il est une loi
Et cette loi, c'est l'amour
Et l'on sait tous qu'une guerre va s'abattre

The godly character of *The Lyre of Orpheus* must be also mentioned here. The song directly mentions the existence of a "God" twice, whether it be the Christian God or one of the Gods of the Greek pantheon. The religious places of hell and heaven are also mentioned:

He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
God was a major player in heaven

Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb
Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste domaine

83 Romans 13:8-10. Copied from Bible Gateway, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2013%3A8-10&version=ESV>.

Well, the well went down to hell

Oui, le puits menait aux enfers

The Biblical references of *O Children* are also important to mention. Its chorus can be seen as an indirect citation from the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”⁸⁴

O children
Lift up your voice, lift up your voice
Children
Rejoice, rejoice

Ô Enfants
Haussez la voix, haussez la voix
Enfants
Laissez éclater votre joie

Yet it was chosen in this case to abandon the repetition as to preserve once again the rime scheme of the original text. The emphasis of the repetition is still carried by the strong degree of the idiomatic expression “laissez éclater sa joie”. The song also contains another reference to religion in the mention of the “Kingdom”, in its last refrains:

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
The train that goes to the Kingdom
We're happy, Ma, we're having fun
And the train ain't even left the station

Hé, petit train ! Tous à bord des wagons
Du train qui part pour le Royaume
On est heureux, M'man, on s'amuse bien
Et le train n'a même pas quitté la gare

Christianity, or rather Christian-related spirituality is however not the only mythology Cave alludes to. The reference to the Greek mythological tale of Orpheus immediately comes to mind. The first part already discussed how Cave proceeds to retelling the story by distorting its former register and twisting it away from its epic tonality. Here also, the translation was not deeply impacted. The main consequence came from the replacement of the English name of Orpheus by its French equivalent, Orphée. In the twelfth stanza, as Cave make the name of the Greek poet and musician rime with “orifice”. The prosonomasia of the play on words could unfortunately not be reproduced in target text. The threat Eurydice makes was also a bit toned down as to preserve the rime with “Orphée” on the second line of the stanza. Poetry really is what gets lost in translation, it would seem.

Eurydice appeared brindled in blood
And she said to Orpheus
If you play that fucking thing down here
I'll stick it up your orifice!
O Mama O Mama

Eurydice apparut couverte de sang
Et dit à Orphée
« Joue de cette saloperie ici-bas
Et je te la ferai avaler »
O Mama O Mama

The literary heritage is in fact double in *The Lyre of Orpheus*. There is, as just mentioned, the retelling of the Greek myth of Orpheus that is performed thanks to a de-epic-alization of the original text. But it also important to underline here again that Cave also reprises more or less strictly for his song the form of Ted Hughes' *Song for a Phallus*, which is itself its own retelling of a myth from

⁸⁴ Philippians 4:4. Copied from Knowing Jesus at <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Rejoicing>.

Ancient Greece, that of Oedipus. Strikingly, Hughes' 1969 poem already set up a distortion of the original tone of the tale for his own purposes, a distinctive feature of Hughes' work at that time (Roberts 2012). As for *Hiding All Away*, the song can be considered to some extent, if not a clear retelling, at least an inspired iteration of Homer's *Odyssey*. The affiliation to the myth is here carried out on par with complete reappropriation of the story by Cave that proceeds to detail a series of violent and unheroic encounters. To the cunning and trickery of Homer's Odysseus, Cave substitutes a passive protagonist whose only common point with the Greek hero is their goal: to return or to find again their missing loved one(s).

In conclusion, the texts of Nick Cave are works that more than acknowledge, fully embrace their literary heritage and influence. Cave has never disavowed what has made him into the artist he has become. As soon as 1986, the Bad Seeds released a full album of covers only, *Kicking Against the Pricks*, to proudly display their influences and, even before that, the first song to ever appear on a Bad Seeds' album is after all a cover of a Leonard Cohen's song⁸⁵. Then, it would be near impossible to discuss Nick Cave's sources of inspirations without tackling more or less extensively his relation to faith and Christianity. As discussed, Cave uses mostly religious themes as an artist — his relation to faith as a man, as an individual is moreover no concern to us in this case. Spirituality is thus used by the songwriter as a material from which to draw inspiration to transfer within his songs; "God is in fact Cave's muse" (Hartney 2012, 276) writes Christopher Hartney. This affiliation was also perceptible here from the early years of the Bad Seeds, as their 1986 album draws its very title from a verse of King James' Bible⁸⁶ and the songwriter himself has never made a mystery of it:

Just as we are divine creations, so must we in turn create. Divinity must be given its freedom to flow through us, through language, through communication, through imagination. I believe this is our spiritual duty, made clear to us through the example of Christ. Through us, God finds his voice, for just as we need God, he in turn needs us. God found life through my father as he raved and flailed about his study reciting his favourite literature, but died in a desk drawer that contained those pages, the first painful contractions of his stillborn dreams.

My father asked me what I had done to assist humanity, and at twelve years old, I could not answer. I now know.

Like Christ, I too come in the name of my father, to keep God alive. (Cave 1996)

85 *Avalanche, From Her to Eternity*.

86 "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Acts 26:14. Copied from Bible Gateway at <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Acts%2026%3A14>.

However important the presence of religious and Biblical themes within the work of Nick Cave is, it is not his only source of inspiration. It has indeed been a recurrent device of the songwriter's texts to draw inspiration from other mythologies and other authors as well. So much that to study Cave feels at times as doing a sort of literary treasure hunt, the goal being to establish and connect all the references that are spread by Cave throughout his work. To study his texts is in the end an eminently intertextual work that seems to match to a certain extent Klaus Kaindl's "intertextual relationships of translations." (Kaindl 2005).

2) Figures and places of the Abattoir Blues' world

Do you want to know how to write a song? Songwriting is about counterpoint. Counterpoint is the key. Putting two disparate images beside each other and seeing which way the sparks fly. Like letting a small child in the same room as, I don't know, a Mongolian psychopath or something, and just sitting back and seeing what happens. Then you send in a clown, say, on a tricycle and again you wait and you watch. And if that doesn't do it, you shoot the clown. (Cave in Forsyth, Pollard 2014).

There is a sense of consistency emanating from the 2004 album that is not only the result of producer Nick Launay's work. Nor does it emanates from the Bad Seeds' distinctive musicianship⁸⁷, that has evolved with personnel fluctuations but has never faded over the years⁸⁸. At the core of this dissertation is the ambition to prove that the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* form a cohesive whole ruled by common laws and constants. In other words, a world, vast or narrow, inside which reigns a homogeneous law⁸⁹. What are the rules that govern this world? And, perhaps more importantly, what are that allow it to function? One of the main answers to that question is the emergence of figures. Many characters stand out in Cave's songs and seemingly serve as anchor points from which the song may unfold. Cave began to develop this feature as soon as the early 1980's, when he replaced little by little Roland S. Howard as the main lyricist for The Birthday Party. Songs such as *Nick the Stripper* and *King Ink*⁹⁰ can be retrospectively considered as the pieces Cave cut his teeth onto. Articulating his songs around striking characters has since then been a recurrent device of Cave. Drawing a complete list would be far too long however some characters have evolved to become so emblematic in Cave's career that it still feels important to mention them, from Saint-Huck to Robert Johnson, by way of Deanna; Henry; the "tall handsome man" with a

87 "The Bad Seeds sound fantastic – it's hard to think of another band that can shift so seamlessly from elegance and control to white-knuckled bedlam." Petridis 2017.

88 "Les Bad Seeds sont un des meilleurs groupes en activité grâce à leur longévité. Vingt ans après, nous sommes toujours aventureux, audacieux... C'est une question de survie." Nick Cave in Cassavetti 2013.

89 "Un monde, étroit ou vaste, à l'intérieur duquel règne une loi homogène, une nécessité de type organique." Jean Starobinski, "Leo Spitzer et la lecture stylistique", *op. cit.*, p. 34.

90 Both songs are from *Prayers on Fire*.

“red right hand”; Stagger Lee; Elisa Day; the boatman and the girl from the west country; the absent nurse and the sorrowful wife; Electric Alice and Mickey Mouse⁹¹.

This profusion of figures can be placed in direct connection to the literary legacy that is constituent of Cave’s songs. Discussing this feature reopens inevitably the question of the intertextuality in Cave’s work. Although Nick Cave is not the first nor the only lyricist to have included external artistic references in his texts, the network of “intertextual echoes and ubiquitous dissemination” (Du Verger 2018, 3) he sets up remains nonetheless quite impressive and only reinforces the multiplicity of the text that characterizes the pop song (ibid.). As Jean Du Verger does in the case of his study of David Bowie, we believe that an intertextual consideration is here necessary in order to better understand (and thus translate) Cave’s canon. In his translation-related study of Bob Dylan, Jean-Charles Meunier also listed intertextuality as a challenging component of Dylan’s texts (Meunier 2020, 18). Michel Morel, as for him, establishes there are actually two sorts of intertextuality. Intratextuality, that concerns exchanges within the corpus of one work or one author; and proper intertextuality, that refers to the process of references between texts from varied authors (Morel 2006, 2). As he cites Gouaux, Morel also highlights the importance of the tracking of the signification-bearing detail⁹² (ibid.).

Ultimately, the final word on the importance of marking figures in the texts can also be found in Dylan’s Nobel speech. The American song-writer, who has also recurrently resorted to name-dropping and has populated his songs with many marking characters. Before listing some of the main influences that have shaped his early years and his work more generally, he confirms the importance of intertextuality in the writing process of a popular song:

I had all the vernacular down. I knew the rhetoric. None of it went over my head – the devices, the techniques, the secrets, the mysteries – and I knew all the deserted roads that it traveled on, too. I could make it all connect and move with the current of the day. When I started writing my own songs, the folk lingo was the only vocabulary that I knew, and I used it.

But I had something else as well. I had principles and sensibilities and an informed view of the world. And I had had that for a while. Learned it all in grammar school. *Don Quixote*, *Ivanhoe*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Tale of Two Cities*, all the rest – typical grammar school reading that gave you a way of looking at life, an understanding of human nature, and a standard to

91 Respectively:

Saint-Huck, *From Her to Eternity*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Higgs Boson Blues, *The Sky Away*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Deanna, *Tender Prey*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Papa Won’t Leave you, *Henry*, *Henry’s Dream*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Red Right Hand, *Let Love In*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Stagger Lee; *Where the Wild Roses Grow*, *Murder Ballads*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Lime Tree Arbour; *West Country Girl*, *The Boatman’s Call*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Hallelujah; *The Sorrowful Wife*, *No More Shall We Part*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds;
Electric Alice, *Grinderman*, *Grinderman* and
Mickey Mouse and the Goodbye Man, *Grinderman II*, *Grinderman*.

92 “La traduction de l’intertextualité s’apparente donc à une traque du détail porteur de signification.” (L. Gouaux)

measure things by. I took all that with me when I started composing lyrics. And the themes from those books worked their way into many of my songs, either knowingly or unintentionally. I wanted to write songs unlike anything anybody ever heard, and these themes were fundamental. (Dylan 2017)

How can one render in the translation this importance of intertextuality then? A solution could be the addition of a complementary text —perhaps in the form of footnotes (Morel 2006, 4)— that could accompany the translation and explicit all the references that are set up by the author. But this would arguably have to do more with commentary than translation. According to Kirsten Malmkjaer and Kevin Windle, “As much as a translator works to build linguistic bridges, he or she is also ethically bound to be “sensitive to each language's contexts, intertexts and intrinsic alterity” (Bermann 2005: 4–5).” (Malmkjaer and Windle 2011, 168). To render the importance of intertextuality seems therefore to escape the control of the translator. It would seem this importance is conveyed alone by the external references of the text: simply to reproduce these references amounts it would seem to reproduce the intertextual dimension of a text.

We can distinguish several categories of referencing to eminent figures within the texts, the first of these categories being the allusions to real, pre-existing people. Here also, Cave acknowledges his influences and even puts them under the spotlight. He often resorts to name-dropping, as if to place the songs under the patronage of the figures he invokes. The consequence of this abundance of references does not necessarily generate direct translation-linked difficulties. However, it forces to return to the artistic paper chase that was mentioned previously. *There She Goes, my Beautiful World* comes evidently to be the song that illustrates the best this aspect of the texts. We find indeed in the song detailed insights within the mind of an artist — hypothetically Cave himself — facing writer’s block and imploring his Muse to send him what he seeks (“Send that stuff on down to me”/ “Envoie-moi ce qu’il me faut”). The *mise en abyme* that results from this is typical of Cave’s writing. The leader of the Bad Seeds happily acknowledges the increasing recurrence of that dimension in his work, for that matter:

I’ve found, as I became more popular, that I don’t go out much, I stay at home, I don’t see many people, I’m more isolated. And it suits me quite well, because my lifestyle evolves mostly around my work. But the idea of work, sitting and writing, has become the primary focus of the songs I write.

If you look at most of my songs, especially on *Push the Sky Away*, but also on *Skeleton Tree*, they are basically about a guy writing songs. (Cassavetti 2017)

In fact, inspiration itself (or its absence) seems to be one of the major sources of inspiration for Cave who has often provided details about his work ethic. If these are sometimes a bit contradictory, inspiration for Cave remains always God-related, as we have discussed above:

I also have an affinity with artists who treat their craft as a job and are not dependant on the vagaries of inspiration — because I am one of them.

The most important undertaking of my day is to simply sit down at my desk and pick up my pen. Without this elementary act I could not call myself a songwriter, because songs come to me in intimations too slight to be perceived, unless I am primed and ready to receive them. They come not with a fanfare, but in whispers, and they come only when I am at work.

Pen, poised, I sit to attention [...] prepared for the beautiful line to arrive. Sometimes it does, sometimes it does not. [...] So often we stand bereft before our ingenuity, with nothing to show for our efforts. Yet at other times we are ushered in.

Once inside the imagination all manner of inexplicable things occur. Time gets loopy, the past presses itself against the present, and the future pours out its secrets. Suddenly words behave in way they shouldn't, but wonderfully do, our pulse quickens [...] and then God appears, there He is, with all his cross-dressing angels and demons and other things, [...] calling, instructing and the beautiful line begins to take shape, gently emerging — there it is! — falling lovely from the end of your pen.⁹³

Returning to *There She Goes, my Beautiful World*, the second and fourth stanzas of the song draw a list of Cave's inspirations he conjures in the hope their invocation will finally resolve his block.

John Wilmot penned his poetry riddled with the pox
Nabokov wrote on index cards at a lectern, in his socks
St. John of the Cross did his best stuff imprisoned in a box
And Johnny Thunders was half alive when he wrote
Chinese Rocks

John Wilmot a écrit ses poèmes rongé par la vérole
Nabokov, en chaussettes, a écrit à ses lecteurs sur des
fiches Bristol
Jean de la Croix a écrit ses plus belles œuvres enfermée au
fond d'une geôle
Et Johnny Thunders, a écrit Chinese Rocks alors qu'il était
presque mort

Karl Marx squeezed his carbuncles while writing Das
Kapital
And Gauguin, he buggered off, man and went all tropical
While Philip Larkin stuck it out in a library in Hull
And Dylan Thomas, he died drunk in St-Vincent Hospital

Karl Marx s'est serré la ceinture pendant qu'il écrivait Das
Kapital
Et Gauguin, il s'est barré pour ne plus peindre que des
scènes tropicales
Pendant que Philip Larkin tenait le coup dans une
bibliothèque d'Hull
Et Dylan Thomas est mort ivre, à Saint-Vincent Hospital

The name-dropping does not really cause a lot of translational issues, the main one in this case was to find the equivalent for St. John of the Cross in French, which is Jean de la Croix. However, as to be sure not to make any misinterpretation in the translation, each reference requires research about the artist cited.

The double designation device that emphasizes Gauguin's relief when, riddled with debts, he left France for Tahiti in 1891 could be easily reproduced in the target text. The modulation of the

93 "The Red Hand Files - Issue #156." *The Red Hand Files*, 29 June 2021.

In the case of *Hiding All Away*, the proliferation of figures serves this time to structure the song around episodes, in the same manner that the epic tale of the Odyssey is divided in several episodes each dedicated to a particular event. If Odysseus encounters during his journey Cyclops, sea monsters, witches and gods, the encounters of the song's main character, if less spectacular at first sight, remain perhaps as unpleasant, to say the least. Cave depicts in this case a wicked world in which every encounter seems to end up on some kind of violent acts.

Beyond the mysterious and painful past events that are really at the origin of the song, *O Children* is another song built around important characters. These characters include on one side the adults, in which we can find "Frank and poor old Jim" but also the enigmatic "cleaners" and, on the other side, the "children" whom the song seems addressed to.

The cleaners are coming, one by one
You don't even want to let them start

Un par un, les nettoyeurs sont en train d'arriver
Tu ne veux même pas les laisser commencer

Here comes Frank and poor old Jim
They're gathering round with all my friends

Arrivent Frank et ce pauvre vieux Jim
Ils se rejoignent avec tous mes amis

O children
Lift up your voice, lift up your voice
Children
Rejoice, rejoice

Ô Enfants
Haussez la voix, haussez la voix
Enfants
Laissez éclater votre joie

This leads to the installation of a powerful dichotomy in the songs, between the innocence of the children on one hand and the guilt of the adults as well as the troubling presence of the "cleaners" on the other hand. The last illustration of these "anonymous" figures is to be found in the two characters of *Nature Boy*. After its first stanza, the song focuses on telling the ups and downs of the relation between the two lovers whose love story becomes the central theme.

And we moved through the days
and through the years

Et nous avançons à travers les jours et les années

The third and final category of characters that populate Cave's songs is that of fictional and/or supernatural figures. *The Lyre of Orpheus* is the most obvious example to come to mind, being Cave's re-appropriation of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Cave would also proceed to retell the story of Lazarus four years later, on *Dig, Lazarus, Dig!!!*, the follow-up album to *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. But the most interesting feature of the song is arguably to be found in the presence of another character. Cave is an author that has always drawn inspiration from religious themes. This inspiration has in return become a salient feature in his writing, pervading many of his texts. God, more than merely being Cave's muse, has become one of his recurrent

characters. And if Cave has shifted from the Old Testament to the New, it would seem that we have to deal here with the wrathful God of the former who is prompt to violently send Orpheus down to Hell just for waking him up.

God picked up a giant hammer
And He threw it with a thunderous yell
It smashed down hard on Orpheus' head
And knocked him down a well

Dieu souleva un gigantesque marteau
Qu'Il jeta d'un tonitruant cri
Il s'abattit sur la tête d'Orphée
Et le jeta au fond d'un puits

There is finally in the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* a game of presence and absence with several songs articulated around the quest, or the chase for a lost or absent companion. The characters of the songs often endorse a sort of inaccessibility to their song companions. The narrator of *Hiding All Away* cannot be found by the song's protagonist:

I had been there, dear, but I was not there anymore
I had been there, now I'm hiding all away

J'avais été là, ma chère, mais je n'y étais plus
J'avais été là maintenant je me cache tout au loin

The two characters of *Messiah Ward* seem lost in the middle of uncertain deeds:

We could navigate our position by the stars
But they've taken out the stars
The stars have all gone
I'm glad you've come along
We could comprehend our condition by the moon
But they've ordered the moon not to shine
Still, I'm glad you've come along
I was worried out of my mind

Nous pourrions naviguer à la lumière des étoiles
Mais ils ont enlevé les étoiles
Les étoiles ont toutes disparu
Mais je suis content que tu sois venue
Nous pourrions trouver notre chemin à le lueur de la lune
Mais ils ont ordonné à la lune de ne pas briller
Malgré cela je suis content que tu sois là
J'étais fou d'inquiétude

Supernaturally is the of scene chases and escapes, in which the addressee seems almost immaterial or unreachable:

Through the windswept coastal trees
Where the dead come rising from the sea
With a teddy-bear clamped between her knees
She says, where can my loverman be?

A travers les arbres battus par les bourrasques côtières
Là où les morts viennent surgir de la mer
Un ours en peluche entre les genoux fixé
« Où peut bien être mon loverman ? » dit-elle

You float by so majestically

Tu flottes par ici si majestueusement

I chase you up and down the stairs
Under tables and over chairs
I reach out and I touch your hair
And it cuts me like a knife

Je te poursuis dans les escaliers
Sous des tables, par-dessus chaises
Je tends le bras et touche tes cheveux
Qui me coupent comme une lame

And the narrator of *Spell* cannot find no more the one he is looking for:

I whisper all your names
I know not where you are
But somewhere, somewhere, somewhere here

Je murmure tous tes noms
Je ne sais où tu es
Si ce n'est quelque part, quelque part, quelque part par là

Upon this wild abandoned star

Sur cette étoile sauvage et délaissée

By their absence and their immateriality, these characters seem also to conferred some higher, more mysterious essence and are often linked with more or less romantic relations. “The loved woman is just as absent as God or devil” writes McCredde in her article, “the language of the song [...] invoke a love which is in mourning at the bodily absence of its loved object.” (McCredde 2009, 172). Although she wrote about other songs, McCredde’s theory seems applicable in the case of many songs of the album. These songs indeed end up marked by the seal of the un-fulfilment of love and the separation of many characters. Depictions of feminine characters are recurrently linked to supernatural or superhuman elements, which reinforces at times the sensation of estrangement between characters, as in *Messiah Ward* for example:

You are a force of nature, dear
Your breath curls from your lips
As the trees bend down their branches
And touch you with their fingertips

Tu es une force de la nature, ma chère
Ton souffle s’échappe en volutes de tes lèvres
Tandis que les arbres fléchissent leurs branches
Pour te toucher du bout de leurs doigts

Nature Boy’s feminine characters is also conferred a superior dimension that somehow separates her from her companion as she seems to have more knowledge and more control over the events than the narrator. The passiveness of the narrator is underlined by his mutism compared to his lover’s words.

You said, hey, nature boy, are you looking at me
With some unrighteous intention?
My knees went weak,
I couldn't speak, I was having thoughts
That were not in my best interests to mention

Tu m’as dit « Hé, nature boy, ne me regardes-tu pas avec
de mauvaises intentions ? »
Les jambes en coton, je ne pouvais pas parler, me venaient
des pensées
Qu’il ne valait mieux pas que je mentionne

You took me back to your place
And dressed me up in a deep sea diver's suit
You played the patriot, you raised the flag
And I stood at full salute
Later on we smoked a pipe that struck me dumb
And made it impossible to speak
As you closed in, in slow motion,
Quoting Sappho, in the original Greek

Tu m’as ramené chez toi
Et fait enfileur un scaphandre de plongée
Tu as joué au patriote, levé le drapeau
Et je me suis tenu au garde-à-vous
Avant que tu nous ne fumions une pipe qui m’a abruti
Au point d’en devenir mutique
Tandis que tu te rapprochais au ralenti,
Citant Sappho en grec antique

It is incidentally this feminine character that saves the narrator at the end of the song:

You pointed at something and said
Have you ever seen such a beautiful thing?
It was then that I broke down
It was then that you lifted me up again

Avant de pointer le doigt au loin et de dire
« As-tu déjà vu une quelque chose d’aussi beau ? »
C’est alors que je me suis effondré
C’est alors que tu m’as relevé à nouveau

But the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* are not structured only around the salience of striking characters. They are also built around the many places mention within the texts

that provide organicity and organization to the diegetic world of the album. After all, it is only natural that sites and locations are crucial features to take into account when analysing the process of world-building undergone in the texts. This is still no new feature of Cave's work as many of his former narratives already happened in important locations such as for example Tupelo; the City of Refuge (inherited from the Bible once again); the little towns of New Haven and Millhaven; The Bucket of Blood and O'Malley's bar; Brompton; a window's sill or a house trapped under an impressive coat of snow; Geneva and the rings of Saturn⁹⁶. There are many noteworthy places in *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* as well. This importance of places is to be linked directly with the visual potency that emanates of Cave's writing. Jessica Stephens' analysis of Dylan Thomas' — one of Cave's favourite poets — can also be applied to Cave:

Tout d'abord, des images visuelles jaillissent de la parole. [...]

Stephens develops by citing Cecil Day-Lewis' idea of "picture[s] made out of words":

An image conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality [...] [Every poetic image] looks out from a mirror in which life perceives not so much its face as some truth about its face. (Stephens 2015, 177)

To use the formula of Bernard Vouilloux, "le langage [...] se tend en direction du visible: il trame et il indique." (Adrien et al. 2015). Cave seems very aware of the visual dimension of the language (ibid.). He weaves a canvas made up of key zones and territories; in other words, he structures his songs' spaces and establishes their geography. "You get a picture of life from the inside on *Desolation Row*, a map of it in *Visions of Johanna*" (Usseglio 2021) wrote Dylan's scholar Greil Marcus. This is perfectly illustrated in the songs of the 2004 album as its songs seem very keen to install a vivid sense of spatiality through conjuring up strong visual images. *Nature Boy's* third verse illustrates this intention by using the cinematographic term "in slow motion" that we have reproduced in the target text:

As you closed in, **in slow motion**

Tandis que tu te rapprochais **au ralenti**

96 Respectively:

Tupelo, The Firstborn is Dead;

City of Refuge, Tender Prey;

Crow Jane; The Curse of Millhaven, Stagger Lee, O'Malley's Bar, Murder Ballads;

Brompton Oratory, The Boatman's Call;

As I Sat Sadly By Her Side; Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow, No More Shall We Part;

Higgs Boson Blues, Push the Sky Away and

Rings of Saturn, The Skeleton Tree.

All songs by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

Cannibal's Hymn's last stanza also resorts to the same device, although it could not be kept in the target text this time.

As I swim, in and out of focus

Tandis que j'entre et sors de ton champ de vision

This importance of the places the songs take place into is also what enables the trajectories and movements discussed above that bring life into the album. Cave himself discussed this feature:

Nature does feature more and more in my songs. [...]

The natural world in my songs is less about the destruction of the environment and more concerned with the biblical notion of paradise, within which O can set my human drams of suffering and transcendence. My natural world is unspoilt, but with a kind of apocalyptic consciousness. The nature in my songs knows what's ultimately coming. It is a world of metaphor, where nature becomes alive with the promise of God, where the moon is a mute witness and the stars hang in the air like questions.⁹⁷

If *Messiah Ward's* uncertainty is arguably the closest song in the album to correspond this statement, *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus* appear nonetheless as the two main examples of the structuration of the song around important locations, as both detail the journey of a character through these places:

“Down by the sea”
“the museum”
“the cathedral”
“the local constabulary”
“the hall of fame”
“above”

“au bord de la mer”
“au musée”
“la cathédrale”
“au poste de police du coin”
“le panthéon”
“du ciel”

“garden shed”
“down the halls”
“through the fields”
“in the sky”
“in heaven”
“down a well”
“hell”
“the abyss”

“cabanon”
“dans les salons”
“à travers champs”
“dans le ciel”
“au céleste domaine”
“au fond d'un puits”
“aux enfers”
“l'abysse”

If none of the translations in *Hiding All Away* were particularly difficult, some choices in *The Lyre of Orpheus* need to be discussed briefly here. “Cabanon” seemed to better re-transcribe the idea of “garden shed” than “cabane” or “abri de jardin”, for example and also allowed to keep the same number of syllables in the target text. We chose to translate “down the halls” as to give the idea of a succession of rooms Orpheus has to cross to arrive to Eurydice. The translation of “hell”, at last, was marked by the uncertainty as to which underworld is Cave referring. We decided to translate it

97 “The Red Hand Files - Issue #2.” *The Red Hand Files*, 9 Oct. 2018.

into the plural form of the noun as to reference the Greek realms of hell; the singular of the noun would have had too much Christian connotations in our opinion.

This geographical dimension has the result of putting the emphasis on the presence of the natural world within the texts of the album. Nature acts as more than a simple backcloth to the stories that unfold under its aegis. In *Nature Boy*, it is therefore closely associated with the romance between the two characters.

I was walking around **the flower show** like a leper
Coming down with some kind of nervous hysteria
When I saw you standing there, green eyes, black hair
Up against **the pink and purple wisteria**
You said, hey, **nature boy**, are you looking at me
With some unrighteous intention?

Je me promenais dans l'**exposition florale** comme un
lépreux
Frappé d'une sorte d'hystérie nerveuse
Quand je te vis là, tes yeux verts, tes cheveux sombres
Te tenant devant la **glycine violette et rose**
Tu m'as dit « Hé, **nature boy**, ne me regardes-tu pas avec
de mauvaises intentions ? »
Les jambes en coton, je ne pouvais pas parler, me venaient
des pensées
Qu'il ne valait mieux pas que je mentionne

We have therefore made the choice not to translate “nature boy” in the target text as to maintain that association in the target text. As Johan Franzone argues, not translating is still a “translational action” (Franzone 2014, 377); several options were nonetheless contemplated before opting for leaving the term as such in the target text. The difficulty of translation of this appellation comes from the fact that it is actually oral speech. The line is aimed at the narrator of the song by the woman whom he just met and seems a bit sarcastic as the two are at a flower exhibition: nature is only artificial in this case. The other solutions considered were “l'enfant sauvage” but that term conveyed too strong and pre-established connotations that did not correspond to the register here; and resorting to amplification. That would have resulted in something like “hé, toi là-bas, près des fleurs” that would have completely overlooked the association between the character and nature. The choruses of the song, as for them, link perhaps even strongly the feminine character to natural elements:

And she moves among the sparrows
And she floats upon the breeze
She moves among the flowers

Et elle se meut, parmi les moineaux
Et elle plane, emportée par la brise
Elle se meut, parmi les fleurs

She moves among the sparrows
And she walks across the sea
She moves among the flowers

Elle se meut parmi les moineaux
Et elle marche au travers de la mer
Elle se meut parmi les fleurs

There She Goes, My Beautiful World places nature as a source of inspiration invoked by the author at loss for words:

The wintergreen, the juniper
The cornflower and the chicory

La gaulthérie, le genévrier
Le bleuet et la chicorée

All the words you said to me
Still vibrating in the air
The elm, the ash and the linden tree
The dark and deep, enchanted sea
The trembling moon and the stars unfurled
There she goes, my beautiful world

L'air toujours vibrant, empli
De tous ces mots que tu m'as dits
L'orme, le frêne et le tilleul
Les sombres abysses de la mer enchantée
La lune tremblante et les étoiles déployées
Ainsi tourne mon beau monde

In *Breathless*, Cave studies the links between the natural world and love. It seems this time nature becomes the vessel of expression of the limitless admiration of the narrator for his loved one:

It's up in the morning and on the downs
Little white clouds like gambolling lambs
And I am breathless over you
And the red-breasted robin beats his wings
His throat it trembles when he sings
For he is helpless before you
The happy hooded bluebells bow
And bend their heads all a-down
Heavied by the early morning dew
At the whispering stream, at the bubbling brook
The fishes leap up to take a look
For they are breathless over you

C'est dans l'air du matin et sur les pentes des bas monts
De petits nuages blancs comme autant d'agneaux
gambadant
Et j'ai le souffle coupé devant toi
Et le rouge-gorge bat des ailes
Quand il chante sa voix chancelle
Car il est sans défense devant toi
Les joyeuses jacinthes inclinent leurs têtes fleuries
Par la rosée du petit matin alourdies
Jusqu'à toucher le sol des bois
Sous le murmure du ruisseau, sous le babil des flots
Les poissons bondissent pour jeter un coup d'œil hors de
l'eau
Mais ils ont le souffle coupé devant toi

Subtle touches of humour come to enliven the song. The addressee of the song is so awe-inducing that even the fish try to jump out of the water to breathe the same air as her, even though fishes generally do not really fare too well out of the water. This first touch of humour could unfortunately not be reproduced into the target text as we have favoured instead the repetition of the word “souffle” throughout the whole of the song. A former solution that we gave up on was “Car ils ne peuvent pas respirer sans toi.” The second touch of humour is found in the second verse of the song in which even the wind is breathless without the song's protagonist. As to preserve this small play on words, we have chosen this time to translate by “Car il est à court de souffle sans toi.”

The wind circles among the trees
And it bangs about the new-made leaves
For it is breathless without you
The fox chases the rabbit round
The rabbit hides beneath the ground
For he is defenceless without you
The sky of daytime dies away
And all the earthly things they stop to play
For we are all breathless without you
I listen to my juddering bones
The blood in my veins and the wind in my lungs
And I am breathless without you

Le vent tournoie entre les arbres
Et bruise dans les nouvelles feuilles
Car il est à court de souffle sans toi
Le renard chasse le lapin dans la forêt
Le lapin court se cacher dans son terrier
Car il est sans défense sans toi
La lumière du jour commence à s'estomper
Et toutes les créatures sur Terre s'arrêtent de jouer
Car nous sommes tous démunis sans toi
J'écoute mes os tout frémissants
Le sang dans mes veines et l'air dans mes poumons
Et j'ai le souffle coupé devant toi

The protagonist of the song seems therefore in perfect connection with the natural world. The narrator of the song, who appears weak in the last lines of this stanza seems to be dependent of this

stronger protagonist. In fact, even nature appears to depend of this character who seems to literally ensure the course of the world:

Still your hands
And still your heart
For still your face comes shining through
And all the morning glows anew
Still your mind
Still your soul
For still, the fire of love is true
And I am breathless without you

Calme tes mains
Et calme ton cœur
Car encore ton visage s'en vient faire le jour
Sur tout le matin qui brille à nouveau
Calme ton esprit
Calme ton âme
Car le feu de l'amour encore flamboie
Et je reste le souffle coupé devant toi

Supernaturally depicts nature as the hunting grounds of its two characters that pursue each other into a wild and unpredictable world.

Through the windswept coastal trees
Where the dead come rising from the sea
With a teddy-bear clamped between her knees
She says, where can my loverman be?
Well, I'm down here, babe, with the Eskimos
With the polar bears and the Arctic snow
With a party of penguins who do not know
How I can get back to thee

A travers les arbres battus par les bourrasques côtières
Là où les morts viennent surgir de la mer
Un ours en peluche entre les genoux fixé
« Où peut bien être mon loverman ? » dit-elle
Eh bien, je suis ici bas, chérie, avec les Eskimos
Avec les ours polaires, sous les neiges arctiques
Avec un groupe de pingouins ignorants
Comment puis-je te revenir

On the fourth line of the stanza, we have made the choice to consider “loverman” as a reference to the 1994 Bad Seeds’ song *Loverman* and therefore not to translate it, as to preserve this intertextual reference. The fifth line of the second verse of the song, that Cave actually draws from W.H. Auden’s *Funeral Blues*⁹⁸ can be seen as conferring Cave’s world its cardinal points.

You're my north, my south, my east, my west

Tu es mon Nord, mon Sud, mon Est, mon Ouest

As for *Spell*, the song turns its natural elements as the mirrors of the state of its narrator: the snow and the cold strike him down and the light and the wind bring him back to his senses while nature around him seems reinvigorated.

Through the woods, and frosted moors
Past the snow-caked hedgerows I
Bed down upon the drifting snow
Sleep beneath the melting sky

A travers les bois et le givre des landes
Après les haies saupoudrées de neige,
Je m'étends là dans la neige tourbillonnante
Et dors sous le ciel qui se désagrège

The wind lifts me to my senses
I rise up with the dew

Le vent me tire de ma torpeur
Je me relève couvert de rosée

98 He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

Auden, W.H., *Funeral Blues, Another Time*, 1940.

The snow turns to streams of light
The purple heather grows anew

La neige fait place à des flots de lumière
Et la bruyère violette pousse, revigorée

Finally, religious places are the last feature that needs to be addressed here. Cave's fascination with Biblical elements also leads him into structuring his songs around several religious locations, such as a cathedral in *Hiding All Away*; an "unending golden stair" in *Let the Bells Ring*; hell and heaven in *The Lyre of Orpheus*. God's Kingdom is also mentioned twice in the album: in its opening track, *Get Ready for Love* ("While the gate to the Kingdom swings shut and closes") and in its closing title, *O Children*:

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
The train that goes to the Kingdom

Hé, petit train ! Tous à bord des wagons
Du train qui part pour le Royaume

This Kingdom appears as one of the recurrent places displayed by Cave in his songs as he alluded to it clearly in 1997 in *There Is a Kingdom*⁹⁹ and still refers to it on its album, on *Hand of God*¹⁰⁰.

3) Tones and voices: multiplicities in Cave's songs

"[Poetry] should always be better when read aloud than when read silently with the eyes. Always." (Stephens 2015 176). Dylan Thomas' statement comes as another assertion of the oral dimension of poetry and of its importance. Ellrodt also testifies of its oral primordially of a poetic, as he cites Ricœur and Bonnefoy:

L'essentielle oralité du verbe poétique ne peut guère être contestée, bien que certaines œuvres modernes ne se distinguent plus de la prose que par la disposition des mots sur la page. "S'il y a poésie, dit Bonnefoy, c'est parce qu'on a voulu que la part sonore des mots soit écoutée." (Ellrodt 2006, 3)

We have discussed earlier in this work to what extent is this oral dimension perceptible within the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. This part will now aim to see how are the rather vague (Baldick 2001, 259; 273) concepts of tone and voice related to that dimension and can be seen as another manifestation of this orality. Chris Baldick's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines tone as:

a very vague critical term usually designating the mood or atmosphere of a work, although in some more restricted uses it refers to the author's attitude to the reader (e.g. formal, intimate, pompous) or to the subject-matter (e.g. ironic, light, solemn, satiric, sentimental). (Baldick 2001, 259)

And voice as:

99 *The Boatman's Call*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

100 *CARNAGE*, Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, 2021.

a rather vague metaphorical term by which some critics refer to distinctive features of a written work in terms of spoken utterance. The voice of a literary work is then the specific group of characteristics displayed by the narrator or poetic 'speaker' (or, in some uses, the actual author behind them), assessed in terms of tone, style, or personality. (Baldick 2001, 273)

What comes out of these definitions, beyond the vagueness of both terms, is that there exists some kind of link between the two. It would seem that one can enable the other and it is not really surprising after all that different tones correspond to different voices and vice-versa. The first thing we will concentrate upon is however to examine the question of tone alone.

There are indeed throughout the album a considerable array of different tones that contribute to give the texts richness and variety. We have discussed in the first part the dichotomy that emanates from the opposition between the registers of traditional literary forms (such as the ballad or the epic) and that of the pop song. This is particularly visible in texts such as *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus*.

You asked the butcher
Who lifted up his cleaver
Stuck his fist up your dress
Said he must've been mad to leave you
But I had to get away, dear, hiding all away
I had to get away, dear, I was hidden all away

Tu as demandé au boucher
Qui a levé son couperet
Il a fourré son poing sous ta robe
Et dit « il doit être fou de t'avoir abandonnée »
Mais j'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin
J'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au loin

Some of us we hide away
Some of us we don't
Some will live to love another day
And some of us won't
But we all know there is a law
And that law, it is love
And we all know there's a war coming
Coming from above

Certains d'entre nous se cachent au loin
Certains d'entre nous, non
Certains vivront pour aimer un autre jour
Et certains d'entre nous ne pourront
Mais l'on sait tous qu'il est une loi
Et cette loi, c'est l'amour
Et l'on sait tous qu'une guerre va s'abattre
S'abattre du ciel

Eurydice appeared brindled in blood
And she said to Orpheus
If you play that fucking thing down here
I'll stick it up your orifice!
O Mama O Mama

Eurydice apparut couverte de sang
Et dit à Orphée
« Joue de cette saloperie ici-bas
Et je te la ferai avaler »
O Mama O Mama

This lyre lark is for the birds, said Orpheus
It's enough to send you bats
Let's stay down here, Eurydice, dear
And we'll have a bunch of screaming brats
O Mama O Mama

« Laissons tomber cette histoire de lyre » dit-Orphée
« Ou cela nous rendra déments
Restons ici-bas, Eurydice, ma douce
Faisons une bande de gamins bruyants »
O Mama O Mama

In connection with that dichotomy, Cave often alternates between different registers of language, switching regularly from what we could call poetic overtones to more “pop” elements. *There She Goes My Beautiful World*, for example, opens onto this poetic lists of natural elements that confer

the song a certain elevation and solemnity that comes to be later opposed to the more informal register of the repetitions of “Send that stuff on down to me” or the rest of the song’s verses:

The wintergreen, the juniper
 The cornflower and the chicory
 All the words you said to me
 Still vibrating in the air
 The elm, the ash and the linden tree
 The dark and deep, enchanted sea
 The trembling moon and the stars unfurled
 There she goes, my beautiful world

La gaulthérie, le genévrier
 Le bleuet et la chicorée
 L’air toujours vibrant, rempli
 De tous ces mots que tu m’as dits
 L’orme, le frêne et le tilleul
 Les sombres abysses de la mer enchantée
 La lune tremblante et les étoiles déployées
 Ainsi tourne mon beau monde

Send that stuff on down to me

Envoie-moi ce qu’il me faut

Karl Marx **squeezed his carbuncles** while writing Das Kapital
 And Gauguin, **he buggered off, man** and went all tropical
 While Philip Larkin **stuck it out** in a library in Hull
 And Dylan Thomas, he **died drunk** in St-Vincent Hospital

Karl Marx **s’est serré la ceinture** pendant qu’il écrivait Das Kapital
 Et Gauguin, **il s’est barré** pour ne plus peindre que des scènes tropicales
 Pendant que Philip Larkin **tenait le coup** dans une bibliothèque d’Hull
 Et Dylan Thomas est **mort ivre**, à Saint-Vincent Hospital

The elaborate verses of *Supernatural* show a similar contrast with the simplicity of its choruses. They are even arguably the most “pop” moments of the whole album, due to their organization around onomatopoeiatic repetitions and the succession of short, simple sentences. The contrast between the one-syllable phonemes that mostly form these sentences and the length of “supernatural” and “supernaturally” is also to be underlined.

Through the windswept coastal trees
 Where the dead come rising from the sea
 With a teddy-bear clamped between her knees
 She says, where can my loverman be?
 Well, I’m down here, babe, with the Eskimos With the polar bears and the Arctic snow
 With a party of penguins who do not know
 How I can get back to thee
 Well I’m gonna ask you, babe
 Hey! Ho!
 Oh baby don’t you go
 Hey! Ho!
 Oh no no no
 Hey! Ho!
 Oh baby, don’t you go
 All supernatural on me
 Supernaturally

A travers les arbres battus par les bourrasques côtières
 Là où les morts viennent surgir de la mer
 Un ours en peluche entre les genoux fixé
 « Où peut bien être mon loverman ? » dit-elle
 Eh bien, je suis ici bas, chérie, avec les Eskimos
 Avec les ours polaires, sous les neiges arctiques
 Avec un groupe de pingouins ignorants
 Comment puis-je te revenir
 Eh bien je vais te demander, chérie
 Hé ! Ho !
 Oh, chérie, ne t’en va pas
 Hé ! Ho !
 Oh, chérie, non non non
 Hé ! Ho !
 Oh, chérie, ne sois pas
 Si surnaturelle avec moi
 Surnaturellement

Cave’s touches of “melodramatic humour” (Hartney 2012, 174) can also be seen as tonal ruptures, as they are often generated by contrasting registers and situations. In *The Lyre of Orpheus*, there is a discrepancy between the apparent tragedy of the situation and the lack of concerned reactions from the characters, that do not seem to take all of this seriously. Orpheus goes to happily play his lyre

after having just witnessed the horrible death of his wife and later on, as he has been thrown down into hell at the cost of his own life, he is only concerned by having children with Eurydice. The contrasting images that are set up by Cave in *Supernatural* also participate in defusing the apparent seriousness of the song.

Through the windswept coastal trees
Where the dead come rising from the sea
With a teddy-bear clamped between her knees

A travers les arbres battus par les bourrasques côtières
Là où les morts viennent surgir de la mer
Un ours en peluche entre les genoux fixé

With an army of tanks bursting from your chest
I wave my little white flag at thee

Avec une armée de tanks qui jaillissent de ta poitrine
J'agite mon petit drapeau blanc devant toi

Cave thus seems to move with ease from one tonality to the other, mixing solemn and serious elements with lighter, sometimes even comic reliefs. The subtle wordplays of *Breathless* also testify of the capacity of the songwriter to insert “gentle, high-serious humour” (McCredde 2009, 173) bits within a rather solemn romantic song. The album seems to balk at committing fully to one genre only, perhaps because Cave had done so previously. *Murder Ballads* was indeed exclusively devoted to the performance of murder-related songs — murder ballads actually existed a long time before the album and are a traditional sort of folk-song of the American repertoire (Louit; Pernerle 2004). In the same manner, *The Boatman's Call* contained only love songs that were marked by a certain disenchantment of the author at the time:

The Boatman's Call was a record born of a personal misfortune that led to a departure from fictitious narrative songwriting into a kind of writing that was more autobiographical. Artistically, my hand was forced by a convergence of events that felt so calamitous at the time that I could not find a way to write about anything else. It's not that I had any desire to write a “break-up record”, but these events just rammed the ramparts of my songwriting and seized control.¹⁰¹

Cave however expressed his reluctance as to being categorised as a “one-trick pony” only and assesses that it would be the endanger his artistic creativity:

I have forever felt a horror of being boxed in by an identity and an inflexible opinion, for this allegiance to a single personae can be the very death of creativity. [...]

For an artist, particularly a songwriter, this ability to be open to influence [...] gives us the freedom to express ourselves in contrasting ways. When I think about the artists who have had the greatest impact on me, this fluctuating and disordered identity, and necessity to reinvent themselves, is common to most of them. I think this is what I look for in an artist — the ability to change, and to grow, and to confound.¹⁰²

Perhaps as a result of this will for a certain eclecticism, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* appears as an album of varied and changing tones that have the effect of “frequently tak[ing] the listener by

101 “The Red Hand Files - Issue #132.” *The Red Hand Files*, 28 Jan. 2021.

102 “The Red Hand Files - Issue #99.” *The Red Hand Files*, 27 May 2020.

surprise” (Petridis 2004). In fact, even the very nature of this album is double and contrasted, *Abattoir Blues* as explains in the mini-documentary detailing the making-of of the record:

We’ve kept the two records quite separate. Jim Scavunos who is a more heavy drummer drums basically all the way through *Abattoir Blues* so it is a much heavier record. And the *Lyre of Orpheus* which has Thomas [Wydler] who’s lighter, more jazzy drumming through that, so that’s lighter and quieter. (Cave “*Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*”, a short film.” 2004)

The songs themselves are quite heterogeneous in their tonality as come one after the other the “queasy funk” and “full-on hellfire-and-brimstone mode” (Petridis 2004) of *Hiding All Away*, the elegiac Messiah Ward and the more lively grooves of *There She Goes, My Beautiful World*, just to give an example.

This variety of tones and registers comes of course to have some repercussions on the way to translate the texts. The “discerning Eye” that we mentioned above is of course necessary in order to apprehend the songs’ games of variations. But moreover, this leads to the necessity for the translator to demonstrate his capacities of elasticity and adaptability as to be able to maintain in the target text the tonal richness of the original. We are then reminded of Norman Thomas di Giovanni’s point of view when he declares that “the worst fault in a translation is not getting a word wrong but getting the author’s tone, or voice, wrong.”¹⁰³

Voice, as for itself, is a rather complex asset to take into account in translation. There is a chiasmic dimension in the textuality of the voice (Oliver 2019, 1), between its original immateriality and the physicality its “scription” (ibid.), that sends us back to the opposition between oral and written traditions. Marie Olivier assures that the voice is an evasive and unseizable object of study and quotes Roland Barthes:

La voix humaine est en effet le lieu privilégié (éidétique) de la différence : un lieu qui échappe à toute science, car il n’est aucune science (physiologie, histoire, esthétique, psychanalyse) qui épuise la voix : classez, commentez historiquement, sociologiquement, esthétiquement, techniquement la musique, il y aura toujours un reste, un supplément, un lapsus, un non-dit qui se désigne lui-même: la voix¹⁰⁴

For Mladen Dolar, the voice is “what does not contribute to making sense.”¹⁰⁵ His affirmation yet seems to be debatable when applied to the field of song translation. As songs remain objects meant to be performed, the importance of the performer’s voice seems hard to overlook as a factor of meaning conveyance. Lucile Desblache also underlines the importance of the performer’s voice in

103 Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas; Frank Mac Shane, *Borges on Writing*, 1973, Hopewell, The Ecco Press, 1994, p.156.

104 Barthes, Roland, cited in Oliver 2019, 2.

105 Dolar, Mladen, cited in Olivier 2019, 2.

regard to that aspect. “The quality of the original voices also contributes to the meaning of the song,” (Desblache 2018, 322) she argues and details elsewhere that “music, by essence, is about listening to voices, being curious about different sounds and finding ways of exploring them.” (Desblache 2019, 150).

This fundamentality of the voice in sung texts is all the more relevant when approaching the work of Nick Cave, who is renowned for his performative prowesses:

The cramped parameters of his singing are his strength. Vulnerability, sentimentality, bitterness, abrasiveness, humour and morbidity – all peel from his stretched larynx like a snake shedding skins. Above all he's hypnotic. (Hattenstone 2008)

The crucial prominence of voices was also asserted by Vincent-Arnaud in her study of Eric Puchner’s *Music Through the Floor*:

Se faisant, comme on l'a vu, mécanique textuelle par laquelle, tour à tour puis se mêlant les unes aux autres, les voix sont amenées à occuper le devant de la scène, la musique sert de fil conducteur, comme on s'en doute, à l'univers référentiel et diégétique d'un recueil qu'elle traverse de part en part pour y déposer également certaines assises structurelles de premier plan. (Vincent-Arnaud 2012, 126)

The first and most recognizable of these voices is that of the singer-songwriter himself, breathing life into his lyrics. The physical performance of the voice that sings the song lyrics (or that recites the verses of a poem) is therefore the most identifiable facet of a text’s orality, as a reminder of Dylan Thomas’ words. The sound characteristics are therefore not only one of the most evident features of the text but also one of the more essential. The games of the voice are what differentiate prose and poetry, says Ellrodt, as to confirm this idea¹⁰⁶. He also cites further Ricoeur’s idea of the inseparable union of sense and sound¹⁰⁷ before himself asserting that:

L’essentielle oralité du verbe poétique ne peut guère être contestée, bien que certaines œuvres modernes ne se distinguent plus de la prose que par la disposition des mots sur la page. “S’il y a poésie, dit Bonnefoy, c’est parce qu’on a voulu que la part sonore des mots soit écoutée.” (Ellrodt 2006, 1)

Nick Cave himself is a man of many voices (Barron 2014), whose performances have always contributed to refine the meaning of his texts. The ominous intonations he adopts on *Hiding All Away* contrast with the warmer romantic timbre he takes on *Breathless*. He sounds omniscient in

106 “Pour mon oreille, ce qui distingue la poésie de la prose, comme du « poème en prose », c’est un jeu de la voix sur une succession réglée de temps forts et de temps faibles qui admet certains dérèglements expressifs.” (Ellrodt 2006, 6).

107 “L’union inséparable du sens et de la sonorité” Ricoeur, cited in Ellrodt 2006, 1.

Cannibal's Hymn but lost in *Messiah Ward* or *Nature Boy*. He seems frustrated and flustered in *There She Goes My Beautiful World* or *The Lyre of Orpheus* and vulnerable on *Spell* or *O Children*. When asked if he liked his voice, his answer was:

“Only when I sing well. One has to use what resources one has and live with these things. I am quite aware that my voice is basically unlikable. And I think what I've managed to achieve with it has been quite a feat in itself.” (Barron 2014)

Despite his voice's versatility, Cave's singing still seems to carry an organizing role, as the common thread from which a togetherness of the album results. Through the proliferation of heterogeneous voices, Cave's voice seems to dominate and orchestrate the fragments¹⁰⁸.

The profusion of characters in the album has another consequence onto the texts, beyond the structuring role. It results also in a proliferation of voices that pervade the textual space mostly through dialogue incursions. *Nature Boy*, *The Lyre of Orpheus* and *Supernaturally* are the three songs that explicitly contain direct speech:

My father said, don't look away
You got to be strong, you got to be bold, now
He said, that in the end it is beauty
That is going to save the world, now

Mon père m'a dit « regarde,
Il faut que tu sois fort et courageux, à présent »
Il a dit qu'au bout du compte, c'est la beauté
Qui sauvera le monde de l'effondrement

You said, hey, nature boy, are you looking at me
With some unrighteous intention?

Tu m'as dit « Hé, nature boy, ne me regardes-tu pas
Avec de mauvaises intentions ? »

You smiled at me and said, Babe
I think this thing is getting kind of serious
You pointed at something and said
Have you ever seen such a beautiful thing?

Tu m'as souri et m'a dit « chéri, nous deux,
Je crois que c'est en train de devenir assez sérieux »
Avant de pointer le doigt au loin et de dire
« As-tu déjà vu une quelque chose d'aussi beau ? »

He heard a sound so beautiful
He gasped and said O my God

Il entendit un son si beau
Que, saisi, il dit « Oh mon Dieu »

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »

O God, what have I done, he said

« Oh mon Dieu, qu'ai-je fait », dit-il

Eurydice appeared brindled in blood
And she said to Orpheus
If you play that fucking thing down here
I'll stick it up your orifice!

Eurydice apparut couverte de sang
Et dit à Orphée
« Joue de cette saloperie ici-bas
Et je te la ferai avaler »

This lyre lark is for the birds, said Orpheus
It's enough to send you bats
Let's stay down here, Eurydice, dear
And we'll have a bunch of screaming brats

« Laissons tomber cette histoire de lyre » dit-Orphée
« Ou cela nous rendra déments
Restons ici-bas, Eurydice, ma douce
Faisons une bande de gamins bruyants »

And stared deep into the abyss and said

108 “A travers cette composition mosaïque où domine [...] l'attention portée à l'émergence d'une voix singulière qui orchestre chaque fragment.” Vincent-Arnaud 2012, 121.

This one is for Mama

Il contempla l'abysse et dit
« Ça, c'est pour ma mère »

She says, where can my loverman be?
Well, I'm down here, babe, with the Eskimos With the
polar bears and the Arctic snow
With a party of penguins who do not know
How I can get back to thee

« Où peut bien être mon loverman ? » dit-elle
Eh bien, je suis ici bas, chérie, avec les Eskimos
Avec les ours polaires, sous les neiges arctiques
Avec un groupe de pingouins ignorants
Comment puis-je te revenir

Moreover, as he aims to abolish the theoretical separation between *phônê* and writing, Meschonnic argues that the presence of the article “I” necessarily implies the presence of an addressee¹⁰⁹. All songs under study correspond that theory although *The Lyre of Orpheus* and *O Children* must be categorized apart from the others. *The Lyre of Orpheus* is actually the only song of the album not to be told through the point of view of the narrator, in the first person singular. The voices, consequently, are Orpheus’ and Eurydice’s voices, even though they are physically performed by Cave. In *O Children*, the presence of the “I” is only hinted at and the voice of the narrator does not remain predominant throughout the whole song. Cave thus lends his voice to multiple characters, as he had already done so on *Stagger Lee* or *O’Malley’s Bar* for example. In the case of this album, Cave gives his voice most notably to the children in the last stanzas of *O Children*. What is interesting is this corresponds also to a shift in focalization in the song, as the children were before that the addressee of the narrator’s words.

O children
Lift up your voice, lift up your voice
Children
Rejoice, rejoice

Ô Enfants
Haussez la voix, haussez la voix
Enfants
Laissez éclater votre joie

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
The train that goes to the Kingdom
We're happy, Ma, we're having fun
And the train ain't even left the station

Hé, petit train ! Tous à bord des wagons
Du train qui part pour le Royaume
On est heureux, M'man, on s'amuse bien
Et le train n'a même pas quitté la gare

Portraying characters at the first person singular has actually been one of Cave songwriting’s main feature for a long time, from the prisoner of death row in *The Mercy Seat*¹¹⁰ to the loverman in the eponymous song. There is not only Nick Cave, there are also his “song-selves” (McCredden 2009, 167). So much that emerges from his texts a sensation of authorial multiplicity. There is in the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* an undeniable sense of multivocality that strikes by its heterogeneity. This multivocality is even conveyed physically as Cave’s voice is also supported by recurring choirs throughout the whole of the album. Rendering this multivocality was a crucial part

109 “Écrire, ce ne serait donc pas renoncer à la vie, à la voix. Par ailleurs, pour lui, dès qu’il y a « je », il y aurait alors voix qui dialogue⁴, ce qui présuppose donc la présence d’un Autre, ou tout du moins, d’un destinataire.” Meschonnic, cited in Oliver 2019, 2.

110 *Tender Prey*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

of the translational work, in concordance with Olivier's argument that making the voice seem alive is of one the primitive aims of a poetic text that compels both the oral and written dimensions¹¹¹.

Vincent-Arnaud's words seem in the end to be perfectly applicable to summarize the vocal and tonal issues of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*:

L'un des traits constitutifs de l'écriture [...] est donc la multiplication des sources énonciatives, des voix et des points de vue, mais aussi des modalités discursives. Se succèdent ainsi, *via* la narration homodiégétique ou les divers avatars de la focalisation interne, hommes et femmes, adultes et enfants, [...] voix solistes alternant bien souvent avec des passages dialogués qui sont autant de lieux de consonances ou de dissonances.

"It's a world I'm creating," Nick Cave tells us, endorsing the role of a demiurgic creator almost in the same manner a fantasy author would. But as with any other created universe, rules and structures must govern and organize this world, in order for it to appear coherent. Cave's world is at first deeply marked by the literary influences and religious considerations of the songwriter. As he strongly connects his sense of spirituality with his artistic inspiration, Cave is often prone to the retelling of pre-existing myths and to incorporate referential elements in his texts. The profusion and eminence of figures and places in the songs of the album is the second element of organization. The songs thus seem structure around key characters that have always been a recurring feature of Cave's writing while the locations they take place into are given more importance than that of mere backcloth. Many natural elements also pervade the diegesis of the album, from *Cannibal's Hymn's* river banks to *Spell's* "purple heather". Finally, the texts of the 2004 record also come to be characterized by the multiplicities in tones and voices they offer. From the eclecticism of the songs' registers to the plurivocality that is to be found in the whole of the album, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* appears in the end as a most varied effort. This last feature actually reopens the concern for the translation of the intertextual dimension of the texts. Can the translation of a text not be considered after all as simply providing a new voice to the text? In order to do so, the translator has to proceed to the substitution of his own voice — the voice of re-creation— to that of the original, fundamental voice of the author. To do so is to proceed to the genesis of a new voice of the text, and later, to many other voices. It means assuring the continuity of the text that will, again and again, be subject to new vocal appropriations as it continues to be read by new audiences. All in all, the phenomenon of translation seems inseparable from that of polyphony.

111 "Parler de vive voix, faire vivre la voix, ne serait-ce pas la mission primitive du poème, qui engage dans ses vers, à la fois écriture et oralité?" Olivier 2019, 2.

III) A universe of emotions and contrasts

There is a “great, Manichean divide” (Self 2013, xi) that tears apart Nick Cave’s world, wrote Will Self in the foreword of Cave’s lyrics anthology¹¹². If the words of the English author are arguably not to be taken to the letter, they are nonetheless revealing of a certain facet of Cave’s songwriting. Contrasting elements and clashing forces are indeed recurrently primordial features of his work. And many of his pieces come to be built around these dichotomies, as the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* illustrate. After all, as Cave once put it, is his songwriting not about counterpoint and disparate images?

1) A world of feelings: translating the emotion

Beyond “all the enjambment, ellipsis and onomatopoeia” (Self 2013, xii), beyond all the poetic devices and the textual analysis, what if the main role of the song was simply to generate emotion? “If a song moves you, that’s all that’s important” (Dylan 2017) suggests Bob Dylan in that regard.

For Peter Webb, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, alongside other contemporary formations, have since their early days put emotion “at the centre of their creative project.” (Webb 2009, 120). Christopher Hartney argues that this is precisely what makes Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds such a unique band: “the simple fact that this group [...] could summon a hundred songs that would give us a hundred different emotional experiences was a potency that seemed miraculous in and of itself.” Emotions, feelings, sensations, all seem therefore particularly essential in the work of Nick Cave and of his Bad Seeds. They seem paramount to the artistic ambitions of the songwriter and his band, as Cave acknowledged in a 2017 interview:

Cassavetti: Despite appearances, ever since your very first Bad Seeds song in 1984, *From Her to Eternity*, your main topic has always been love. It’s like you’ve been slowly peeling off layers of skin, trying to express more emotions and feelings...

Cave: Well, that’s very nice of you to say that. And it’s probably right. *From Her to Eternity*... I guess that sums it up, what more can I say ?

Sure, I’ve been going on about the same things all the while. But then I wouldn’t know what other things there are to write about. I think most songwriters write about the same thing all through their life. I can’t think of anyone who doesn’t, in fact. You find your themes, the ones that interest you, and you just keep digging. (Cassavetti 2017)

112 Cave, Nick. *The Complete Lyrics: 1978-2013*. 3rd ed., Penguin Books, 2013.

There are many others who have testified of the importance of this aspect of music. Descartes himself, in the beginning of the 17th century, already took it into consideration: “Sa fin [la musique] est de plaire et d'exciter en nous diverses passions.”¹¹³ And even before that, Gil de Zamora, a Spanish intellectual of the 12th century praised the many effects and benefits of music:

La musique est la clé de la consonance de l'univers; l'harmonie est l'image de l'harmonie universelle, elle même reflet de la perfection divine. La musique approche le mystère divin [...] Les bienfaits de la musique émeuvent l'âme, guérissent les malades, chassent les démons... La musique excite les passions, aiguise les sensations; elle encourage les combattants et l'ardeur à combattre est d'autant plus grande qu'est plus fort le son de la trompette; elle réjouit les affligés, elle effraie les lâches... (Cited in Warszawski 2019)

It is arguably one of the translator's primordial and most demanding goals to convey in the target language the emotions and sensations of the original text (Brèthes 2016). And this concern seems therefore double within the framework of song translation. The intersemioticity of the popular song, that is born of the encounter between the poetical and the musical arts, seems indeed to make the task more complex as the emotions of the text are actually carried out by two agents: the words and their music. This duality of the song highlights here again its links with orality. In fact, orality and the transmission of sensations seem to be inextricably interlinked, as Stephens reminds us:

“De la musique avant toute chose”, nous dit le poète Verlaine. Oralité, sonorités, sensations et traduction: comment ces quatre éléments se combinent- ils et de quelle façon s'opère l'alchimie subtile entre ce qui relève du domaine de la perception, des sens, de l'émotion et le travail ancillaire et artisanal sur la langue qu'est la traduction? (Stephens 2015, 11)

She also asserts the importance of the corporeality in the communication of emotions:

Or l'ouïe est, de tous les sens, celui qui est capable de faire jaillir des émotions et d'éveiller le corps: à cause de la qualité puissamment vibratoire du son, “le mot musical, fait d'une formation intérieure de syllabes, va plus loin que l'épiderme et le duvet de notre sensibilité” (Claudel, 1965: 158). Le son vibratoire agit donc sur un plan physiologique en suscitant des sensations physiques. (Stephens 2015, 12)

Emotions are prominent forces that subtend Cave's career and their reproduction thus becomes of the main issues of the translation. And, without much surprise, the main emotion that pervades Cave's texts is love. Arguably pop songs' greatest and most recurrent theme (Christenson et al. 2019, 194), love has come to occupy a primordial place over the years in Cave's oeuvre. Self argues indeed that it would be a mistake to classify the Bad Seeds' leader as nothing more than a “lyricist of blood, guts and angst” (Self 2013, xii). Just as he has switched from Old to New Testament-inspired songwriting around the time of *The Boatman's Call*, Cave has also changed his

¹¹³ Descartes, *Compendium Musicae*, 1668. Cited in Warszawski 2019.

tune¹¹⁴. He is no longer the “doom-and-gloom merchant” (Heller 2017) whose songs evoked “an atmosphere of decadence, profanity, and damnation” (ibid.). Cave is now dedicating his song-crafting to the study of the matters of the heart above all. Songs such as *Nobody’s Baby Now, No More Shall We Part* and *Love Letter*¹¹⁵, just to cite a few, have become classic Cave love songs. It is also this devotion to the register of the love song that contributes to make the songwriter an artisan of the lyric, as we have examined earlier in this dissertation.

Cave’s affinity for the love song is also discernable in the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*. Of the ten songs under study in this dissertation, only three are not centred around romantic elements, *There She Goes*, *My Beautiful World*, *The Lyre of Orpheus* and *O Children*. And of these three, only *O Children*, the closing track, does not feature any reference at all to love while both the other two songs comprise allusions to romantic relations:

<p>I look at you and you look at me and deep in our hearts know it That you weren't much of a muse but then I weren't much of a poet</p>	<p>Nous échangeons un regard et savons au fond de nos cœurs Que tu n'étais guère une muse mais, alors, je n'étais guère plus un poète</p>
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These lines can be seen as illustrations of Cave’s declarations about his reluctance and detachment from the conventional idea of the muse¹¹⁶. As for *The Lyre of Orpheus*, however dysfunctional the relationship between Orpheus and Eurydice may be in Cave’s retelling of the Greek myth, its literary heritage still conveys romantic undertones.

Cave has extensively reflected on the genre of the love song, in relation to his songwriting, leading him to write up a full lecture on the subject: *The Secret Life of the Love Song*, which he performed for the first time in 1998, at the Vienna Poetry Festival¹¹⁷. Love, it seems, does not come alone within Cave’s texts. It is more often than not connected to other states and emotions:

They [Cave’s songs] are the companions of the soul that lead it into exile, that sate the overpowering yearning for that which is not of this world. The imagination demands an alternative world, and through the writing of the love song one sits and dines with loss and longing, madness and melancholy, ecstasy, magic and joy with equal measure of respect and gratitude. (Cave 1999, 19)

114 No pun intended.

115 *Let Love In* and *No More Shall We Part* (x2).

116 “I have never been all that comfortable with the term “muse” either. I think the problem with the word is that traditionally “muse” feels female and takes a secondary position, as the source of inspiration for the male artist — a kind of sanctifying of a subordinate role. So there is something a bout it that feels a little undermining, as is the muse has nothing else to do but hang around energizing the artist.

“The Red Hand Files - Issue #167.” *The Red Hand Files*, 24 Sept. 2021.

117 The extracts cited in this work are actually taken from a later performance of the lecture at the South Bank Centre, in London, in 1999.

As mentioned earlier, Cave's songs are in the first place in direct connection with his sense of spirituality. He sees them indeed as born of divine inspiration, as summoned manifestations of God by the author:

Looking back over the past 20 years, a certain clarity prevails. Amidst the madness and the mayhem, it would seem I have been banging on one particular drum. I see that my artistic life has centred around an attempt to articulate an almost palpable sense of loss that laid claim to my life. A great gaping hole was blasted out of my world by the unexpected death of my father when I was 19. The way I learned to fill this hole, this void, was to write. My father taught me this as if to prepare me for his own passing. Writing allowed me direct access to my imagination, to inspiration and, ultimately, to God.

I found that, through the use of language, I was writing God into existence. Language became the blanket that I threw over the invisible man, which gave him shape and form. The actualisation of God through the medium of the love song remains my prime motivation as an artist. I found that language became a poultice to the wounds incurred by the death of my father. Language became a salve to longing. (Cave 1999, 6)

But beyond the godly presence that seems inseparable from Cave's song-crafting process, his songs are indissociable from a certain sense of sadness and melancholy. More than that, Cave argues that this certain part of sadness and longing is essential in the love song for it to fulfill its role of easing the sorrow of the soul. He links therefore the love song with not only the Portuguese concept of *saudade*, that he describes as "an inexplicable sense of longing, an unnamed and enigmatic yearning of the soul" (Cave 1999, 7); but also with Federico García Lorca's *duende*. The Spanish term refers, as for itself, to "the darkness, death, blood, and struggle within creation" (Alderton 2009, 184) but Cave links it to "the eerie and inexplicable sadness that lives in the heart of certain works of art." (Cave 1999, 7).

We all experience within us what the Portuguese call *saudade*, an inexplicable longing, an unnamed and enigmatic yearning of the soul, and it is this feeling that lives in the realms of imagination and inspiration, and is the breeding ground for the sad song, for the love song. *Saudade* is the desire to be transported from darkness into light, to be touched by the hand of that which is not of this world. The love song is the light of God, deep down, blasting up through our wounds.

In his brilliant lecture, *The Theory And Function Of Duende*, Federico Garcia Lorca attempts to shed some light on the eerie and inexplicable sadness that lives at the heart of certain works of art. "All that has dark sounds has *duende*." [...]

All love songs must contain *duende*, because the love song is never simply happy. It must first embrace the potential for pain. Those songs that speak of love, without having within their lines an ache or a sigh, are not love songs at all, but rather hate songs disguised as love songs, and are not to be trusted. These songs deny us our human-ness and our God-given right to be sad, and the airwaves are littered with them. The love song must resonate with the whispers of sorrow and the echoes of grief. (Cave 1999, 7-8)

Bob Dylan has it. Leonard Cohen too, he says. And so do Van Morrison, Tom Waits and Neil Young and The Dirty Three (Warren Ellis' first band) (Cave 1999, 8). It also seems that many of the

characters of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* have it. Cave's Orpheus seems even to perfectly epitomize both *saudade* and *duende*. His creation of the lyre seems indissociable from the state close to that of the *saudade* while "the darkness, death, blood, and struggle" that we mentioned to be distinctive to *duende* are constitutive parts of Orpheus' journey in Cave's retelling of the Greek myth.

Orpheus sat gloomy in his garden shed
Wondering what to do

Morose, Orphée s'assit dans son cabanon
Cherchant que faire

He was feeling something rotten

Il sentait quelque chose de pourri

Both emotions are also perceptible to a certain extent in *There She Goes My Beautiful World*. *Duende* indeed seems to lie in the rather dark fates of Cave's influences while the narrator seems more or less to be prey to *saudade*.

Karl Marx squeezed his carbuncles while writing Das
Kapital
And Gauguin, he buggered off, man and went all tropical
While Philip Larkin stuck it out in a library in Hull
And Dylan Thomas, he died drunk in St-Vincent Hospital

Karl Marx s'est serré la ceinture pendant qu'il écrivait Das
Kapital
Et Gauguin, il s'est barré pour ne plus peindre que des
scènes tropicales
Pendant que Philip Larkin tenait le coup dans une
bibliothèque d'Hull
Et Dylan Thomas est mort ivre, à Saint-Vincent Hospital

Well, me, I'm lying here, with nothing in my ears
Me, I'm lying here, with nothing in my ears
Me, I'm lying here, for what seems years
I'm just lying on my bed with nothing in my head

Et moi je suis couché là, sans le moindre air en tête
Moi, je suis couché là, sans le moindre air en tête
Je suis couché là, depuis une éternité
Je suis juste couché dans mon lit sans la moindre idée

Cave has been seen most of his career as a sinister figure, whose voice evoked "the moan of the wind through tombstones" (Heller 2017), only interested in the telling of sad or dark or violent stories (and sometimes the three at the same time). It is understandable that those who have witnessed his journey from the 1980's may seem him that way. And it is also undeniable that he has sometimes played around that image, on albums such as *Let Love In* or *Murder Ballads*, for example. Yet it would be diminishing to reduce Cave to that caricatural, grim-faced figure of torment. The songwriter himself seems aware and more or less distant from this image of him: "the way I'm portrayed I find particularly funny sometimes, this supposed pessimism I'm meant to harbour towards everything and anything." (Cave in Barron 2014). And the same argument goes for Cave's songs as well. They are indeed more complex objects than it would seem at first, even in their themes. And if Cave has often set his songs up with dark undertones and violent deeds, they still remain multidimensional pieces of work. As Cave explains:

Saudade is the desire to be transported from darkness into light, to be touched by the hand of that which is not of this world. The love song is the light of God, deep down, blasting up through our wounds. [...]

The writer who refuses to explore the darker reaches of the heart will never be able to write convincingly about the wonder, magic and joy of love, for just as goodness cannot be trusted unless it has breathed the same air as evil, so within the fabric of the love song, within its melody, its lyric, one must sense an acknowledgement of its capacity for suffering. (Cave 1999, 7-8)

There is therefore a dichotomy that subtends the love song of Nick Cave, as it appears to be both soaked in dark undertones and striving for light. The lyricist has thus written many love songs over the course of his career that have been associated with many different other emotions, from the voyeurism of *Watching Alice* to the incantatory wishes of *Palaces of Montezuma*¹¹⁸. Testifying to the hybridity of love in Cave's writing, Self writes that "each Cave love song is at once perfumed with yearning, and already stinks of the putrefying loss to come." (Self 2013, xii). Love does therefore not seem as an end in itself for Cave but rather a vehicle onto which he cannot help but to attach other sentiments and perceptions. In *Cannibal's Hymn* and in *Messiah Ward*, love is inescapably associated with worrying premonitions and mortuary connotations:

But if you're gonna dine with them cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten

Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces cannibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée

You are a force of nature, dear
Your breath curls from your lips
As the trees bend down their branches
And touch you with their fingertips
They're bringing out the dead now
It's easy just to look away
They are bringing out the dead now
It's been a strange, strange day

Tu es une force de la nature, ma chère
Ton souffle s'échappe en volutes de tes lèvres
Tandis que les arbres fléchissent leurs branches
Pour te toucher du bout de leurs doigts
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Et l'on peut ne pas regarder
Ils sortent le mort à présent
Ce fut une si étrange journée

Both songs are also under the yoke of an uncertainty and a sense of danger that perhaps forbids love to blossom.

Nature Boy is perhaps the most classic example of the telling of a love story to be found onto the album. But the song still depicts a certain un-stability of the narrator and multiplies the allusions to the unhealthiness of the couple. It is considered at times that the song refers to the romance Cave had with PJ Harvey in the end of the 1990's (Pengelly 2020).

I was walking around the flower show like a leper
Coming down with some kind of nervous hysteria

Je me promenais dans l'exposition florale comme un
lépreux
Frappé d'une sorte d'hystérie nerveuse

Years passed by, we were walking by the sea
Half delirious

Des années après, nous marchions au bord de l'océan
A moitié délirants

118 *Tender Prey*, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.
Grinderman II, Grinderman.

It was then that I broke down
It was then that you lifted me up again

C'est alors que je me suis effondré
C'est alors que tu m'as relevé à nouveau

Interestingly, if *Messiah Ward* and *Cannibal's Hymn* cannot rid themselves from their dark undertones, *Nature Boy* ends on a promise of salvation assured by the feminine protagonist of the song. The love song seems therefore very rarely unidimensional in Cave's writing.

In *Breathless*, nature is the vessel chosen by Cave to express his fascination towards the loved one. By doing so, he places the whole song under love's aegis; the track can arguably be considered as the purest love song on the album. In fact, one could even argue that Cave writes an ode¹¹⁹ that comprises transcendentalist¹²⁰ features. It is through the celebration of an untouched natural world that Cave praises the quality of his loved one, reminding us of this quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, founder of the transcendentalist movement: "In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says, -- he is my creature, and maugre all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me."¹²¹ Cave also associates nature with the events taking place within the song in *Babe, You Turn Me On*, in which nature becomes the backcloth and mirror of an erotic chase.

The fox chases the rabbit round
The rabbit hides beneath the ground
For he is defenceless without you
The sky of daytime dies away
And all the earthly things they stop to play
For we are all breathless without you

Le renard chasse le lapin dans la forêt
Le lapin court se cacher dans son terrier
Car il est sans défense sans toi
La lumière du jour commence à s'estomper
Et toutes les créatures sur Terre s'arrêtent de jouer
Car nous sommes tous démunis sans toi

Cave also associates nature with the events unfolding within the song in *Babe, You Turn Me On*, in which nature becomes the backcloth and mirror of an erotic chase.

The butcher bird makes it's noise
And asks you to agree
With it's brutal nesting habits
And it's pointless savagery
Now, the nightingale sings to you
And raises up the ante
I put one hand on your round ripe heart
And the other down your panties

119 *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines the ode as:

"an elaborately formal lyric poem, often in the form of a lengthy ceremonious address to a person or abstract entity, always serious and elevated in tone." (Baldick 2001, 177).

120 *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines transcendentalism as:

an idealist philosophical tendency among writers in and around Boston in the mid-19th century. [...]The leading Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson issued what was virtually the movement's manifesto in his essay *Nature* (1836), which presents natural phenomena as symbols of higher spiritual truths.

121 *Nature*, 1836.

The fragments of direct speech embedded within the songs are another vector of emotions in the texts. In *The Lyre of Orpheus*, the dialogues express the feelings of Orpheus; first of delight and excitement, then of horror and finally of resignation. It also testifies to Eurydice's anger.

He heard a sound so beautiful
He gasped and said O my God

Il entendit un son si beau
Que, saisi, il dit « Oh mon Dieu »

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »

O God, what have I done, he said

« Oh mon Dieu, qu'ai-je fait », dit-il

This lyre lark is for the birds, said Orpheus
It's enough to send you bats
Let's stay down here, Eurydice, dear
And we'll have a bunch of screaming brats

«Laissons tomber cette histoire de lyre » dit-Orphée
« Ou cela nous rendra déments
Restons ici-bas, Eurydice, ma douce
Faisons une bande de gamins bruyants »

Orpheus picked up his lyre for the last time
He was on a real low down bumper
And stared deep into the abyss and said
This one is for Mama

Orphée prit sa lyre pour la dernière fois
Il se sentait vraiment très, très amer
Il contempla l'abysse et dit
« Ça, c'est pour ma mère »

And she said to Orpheus
If you play that fucking thing down here
I'll stick it up your orifice!

Et dit à Orphée
« Joue de cette saloperie ici-bas
Et je te la ferai avaler »

The punctuation was added in the translation as to separate the utterances more clearly from the rest of the text.

Finally, *Hiding All Away*'s last stanza almost seems as a sort of mise en abyme when considering the importance of the theme of love throughout the album.

But we all know there is a law
And that law, it is love

Mais l'on sait tous qu'il est une loi
Et cette loi, c'est l'amour

These lines therefore underline the importance of emotions in the songs of the 2004 album, and more precisely, the importance of love, from which unfolds one of Cave's preferred forms: the love song. Cave's love songs rarely have a neutral agenda, in which the celebration of love is an end in itself, it would seem. Other dimensions and sentiments, such as uncertainty and divine connotations, are often attached to them by the songwriter. They seem nevertheless to share the same common goal in the end: to address and ease the longing and ache of the soul. As Cave himself acknowledges, by doing so, the love song is invested of a formidable emotional power, that to be the manifestations of love itself:

Maybe *songs* are the parlance of love. Maybe that's what we have conceived them for — to give a voice to this strange, inscrutable feeling that tears away at us, all our lives. I don't know. Maybe some songs are the embodiment of love itself and that's why they move us so deeply. They are

simple, plainspoken, incendiary devices that bomb the heart to pieces — something other art forms can't do with the same sudden and frightening precision.¹²²

2) Contrasting forces in the Abattoir Blues' world

The world that Nick Cave builds is in the end ruled by the contrast — the clash even sometimes— that opposes the many themes and elements of the songs of the 2004 album. Cave summons in turn God's Kingdom (in both the first and the last song of the album) and heathens; Saint John of the Cross and Johnny Thunders; laughter and tears; the depths of the ocean and the starry skies as well as heaven and hell.

The games of presence and absence that are at the core of several songs of the album constitute the first of these contrasts. In direct connection with the inaccessibility of some characters we have mentioned earlier, several songs indeed revolve around the quest for a missing loved one. *Hiding All Away* is built entirely upon the absence of the narrator, who seems to exist in the song only by being the object of the quest of the main protagonist. In his absence, Cave weaves a canvas of omnipresent dangers and threatening figures around which the song structures itself in an episodic manner, similarly to Homer's *Odyssey*. The textual structure of the song actually reinforces the separation between the protagonist and the man she is looking for. While the verses indeed detail her adventures, the narrator remains mostly confined to the refrains at the end of each stanzas.

You went and asked your doctor
To get some advice
He shot you full of Pethidine
And then he billed you twice
But I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
But I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

Tu t'en es allée demander à ton docteur
Des conseils à propos de tout cela
Il t'a droguée à la Péthidine
Et t'a facturée deux fois
Mais je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Mais je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

You approached a high court judge
You thought he'd be on the level
He wrapped a rag around your face
And beat you with his gavel
I was hiding, babe, hiding all away
I was hidden, dear, hiding all away

Tu as abordé un juge de la cour suprême
Pensant qu'il serait au niveau
Il t'a entouré le visage d'un torchon
Et t'a battue de son marteau
Je me cachais, chérie, je me cachais tout au loin
J'étais caché, ma chère, caché tout au loin

The sense of absence of the narrator is yet to be qualified as his presence still hovers onto the whole of the song through his narration itself, mainly. He is still the one providing insight on the actions of the protagonist and seems much more omniscient than she does. Moreover, much of the incidents that happen to the protagonist seem more or less directly connected with him, as she appears to search the places he used to linger in or, at least, that he shares some connection with.

122 "The Red Hand Files - Issue #32." *The Red Hand Files*, 22 Mar. 2019.

You searched through all my poets
From Sappho through to Auden
I saw the book fall from your hands
As you slowly died of boredom
I had been there, dear, but I was not there anymore
I had been there, now I'm hiding all away

Tu as cherché parmi tous mes poètes
De Sappho jusqu'à Auden
Alors que tu mourais lentement d'ennui
J'ai vu le livre tomber de tes mains
J'avais été là, ma chère, mais je n'y étais plus
J'avais été là maintenant je me cache tout au loin

You walked into the hall of fame
And approached my imitators
Some were stuffing their faces with caviar
Some were eating cold potatoes
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away
I was hiding, dear, hiding all away

Tu es entrée dans le panthéon
T'es approchée de mes imitateurs
Certains s'empiffraient de caviar
D'autres se contentaient de pommes de terre sans saveur
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin
Je me cachais, ma chère, je me cachais tout au loin

Supernaturally opens on a character that is also seeking her “loverman”, who seems to be lost far away from her.

With a teddy-bear clamped between her knees
She says, where can my loverman be?
Well, I'm down here, babe, with the Eskimos
With the polar bears and the Arctic snow
With a party of penguins who do not know
How I can get back to thee

Un ours en peluche entre les genoux fixé
« Où peut bien être mon loverman ? » dit-elle
Eh bien, je suis ici bas, chérie, avec les Eskimos
Avec les ours polaires, sous les neiges arctiques
Avec un groupe de pingouins ignorants
Comment puis-je te revenir

This time, however, the sense of absence is actually more of a perception than a reality. Indeed, if the first stanza does establish a separation between the two characters, that is key to the song, it also establishes their existence on the same plane or in the same diegesis, rather. Furthermore, the fact that both characters strive to find each other in the beginning of the song further differentiate the song from *Hiding All Away*. However, the chasing sequence that brings together the two characters at the end of the song only reinforces their separation, as the narrator cannot reach the other protagonist.

Now I've turned the mirrors to wall
I've emptied out the peopled halls
I've nailed shut the windows and locked the doors
There is no escape, you see
I chase you up and down the stairs
Under tables and over chairs
I reach out and I touch your hair
And it cuts me like a knife
For there is always something
other little thing you gotta do

J'ai maintenant retourné les miroirs face aux murs
J'ai dispersé la foule des salles surpeuplées
J'ai cloué les fenêtres et verrouillé les portes
Tu vois, il n'y a pas d'issue
Je te poursuis dans les escaliers
Sous des tables, par-dessus chaises
Je tends le bras et touche tes cheveux
Qui me coupent comme une lame
Car il y a toujours quelque autre petite chose que tu dois faire

Spell, finally, is truly centred on the absence of another character, only this time, it is the narrator that endorses the role of the “searcher”. Despite his or her absence, the other protagonist still manages to hold some influence onto the narrator, as the choruses illustrate:

And I'm full of love

Et je suis empli d'amour

And I'm full of wonder
And I'm full of love
And I'm falling under
Your spell

Et je suis plein d'émerveillement
Et je suis empli d'amour
Et je succombe
A ton envoûtement

The repetitions, notably of sounds, of the choruses are to be underlined, as it textually transcribes the enchantment the narrator falls under. They could only be partially reproduced in the target text as “je suis plein d’amour” sounded a bit too informal and “je suis empli d’émerveillement, as for itself, seemed too heavy and un-idiomatic.

The second opposition that subtends the texts is one we have already come to lean upon a bit; it is an opposition of registers between that of the serious, the solemn and the lighter one of humour. Despite the apparent seriousness that seem to often characterize his songs, Cave has regularly enjoyed disseminating touches of humour to enliven the tone of his texts. From burlesque to satire, to irony and to more subtleness, Cave’s humour takes on many forms on the album, as we have examined earlier. In fact, if the seriousness and solemnity of his work has been assessed on many occasions, Cave argues that humour is an essential feature to his writing:

There is nothing on this earth that is so serious that it cannot be elevated by humour. Humour is not lack of gravity and it is not frivolity. Rather, it is the merciful oxygen that can envelop seriousness and prevent it from becoming a grim contagion that infects ourselves and those around us. True humour is the antidote to dogmatism and fanaticism, and we must be cautious of the humourless and those who cannot take a joke.

Humour is the way in which we manoeuvre ourselves through the things that are difficult to talk about, that require subtlety of thought, that are counter-intuitive, uncertain and mysterious. Humour is a way of exploring the uncomfortable without fully committing ourselves, testing and pushing at the boundaries of acceptability, always able to retreat back into the form itself.

In this respect [...], I am a humorist, and many of my songs are essentially comic songs. I have always used humour as a way of presenting ideas that may otherwise be considered unacceptable. Humour is a device that allows us to push against the constraints of decorum and say the uncomfortable things that challenge our presumptions; it allows us room to breathe.¹²³

The third dichotomy around which is organized the world of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre Of Orpheus* is the opposition between the sacred and the unholy, that we have briefly mentioned earlier too. In the same stanza, Cave mentions for example Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish Catholic Priest of the 16th century who was imprisoned and tortured in a period of religious tension; and Johnny Thunders, the infamous guitarist of glam rock pioneers The New York Dolls, whose lifestyle was far from that of a saint, to say the least. The same stanza also comprises a reference to John Wilmot, the second earl of Rochester, an English aristocrat of the 17th century renowned for his poetry but also for his life of debauchery and depravity.

123 “The Red Hand Files - Issue #75.” *The Red Hand Files*, 11 Dec 2019.

John Wilmot penned his poetry riddled with the pox
Nabokov wrote on index cards at a lectern, in his socks
St. John of the Cross did his best stuff imprisoned in a box
And Johnny Thunders was half alive when he wrote
Chinese Rocks

John Wilmot a écrit ses poèmes rongé par la vérole
Nabokov, en chaussettes, a écrit à ses lecteurs sur des
fiches Bristol
Jean de la Croix a écrit ses plus belles œuvres enfermé au
fond d'une geôle
Et Johnny Thunders, a écrit Chinese Rocks alors qu'il était
presque mort

As Lyn McCredden writes, both the sacred and the unholy — she refers to it as the profane— are essential features of Cave's texts that offer not a separation of the two but rather interplays. Interestingly, she also describes Cave's conception of spirituality as a way to fill the void that was opened in him by the death of his father:

The sacred (the holy, divine, purity, justice, mercy) and the profane (violence, taboos, impurity, retribution) do not stand apart in his work. They are in dynamic and sometimes painful conjunction. This interplay creates a sprawling, unsystematic and confrontational dialogue with divine forces that for the narrators in the songs may or may not be 'there'. [...] What we find stamped across his songs, over and over, is the dark, lonely figure of a man caught up in desire for a divine source or balm.

In his most powerful songs a theology emerges which does not simply endure or oppose human violence, abjection and flesh, but sees them as intimately entwined with the sacred. (McCredden 2009, 167)

Both *Hiding All Away* and *The Lyre of Orpheus* can moreover be seen as perfectly valid confirmations of McCredden's argument that Cave mixes within his texts sacred and profane elements. Indeed, the two songs, if they present divine-related elements, come to counter-balance them with the de-sacralization of these elements by juxtaposing them with violent and unholy features.

You asked the butcher
Who lifted up his cleaver
Stuck his fist up your dress
Said he must've been mad to leave you
But I had to get away, dear, hiding all away
I had to get away, dear, I was hidden all away

Tu as demandé au boucher
Qui a levé son couperet
Il a fourré son poing sous ta robe
Et dit « il doit être fou de t'avoir abandonnée »
Mais j'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, me cacher tout au loin
J'ai dû m'en aller, ma chère, j'étais caché tout au loin

Some of us we hide away
Some of us we don't
Some will live to love another day
And some of us won't
But we all know there is a law
And that law, it is love
And we all know there's a war coming
Coming from above

Certains d'entre nous se cachent au loin
Certains d'entre nous, non
Certains vivront pour aimer un autre jour
Et certains d'entre nous ne pourront
Mais l'on sait tous qu'il est une loi
Et cette loi, c'est l'amour
Et l'on sait tous qu'une guerre va s'abattre
S'abattre du ciel

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
He hit a G minor 7
He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
God was a major player in heaven

Orphée joua jusqu'à avoir les doigts en sang
Il fit un Sol mineur septième
Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb
Lui qui jouait un rôle majeur au céleste domaine

O Mama O Mama

God picked up a giant hammer
And He threw it with a thunderous yell
It smashed down hard on Orpheus' head
And knocked him down a well
O Mama O Mama

O Mama O Mama

Dieu souleva un gigantesque marteau
Qu'il jeta d'un tonitruant cri
Il s'abattit sur la tête d'Orphée
Et le jeta au fond d'un puits
O Mama O Mama

The song's closing stanza may yet be seen as the announcement of a divine punishment, in the likes of the Flood, that will come to cleanse the world of all its depravity. This is however to be qualified by the fact that no sense of justice really emanates from this last stanza and that "war" still means in the end continuing the propagation of violence. In fact, from the "heathens" of *Cannibal's Hymn* to the violent and cantankerous God of *The Lyre of Orpheus*, the profane seems this time to overcome the sacred if we take a broader look at the whole of the album.

In connection with that idea is the contrast between love and violence that pervades the album. In fact, except in *Breathless* (where there is still a fox chasing a rabbit), it seems that love cannot exist without some form of violence in the songs of the 2004 album. At the occasion of the release of *Dig, Lazarus, Dig!!!*, the follow-up Bad Seeds' album to *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*, Cave seemed to fully embrace that apparent dichotomy:

If you took love out of the equation, I wouldn't know what else to write about. But I think mostly for me, I write violent lyrics. Even the most beautiful love lyrics that I write are always for me seen through a prism of violence. (Cave in Jaffe 2010)

From his beginnings with The Birthday Party back in 1978, violence became a regular feature in Nick Cave's artistic output. Whether it was expressed in his lyrics, in his behavior, in any of his bands' live shows or just musically, violence has more than often lurked within his art. In 2004, the Australian singer told the Herald Scotland:

I'm interested in our capacity for violence. We live in civilized societies where we live civilized lives, all of us. We can all sit down and communicate with each other but inside each one of us is the potential for untold violence and evil, given the right or the wrong situation. (Herald Scotland 2012)

After all, the Bad Seeds have released an entire album centered almost exclusively on murder. And, although violence is arguably less omnipresent in the 2004 effort in comparison to the 1996 record, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* remains an album fraught with violent deeds. And this feature has evidently to be taken into account when considering the translation of the album's songs. Violence threatens from the very first lines of *Messiah Ward*, as the narrator warns the song's protagonist about the intentions of the "heathens" she spends time with.

You have a heart and I have a key
Lie back and let me unlock you
Those heathens you hang with down by the sea
All they want to do is defrock you

Tu as un cœur et moi une clef
Étends-toi, laisse-moi le déverrouiller
Tout ce que veulent ces païens, que sur le rivage tu t'en
vas retrouver
C'est te défroquer

As those first lines indicate, sexual tension and eroticism are never too far away, a feature Cave has also acknowledged before:

L'érotisme, c'est le fruit de l'esprit, c'est du domaine de l'imaginaire et du fantastique. Pour moi, même l'écriture d'une chanson peut être érotique dans sa nature parce que c'est une histoire de fantasme, d'imagination. C'est aussi une expérience religieuse, puisqu'il s'agit d'une transformation. L'écriture permet de devenir différent. Quand on utilise aujourd'hui les termes érotisme et religieux, les gens se font immédiatement des idées fausses. Lorsque je dis religieux, je ne fais pas référence au christianisme, je n'ai jamais été là-dedans, mais je suis préoccupé par la vie intérieure qui a tout à voir avec l'érotisme... (Cheley 2020)

The play on sounds between “defrock you” and “to fuck you” on the fourth line also reinforces the violently erotic dimension of the text. The many recurrences of hard sounds, most notably in -b and -g in the choruses, come to textually convey that sensation and could only be partially reproduced in the target language. This leads therefore to a down-toning of the sexual innuendos in the translation as the sound play aforementioned could not be preserved either.

But if you're **g**onna dine with them **c**annibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're **g**onna **g**et eaten
But I'm **g**lad you've come around here with your animals
And your heart that is **b**ruised **b**ut unbeaten
And **b**eating like a drum

Mais si tu vas dîner avec ces **c**annibales
Tôt ou tard, ma chère, tu finiras mangée
Mais je me réjouis que tu sois venue ici **b**as avec tes
animaux
Et ton cœur, meurtri mais non défait
Qui **b**at comme un **t**ambour

Violence and sexual tension are also linked in *Hiding All Away*. If it is mostly implicit at first, the references to sexual violence become more and more explicit as the song progresses, leading to an effect of gradation and tension-building that culminates in the last stanza and the end choruses.

You went and asked your doctor
To get some advice
He shot you full of Pethidine
And then he billed you twice

Tu t'en es allée demander à ton docteur
Des conseils à propos de tout cela
Il t'a droguée à la Péthidine
Et t'a facturée deux fois

You asked at the local constabulary
They said, he's up to his same old tricks
They leered at you with their baby blues
And rubbed jelly on their sticks

Tu es allée au poste de police du coin
« Il fait encore des siennes » ont-ils affirmé
Ils t'ont lorgnée en proie à leur baby blues
Et ont enduit leurs matraques de gelée

You asked the **b**utcher
Who **l**ifted **u**p his **c**leaver
Stuck his **f**ist **u**p your **d**ress
Said he must've **b**een **m**ad to leave you

Tu as **d**emandé au **b**oucher
Qui a levé son **c**ouperet
Il a fourré son **p**oing sous **t**a **r**obe
Et **d**it « il **d**oit être fou **d**e **t'**avoir **a**bandonnée »

Violence and sexuality are therefore clearly superimposed in this stanza through both the image of the cleaver and the actions of the butcher themselves. The repetition of hard consonants in the original text also participates to carry that violence and was more or less reproduced in the translation.

In *Nature Boy*, the description of the sexual act is considerably lighter and is assured through the use of rather comical, absurd metaphors, more or less explicit, and that could be kept in the target language.

You took me back to your place
And dressed me up in a deep sea diver's suit
You played the patriot, you raised the flag
And I stood at full salute

Tu m'as ramené chez toi
Et fait enfiler un scaphandre de plongée
Tu as joué au patriote, levé le drapeau
Et je me suis tenu au garde-à-vous

Supernaturally, as for itself, contains a more diffuse and unclear sense of sexual tension as the song details the game of hide and seek of its two characters that culminates in a violent chase scene.

With an army of tanks bursting from your chest
I wave my little white flag at thee

Avec une armée de tanks qui jaillissent de ta poitrine
J'agite mon petit drapeau blanc devant toi

Now I've turned the mirrors to wall
I've emptied out the peopled halls
I've nailed shut the windows and locked the doors
There is no escape, you see
I chase you up and down the stairs
Under tables and over chairs
I reach out and I touch your hair
And it cuts me like a knife

J'ai maintenant retourné les miroirs face aux murs
J'ai dispersé la foule des salles surpeuplées
J'ai cloué les fenêtres et verrouillé les portes
Tu vois, il n'y a pas d'issue
Je te poursuis dans les escaliers
Sous des tables, par-dessus chaises
Je tends le bras et touche tes cheveux
Qui me coupent comme une lame

In *The Lyre of Orpheus*, violence serves as a tool of distortion of the epic register, as mentioned in the first part of the dissertation. The song contains the most graphic scenes of the album as Cave explicitly details the fate of the song's characters, first Eurydice and then Orpheus. Music, in this case, seems to be connected to violence, as it is the sound of Orpheus' lyre that dooms the characters. The contrast between the "gentle note" Orpheus plays and the gruesome effects it causes is also highlighted.

Look what I've made, cried Orpheus
And he plucked a gentle note
Eurydice's eyes popped from their sockets
And her tongue burst through her throat

Orphée cria « Regarde moi ça »
Et doucement joua une note
Les yeux d'Eurydice éclatèrent dans leur orbite
Sa langue explosa dans sa gorge

Poor Orpheus woke up with a start
All amongst the rotting dead
His lyre tucked safe under his arm
His brains all down his head

Le pauvre Orphée se réveilla en sursaut
Parmi les corps pourrissants
Sa lyre bien à l'abri sous son bras
Son cerveau sur le sol gisant

In fact, Orpheus' creation of the lyre endorses almost Promethean undertones in Cave's retelling of the myth. Music, before the invention of the Greek musician, seemed indeed to be reserved strictly to the domain of the skies. Orpheus' musical invention therefore comes as a desacralization of the art that was God's only, it would seem. This is underlined in the eighth stanza in which Orpheus plays a minor chord while God seemed to favour the major tonality.

Orpheus strummed till his fingers bled
He hit a G **minor** 7
He woke up God from a deep, deep sleep
God was a **major** player in heaven
O Mama O Mama

Orphée joua jusqu'à avoir les doigts en sang
Il fit un Sol **mineur** septième
Il tira Dieu d'un sommeil de plomb
Lui qui jouait un rôle **majeur** au céleste domaine
O Mama O Mama

This also reminds us of the opposition between the sacred and the unholy, not only because of how God is portrayed, but also because Orpheus' fate seems due to the fact he meddled with the matters of the divine. The song therefore depicts a strict separation between the two worlds.

As for itself, love is omnipresent in Cave's texts, as we have addressed before. This has led to a recurrence of love songs throughout his career. In his 1999 lecture, Cave thus commented on the many attributes of the love song, comparing it to love letters¹²⁴ in doing so:

We discussed the power of the love letter, and found that it was, not surprisingly, very similar to that of the love song. Both serve as extended meditations on one's beloved. Both serve to shorten the distance between the writer and the recipient. Both hold within them a permanence and power that the spoken word does not. Both are erotic exercises in themselves. Both have the potential to reinvent, through words, like Pygmalion with his self-created lover of stone, one's beloved. But more than that, both have the insidious power to imprison one's beloved, to bind their hands with love-lines, gag them, blind them, for words become the defining parameter that keeps the image of the loved one imprisoned in a bondage of poetry. "I have taken possession of you," the love letter, the love song, whispers, for ever. (Cave 1999, 14-15)

This duality that subtends the texts, between love and violence, seems to be part of a broader dual tension, the battle between life and death. Cave has extensively written about death, perhaps more than any other songwriter. In fact, he argues that life and death are very much intertwined and that love (the manifestation of life), cannot exist without grief.

It seems to me, that if we love, we grieve. That's the deal. That's the pact. Grief and love are forever intertwined. Grief is the terrible reminder of the depths of our love and, like love, grief is non-negotiable. There is a vastness to grief that overwhelms our miniscule selves. We are tiny, trembling clusters of atoms subsumed within grief's awesome presence. It occupies the core of our being and extends through our fingers to the limits of the universe. Within that whirling gyre all manner of madnesses exist; ghosts and spirits and dream visitations, and everything else that we, in our anguish, will into existence. These are precious gifts that are as valid and as real as we need them to be. They are the spirit guides that lead us out of the darkness.¹²⁵

124 Cave wrote for the Bad Seeds' 2001 album, *No More Shall We Part*, a song called *Love Letter*.

125 "The Red Hand Files – Issue #6." *The Red Hand Files*, 18 Oct. 2018.

O Children is perhaps the best example of how the songs of the album are torn apart between life and death. The song is indeed placed under the sign of grief, that is so important to Cave as he explained just above. After some traumatising events, the habitants of a town seem to gather in order to reflect on the tragedy that has happened. As we have discussed earlier, the song is structured upon the division between the point of view of the adults and that of the children in question. In a twist that serves to reinforce the song's emotional potency, the children are placed by Cave in connection with death while the adults are condemned to remain alive in the grip of their remorse. The last stanzas of the song indeed presents the children leaving for the Kingdom, here also drawing a bridge between earthly and sacred domains:

Hey little train! We are all jumping on
 The train that goes to the Kingdom
 We're happy, Ma, we're having fun
 And the train ain't even left the station

Hé, petit train ! Tous à bord des wagons
 Du train qui part pour le Royaume
 On est heureux, M'man, on s'amuse bien
 Et le train n'a même pas quitté la gare

The innocence of the voices of the children is here contrasting with the tragedy of the situation and offers to the listener a poignant sense of dichotomy.

Hey little train! Wait for me!
 I was held in chains but now I'm free
 I'm hanging in there, don't you see
 In this process of elimination

Hé, petit train ! Attends moi, donc !
 J'étais enchaîné mais plus maintenant
 Ne vois-tu pas que je tiens bon
 Au milieu de cette procédure d'élimination

Death also hovers above *Messiah Ward* quite clearly. If the refrains refer quite clearly to it, the whole of the song actually has an apocalyptic dimension:

They're bringing out the dead now
 It's easy just to look away
 They are bringing out the dead now
 It's been a strange, strange day

Ils sortent le mort à présent
 Et l'on peut ne pas regarder
 Ils sortent le mort à présent
 Ce fut une si étrange journée

The stars have been torn down
 The moon is locked away
 And the land is banked in frozen snow

Les étoiles ont été jetées à bas
 La lune emprisonnée au loin
 Et les terres recouvertes de neige gelée

We could navigate our position by the stars
 But they've taken out the stars
 The stars have all gone
 I'm glad you've come along
 We could comprehend our condition by the moon
 But they've ordered the moon not to shine
 Still, I'm glad you've come along
 I was worried out of my mind

Nous pourrions naviguer à la lumière des étoiles
 Mais ils ont enlevé les étoiles
 Les étoiles ont toutes disparu
 Mais je suis content que tu sois venue
 Nous pourrions trouver notre chemin à le lueur de la lune
 Mais ils ont ordonné à la lune de ne pas briller
 Malgré cela je suis content que tu sois là
 J'étais fou d'inquiétude

As for the presence of life, it seems to be assured by the very existence of the songs. As Alderton indeed argues, Cave considers artistic creativity as a God-related and as vector for life to

emerge: “He views creativity as a divinely sanctioned act, which is seen as a means of expressing God and reciprocating the gift of life.” (Alderton 2009, 175). Cave’s *The Secret Life of the Love Song* also comes to support this idea:

Mostly, they [his songs] were the offspring of complicated pregnancies and difficult and painful births. Most are rooted in direct personal experience and were conceived for a variety of reasons, but this rag-tag group of love songs are, at the death, all the same thing — lifelines thrown into the galaxies by a drowning man. [...]

Me, I’m a soul-catcher for God. Here I come with my butterfly net of words. Here I catch the chrysalis. Here I blow life into bodies, and hurl them fluttering to the stars and the care of God. (Cave 1999, 15)

In the end, all of these contrasts can be summarized in a single one, around which the songs are structured. The constant opposition between beauty and ugliness is at the very core of the album, as they both overlap throughout its entirety. Ugliness must be understood as a rather vague and vast term, that includes all the violence, the death, the unholiness that pervade the texts and that seemingly prevent beauty to fully rule over them. This is a recurrent contrast in Cave’s songs. One can only think of *Where the Wild Roses Grow*¹²⁶ when approaching that chiasmic dimension of his work. In his 1996 hit, Cave already made death clash with the beauty of the song’s female character, as encapsulated in the song’s last verse:

On the last day I took her where the wild roses grow
And she lay on the bank, the wind light as a thief
As I kissed her goodbye, I said, “All beauty must die”
And lent down and planted a rose between her teeth

In *Brompton Oratory*¹²⁷, beauty is almost a burden for the narrator, arguably Cave himself as the album is his most autobiographical. It is also strongly linked with the divine, as the song takes place at a Bible reading, in a church:

Up those stone steps I climb
Hail this joyful day’s return
Into its great shadowed vault I go
Hail the Pentecostal morn

And I wish that I was made of stone
So that I would not have to see
A beauty impossible to define
A beauty impossible to believe

The reading is from Luke 24
Where Christ returns to his loved ones
I look at the stone apostles
Think that it’s alright for some

A beauty impossible to endure
The blood imparted in little sips
The smell of you still on my hands
As I bring the cup up to my lips

The attention to beauty is therefore a crucial element of Cave’s writing, as McCredden underlines: “Cave stands in a long line of Gothic and Romantic writers who confront the sublime, ‘the beauty

126 *Murder Ballads*.

127 *The Boatman’s Call*.

and the terror' of the created, carnal world ." (McCredden 2009, 167). Christopher Hartney, as for him, links Cave's yearning to insert beauty within his songs with his Biblical influences and describes Cave as "delving into the majesty, wisdom, beauty, and sheer cruelty of the Bible to present an art that drips with both poetic and theological drama." (Hartney 2012, 268).

Beauty, with its subjective connotations, remains very elusive and tends to resist definition. We are reminded in this part of Emily Dickinson's lines¹²⁸:

Beauty — be not caused — It Is —
Chase it, and it ceases —
Chase it not, and it abides —
Overtake the Creases
In the Meadow — when the Wind
Runs his fingers thro' it —
Deity will see to it
That You never do it —

Beauty takes on many forms onto *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* but the first aspect we can mention is probably the beauty of the Nick Cave's writing itself. We have tried to demonstrate throughout the course of this work all the poetical qualities that imprint Cave's songwriting and that contribute to make the text beautiful. It is also important to underline that the beauty of Cave's texts fully blossoms not on the page of the album's booklet or in this dissertation's analyses but when listened accompanied by the unique musical skills of the Bad Seeds. There is undeniably beauty to be found in the love song and in songwriting itself defends Cave:

Love songs that attach themselves to actual experience, that are a poeticising of real events, have a beauty unto themselves. They stay alive in the same way memories do and, being alive, they grow up and undergo changes and develop. If a song is too weak to do that, if it is lacking in sufficient stamina and the will to endure, sadly, it will not survive. You'll come home one day and find it dead in the bottom of its cage. Its soul will have been reclaimed and all that will remain is a pile of useless words. A love song such as *Far From Me* demanded a personality beyond the one I originally gave it, with the power to influence my own feelings and thoughts around the actual event itself. The songs that I have written that deal with past relationships have become the relationships themselves, heroically mutating with time and mythologising the ordinary events of my life, lifting them from the temporal plane and blasting them way into the stars. As the relationship itself collapses, whimpering with exhaustion, the song breaks free of it and beats its wings heavenward. Such is the singular beauty of songwriting. (Cave 1999, 18)

The first example on the album that comes to mind is *Nature Boy*'s first stanza, in which beauty is presented as the solution to the world's ugliness, as a vector of salvation for this world whose soul Cave's songs aim to save¹²⁹:

I was just a boy when I sat down
To watch the news on TV

Je n'étais qu'un garçon lorsque je m'assis
Pour regarder les infos à la télé

128 Poem 654, 1863. In Dickinson 2020, 608.

129 "The Red Hand Files - Issue #102." *The Red Hand Files*, 23 June 2020.

I saw some ordinary slaughter
 I saw some routine atrocity
 My father said, don't look away
 You got to be strong, you got to be bold, now
 He said, that in the end it is beauty
 That is going to save the world, now

J'y ai vu quelques massacres ordinaires
 J'y ai vu quelques habituelles atrocités
 Mon père m'a dit « regarde,
 Il faut que tu sois fort et courageux, à présent »
 Il a dit qu'au bout du compte, c'est la beauté
 Qui sauvera le monde de l'effondrement

It is later in the song the element that will trigger the narrator's breakdown and thus pave the way for his salvation:

You pointed at something and said
 Have you ever seen such a beautiful thing?
 It was then that I broke down
 It was then that you lifted me up again

Avant de pointer le doigt au loin et de dire
 « As-tu déjà vu une quelque chose d'aussi beau ? »
 C'est alors que je me suis effondré
 C'est alors que tu m'as relevé à nouveau

And this here appears as the perfect epitome of the relation between beauty and Cave's texts: no matter their violence, their darkness or their profanity, beauty still manages to find a way within them to counterbalance it, as Yael Klangwisan explains:

There are moments of beauty that slip in and out of Cave's art: "... a wisp of light air, goodness and redemption". Cave's creative project in itself is a sign of life, not just death, depravity and destruction, a kind of life and death struggle. (Klangwisan 2013, 154)

As he compares Cave and Lou Reed, journalist Jeremy Larson also points out the duality between light and obscurity that marks Cave's songwriting and his approach to beauty:

Cave shares this quality with Reed, each in their own milieu. Both tell stories of druggies, nymphos, transvestites, whores, burnouts, murderers, alcoholics, junkies — those in the lower castes of society. Their songs come from the darker regions of their hearts, only to better understand what it is that makes things light. (Larson 2013)

There She Goes My Beautiful World is the other example on the album that points in that direction. The beauty that is to be found in the works of Cave's influences seems to have emerged through hardship and ordeals. John Wilmot was a 17th century rake who died at the age of 33 after contracting several venereal diseases. John of the Cross was imprisoned and tortured for his religious beliefs. Johnny Thunders, finally, suffered from drug addiction and alcoholism and both allegedly led to his death at the age of 38. There is in this last reference a certain game of mirror with Cave's own behaviour in the 1980's (Hattenstone 2008). It seems thus that beauty manages to blossom even in the most dire circumstances.

John Wilmot penned his poetry riddled with the pox
 Nabokov wrote on index cards at a lectern, in his socks
 St. John of the Cross did his best stuff imprisoned in a box
 And Johnny Thunders was half alive when he wrote
 Chinese Rocks

John Wilmot a écrit ses poèmes rongé par la vérole
 Nabokov, en chaussettes, a écrit à ses lecteurs sur des
 fiches Bristol
 Jean de la Croix a écrit ses plus belles œuvres enfermé au
 fond d'une geôle

Et Johnny Thunders, a écrit Chinese Rocks alors qu'il était presque mort

Beauty, of course, lies also in the music played by Orpheus, even to the price of his and Eurydice's lives. The intensity of it is here conveyed by the insertion of direct speech. The addition of "saisi" in the translation, beyond reproducing the meaning of "gasp", also helped to transmit this feeling.

Orpheus looked at his instrument
And he gave the wire a pluck
He heard a sound so beautiful
He gasped and said O my God

Orphée contempla son instrument
Puis il pinça le fil de fer
Il entendit un son si beau
Que, saisi, il dit « Oh mon Dieu »

It is also to be found in the "supernaturality" of the *Breathless*' addressee and her connection with the natural world. The "bubbling brook" at the end of the first stanza may be seen as indirectly referring to Emily Dickinson's 27th poem¹³⁰.

It's up in the morning and on the downs
Little white clouds like gambolling lambs
And I am breathless over you
And the red-breasted robin beats his wings
His throat it trembles when he sings
For he is helpless before you
The happy hooded bluebells bow
And bend their heads all a-down
Heavied by the early morning dew
At the whispering stream, at the bubbling brook
The fishes leap up to take a look
For they are breathless over you

C'est dans l'air du matin et sur les pentes des bas monts
De petits nuages blancs comme autant d'agneaux
gambadant
Et j'ai le souffle coupé devant toi
Et le rouge-gorge bat des ailes
Quand il chante sa voix chancelle
Car il est sans défense devant toi
Les joyeuses jacinthes inclinent leurs têtes fleuries
Par la rosée du petit matin alourdies
Jusqu'à toucher le sol des bois
Sous le murmure du ruisseau, sous le babil des flots
Les poissons bondissent pour jeter un coup d'œil hors de
l'eau
Mais ils ont le souffle coupé devant toi

In fact, beauty seems to be even at the core of the translational process. Is it not one of the translator's main aims to preserve into the target text the sense of wonder that has seized him at the lecture of an original text? And thus, to assure through his re-creation, a continuation of beauty? Morel's assertions that translation is the most complete act of lecture seems to tend towards that idea:

On devine alors qu'idéalement la traduction est non seulement l'acte de lecture le plus complet qui soit, mais aussi un acte d'écriture se mesurant à celui du créateur originel, dans une transparence seconde qui en fait la beauté et le paradoxe. (Morel 2006, 3)

130 Flees so the phantom meadow
Before the breathless Bee –
So bubble brooks in deserts
On ears that dying lie –
Burn so the evening spires
To eyes that Closing go –
Hangs so distant Heaven –
To a hand below.
Poem 27, 1858. In Dickinson 2020, 40.

In conclusion, *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* is, as we mentioned before, a multifaceted album, marked by the contrasting forces that dwell within the lyrics of its songs. Cave indeed opposes sacred and unholy elements within his songwriting. He also deploys games of presence and absence alternately, of his songs' characters. Love, Cave's primordial concern, is often tainted with violence in the same manner that life and death give battle to each other for the domination of the texts. But finally, joining all these other clashes together, we find the opposition between ugliness and beauty, a feature that is still present to this day in his artistic output. Cave himself indeed defined his most recent album, *CARNAGE*, as being both "brutal and beautiful." (Cave in Hawkins 2021).

CONCLUSION

What does it mean to translate Nick Cave? What does translating the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* imply? These are the questions at the very core of this dissertation, the questions that underlie its whole process of reflection and analysis. In the end, these are the questions this work tried to provide an answer to by examining the poetical issues of Nick Cave's lyrics for the 2004 album of the Bad Seeds. And, as we have seen it, the construction of a world is the common thread that tie the songs of *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* together.

The first feature of Cave's texts that we discussed was how his songs come to constitute a poetical and literary journey. The many movements and trajectories that bring the texts to life were indeed one of the first elements to come out of the study of the corpus. Cave's texts are imprinted by their literary legacy, perhaps to an unmatched degree in the field of songwriting (Taylor 2021). This is first embodied by the songwriter's re-utilization of the literary tradition of the ballad, that led us to discuss lyric and narrative modes in Cave's writing. The songwriter's distortion of the epic is the other main vector of this literary heritage. This first part was also finally the occasion to discuss the question of the translation of sounds in poetical texts and to assert its importance.

We opened the second part with an examination of Cave's fascination with myths. This significant interest of the songwriter for pre-existent myths leads him to actually reprise many of their elements into his songs. It must also be linked with Cave's sense of faith, an essential feature of his work. Cave's spirituality is inseparable from his Christian influences that have actually become a trademark of his songwriting. The next feature to be considered was the importance of figures and places as vectors of organization in Cave's world. There is a line in *The Mercy Seat*¹³¹, one the Bad Seeds' most emblematic songs that goes as follows: "A throne from which I'm told / All history does unfold." The same principle seems applicable in regard to the importance of characters and places of the 2004 album: all the songs seem to unfold and revolve around these agents of structuration. The final point discussed in this second part is to be placed in direct connection with the profusion of characters in Cave's songwriting: there is indeed a multiplicity of tones and voices that characterizes the texts of the record.

The last part was ultimately dedicated to the importance of emotions in Cave's songwriting. They are indeed preponderant features of the 2004 album that fill its texts. This leads actually to a sort of *mise en abyme* as emotions, if they are undoubtedly a primordial feature of the lyrics, are also a key element of the music of the Bad Seeds itself. At last, these emotions come often to

131 *Tender Prey*.

contrast with each other in the texts of Cave. Love is thus often interwoven with violence; the sacred and the unholy regularly overlap and life and death's eternal battle also occupies Cave's lyrics. But all these contrasts that are primordial in *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus* can actually be summarized to a single, larger one: the struggle between ugliness and beauty. Indeed, despite their apparent darkness, Cave's texts often manage nonetheless to offer subtle touches of light and beauty to counterbalance it.

In the end, the world of Nick Cave is a complex and poetic world and its translation — like any work of literary translation— hence comes to be a complex task. “Poetry is what gets lost in translation” declared Robert Frost. There is undoubtedly some truth in the American poet's statement. At the end of the day, any work of translation seems to amount to asking what translation really implies. And there is no perfect answer, it seems, only tracks and elements that may or may not guide the translator in his work. Song translation is a complex task, due to the double nature of its subject. If it has never been the ambition of this dissertation to provide a definitive answer to these questions or a complete guide to song translation, we humbly hope nonetheless to have provided some elements of reflection to consider when undertaking such a task.

Frost's famous maxim has probably crossed more translator's minds than one could ever tell. If it implies the impossibility to reach a perfect translation, it also implies the importance of what remains, of what the translation manages to convey nevertheless; it underlines unwillingly the importance of that new kingdom made of sounds and senses almost autonomous¹³², as Claude Vigée puts it. We would like to seize the opportunity of this conclusion to come back to the form of this dissertation and on the link between the acts of translation and commentary. Both seem indeed brought together by a common goal, that of assuring the continuation of a text in another language (Peslier; Dosse. 2016).

S'ouvre ici un questionnement sur la qualité commune au commentaire et à la traduction, cette vertu inchoative qui les rassemble comme puissances du poème à recommencer, en un autre local et par une énonciation nouvelle, possibilité pour lui d'être articulé de nouveau (potentialité aussi bien offerte par la traduction que dans l'exercice du commentaire). [...]

On privilégiera avec Claude Vigée un éloge du recommencement. Traduire, commenter, c'est toujours mettre en œuvre le désir d'intellection, dans ce qu'il a de plus noble, c'est faire œuvre à l'intersection de deux textes, celui que l'on a lu en une langue, dite originale et marquée du sceau du poète, celui que l'on donne à lire en une autre, qu'elle soit de commentaire ou de traduction, voire mêlée de ces deux-là, quand on commente en traduisant par fragment ou que l'on traduit en commentant par notes en bas de page et selon les autres dispositifs de l'appareil critique. C'est donner à (re)lire et à relier, d'une langue à l'autre, c'est inviter à rouvrir le texte original dans des jeux de miroirs complexes et foisonnants de sens inédits, qui demeureraient comme en jachère sans l'original. C'est multiplier les palimpsestes afin de régénérer la pensée d'un auteur, et en cela, c'est

132 “Royaume nouveau fait de sons et de sens presque autonomes.” Claude Vigée. Cited in Vincent-Arnaud 2015, 43.

se prononcer en faveur d'un geste de relance, généreux et humble à la fois, afin de produire un texte second qu'on inscrit dans une certaine historicité. Loin de l'affaiblir et de le circonscire à un emplacement secondaire dans l'histoire de la littérature et de la pensée, cette historicité le renforce — la traduction comme le commentaire font date, et parfois de façon spectaculaire. (Ibid.).

And even if these considerations were not enough, in the case of Nick Cave and Bad Seeds, there still remain songs to listen to. As Bob Dylan put it in 2016, “it’s songs that are at the vital center of almost everything.”

* * * * *

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All answers are written by Nick Cave.

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