

STRANGER THAN KINDNESS



NICK CAVE

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What you see in this book lives in the intricate world constructed around the songs, and which the songs inhabit. It is the material that gives birth to and nourishes the official work.

By official work I mean the song or the book or the score that is released into the hands of the fans. The fans become its custodians. They own it. Yet beyond the song there is an enormous amount of peripheral stuff – drawings, maps, lists, doodles, photographs, paintings, collages, scribbles and drafts – which are the secret and unformed property of the artist.

These are not to be seen as artworks so much as the wild-eyed and compulsive superstructure that bears the song or book or script or score along. They are a support system of manic tangential information.

I hope that you find some value in them. To me, these pieces have a different creative energy to the formed work: raw and immediate, but no less compelling.

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CANONGATE

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SHATTERED HISTORY

by Nick Cave

ONE

You are born. You build yourself piece by piece. You construct a narrative. You become an individual, surrounding yourself with all that you love. You are wounded too, sometimes, and left scarred. Yet you become a heroic and unique embodiment of both the things you cherish and the things that cause you pain. As you grow into this living idea, you become instantly recognisable; among the billions of faces in the world, you become that which you think you are. You stand before the world and say, 'I am here and this is who I am.'

TWO

But there is an influence at work. A veiled, magnetic force. An unnamed yearning drawing you toward a seismic event; it has always been there, patiently waiting. This event holds within it a sudden and terrifying truth. You were never the thing that you thought you were. You are an illusion, as the event shatters you into a multitude of pieces.

THREE

The pieces of you spin apart, a million little histories, propelling themselves away at a tremendous rate. They become like the hurtling stars, points of retreating light, separated only by your roaring need and the distant sky itself.

FOUR

You scramble for the pieces of your shattered history. There is a frantic gathering up. You seize the unknowable fragments and begin to put yourself back together again. You reassemble yourself into something that seems absolutely foreign to you, yet fully and instantly recognisable.

FIVE

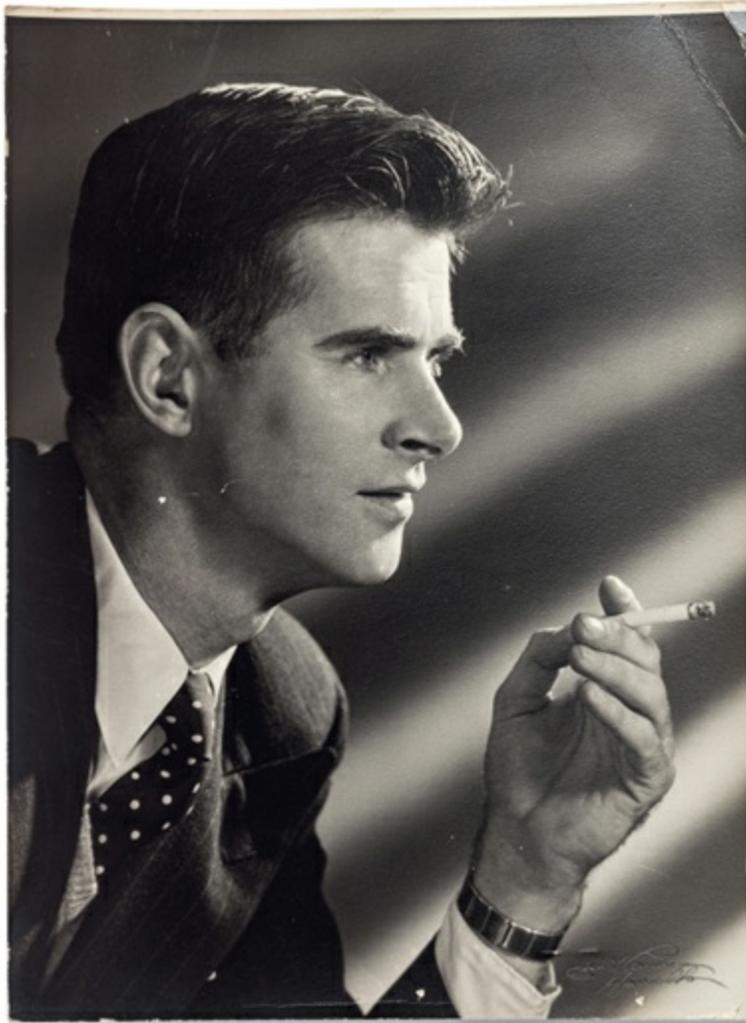
You stand anew, remade. You have rebuilt yourself. But you are different.

You have become a we, and we are each other: a vast community of astonishing potential that holds the sky aloft with our suffering, that keeps the stars in place with our limitless joy, that situates the moon within the reaches of our gratitude, and positions us in the locus of the divine. Together, we are reborn.



Nick Cave as a toddler in Warracknabeal, c. 1960

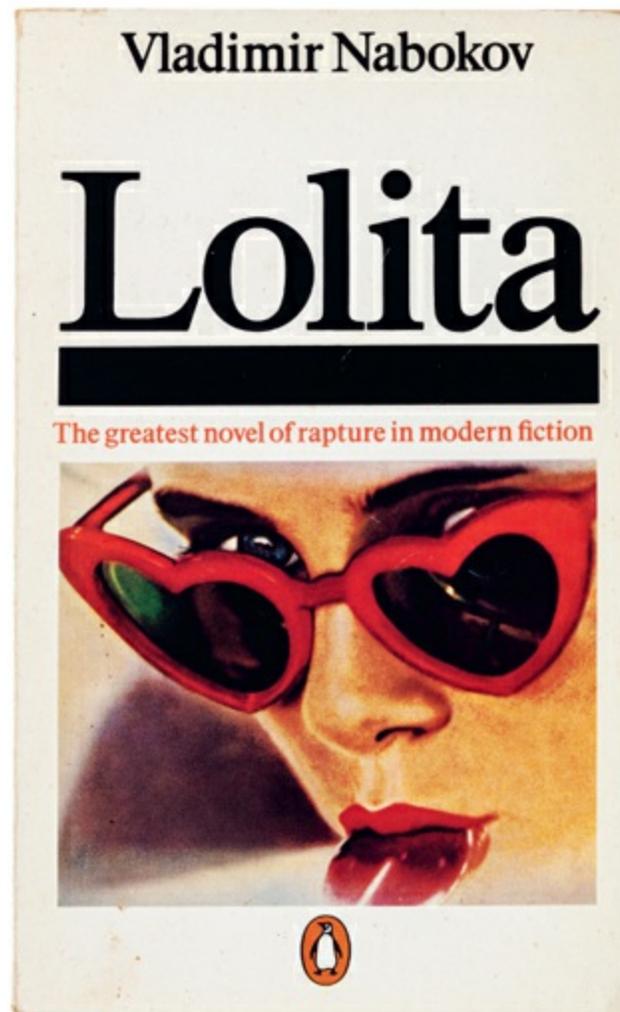
Photograph by Colin Cave



Colin Cave, c. 1956

Photograph by Ernest Cameron

For further reading [here](#)



Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov, 1980 (first published in 1955)

For further reading [here](#)



Christmas card featuring choir boys of the Holy Trinity Cathedral,
Wangaratta, 1965

For further reading [here](#)



Still image from *City with a Future - Wangaratta*, 1965 Directed by Gordon Williams

For further reading [here](#)



Dawn Cave, 1958

Photographer unknown

For further reading [here](#)

1




Merton House
 CAULFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
 27 GLEN VIEW ROAD, EAST ST. ALBAN, VIC., 3088
 Telephone: 22 242
 22 242

Sunday

Dear Mum, Dad, Pete and Julie.

How is every-thing at home. I hope you are all very well.

On Friday night we had an acturless night where we played Grid hon, no rules. Then Saturday morning came I was rather aching so I didn't play to well against Scotch College in Rugby (32-0) One bad thing, lost one of my football socks but I am buying another pair cheaply from "Vintage Disposals". They are 85¢ and I will buy them soon. Sorry.

On Friday night we (me and Michael Hunt) went to "Vintage Disposals" and there were 2 blue cotton jackets for 90¢.



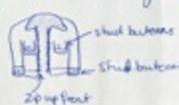
2




Merton House
 CAULFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
 27 GLEN VIEW ROAD, EAST ST. ALBAN, VIC., 3088
 Telephone: 22 242
 22 242

P.S. Julie - do you want a Betty Jackson?

This is what they look like.



do we bought on each. They are second hand but I use them for every-thing. They are really great.

Most of the boarding house has been pretty sad about things. There was a boy (day boy) who was a friend of all the boarders last year died. He was really brainy and intelligent and left school last year to go to University. He had committed suicide. He had shot himself. You know.

3




Merton House
 CAULFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
 27 GLEN VIEW ROAD, EAST ST. ALBAN, VIC., 3088
 Telephone: 22 242
 22 242

Bill Turcross. He was Alex Barnes (the boy who committed suicide) best friend. Bill was the curly haired boy who showed us around the school when we came to look at it. He was under sedation from shock.

On Monday the school is taking us to see "2001 Space Odyssey". All from 21 are going.

There is nothing much more to tell you except I had to have a hair cut. It was very short. I wanted to go to "Charles hair" as he is very good but I only had 20¢ and he costs 40¢ so I had to go to some trashy hair barber down the road.

Well I must go, Bye Bye.

Are missing you.
 you. Nick x x x x x

Letter sent from Nick Cave to his family while in boarding school, 1971



Chris Coyne, John Cocivera, Howard (last name unknown), Phill Calvert and Nick Cave performing at Korowa Anglican Girls' School, c. 1975

Photographer unknown

For further reading [here](#)

PO BOX 189 ST KILDA . VC. 3182

FROM THE HEADMASTER

CAULFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL
217 GLEN ERA ROAD EAST ST KILDA. VC. 3183
Telephone 53 0451

25th June, 1975.

Mr. C.F. Cave,
6 Airdrie Road,
NORTH CAULFIELD, 3161.

Dear Mr. Cave,

I have become somewhat concerned about aspects of Nicholas' attitude and conduct in the School.

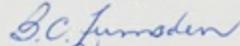
Reports have been coming to me from members of staff of difficulties they have been meeting in gaining Nicholas' full co-operation. They have on occasions observed a lack of proper respect for their authority and a disinclination to accept instructions. Work, too, has been neglected.

I should add that, in this situation Nicholas is not acting alone, but is involved with a group of friends who support and encourage this contrary spirit in each other.

Matters reached a minor climax last week and I am now hopeful that, as a result of action taken, Nicholas has begun to understand the foolishness of his attitude and the fact that it is he who will suffer most if he persists in this pattern of conduct. There are signs that this is so.

You will, I am sure, prefer that I should inform you of the situation at this stage. I hope, of course, that the present improvement will be sustained and that the necessity will not arise for more serious action to be taken. To this end I know that we can count on your help and influence.

Yours sincerely,



B. C. Lumsden,
Headmaster.

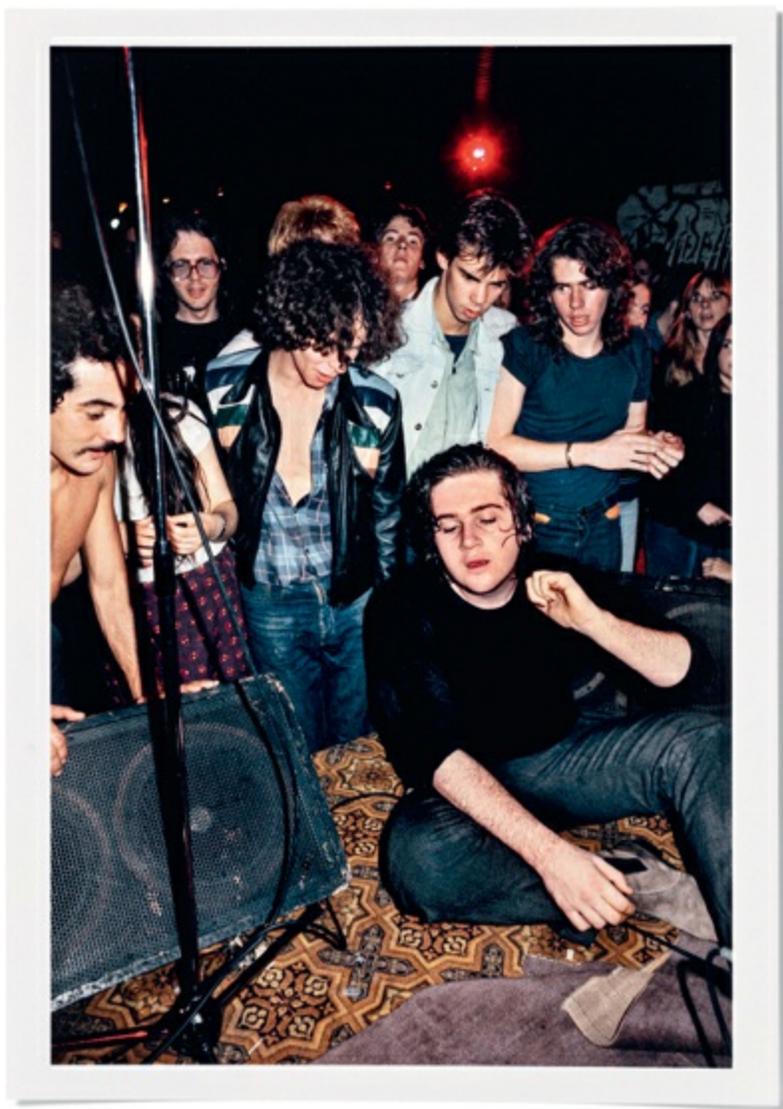
Letter from Caulfield Grammar School to Colin Cave, 1975



Rowland S. Howard, Nick Cave, Ollie Olsen, Megan Bannister, Anita Lane, Bronwyn Adams, Nauru House, Melbourne, 1977

Photograph by Peter Milne

For further reading [here](#)



Nick Cave at The Saints concert, Tiger Room, Melbourne, 1977

Photograph by Rennie Ellis

For further reading [here](#)

Learnt	Song List	Unlearnt
She's not the chosen one A.K.A You and/or Her Shivers Broken Hands	Whatever it Means The Wrong Person Grand Illusions My Secret. Mad about the boy. XXXXXX Fresh Blood My Actress?	
	To Finish Thin Boys Remember(No) Into the Other Room	

Song list, The Boys Next Door, 1978

For further reading [here](#)

admitably
I am a little
drunk but
I LOVE
YOU and
that's that.
P.T.O.

Letter from Nick Cave to Anita Lane, 1980



Nick Cave and Anita Lane, c. 1980

Photographer unknown

For further reading [here](#)

- things I am not happy with~~with~~
with, within the boys next door (in no particular
order)
1. micks guitar/synth playing
 2. the synth as an instrument
 3. the choice of ~~xxxxxxx~~ songs to record
 4. my visual performance
 5. 50% of our material
 6. the lack of interband communication
 7. phil's contribution as a drummer
 8. the way the set lists are organised
 9. the way in which we accomodate for the tastes of our audience
 - 10.

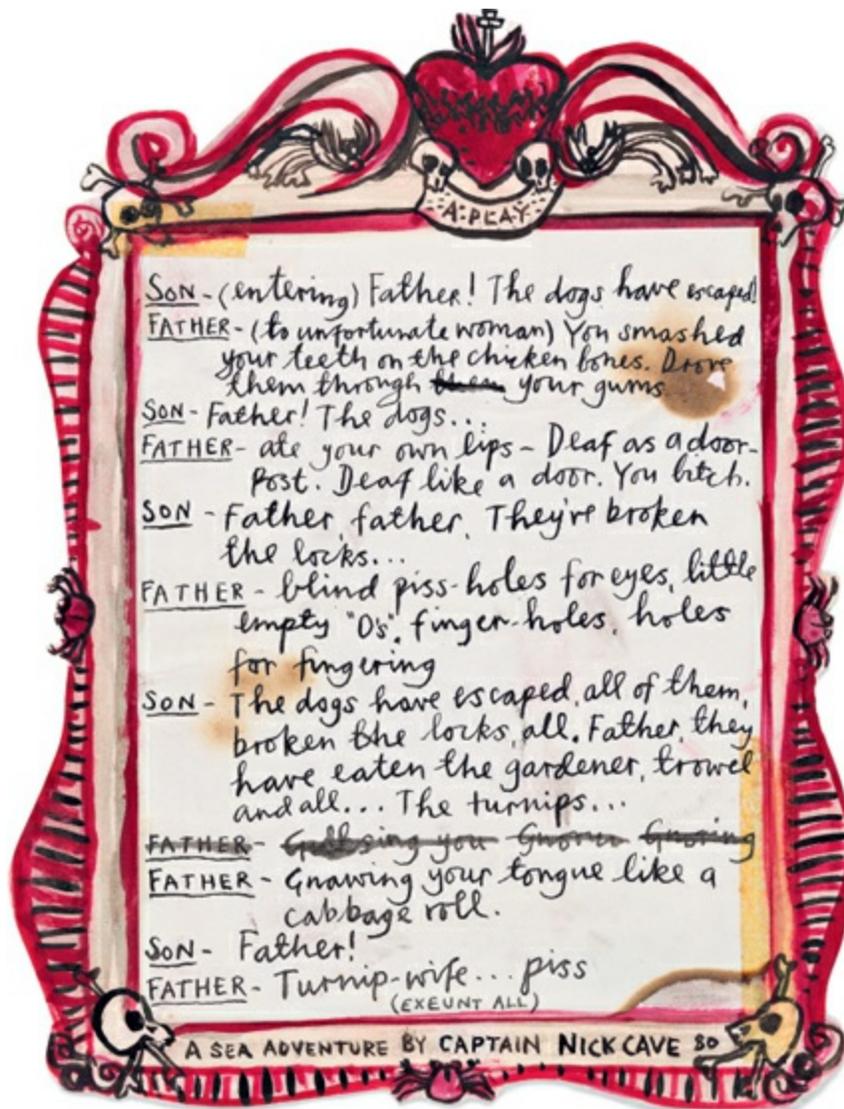
List by Nick Cave, c. 1978

For further reading [here](#)



Painting entitled *Horn of Plenty* by Anita Lane, 1977

For further reading [here](#)



Script for A Sea Adventure by Nick Cave, 1980

Happy Birthday

It was a very happy day
they all had fun, fun, fun
There was icecream and jelly
and a punch in the belly
and the cake got all over the walls
and how his face glowed
It's a bike! What a surprise!
A big bike! What a big surprise!
A red bike! What a red surprise!
Whooooooooooooo! A surprise!!
But the best thing there
was the wonderful ~~Big~~ Dog-chair
it could count right up to ten!
Woof woof woof woof woof woof woof...

It's another happy day
He was born eleven years ago
This year it's long trousers
and a really smart tie
Just think..Five more years and he'll be shaving!
And how his little face glowed
It's a Ninja suit! What a surprise!
and a Samuria sword! What a metal surprise!
He'll remember this day for the rest of his life
But..the best thing there x
You guessed it! The Dog-chair!
It could count right up to ~~eleven~~ eleven
Woof woof woof woof woof woof woof....
And it ran 'round and 'round the room
.....until it got dizzy.

Song lyrics for 'Happy Birthday' by Nick Cave, 1980

First released as a free giveaway single at The Boys Next Door's
farewell concert in 1980

For further reading [here](#)



Wallet owned by Nick Cave, c. 1985



List minkett's
knockouts

(cred) \$25

- *1. Ring + Onyx Ring + crucifix
2. Black Trousers - Tailor
3. Winklepickers - Venus
4. ~~Money to make princess~~
- *5. Jacket + Shirts etc. - op
- *6. Books - ~~Attard readers~~
Brecht, Verse
pinget (Marx's) complete
7. ~~Xerox~~ select players
(impressive press, synopsis)
ring Mr. Kerle. > ~~Mitch, sound~~
Arvita, costume
Tony Clark, BDrop?

(Look into)
Youth Thru

8. ~~Dentist 10am - Harm (Good, bad, q)~~
9. ~~Dinner w/ Pete + A + man~~
10. ~~Pixote?~~
11. ~~Ken West - Maner Ring~~

12. Clip-belt for ~~TV~~ buckle

<p style="text-align: center;">RIVER 185</p> <p>S. - \$100 + 25 + 60</p> <p>LIZ - \$25</p> <p>GARY/SIMON - \$25</p> <p>GROWWIN - \$25</p> <p>ROBERT \$15</p> <p>ROWLAND \$20</p> <p>KEN \$50 (15000)</p> <p>LISA - \$25</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">OWING</p> <p>HELEN - \$100</p> <p>COSTA - \$80</p> <p>SATURDAY</p> <p>* Ring Ken West (Gig + Money + Pairs)</p> <p>* Ring Arpad Mihal</p> <p>* Ring Marcus (20mb)</p> <p>* Sigma Codeine Linetus</p> <p>Para codeine Linetus</p> <p>cu Riversdale (Colt Fine)</p>
---	--

Lists by Nick Cave, c. 1979

* Ring C. Carr. Bio + Articles

THURSDAY

* Frat

* BW Herringbone pants fixed

* Money to Rowland (2:30 p.m.)

* S/CHECK ^{Order by 2:00pm.}

* GIG

* Visit Chris Whelan

* Ring Arpad after 3:00 PM.

FRIDAY

Makeup for wita w/ Lee

write synopsis + bio.

* Material - trousers ~~###~~

SATURDAY

• Buy GRmm.

• Buy Costa

SUNDAY

GUEST LIST

~~Pierre + Margie~~

~~Liegh + Dwayne~~

~~Tony Clarke~~

~~Simon / Brohr.~~

~~Nicks Costa +~~

~~Carol Pinxt~~

~~Helen + Debbie~~



Still image from the music video for 'Nick the Stripper', 1981
Directed by Paul Goldman
For further reading [here](#)

THIS PLACE IS HELL TO ME
WITH THE DEVIL IN MY BED
THE DEVIL IN THIS BOTTLE
AND THE DEVIL IN MY HEAD
AND I'LL MEET YOU IN HEAVEN AGAIN
IF YOU WEAR THAT DRESS AGAIN
(I'LL HAVE ONE MORE DRINK, MY FRIEND)
WHERE MY HEART IS KEPT ON ICE
AND PRAYERS BURST INTO FLAMES
PRAYERS ON FIRE

Lyric for *Prayers On Fire* by Nick Cave, c. 1981

Featured on the artwork for *Prayers on Fire* by The Birthday Party, 1981



Design sketch for *The Bad Seed* by Nick Cave, 1982-83
For further reading [here](#)

wait

WILD WORLD
hold me up, baby, for I may fall
hold my dishrag body tall
my body freezes in your arms - we are one
post-concifixion and all undone

to us all
WILD WORLD
its a wild world

la la la la - laaaa - la la la la la
Church bells bang out the toll of our night
forward + foreverer b/ward - forever b/ward straight
Strophe and antistrophe - ~~and~~ kiss me now + hold me tight
this is a wild-world, up here, in your hands, ~~that~~ night.

la - la - la - la la - la - la - la
its a wild world

Shadows ^{kismeanowpaper and old} writhing under our feet
10 pin + I lose with an gutter roll ^{SSABED}
barbend old meat ite

Song lyrics for 'Wild World' by Nick Cave, 1982-83

Released on *The Bad Seed* by The Birthday Party, 1983

Did you see that Sonny's Burning
~~Oh look at that~~ Sonny's Burning
Like some bright, erotic star
lighting up the purple
+ raising the hair
Flame on: Flame on
Someday I think I'll cut him down
Oh, can you see how Sonny's burning
yet! someday I think I'll cut him down
but ~~the~~ light is so cold in here
and he gives off such an evil heat
Flame on: Flame on ~~son~~ ~~to~~ me
Crackle and spit your ~~fire~~ ~~to~~ me
Oh witness Sonny burning
warming the damp and rotten seeds
Heat blown into the demon-flowers
now both fire + flower consume me
Flame on: flame on
Sonny's burning falls into me
Flame on: flame on
Now evil heat is running thru me
Flame on: flame on
Sonny will burn forever to me
Flame on: flame on ~~is~~ ~~a~~ ~~good~~ ~~friend~~
Can't seem to cut him down
Flame on: flame on
Can't seem to cut him down
~~Flame on~~
Flame on: flame on
Sonny is burning and me
and me and me and me

Song lyrics for 'Sonny's Burning' by Nick Cave, 1982
Released on *The Bad Seed* by The Birthday Party, 1983

Bluebeard
Swampland

1. ~~Lord~~ ~~ahm~~ ~~gunns~~ ~~die~~
 + ~~Lord~~ ~~ahm~~ ~~not~~ ~~wot~~ ~~ah~~ ~~did~~
 but ~~God~~ ~~was~~ ~~ah~~ ~~pay~~ ~~for~~ ~~it~~
 So, cum mah ~~her~~ ~~er~~ ~~ushionahs~~
 oh, cum mah ~~poverty~~ ~~hustah~~ ~~o~~
 yah, cum mah ~~country~~ ~~kellahs~~
 for ah ~~canna~~ ~~run~~ ~~no~~ ~~more~~
 rummin' ~~ehm~~ ~~dah~~ ~~Swampland~~
 thru mud + ~~quix~~ ~~canne~~
 Lucy, ah ~~lost~~ ~~the~~ ~~bet~~ ~~the~~
 SWAMPLAND GODS TOOK IT

* Ah, mah ~~blud~~ ~~turns~~ ~~black~~ ~~wit~~ ~~feer~~
 mah ~~blud~~ ~~turns~~ ~~black~~ ~~wit~~ ~~feer~~
 * Lucy, ah ~~loved~~ ~~you~~ ~~all~~ ~~dah~~ ~~ehm~~
 the ~~se~~ ~~huntin'~~ ~~me~~ ~~the~~ ~~larka~~ ~~dog~~
 deah, u, swam ~~o~~ ~~a~~ ~~amp~~ ~~la~~ ~~and~~

2. Blind wit cat-a-racks of hate
 they cum wit gun + club + stump
 wit rope + gas-o-leer
 wit doggys rabid-mean ~~stump~~ ~~dah~~ ~~chains~~
~~stump~~ ~~ah~~ ~~canna~~ ~~run~~ ~~no~~ ~~more~~
 Is that Nancy Jacksons dress
 Is that mah name written on it
 Is that mah D. Warrant
 written in her blood
 an

Blind wit cat-a-racks of hate rabid-mean
 2. Death cum ~~gun~~ ~~club~~ ~~an~~ ~~wife~~
 they cum wit rope + gas-o-leer
 wit doggys ~~stump~~ ~~dah~~ ~~chains~~
 Strained on dah chains
 Is that Nancy Jacksons dress?
 Is that mah name written on it
 Is that mah D. Warrant
 written in her blood
 an

Lucy, there's a monster livin' in the house
 an ah wont live to see ~~ah~~ ~~dah~~ ~~sun~~ ~~rise~~
 in swam ~~o~~ ~~a~~ ~~amp~~ ~~la~~ ~~and~~

Song lyrics for 'Swampland' by Nick Cave, 1983
 Released on *Mutiny!* by The Birthday Party, 1983

Q=2

Jennifers veil

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So you've come back for Jennifer
y'no she ~~xxxxx~~ hides her face behind a veil
I'm warning you Frankie, leave on the next train,
Your Jennifer, she just aint the same
Hey! ~~Don't~~ ^{quit} wave that thing 'round, *ol' cum back!*
Come back! and give me a chance to explain
Your Baby will never cry again.

CHORUS
So don't try to reach out, and ~~let~~ ^{down} the ~~xxx~~ ships flag drop.
Point: the figure-head at the storm
and drive ^{Her} ~~it~~ hard upon.
Don't stop. and Don't Stop
And don't let the veil drop
(another ship ready to sail, The rigging is tight like
Jennifers Veil)

✓
She drew the curtain, on her face,
~~the day~~ ^{the day} they burnt the ol' place down.
And, why is she searchin', thru the ashes.

✓
only Jennifer knows that now.
? x QND THE OFFICER ~~WITHOUT A WORD~~ ^{lose all his junk an' just moved out.}
CHORUS

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So don't try to reach out and don't ~~pull~~ ^{let} the ships flag down,
point the figure ^{at the glass} ~~at the glass~~
smash! smash! into shards
Don't stop and don't touch
and don't let the veil drop
(another ship out to sea, the rigging is loose
^{be hind} ~~like~~ Jennifers veil)

Song lyrics for 'Jennifer's Veil' by Nick Cave, 1983
Released on *Mutiny!* by The Birthday Party, 1983

GOD IS IN THE HOUSE

by Darcey Steinke

I — Pilgrims

Twenty years ago, I lived for a year in a house across from William Faulkner's Rowan Oak in Oxford, Mississippi. My office was in the attic, a room bigger than my whole apartment in Brooklyn. My desk sat in front of a window and at intervals ladybugs with rust backs and black spots streamed out of the window frame. They'd gather in a shifting pile and then crawl out across the glass onto the green vine wallpaper. I often thought, by the way they swooped and curved, that they might form letters, then words and finally a sentence from a wild god.

This never happened. Instead I watched Spanish moss hanging like long scarves from the giant cedar in my yard and, behind the tree on the road, buses filled with senior citizens come to tour Faulkner's Greek Revival house in Bailey's Woods. Sometimes the pilgrims were from other countries: busloads of Irish and French people on vacation. I watched them de-bus, walk the driveway covered in small blonde stones, pass the boxwood hedge maze and the giant magnolias with their thick, shiny leaves and creamy-petalled flowers. Inside they'd find portraits of Faulkner's ancestors as well as dark wooden Victorian furniture. In the writer's office they'd gape at the outline for *A Fable* written directly on the walls and Faulkner's Underwood

typewriter sitting next to a tin of pipe tobacco on his desk. I most cherished the items and details that brought Faulkner back to scruffy life: a crappy plastic shoe rack beside his bed and, in the kitchen, pencilled phone numbers written around the black rotary phone.

Every night at twilight, I walked with my three-year-old daughter over to Rowan Oak. She would chase rabbits around the boxwoods and, as it got darker, try to catch fireflies. Sometimes we'd find offerings on the steps: a red rose, a white rose, a pair of fake false teeth, a tiny plastic coffin.

The pilgrims came in every season. Most compelling to me were not the busloads of people but the seekers who came on foot, alone or in pairs. I assumed they'd travelled to Oxford by Greyhound bus and walked all the way from the bus station across town. Some were in ordinary clothes but the majority of them, and this at first surprised me, wore black. I would look up from my legal pad to find a tall young man in a black velvet jacket, tight black trousers and knee-high black lace-up boots. I remember a girl in black leather trousers, a blouse with large bell sleeves, a black ribbon around her neck. Another young woman wore black lace gloves to her elbows, a long black dress and Doc Martens.

'I OFTEN THOUGHT, BY THE WAY THEY SWOOPED AND CURVED, THAT THEY MIGHT FORM LETTERS, THEN WORDS AND FINALLY A SENTENCE FROM A WILD GOD'

Of all the young pilgrims I saw that year the one who most stays in my mind is a Japanese boy in black high-top tennis shoes, black jeans and a Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds t-shirt. He walked fast and with a look of stricken

anticipation. I had the feeling his journey had been arduous and that his longing was close to overwhelming him.

I didn't see the boy leave Rowan Oak; I'd had to pick up my daughter at preschool, grade papers, make our dinner. When we walked over later in the near dark we found on the steps, in the usual offering spot, a copy of Nick Cave's novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel* in Japanese.

I have spent a lot of time in the intervening years thinking of those black-clad kids, moving diligently and with joy under the draped moss, past banks of kudzu toward their particular mecca. I understand why they were drawn to Rowan Oak and to Faulkner: his lyric prose, his cast of suffering and deeply human characters, but most of all what Albert Camus called Faulkner's 'strange religion'. A religion that knifed open metaphysical questions and split the human heart. 'What goes on up there,' Cave writes in *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, 'what measure the affliction? What weight the iron? Is it a chance system? ... or —anti-creation, something seasonal, something astrological?'

What is God? What does it mean to bear witness? Where do the dead go? Does the divine world exist? Does it fit with the human world or are they separate? What does it mean to be good? Cave's characters, like Faulkner's, often blend the earthly and the heavenly. 'No God up in the sky' Cave sings, 'no devil beneath the sea/Could do the job that you did, baby,/ of bringing me to my knees.' Cave's songs often undermine and negate religious adoration and instead, though we may be too blissed out to realise it, confront us with lush far-reaching theological questions.

John Keats claimed that the best writers all had a love of questions, of paradox, of what he called 'Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable

reaching after fact and reason.’

Both Faulkner’s and Cave’s characters reside in paradox, filled with doubt, longing, questions, frustration. Faulkner’s paradoxical religious outlook ‘invested brothels and prisons with the dignity of the cloister’. And Cave is “‘agitating” for a *broader* definition of the human, one that incorporates lapses into the human, incompleteness, a certain dilapidation and impoverishment of the soul’. Both see human/god relationships as complicated, fraught. Apophatic theological belief is found, if at all, piecemeal, murky, a grasping through darkness, never in the light.

‘All the best people,’ my friend recently said to me at our red wine lunch, ‘are dinged up a little.’ What makes a living person or a fictional character unique is not perfection but their flaws and scars.

God’s redemptive gift of grace can be experienced in Cave’s songs by anyone, the more dinged up the better: a killer on death row (‘The Mercy Seat’), a john (‘Jubilee Street’), even a man who may or may not have murdered his entire family (‘Song of Joy’). Like Faulkner’s ‘strange religion’, Cave is not interested in easy born-again redemption. Those black-clad young people were not pilgriming toward fixed meaning, certain divinity, systems of truth. No. They were drawn like particles toward a magnet, like an electrified atom of authentic mystery, to a raw – almost bloody – sensitivity, to an awareness ‘in which life itself is lived more intensely and with a meaningful direction’.

William James, the nineteenth-century philosopher, speculated that belief was a form of magnetic energy that pulled the believer almost unconsciously in one direction or another. ‘It is as if a bar of iron, without touch or sight, with no representative faculty whatever, might nevertheless be strongly endowed with an inner capacity for magnetic feeling; and as if, through the various

arousals of its magnetism by magnetic comings and goings in the neighborhood, it might be consciously determined to different attitudes and tendencies. Such a bar of iron,' James continues, 'could never give you an outward description of the agencies that had the power of stirring it so strongly; yet of their presence, and of their significance for its life, it would be intensely aware through every fibre of its being.'

On Sundays Faulkner intermittently attended the Episcopal church in Oxford, but according to local legend he also, after all-night drinking binges, rode his horse wildly around the town square while the rest of Oxford sat in church. And Faulkner, as well as Nick Cave, casts a spell on you, like a prehistoric shaman, who meshes the reader in numinous symbols and sacred horror.

My favourite Faulkner character, Addie Bundren from *As I Lay Dying*, speaks only after she is dead. Many of Cave's most unforgettable characters, from The Birthday Party's 'She's Hit' to the *Murder Ballads*' 'Henry Lee' and 'Where the Wild Roses Grow', to *Ghosteen*, are voiced only after they are gone. Addie haunts her family, who must carry her dead body in a pine coffin into town. Before she dies, one of her sons describes her eyes. 'Like two candles when you watch them gutter down into the sockets of iron candle-sticks.' Addie's female body is an affront and a challenge to masculine culture. Outwardly she has conformed to traditional gender construction, though her inner life is complete rebellion.

She has had an affair with the minister, Whitfield, and her child with him is her favourite son Jewel. Addie's friend Cora abides by traditional Christian standards, while Addie is punk rock, rejecting the Christian ideal of human suffering as the price one pays for the privilege of eternal life. 'The duty to the alive, to the terrible blood. The red bitter blood boiling through the land.'

Cave's song 'Nobody's Baby Now' has always reminded me of Addie, a

seeking soul, who turns away from both human convention and restrictive religion to face an implacable God. 'I've searched the holy books/Tried to unravel the mystery of Jesus Christ, the saviour/I've read the poets and the analysts/Searched through the books on human behaviour/I travelled the whole world around/For an answer that refused to be found/I don't know why and I don't know how/ But she's nobody's baby now'. Later lines from the song could be spoken by Addie's son Jewel. 'And through I've tried to lay her ghost down/ She's moving through me, even now.'

In *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, the hero Euchrid Eucrow speaks, like Faulkner's Addie, out of silence. While Addie speaks from beyond the grave, Euchrid is a deaf mute, the only surviving twin born to an alcoholic mother into a mythical landscape with hints of the American Deep South as well as rural Australia. 'Tall trees born into bondage rising from a ditch and crabby dog-weed, carrying a canopy of knitted vine upon their wooden shoulders.' Euchrid is 'jettisoned from the boozy curd of gestation' into the Ukulite Congregation, a group of Amish/Mormonlike zealots. In his silent world Euchrid is 'the loneliest baby boy in the history of the world ...'

The God of the novel is the Old Testament God, and interactions with him bring Euchrid fear and trembling rather than peace. And as Cave has written, 'I believed in God, but I also believed that God was malign and if the Old Testament was testament to anything, it was testament to that.'

Euchrid is shunned, beaten up and despised by the Ukulite faithful but also by anyone else he comes into contact with. His lamentations contain some of the most beautiful writing in the book. 'Ah was deemed unworthy of the organ of lament. Ah am not one to bemoan mah lot. But even Christ himself was moved to loosen the tongue of his wounds.' And in Lamentation 3: 'Even now as ah inch under, something rushes at me. Something of the hellish reason-evangelists hooded scarlet came, turned vigilante with bloody

deed done.’

Euchrid is kin to John Harper in the 1955 film *The Night of the Hunter*. Both are boys living in a world of false prophets and over-heated faith. Harper must protect his little sister Pearl against a widow-killing convict with the words HATE tattooed on the fingers of one hand and LOVE on the fingers of the other. After Powell murders their mother, the children climb

‘HELL IS A GREAT DEAL MORE FEASIBLE TO MY WEAK MIND THAN HEAVEN’

into a boat and float into an uncanny night journey on glittering black water. It’s hard to tell if the river is redemptive, or that doomed transitional waterway, the River Styx.

‘Hell,’ Flannery O’Connor wrote in *A Prayer Journal*, ‘is a great deal more feasible to my weak mind than heaven.’

And the Ass Saw the Angel does not let up on injustice and hellish atrocities. Still, it’s Cave’s rich atavistic language, idiosyncratic and imaginative, that is ultimately redemptive. ‘Language itself,’ Cave has said, ‘can have a hugely beneficial effect on you in the same way music can.’ Rebecca, a character in the novel, comes ‘through her back door, wearing only a night dress and carrying her spirit lamp, she crept like a bird into the night’. And Euchrid’s empathy for the earth is acute and beautiful. ‘All about me the world seemed in need of attention.’

‘A proof of God is in the firmament, the stars Faulkner once wrote, ‘proof of man’s immortality, that his conception that there could be a God, that the idea of a God is valuable, is in the fact he writes the books and composes the

music and paints the pictures. They are the firmament of mankind.’

‘Slippery as religious experience,’ writes Maud Casey in her book *The Art of Mystery*, ‘mystery involves an undoing that yields wonder.’

‘For me,’ Cave told an interviewer for *BOMB* magazine, ‘belief comes from the place that inspiration comes from, from a magical space, a place of imagination.’

II — Holy Jumpers

‘Faulkner wrote about twelve ministers,’ the religious scholar Charles Reagan Wilson wrote, ‘three heavy drinkers, three fanatics, and three slave traders, two adulterers and two murderers.’

God, as they say, works in mysterious ways.

My grandfather, the Reverend Arthur Ferdinand Steinke, neither drank nor killed anyone, though he was foreboding and very Old Testament. His church had a tall white steeple and a metal cross on the brick façade. He was a sombre Lutheran minister who loved to wear his black Martin Luther cape and slouchy hat. A fire-and-brimstone preacher, as he got up into his eighties he didn’t talk much but he still loved to preach. Even when he had to be helped up the steps into the pulpit, his voice boomed, his face reddened, and he sweated. His sermons often spun out into diatribes about how the Christian faith should use the symbol of the electric chair rather than the cross, which chimes eerily with the imagery in Cave’s song ‘The Mercy Seat’. Sometimes my grandfather fell into a time warp, telling women to get over their addictions to nylon stockings, and men to new car tyres. His signature sermon was one in which he held up a silver dollar and asked someone in the congregation to

‘ALL I HAD TO DO WAS WALK ON STAGE AND OPEN MY MOUTH AND LET THE CURSE OF GOD ROAR THROUGH ME’

come and claim it. Nobody would, not the ageing male ushers, not the church ladies in their pastel Sunday suits, not the young mothers or the teenagers. We were all terrified of him. After ten excruciating minutes he began berating us for our lack of faith.

What does it mean to be Old Testament? To identify with its punitive and inchoate God? The Old Testament seems to have given Cave permission; extreme texts can open up a writer to a freer and more expressive way of working. ‘When I bought my first copy of the Bible, the King James version,’ Cave writes in his introduction to *The Gospel According to Mark*, ‘it was to the Old Testament that I was drawn, with its maniacal, punitive God, that dealt out to His long-suffering humanity punishments that had me drop-jawed ... at the very depth of their vengefulness.’

In his early years Cave channelled the Godhead of the Old Testament. ‘All I had to do was walk on stage and open my mouth and let the curse of God roar through me. You could smell his mad breath.’ In Cave’s imagination the Bible became a magic book, enchanted but also dangerous. You could ‘see the yellow smoke curl from its many pages, hear the blood-curdling moans of despair.’

So much of the power in Cave’s lyrics is in the way he declaims them. In his black suit, the microphone in his right hand, and his left pointing out over his congregation, Cave stalks the stage, sometimes falling on his knees to touch the hands raised up in hallelujah. What makes his presence so mesmerising is that while he evokes a tent preacher, he is also sexual, gothic, and his

message, unlike an Old Testament preacher, damns no one; it is nuanced, complex and empathetic.

Cave in later writings linked the nihilistic rage that permeated his early songs to blocked grief. 'I see that my artistic life has centered around an attempt to articulate the nature of an almost palpable sense of loss that has 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 nineteen.' Cave learned to fill that 'hole' by writing.

The gnostic concept of an impotent and evil God whose melancholy and rotten creation mirrors his own badness seems to be part of Cave's earliest theology. Many of the songs are staged in a mythic place much like the Southern United States. The South in this myth is Old Testament, punitive, conservative, wounded. A grim Calvinism injects the area with literal readings of the Bible, as well as an obsession with mortality.

In Mississippi, my next-door neighbour was an Italian translator who was working on court transcripts of John Calvin's trials. These took place in Geneva in the 1500s. She told me about a young woman who had accidentally broken a vessel filled with olive oil and in fear of what her master might do to her had jumped into the river. Because suicide was, according to Calvin, a crime against God, she was tried and hanged. This fragile drowned ghost often comes to me all these centuries later, a slave girl, standing in front of a court filled with men. Calvin would have railed on, much like my grandfather, about the sovereignty of God and the depravity of man.

'No bolder attempt to set up a theocracy was ever made in this world,' wrote cultural critic H.L. Mencken about the South, 'and none ever had behind it a more implacable fanaticism.' What would I say if I were that slave girl persecuted by Calvin and his idea of a rule-obsessed and punitive God?

Cave's 'Big-Jesus-Trashcan' would be a good place to start. Cave snarls 'Right!' as the song begins, signalling that court is in session and it's not the sinner but the Church's crappy theology that is on trial. The sin of the Church is its failure to come to terms with human nature, to think it is better than the people it serves. 'Big-Jesus-Soulmate-Trashcan a fucking rotten business this.' There is anger but also sorrow for the sorry state of the Church. This melancholy manifests in both rage and absence. Jesus, as he is embedded in the Church, is a malevolent figure who pumps Cave 'full of trash'.

Punk, to my mind, differs from heavy metal by both its sly humour and its irony. Also its nuanced theological engagement. While much metal takes on the mask of destroyer, punk is the wailing of the destroyed. A Bible website lists scriptures that support the existence of punk rock: 2 Timothy 4:2, 'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching'; Ephesians 5:19, 'Addressing one another in psalms

'PUNK IS THE WAILING OF THE DESTROYED'

and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart'; and my favourite, James 1:8, 'He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.'

Darkness doesn't have to be nihilistic. Cave has often denied that his songs are negative, and in interview footage from the 1990s he says that rather than asking him why his lyrics are dark, people should ask Bruce Springsteen why his lyrics are happy. The mystic St John of the Cross taught that only through what he called the Dark Night could we ever understand ourselves and that the purest form of God is absence. Only by deconstructing our meta-narratives about God can we get closer to the divine mystery.

Our ideas about God, Gerald G. May writes in his book about St John, 'are only messengers. Instead, we take them for the whole of God's self, and thus we wind up worshipping our own feelings. This is perhaps the most common idolatry of the spiritual life.'

'I do not know you God,' writes Flannery O'Connor, 'because I am in the way. Please help me to push myself aside.'

In both St John's poetry and Cave's lyrics emptiness is the beginning of something; it is generative. 'You fled like the stag after wounding me,' writes St John, 'I went out calling you, but you were gone.' And Cave: 'The same God that abandoned her/Has in turn abandoned me.' The spiritual path is one of subtraction; we are slowly but conclusively emptied out.

'The kind of sadness that is a black suction pipe extracting you,' writes Anne Carson, 'from your own navel and which Buddhists call/"no mind cover" is a sign of God.'

'The religions which have a conception of this renunciation,' writes theologian Simone Weil, 'this voluntary effacement of God, his apparent absence ... these religions are true religion.'

Weil says: 'Grace fills empty spaces but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it and it is grace itself that makes this void.'

'Big-Jesus-Trashcan' attempts, like all punk, to harness the life force, or rather, the band becomes a conduit for that wild force. This power is not strictly positive – it's a mad energy that pushes up tulip tendrils, moves babies out of mothers, gives poets ideas but also fuels anger, violence, even bloodshed. The life force is as much part of a seed sprouting as it is a body chemically breaking down after death.

For Cave, it's this same wild rush of spirit that also fuels rock's beginnings. These myths in Cave's telling are both enchanted and ominous. In 'Big-Jesus-Trashcan' Elvis makes an appearance: 'wears a suit of gold (got greasy hair)'. In the next line Cave sets up a sort of competition with Elvis, an anxiety of influence that will continue throughout all the years of his songwriting: 'But God gave me sex appeal.'

Elvis is the Jesus of rock and roll. Of course we have the earlier myth of Robert Johnson meeting the Devil at a crossroads, as retold in the song 'Higgs Boson Blues' on Cave's album *Push The Sky Away*. Johnson seems to sell his soul so that musical divinity in the form of the blues, rock's predecessor, can enter the world. It's the African American blues men and women who are both the founders and the saints of rock's Church. But Elvis is Jesus. Stanley Crouch, a critic, has called Jesus's last line on the cross – 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me' – the greatest blues line of all time. Like Jesus's, each part of Elvis's life has been fetishised, mythologised, made into scripture.

'Myth,' Cave writes in his poem *The Sick Bag Song*, 'is the true history.' In his song 'Tupelo', Cave both retells and electrifies the myth of Elvis's birth. First thunder and hard rain, then Cave calling out like a wild prophet. 'Looka yonder!' Cave exhorts us, 'A big black cloud come!/O comes to Tupelo'. A storm precedes the birth of rock's messiah, the birth that will bring into the world, through song, pockets of

'MUSIC COULD BE AN EVIL THING, A BEAUTIFUL, EVIL THING'

eternity. The supernatural aspects of this new king's coming are accompanied not only by biblical rain but also a cessation of natural processes: hens can't

lay, cocks can't crow, horses are freaked out, women and children have insomnia. Unlike the usual soft-focus sentimental myth of Elvis's birth along with his dead twin in the shotgun shack in Tupelo, Cave includes a new character, the Sandman. Not the gentle fairy who sprinkled sand in children's eyes so they can sleep but instead a version of E.T.A. Hoffmann's Sandman, who throws sand into children's eyes so that their eyes fall out and he can collect them to feed to his own children on the dark side of the moon.

It wasn't Elvis, but one of Cave's other idols who first initiated him into the extreme pleasures and darkness of rock. 'I lost my innocence,' Cave told an interviewer in the *Guardian*, 'with Johnny Cash. I used to watch the Johnny Cash Show on television in Wangaratta when I was about 9 or 10 years old. At that stage I had really no idea about rock'n'roll. I watched him and from that point I saw that music could be an evil thing, a beautiful, evil thing'.

The 'King' in 'Tupelo', like Jesus, is born in a modest abode, on a concrete floor 'with a bottle and a box and a cradle of straw'. The dead twin is placed 'In a shoe-box tied with a ribbon of red'. Death and life are tied, like happiness and grief, beauty and ugliness are intertwined and can never separate. The song ends hinting at the weight that will haunt Elvis: 'He carried the burden outa Tupelo.' Not unlike Christ carrying the sins of the world.

What do we know of Elvis's actual life in Tupelo? We know his mother Gladys had a difficult pregnancy and had to quit her job at the garment plant where she worked. We know that Elvis's twin Jesse was born dead, but was never forgotten by either the Presley family or Elvis's fans, Cave included. Gladys told Elvis: 'When one twin dies the other got his strength.'

We know that even at age two, Elvis was drawn to music. At the Pentecostal church where his mother took him, Elvis regularly escaped from the pew and

ran up to the choir, standing in front of them, eyes large with wonder, trying to sing along with the hymns. He got his guitar from the local hardware store at age eleven and in seventh grade started to take it to junior high, keeping it in his locker and playing for his friends at lunchtime and recess.

In Cave's telling, Elvis's birth is messianic and Elvis himself, who famously slept with a large statue of Christ on his bedside table, was drawn to Jesus. He was known to both acknowledge and deny his kinship to Christ. After a Las Vegas concert in 1972, a woman ran up to the stage carrying a crown on a red pillow, telling Elvis it was for him, because he was the king. Elvis smiled and took her hand, 'Honey, I'm not the king. Christ is the king. I'm just a singer.' Nearer the end of his life he told his spiritual adviser Larry Geller about a mystical experience he had in the desert. 'I didn't only see Jesus's picture in the clouds – Jesus Christ literally exploded in me. Larry, it was me! I was Christ ...'

We also know that Elvis, from a young age, practised meditation. He told one of his early girlfriends, June, that if you look up at the moon and let yourself go totally relaxed and don't think about anything else, just let yourself float in the space between the moon and the stars, that 'If you relaxed enough ... you could get right there next to them.' Elvis told June that he never spoke about this mystical experience because people think you are crazy 'if they can't understand you'.

'There was a floating sense of inner harmony,' Peter Guralnick writes in his biography of Elvis, 'mixed with a ferocious hunger, a desperate striving linked to a pure outpouring of joy, that seemed to just tumble out of the music. It was the very attainment of art and passion, the natural beauty of the instinctive soul.'

'I spend my days pushing Elvis Presley's belly up a series of steep hills,'

writes Cave in *The Sick Bag Song*. And later: ‘I like the image of pushing Elvis Presley’s belly up a hill – the Sisyphean burden of our influences.’

In The Red Hand Files, the website where Cave answers questions posed by his fans, one asks ‘What does Elvis mean to you?’ In his reply, Cave focuses on Elvis as performer. ‘This narrative of suffering and rebirth is played out again and again within our own lives, but I believe it is captured most beautifully, within the musical performance itself.’

Cave points to the last ten minutes of the film *This Is Elvis*, in which the singer blunders the lyrics to ‘Are You Lonesome Tonight’. ‘It is one of the most traumatic pieces of footage I have ever seen.’ Afterwards Elvis, humiliated, bows his head, then his voice ‘steeped in sorrow’ begins ‘All My Trials’. As the concert ends the camera lingers on Elvis’s face: ‘tear-streaked ... his head hung in sorrowful acceptance; and his caped arms outstretched in triumph. These are the stages of Christ’s passage upon the cross, the anguish, the sufferance and the resurrection.’

After moving to Memphis, Elvis attended both white and black gospel concerts with his parents. As a teenager he hung around Beale Street, mesmerised by the black singers. He also attended the Assembly of God church with his girlfriend Dixie Locke. The church started as a tent revival, then moved to a storefront and finally into a church building. Elvis told a reporter how the ‘holy rollers’ inspired him. ‘They would be jumping on the piano, moving every which way. The audience liked ’em. I guess I learned from those singers.’

Whenever a guest came to visit my daughter and me in Mississippi, we’d go see Al Green at his Full Gospel Tabernacle Church an hour away in

Memphis. In the parking lot we always found the bass player's van, covered with plastic rocket ships which hinted at his other gig in a funk band. One of my friends on hearing the music start up whispered into my ear, 'My god, the dirty organ!' It was not unusual for one of the Staple Singers to drop in, the choir backing her up. Every Sunday Al Green sang out from the pulpit. His youthful shining face sent me and the other members of the congregation into a euphoric trance. My daughter Abbie never got over those services. When we moved back to Brooklyn, where we sometimes attended the Episcopal church, she called the service 'stupid' and begged to be taken back to 'real church'.

'[Elvis] reminded me of the early days,' DJ Tom Perryman said about seeing the singer perform, 'of where I was raised in East Texas and going to these Holy Roller Brush Arbor meetings: seeing these people get religion.'

Acts 2:19: 'Suddenly a sound came from heaven like a rush of a mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues of fire, distributed and resting on earth.' These flames allowed Jesus's traumatised disciples, just days after his crucifixion, to speak in languages that they did not know, languages that are both nonsensical and holy.

Rock's debt to the blues tradition is well catalogued but the influence of the so called 'holy rollers' of the Pentecostal Church is either unacknowledged or minimised. Many of rock's innovators, including Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Little Richard and James Brown, were raised in, and created by, the musical traditions of the southern Pentecostal Church.

After the service at Al Green's church we'd visit Graceland. In Graceland, light seems to come at you from all directions, as if the sun has liquefied and flowed into the floor, walls and ceiling. I recognised in the glittery decor a

longing for transcendence that is often labelled as tacky. The mirrored bar in the downstairs TV room was like a fenestral opening, the kind I spent most of my childhood searching for, that soft spot in reality that linked this world to the next. I liked the modest colonial kitchen. I could easily picture a bummed out and overweight Elvis wondering what it was all about as he raided the refrigerator. It's this transfiguring light integrated with sadness that makes Graceland so powerful. Elvis's endless hobbies – shooting guns, racquetball, horseback riding – all seemed like desperate attempts to fill up a faltering life.

Elvis is an icon, but not in any contemporary sense, not a one-dimensional computer icon. Neither is he an icon in the sense that Princess Di is an icon, someone who represented a particular kind of lifestyle. Elvis was an icon in the traditional sense of icons of the Greek Orthodox Church. These icons depict Christ, Mary or a saint shown against a gold background, which signified a source of illumination, independent of them. In iconography gold paint is built up from the base and the figure emerges from this globe of light. The gold light signified the mystical Other, the life force, a higher power, God.

‘As much as we twist and turn,’ Cave writes in *The Sick Bag Song*, ‘they [influences] are never really transcended. They are seared into our souls like a brand.’

III — Of Weal and Woe

Elvis's story ends with sadness, loneliness and abandonment. He died ‘reading a book on the Shroud of Turin,’ writes David Rosen in the *Tao of Elvis*, ‘sitting on the American throne he fell forward, ending his life in a prayerful position on the thick bathroom carpet.’

‘The different kinds of vice,’ wrote Simone Weil, ‘the use of drugs, in the

literal or metaphorical sense of the word, all such things institute the search for a state where beauty is tangible.’

In an interview in the 1980s Cave, clearly high, nods off. On his unrolled shirt sleeve, the interviewer sees specks of blood. Another journalist reports that at a Birthday Party show near the end of the band’s time together, Cave frequently falls down; bandmates kick him to get up. ‘Throughout the gig Cave looked like a corpse reanimated with a thousand-volt shock.’

Self-destruction, addiction, debasement, anorexia, even cutting, these are medical and psychological conditions but they are also spiritual. The fragile human sways under the weight of the world’s expectations, under the weight and responsibility of their own humanity. There is suffering and estrangement but also the possibility of opening up to grace.

‘Well,’ Dylan said, in 1991, as he accepted the Grammy for Lifetime Achievement, ‘my daddy, he didn’t leave me much, you know he was a very simple man, but what he did tell me was this, he did say, son, he said,’ there was nervous laughter from the audience, ‘he said, you know it’s possible to become so defiled in the world that your own father and mother will abandon you and if that happens, God will always believe in your ability to mend your ways.’

Cave, in *The Red Hand Files*, answers a question about evil. He believes ‘that we are spiritual and transcendent beings, that our lives have meaning, and that our individual actions have vast implications on the well-being of the universe’. What we do, how we act, affects

‘THE FRAGILE HUMAN SWAYS UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD’S EXPECTATIONS, UNDER THE WEIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THEIR OWN HUMANITY’

not just those near us but the universe itself. ‘This acknowledgement of our capacity for evil, difficult as it may be, can ultimately become our redemption.’

Evil is just as human as empathy or love. While we try to cast evil as the other, evil is us. Evil is kin to debasement, but while debasement is a singular state, evil is an attempt to transfer our debasement and pain to another through violence.

‘The thief and the murderer,’ wrote T.H. Huxley, ‘follow nature just as much as the philanthropist.’

‘Song of Joy’ on the album *Murder Ballads* follows this equation of abasement forced onto another in the form of bloodshed. The speaker tells the story of meeting his wife Joy: ‘I had no idea what happiness a little love could bring’. But then he wakes one morning to his wife crying. She ‘became Joy in name only’. He is the father of the family, he and Joy have three daughters, and also the destroyer of the family. In acute detail he lays out how he *found* his wife bound with electrical tape, a gag in her mouth, stabbed and stuffed into a sleeping bag. His little girls are also dead. The song seems connected to the famous 1970 MacDonald murders in which a doctor killed and then denied killing his entire family. ‘I like the way the simple, almost naïve tradition of the murder ballad,’ Cave has said, ‘becomes a vehicle that can happily accommodate the most twisted acts of deranged machismo.’ ‘Song of Joy’ evokes in this listener Freud’s *unheimlich*, the uncanny or the

unhomely. The horror concealed in the domestic has spurted out. The safe area of the home has been made unholy. Cave understands what the listener needs. That need is not always for beauty and love but sometimes for violence and blood. We are closer than we would like to admit to human predator and human prey. Horror, while rarely realised, is real. The Devil has won this particular round and Cave, rather than offering an unsatisfying redemption, keeps the story inside human misery and struggle. In ‘Song of Joy’ the listener serves the religious function of witness. The speaker is a monster, but we know that the Latin root of monster is *reveal*. The ‘monstrum’, writes professor of religion Timothy Beal, ‘is a message that breaks into this world from the realm of the divine.’

Johnny Cash, a singer with a powerful influence on Cave who also did a memorable cover of Cave’s ‘The Mercy Seat’, also depicted evil in his songs. In ‘Folsom Prison Blues’, the speaker is a murderer. ‘I shot a man in Reno just to see him die.’ Cash often said that while God was #1, the Devil was #2. ‘I learned not to laugh at the devil.’ As a boy Cash remembered walking in the woods and seeing a blazing fire in the distance between the tree trunks. ‘That must be the hell I’ve been hearing about.’ Cash saw his life as a battle. ‘I’m not obsessed with death,’ he wrote, ‘I’m obsessed with living. The battle against the dark one and the clinging to the right one is what my life is about.’

‘What is that sweet breath behind my ear, I hear you say?’ writes Cave in *The Sick Bag Song*. ‘It is the Muses and Johnny Cash blowing us along our way.’

‘To me,’ Cash wrote, ‘songs were the telephone to heaven and I tied up the line quite a bit.’ Many of Cash’s songs have the tension of the psalms, an older telephone to God. The psalms, particularly the lament psalms, vibrate with doubt, misery and passion. Cave admires how ‘verses of rapture, or ecstasy and love could hold within them apparently opposite sentiments –

hate, revenge, bloody-mindedness – that were not mutually exclusive. This has left an enduring impression upon my songwriting.’ Cave’s chorus from ‘Mercy’ is psalm-like. ‘And I cried “Mercy”/Have mercy upon me/And I got down on my knees’. From Psalm 13: ‘How long wilt thou forget me O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?’ Lines from ‘I Let Love In’ – ‘Lord, tell me what I done/

‘EVIL IS JUST AS HUMAN AS EMPATHY OR LOVE’

Please don’t leave me here on my own/Where are my friends?/My friends are gone’ – parallel the sense of absence found in Psalm 74: ‘We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: nether is there among us any that knoweth how long.’

Cave’s theology, like all true faith, is both fuelled by doubt and ever transforming. His songs, like psalms, are not nihilistic, but act as a counterweight to the wilful optimism of our culture, a culture that denies the darkness that we are all, in this life, called to face. In both Cave’s lyrics and the psalms, darkness is not easily transformed into light. No. Darkness is shared and solace is offered in fidelity, in a relentless solidarity. ‘Darkness,’ the theologian Walter Brueggemann has written, ‘is where new life is given.’

On stage Cave’s persona has been likened to a sinister old-time preacher. Critics early in his career questioned what one called his ‘deranged preacher shtick’. Many of his songs, like ‘City of Refuge’, have a camp meeting, revivalist energy. ‘In the days of madness/ My brother, my sister/When you’re dragged toward the Hell-mouth/You will beg for the end/But there ain’t gonna be one, friend/For the grave will spew you out/It will spew you out.’ Cave often gives what seems to be a sermon in the bridge of songs, but

this, I would argue, is as it should be. Cave is not adding a mask, a shtick to the idea of the rock star; he is instead harkening back to the original *Front Man*, the preacher who fronted the choir.

Another religious archetype that Cave sometimes evokes is the circuit rider, a preacher dressed in black, on horseback with a Bible in his saddlebag. Circuit riders moved from revival to revival.

African American worshippers set up camp behind the raised platform and whites in front. Sunrise was welcomed by a trumpet call and preaching continued throughout the day. Many preachers, like Peter Akers, used their whole bodies as they spoke. Akers often fell to his knees (a knee drop!) and pressed his face in supplication to the platform.

Sinners who wanted to repent were welcomed to the front of the platform, a space known alternatively as the mercy seat, the mourner's bench, the glory pen and the anxious seat. When enough mourners had come forward the preacher left the pulpit and moved into the pen where he continued to exhort, invite and counsel mourners. It's hard not to think of rock performers, like Cave, playing to the first few rows of fans pressed up to the stage. Many of the mourners at camp meetings (and concerts) were women. Revivals were one of the few places antebellum women could act out. They cried, screamed, jerked and fell down. Redemption was cathartic, even sex-positive. One Alabama girl wrote in a letter to a friend that she had gained 'many boyfriends' at the camp meeting and that the girls had enjoyed themselves 'more than ever before'. Peter Cartwright wrote in his memoir about the suddenness of female conversion, how bonnets and combs would fly and a young women's hair 'would crack almost as loud as a wagon whip'.

At night, thousands of lights filled the camp meeting grounds, bonfires, candles, flickering lamps attached to tree branches and fire altars, raised

tripods blazing with enormous flames. The night revival is akin to the rock concert where lighters make stars in the dark. The concert is a secular happening, but also a holy one. Cave evokes in both song and performance what has been lost in religious practice, at least among his liberal, secular followers: the vastness of God, an otherworldly and theatrical grandeur.

‘A PREACHER DRESSED IN BLACK, ON HORSEBACK WITH A BIBLE IN HIS SADDLEBAG’

‘I can remember the time when I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts,’ writes Mary Rowlandson, who was captured by Native Americans in 1675, ‘but now it is other ways with me. When all are fast about me, and no eye open, but HIS who ever waketh, my thoughts are upon things past, upon the awful dispensation of the Lord towards us, upon HIS wonderful power and might ... I remember in the night season, how the other day I was in the midst of thousands of enemies, and nothing but death before me ... Oh! The wonderful power of God that mine eyes have seen, affording matter enough for my thoughts to run in, that when others are sleeping mine eyes are weeping.’

In 1998, Cave wrote an introduction to *The Gospel According to Mark*. In it he reflects on his evolving self and how this coincided with his discovery of the New Testament: ‘But you grow up. You do. You mellow out. Buds of compassion push through the cracks in the black and bitter soil. Your rage ceases to need a name. You no longer find comfort watching a whacked-out God tormenting a wretched humanity as you learn to forgive yourself and the world.’ Cave’s theology continues to morph. ‘Religions,’ philosopher John

Gray writes, ‘seem substantial and enduring only because they are always invisibly changing.’

In the New Testament, Cave explained on the radio, ‘I slowly reacquainted myself with the Jesus of my childhood, that eerie figure that moves through the Gospels, the man of sorrows, and it was through him that I was given a chance to redefine my relationship with the world. The voice that spoke through me now was softer, sadder, more introspective.’

Who is Cave’s Jesus? He is first and foremost a storyteller, an artist even, a being whose imagination was both laser-like and unrestrained.

‘YOU NO LONGER FIND COMFORT WATCHING A WHACKED-OUT GOD TORMENTING A WRETCHED HUMANITY AS YOU LEARN TO FORGIVE YOURSELF AND THE WORLD’

Jesus did not teach his followers a set of principles but showed them a way of life. Cave’s Jesus is not moralistic; instead he encourages a faith that is in close relation with a God who does not like complacency or stability, who is perpetually on the move, who pushes us on a journey with multiple ruptures and endless transformation.

‘As I understand it,’ wrote the songwriter Leonard Cohen, ‘into the heart of every Christian, Christ comes, and Christ goes. When, by his Grace, the landscape of the heart becomes vast and deep and limitless, then Christ makes His abode in the graceful heart and His Will prevails. The experience is recognized as Peace. In the absence of this experience much activity arises,

divisions of every sort. Outside the organizational enterprise, which some applaud and some mistrust, stands the figure of Jesus, nailed to a human predicament, summoning the heart to comprehend its own suffering by dissolving itself in a radical confession of hospitality.’

‘Christ, it seemed to me,’ says Cave, ‘was the victim of humanistic lack of imagination, was hammered to the cross with the nails of creative vapidness.’

‘In his spiritual reality too,’ Josef Pieper writes in his book *Only the Lover Sings*, ‘man is constantly moving on – he is essentially becoming; he is on the way. For man to be means to be on the way – he cannot be

‘SONG ITSELF IS A KIND OF MOVEMENT, A BECOMING, A SLICE OF ETERNITY SLIPPED INTO NORMAL TIME TO DILATE AND EXPLODE OUR FIXEDNESS’

in any other form, movement is intrinsic to a pilgrim, not yet arrived, regardless of whether he is aware of it or not, whether he accepts it or not.’

Song itself is a kind of movement, a becoming, a slice of eternity slipped into normal time to dilate and explode our fixedness. A song, like a book or a film, ‘must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us’.

In the last chapter of *Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James lays out the fundamental tenets that frame all faiths. 1: ‘There is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand.’ 2: ‘*We are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers.’ The conundrum that many of Cave’s songs explore is that divine connection, no matter how much

we crave it, is often unstable, unbelievable, even inhuman. While God is not indifferent, he/she/they is hard to reach. A better strategy than forcing oneself up towards the Godhead is to connect with the divine in humans. ‘God don’t need me,’ a black minister says in Faulkner’s novel *A Fable*, ‘I bears witness to him of course, but my main witness is to man.’

In ‘The Witness Song’, Cave’s focus is human love. The speaker and his female partner both dip their hands into a fountain of healing water. Both claim to be healed, then admit that the holy water has not healed them. It’s as if the rebuking of God’s supernatural ability brings them closer together. What haunts the speaker as the song ends is not a Christian trope but the gesture the woman makes as she leaves. ‘And she raised her hand up to her face/And brought it down again/I said “that gesture, it will haunt me”.’

The lover in ‘Do You Love Me?’ is a stand-in for the celestial sphere and all its creatures. ‘I found God and all His devils inside her/In my bed she cast the blizzard out/A mock sun blazed upon her head/ So completely filled with light she was.’ Cave searches for a faith that is not cookie-cutter or one size fits all,

‘MY SONGS ARE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DIVINE THAT MIGHT, IN THE END, BE SIMPLY THE BABBLING OF A MADMAN TALKING TO HIMSELF’

but deeply personal in its symbols, myths and theology. He pushes his own life through the Christian grid and usually finds his own life with all its uncertainty, rupture and sadness more real, if not completely satisfying.

In many songs Cave struggles toward a radical Christian theology that is on a human scale. The speaker in 'Into My Arms' does not believe in an interventionist God or angels, but human love. And in 'Brompton Oratory', the speaker tells us that the beauty of intimacy with his lover is almost impossible to endure, and in its sensations it rivals the foremost Christian ritual. 'The blood imparted in little sips/The smell of you still on my hands/As I bring the cup up to my lips.'

There is no God without human beings; the human imagination makes God. Doubt in our imagined divinity is, in part, what fuels faith. 'I have always found great motivating energy,' Cave writes in *The Red Hand Files*, 'in the idea that the thing I live my life yearning for, let's call it God, in all probability does not exist ... my songs are conversations with the divine that might, in the end, be simply the babbling of a madman talking to himself.'

IV — Angelology

Angels probably don't exist either. These spiritual beings, according to the fifteenth-century philosopher Marsilio Ficino, are created when a person acts with a pureness of intent. Every angel is the embodiment of a single emotion or impulse. 'The action transcends its physical place, time and individual connection and rises into the angel world: an angel is created.'

The single most vibrant dream of my life concerned angels. I was a new mother, at thirty-three, when I woke in the dark and went out into the hallway. On the landing I found a door that led to the fourth floor of my house. Why hadn't I realised before that my house had four not three floors? I went up the stairs into a huge, high-ceilinged room, panelled with dark wood, and on the far wall was a three-storey fireplace, filled with enormous pink and orange flames. The fire warmed the room and was its only light source. Human creatures were lying and sitting on furs spread out on the floor; each

one was speaking in a high-pitched melodic language I could not understand. They were speaking but their mouths did not move. They all had light brown skin, soft, shoulder-length hair and flat-chested, androgynous bodies. Each wore a beige bodysuit. While none of the creatures looked alike they all shared the same placid expression. The love between them was obvious in how they smiled at one another and lay with their heads in each other's laps. It was not until I woke up that I realised they were angels.

What can be known about angels? I'm as valid an angelologist as anyone. From my dream I gather that angels have no specific sexual orientation and when they are not working as celestial messengers, they enjoy their downtime. In the Bible, angels are often fearsome. There is a reason that the first words they speak are 'Be not afraid!' In The Book of Judges, angels move up into heaven inside a column of fire. Gnostic texts claim that there are seventy-two angels, each responsible for the creation of a different part of the body. Angels existed long before Christianity, and Hippolytus wrote in 200 CE that the highest form of angels, prime angels, were born of a copulation between God and the Earth.

In *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, Euchrid sees his angel in the swamp. The 'angel did ease herself into mah world'. First a whisper, then a flutter, then his name is called and finally the beating of silver wings. 'Immersed in a cobalt light, she hovered before me. Her wings beat through mah lungs, fanning up nests and brittle shells and webs and shiny wings and little skeletons and skulls and skins around me.

And this visitation, she spoke sweetly to me. She did. "I love you, Euchrid," she said. "Fear not, for I am delivered unto you as your keeper."

'Angels,' observes Michel de Certeau in his book *White Ecstasy*, 'enter the human world as the cosmology that placed them in a celestial hierarchy

begins to crumble.’ The less we believe in God, the more angels can escape heaven and walk with us on the earth.

‘THE LESS WE BELIEVE IN GOD, THE MORE ANGELS CAN ESCAPE HEAVEN AND WALK WITH US ON THE EARTH’

The poet Rilke tells us that angels have ‘tired mouths’, and that they all resemble each other. Ficino explained that the sun is God and the stars, the angels. Also that while human souls are created daily, angels were all created before time began. Porphyry, around the third century CE, claimed you could attract an angel with an offering of ‘fruit and flowers’. Thomas Aquinas, known as the Angelic Doctor, said that each angel was a single species, a creature unto himself.

‘We are with you,’ the angels tell Cave in *The Sick Bag Song*, ‘but you must take the first step alone.’

‘Religion,’ John Gray writes in his book *Seven Types of Atheism*, ‘may involve the creation of illusions. But there is nothing in science that says illusion may not be useful, even indispensable, in life. The human mind is programmed for survival, not truth.’

In Cave’s mid-career songs angels are frightening and chaotic. In ‘The Hammer Song’, ‘an angel came/With many snakes in all his hands.’ The angels in ‘Straight to You’ are part of heaven’s chaos. ‘The saints are drunk and howling at the moon/The chariots of angels are colliding.’ As in many of Cave’s songs, while the spiritual world is vibrant and real, the speaker chooses human life, human fragility, human emotion. ‘I don’t believe in the

existence of angels,' Cave sings in 'Into Your Arms', perhaps his most theologically brilliant song, 'but looking at you I wonder if that's true.'

Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher born in 1135, extended the idea of the angel to include wind and fire. Also human passion: everyone who goes on a mission is an angel. The angel in this way of thinking is the imagination itself.

'There is communion, there is language,' Cave sets down, 'there is God. God is a product of a creative imagination, and God is that imagination taken flight.'

'Still,' the poet Fanny Howe writes, 'hope was like a throng of singers that circle the world both here and there having died and echoed over and over. What is a song but a call from the other side?'

In the song 'Distant Sky', from *Skeleton Tree*, Cave's first album to come out after the death of his son Arthur in 2015, an angel speaks, an angel who will carry us back into God. 'Let us go now, my one true love ... We can set out, we can set out for the distant skies/Watch the sun, watch it rising in your eyes ... Soon the children will be rising, will be rising/This is not for our eyes.' Everything is one in the angel world. Time is not linear but simultaneous so the children both rise in the morning from their earthly beds as well as that final rising after death, the resurrection. As Rilke wrote, 'Angels (they say) don't know whether it is the living/they are moving among, or the dead.'

Before resurrection there is death and the angel of death comes as a messenger but also to coax the soul out of the body and into the open air. Gabriel will blast his trumpet to demarcate time's ending. Graves will shiver and the reawakened bodies will push up like mushrooms from beneath their mouldy beds.

William Blake's angel opens up metaphorical coffins, so the spiritually dead can run free. 'And by came an Angel who had a bright key,/And he opened the coffins and set them all free.' The Islamic angel Azrael was said to lure the soul by holding an apple from the tree of life to the nose of the dying person.

'WHAT IS A SONG BUT A CALL FROM THE OTHER SIDE?'

Libby, the wife of Bunny Munro in Cave's second novel, *The Death of Bunny Munro*, is herself a kind of death angel. Returning to their flat having been with a prostitute, Bunny, who believes he is locked out of the marital bedroom, sees his wife through the keyhole, standing by the window wearing the orange nightgown that she wore on their wedding night. She floats in his mind in 'dreamtime', the 'near-invisible' material of her nightgown hanging from her nipples.

Once inside the bedroom, he finds his wife hanging from the security grille. 'Her feet rest on the floor and her knees are buckled. She has used her own crouched weight to strangle herself.'

To Bunny Junior, their ten-year-old son, his mother is ever after a spirit. 'A slowly dissolving ghost-lady, as incomplete as a hologram. He feels, in this instance, forever suspended on the swing, high in the air, never to descend, beyond human touch and consequence, motherless ...'

In Karl Ove Knausgaard's novel *A Time for Everything*, angels are corporeal beings who, ever since Christ's crucifixion, have been trapped on earth. They have thin wrists, claw-like fingers, deep eye sockets. They shake continuously and uncontrollably. They do not speak but shriek. As they

move, they trail gaseous fire, like a comet.

The eighteenth-century mystic Emanuel Swedenborg often flew to heaven to converse with angels, though after these sessions he was never able to remember what the creatures told him. Humans have trouble both understanding and remembering angel speech. Angels may appear to speak but they are more likely communicating directly with their minds. ‘The angels,’ wrote Hildegard of Bingen, ‘who are spirits, cannot speak in a comprehensible language. Language is therefore a particular mission of humanity.’

In the 1987 film *Wings of Desire*, Nick Cave plays himself, a sort of anti-angel, all sharp skeletal angles in a blood-red shirt and black open vest. He is as agitated as the angels are peaceful, emoting as he sings ‘From Her to Eternity’ both desire and violence. He makes the angels feel human and the humans feel like angels.

‘HE MAKES THE ANGELS FEEL HUMAN AND THE HUMANS FEEL LIKE ANGELS’

The actual angels, Damiel and Cassiel, wear black trenchcoats and offer pastoral care to the people of Berlin. They see history from beginning to end; life is not linear but a continuous engagement with an ongoing present. In my favourite scene, Damiel, who will eventually choose the human over the angelic, soothes a dying man by moving his mind away from the pain caused by his motorcycle accident to the man’s treasured memories: ‘Albert Camus ... the swim in the waterfall ... first drops of rain ... bread and wine ... the veins of leaves, blowing grass, the colour of stones ... the dear one asleep in the next room ... the beautiful stranger.’

Angels, unlike humans, are not paradoxical. There is no difference between their inner and their outer. The scales are off their eyes and they see. While human subjectivity, blind spots, prejudices and ego all distort our vision, angels have no such blindness. I imagine their sight is how the visual artist Robert Irwin described the world just after he emerged

‘IS IT YOU, COME TO CARRY ME THROUGH THE GATES?’

from a sensory-deprivation tank. ‘For a few hours after you came out, you really did become more energy conscious, not just that leaves move, but that everything has a kind of aura, that nothing is wholly static, that color itself emanates a kind of energy. You noted each individual leaf, each individual tree. You picked up things which you normally blocked out.’

‘Is it you?’ Euchrid calls out at the end of *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, ‘Is it you, come to carry me through the gates?’

VI — The In-Between

In his foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman enjoins us to be prepared for the transition from corporeal to spirit. The point, he tells us, is to learn to love the clear light, not ‘shoot through the void and rise back up into an ... embodiment’. If we don’t learn to love the clear pre-dawn light we will end up inside either ‘lotus or womb or egg or moist cavity’ and the life cycle will start up once again.

One of the ways we can prepare, according to Thurman, is by being familiar with what heaven will look like. If we are Christian, we may see the Pearly Gates, if we’re Jewish we might see angels tending the garden of Eden,

harvesting manna, otherwise known as angel food. If we are science fiction devotees we might find ourselves on another planet, pink waves crashing onto an indigo shore. If we are secular, Thurman advises that we read up on life-after-death experiences. ‘During the between-state,’ he instructs, ‘the consciousness is embodied in a ghost-like between body made of subtle energies structured by the imagery in the mind, similar to the subtle embodiment we experience in dreams.’

Raymond A. Moody collected near-death experiences in his book *Life After Life*. The steps are uncannily the same in every account: the person floats up out of their body; they see a bright light; out of the light comes a voice. After a car crash, a man watched people walk up to the wreck. ‘I would try to turn around, to get out of their way, but they would just walk *through* me.’

A woman felt a sort of drifting, she heard beautiful music and floated down the hallway onto her porch and right through the screen. Another saw a spirit that looked like ‘the clouds of cigarette smoke you can see when they are illuminated as they drift around a lamp’.

Since the death of his son, Cave has been in closer contact with his fans, staging so-called Conversations – events in which he answers random questions from the audience in between performing solo at the piano. He also answers fan questions on his website The Red Hand Files. In one question about the possibility of an afterlife, Cave writes how grief can engender the spirit world. ‘Within that whirling gyre all manner of madnenses 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.’

‘Seeing the swallows flying through the summer air,’ Roland Barthes writes in his *Mourning Diary*, ‘I tell myself, thinking painfully of mama, how

barbarous not to believe in souls, in the immortality of souls, the idiotic truth of materialism.’

There is an empty space within death culture and grief. We still haven’t articulated the spiritual components of grieving. I remember after my mother’s funeral how I felt at a complete loss on what to do next, how to console my flayed heart. *Ghosteen*, Cave’s latest album, is a valuable study of loss and sorrow, of the time after a loved one dies when we feel stuck with one foot in this world and one, with our beloved, in the next.

‘CAVE’S CALL IS TO THE IMAGINATION, TO CREATIVITY, TO THE SOUND OF THE CELESTIAL SPHERES OR WHAT WE CALL MUSIC’

Angels are everywhere on *Ghosteen*, not named directly, but they sing on nearly every song with a wordless beauty and urgency that this listener finds both painful and lovely. Cave has said that *Ghosteen* is about a disembodied spirit. Sometimes the spirit speaks as in ‘Sun Forest’: ‘I am here/Beside you/Look for me/In the sun/I am beside you/I am within/In the sunshine/In the sun.’

On ‘Ghosteen Speaks’, ghost and human share not an earthly reality but a theology. ‘I try to forget/To remember/That nothing is something.’ The ancient idea that God is best found in the void. And the final incarnation, terrible but also full of grace: ‘I am within you/You are within me.’

As I finish this essay, I am at my desk in my attic office in Brooklyn. My window is not swarming with lady bugs. I look out not on moss-covered cedars but a brick wall and a plastic owl that sits on the ledge to scare away pigeons. I don't watch, as I did in Mississippi, black-clad pilgrims head down the street to Rowan Oak. Though I do journey at my desk, my own sacred space, as passionately as any pilgrim. I see. I doubt. I wonder.

In Chekhov's story 'The Student', a young seminarian walking home on a cold night comes across a group of peasant women standing around a large bonfire. It is a few days before Easter. The seminarian tells the story of Peter's denial of Jesus, which brings the women to tears. As he leaves and continues walking home, he realises that it's not his storytelling abilities but the old story itself that moved the women. This gives him a jolt, a sensation of eternity. 'He even stopped for a minute to take breath. "The past," he thought, "is linked with the present by an unbroken chain of events flowing one out of another." And it seemed to him that he had just seen both ends of that chain; that when he touched one end the other quivered.'

Nick Cave's work continues to do the implicit work of re-enchanting the world, of reminding us that our longing for God is real, though our main work is to witness, minister to and love one another. This is hard, particularly when we are called to love the dead. Cave's call is to the imagination, to creativity, to the sound of the celestial spheres or what we call music. The balance of beauty and sorrow in his most recent songs reminds me of a saint's reliquary I saw at the Metropolitan Museum, in a show featuring treasures of St Sophia: a small gold chapel made out of delicate filigree, inset with blue and red jewels. And at the bottom, in a sort of golden cage, lay items that at first shocked me with their incongruity: bone fragments and a swatch of rotten cloth. The fragile remnants of a saint, a holy animal, inside an eternal frame. This is our dilemma. We are God. We are human. Both at the same time. And this is what makes our position on earth tricky,

humorous, beautiful and impossible.

Darcey Steinke

Brooklyn, 2020

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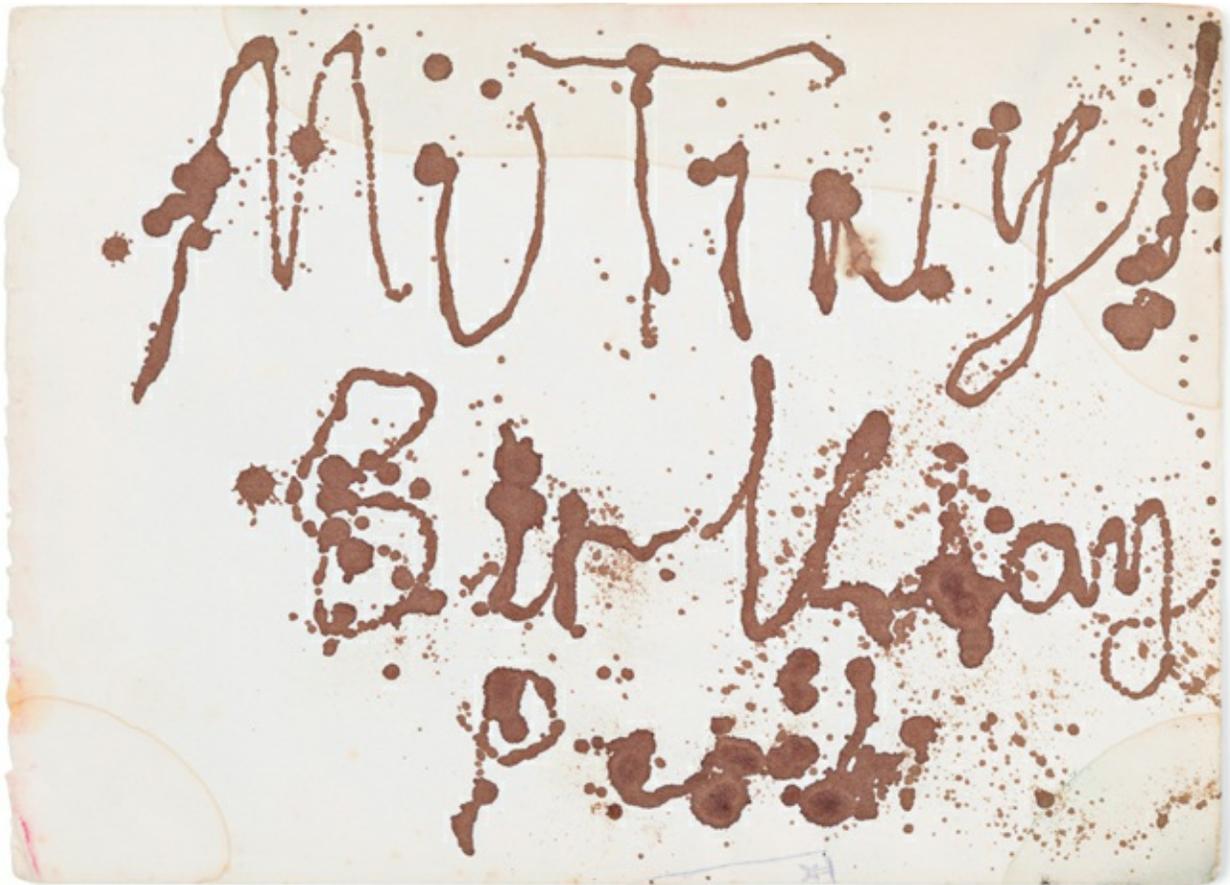
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'I would try' and 'the clouds': Raymond A. Moody Jr., *Life After Life* (HarperOne, New York, New York, 1975)

'Seeing the swallows': Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary* (Hill and Wang, FSG, New York, New York, 2010)

'He even stopped': Anton Chekhov, 'The Student' in *The Witch and Other Stories* (Project Gutenberg, 2006)



'Mutiny! The Birthday Party'

Drawing in blood by Nick Cave, c. 1983

For further reading [here](#)

(Mutiny in Heaven)

① Ah wassa born
 to walk
 to walk in these losers shoes
 And a confess ~~that ahim~~ ^{gunna end it all}
~~was~~ ~~with~~ ~~some~~ ^{get some} wings
 Owi owi owi owi)
 Ah bailing out x4
 Mu-tin-ee in Heaven - ~~at~~

② ~~This old heart~~ This old heart
~~is a ghetto~~ is a ghetto
~~destitute~~
 + it drums ~~at~~ ^{at} beat
 + what was once heaven
 barbee
 is a slum + you know it
 Ahm bailing out x4
 Don't ever telephone me again x2
^{ahim gone + get}
 cause ahim ~~got~~ ^{got} heaven on the line
 Hello? Hello? This is... this is... o-o-oh.
 There's a Mu-tin-ee in Hea-ven
 [ahm bailing out 1234 wo-o-o-ow)

③ Ah wassa born
 barbee to walk
 Ah walk is just ablat d'him gunna do ^{walk outa}
 One is a crowd + ahm bailing out ^{your life}
 Don't ever telephone me again x2 ^{+ mine}
 Mu-tin-ee in Hea-ven ^{in these losers}
 There's one thing that I don't need ^{shoes}
 is ~~your~~ ^{your} little hungry mouth to feed
 Mu-tin-ee in Hea-ven

Song lyrics for 'Mutiny in Heaven' by Nick Cave, 1983
 Released on *Mutiny!* by The Birthday Party, 1983



Box of cassettes
Owned by Nick Cave, 1982-85

From her to Eternity 97

Intro I wanna tell you about a GIRL.
You know, she lives in room 29
Why! That's the one right up top mine
I start to to cry.

V1(c) ~~The~~ Sometimes I hear her walking
walking barefoot cross the floorboards
all thru the night.

V2. I hear her ^{loveless} crying, tears come falling on
down, leaking thru the cracks, splashin
on my face, I catch them in mouth

V3. Walkin' cry x 4 From Her to Eternity

V4. I read her diary on her sheets,
Tore out a page + fled, out the window +
shinning it down the vine, Out a her
night mare ^{back} thinto mine

V5. I don't believe in miracles no, no, no, no.
From her to Eternity.

V6. Here is the Church, here is the steeple
I make my confession up at the keyhole
why open the door ^{Key hole} if ya can see thru the pophole
Here is the ^{See-sick soul} ~~if ya can see thru the pophole~~
wrestling ^{walkin' up the stairs}
BRISTLING

Song lyrics for 'From Her to Eternity' by Nick Cave and Anita Lane, 1983

Released on From Her to Eternity by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1984

For further reading [here](#)



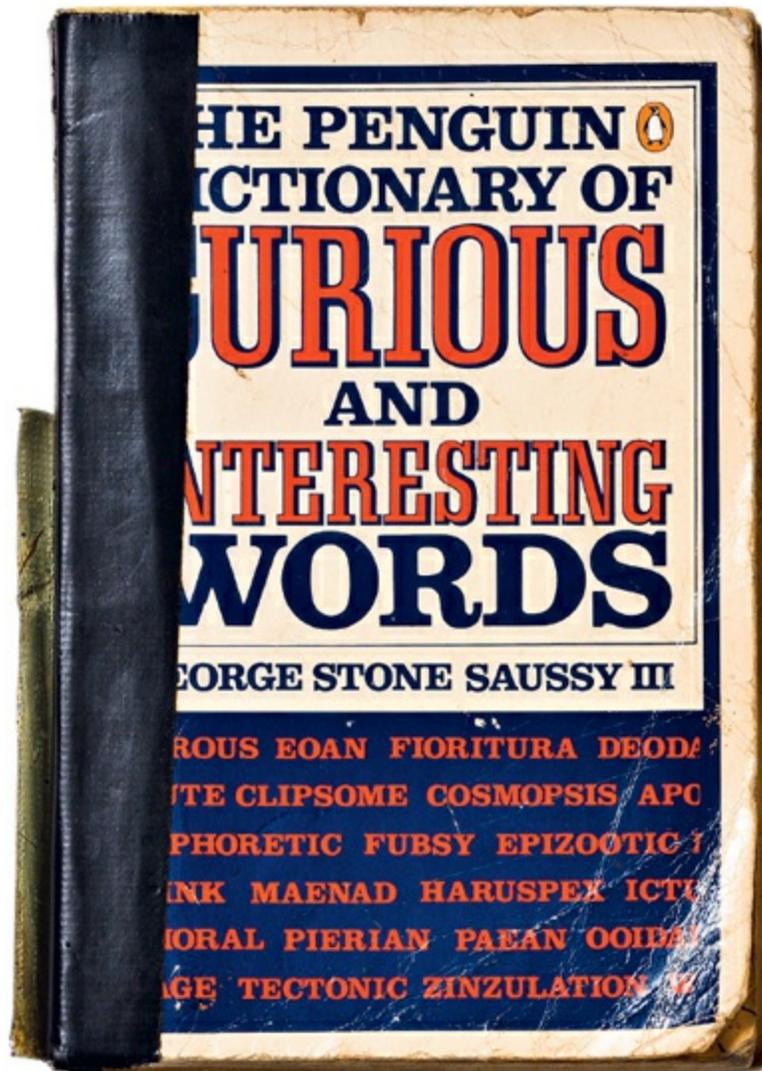
Postcard from handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985



Statue of Christ, c. 1860

Present from Victoria Clarke to Nick Cave on his fortieth birthday

For further reading [here](#)



The Penguin Dictionary of Curious and Interesting Words by George Stone Saussy III, 1986



Postcard from handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985

~~TUPELO~~

①

LOOK-a-YONDER
 LOOK-a-YONDER
 LOOK-a-YONDER
 A BIG BLACK CLOUD COMES ^{x2}

Come (TUPELO) →

YONDER ON THE HORIZON
 YONDER ON THE HORIZON
 STOPPT AT THE MIGHTY RIVER ^{x2}
 SUCKT THE DAMN THING DRY
 VALLEY <TUPELO>

✓ DISTANT THUNDER RUMBLE
 DISTANT THUNDER RUMBLE
 RUMBLE HUNGRY LIKE THE BEAST
 3X THE BEAST IT COMETH, COMETH DOWN
 WO-O-OAH TUPELO BOUND
 " <TUPELO> ←

THE HEN WONT LAY NO EGG
 CAINT GIT THAT COCK TO CROW
 THE NAG IS SPOOKED + CRAZY
 3X O GOD HELP TUPELO. 240479
 2132455

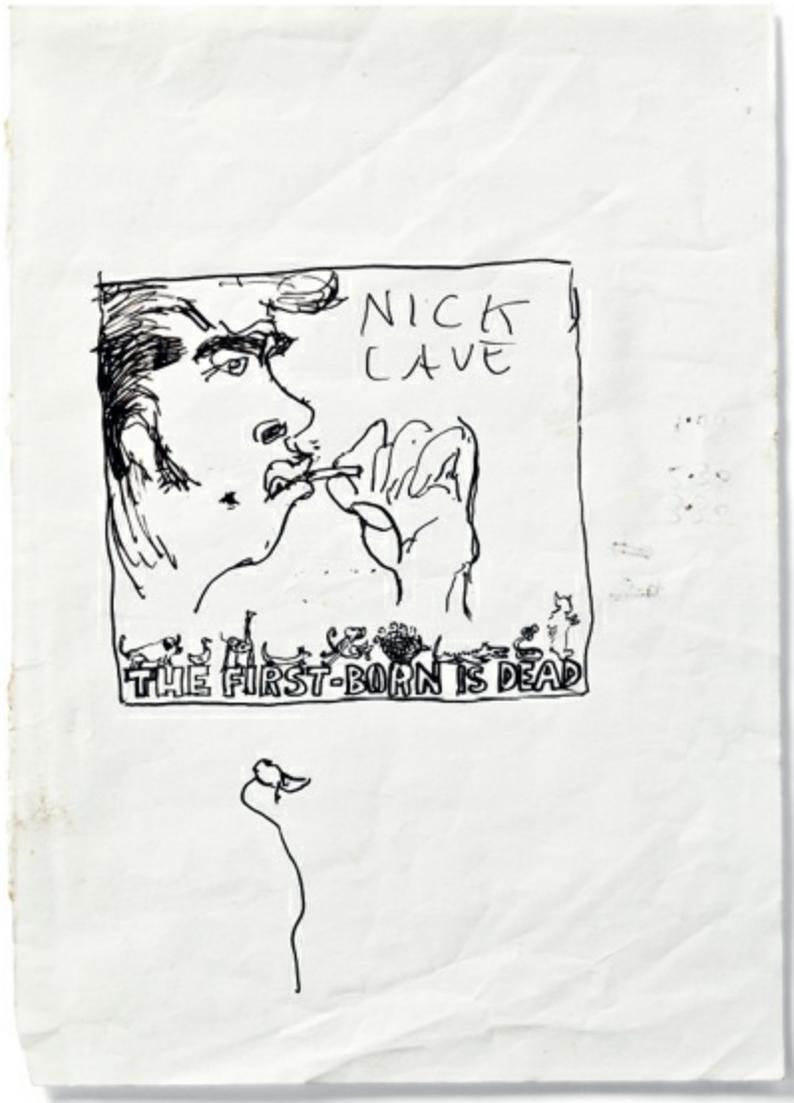
RIVERS - STREET x4
 x4
 x7

Song lyrics for 'Tupelo' by Nick Cave, c. 1984
 Released on *The Firstborn Is Dead* by
 Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1985
 For further reading [here](#)



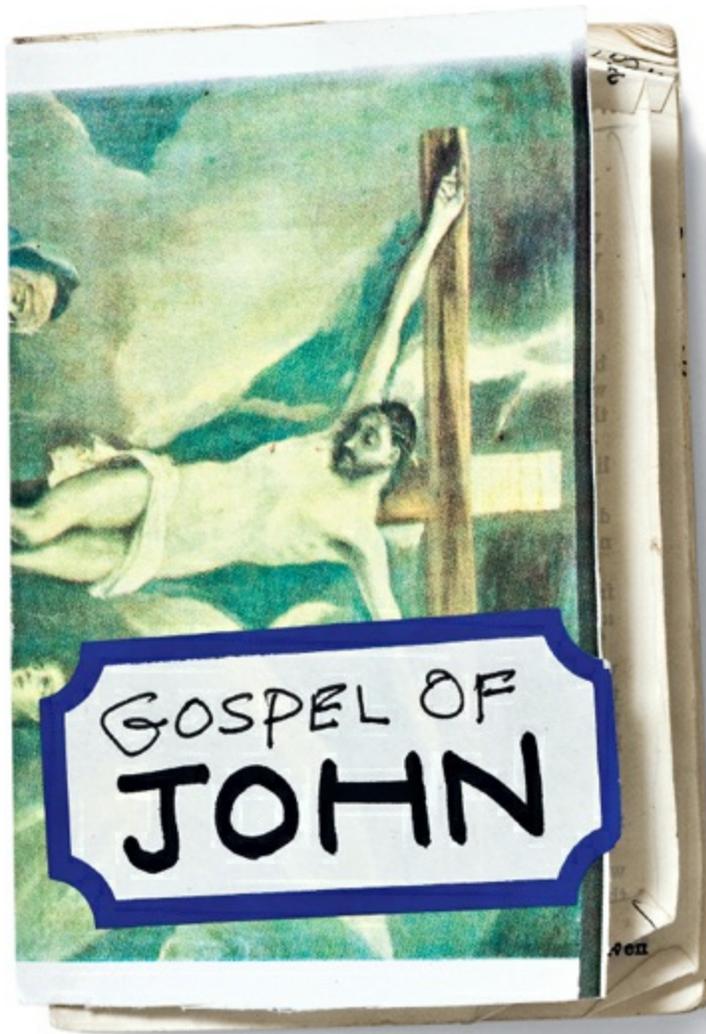
Handwritten dictionary of words by Nick Cave, 1984-85

For further reading [here](#)



The Firstborn Is Dead

Drawing by Nick Cave, 1985



The Gospel According to St John, 1980s

Annotated by Nick Cave

thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy

word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have

WHY IS FAITH ESSENTIAL to eternal life?
Why do we need to believe?

given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

CHAPTER 18

WHEN Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook

Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he; they went backward, and fell to the ground.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if

The Gospel According to St John, 1980s

Annotated by Nick Cave



Euchrid's Crib 1

Nick Cave in Yorkstraße, West Berlin, 1985

Photograph by Bleddyn Butcher

For further reading [here](#)



Barbary Ape, Souvenir of Gibraltar, date unknown
Given to Nick Cave by Martyn Casey



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987
For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)



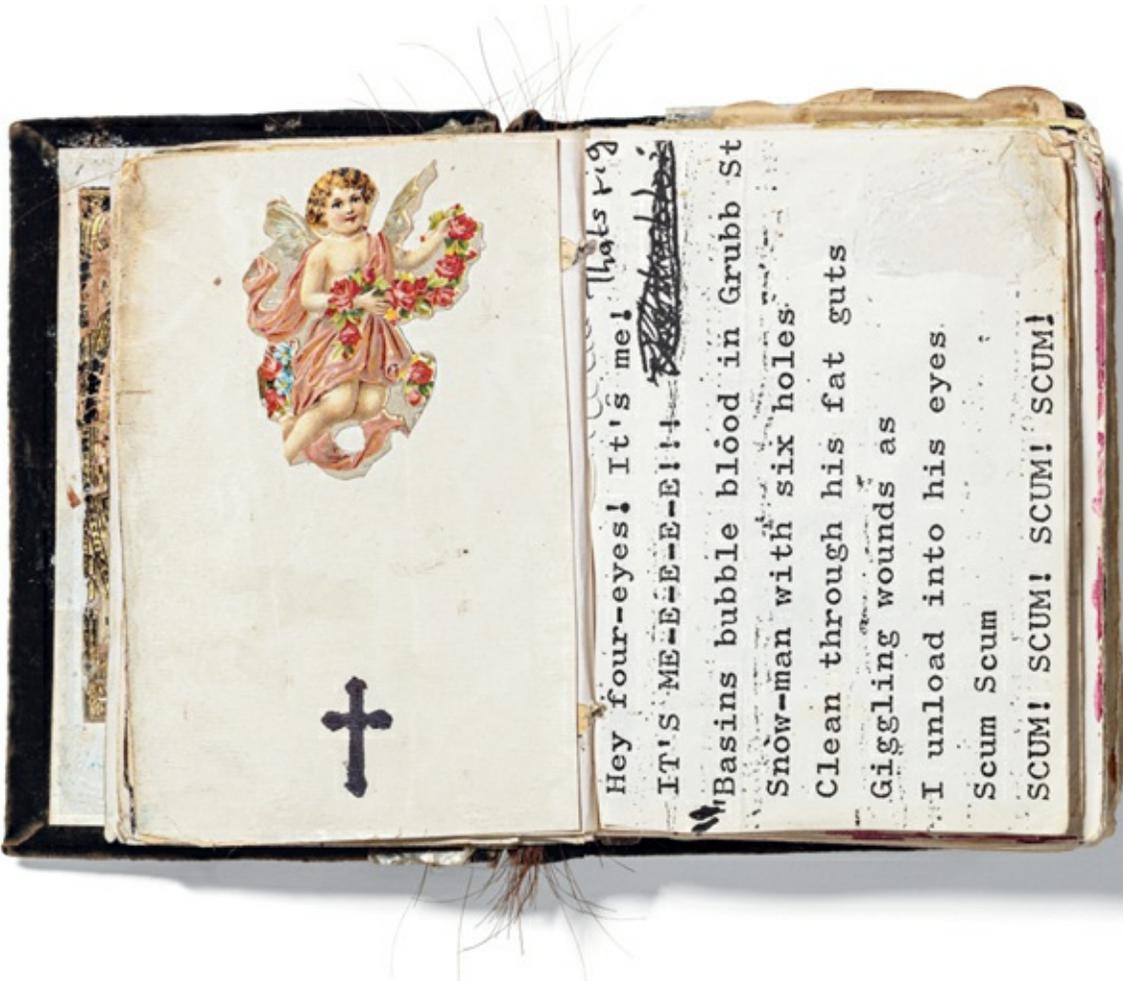
Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987
For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987
For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987
For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987
For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)

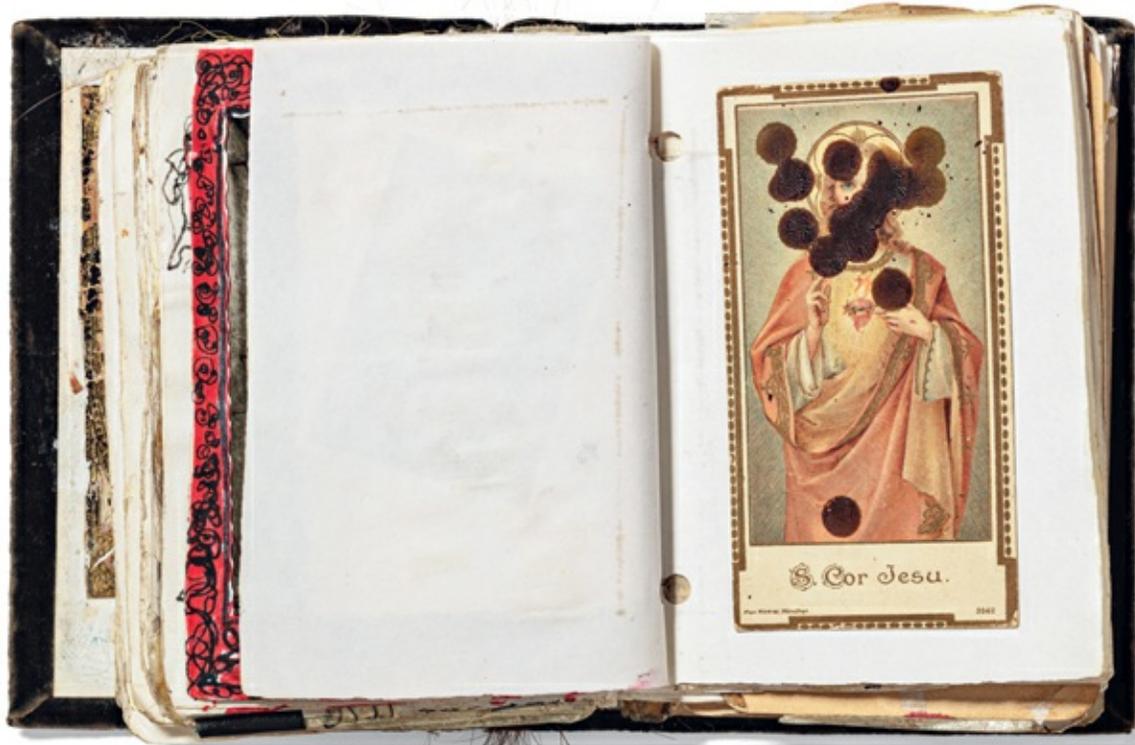


Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987
For further reading [here](#)



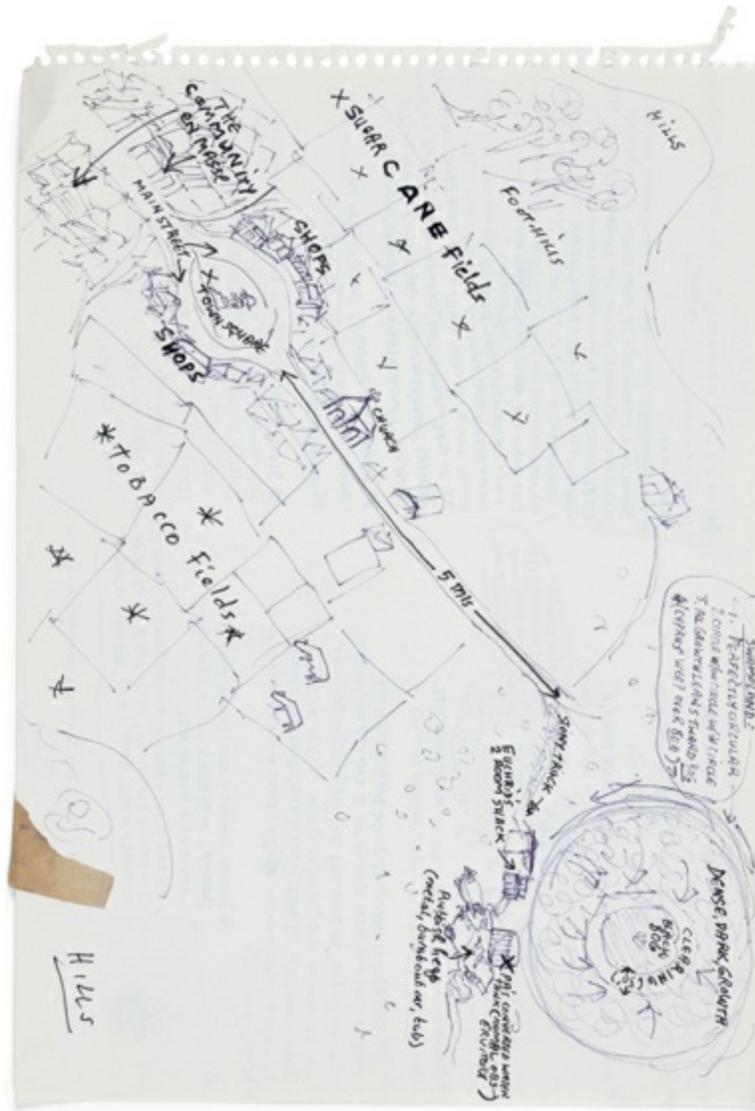
Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1987

For further reading [here](#)



Map of Ukulore for *And the Ass Saw the Angel* by Nick Cave, 1985

PART

** AND THE ASS SAW THE ANGEL **



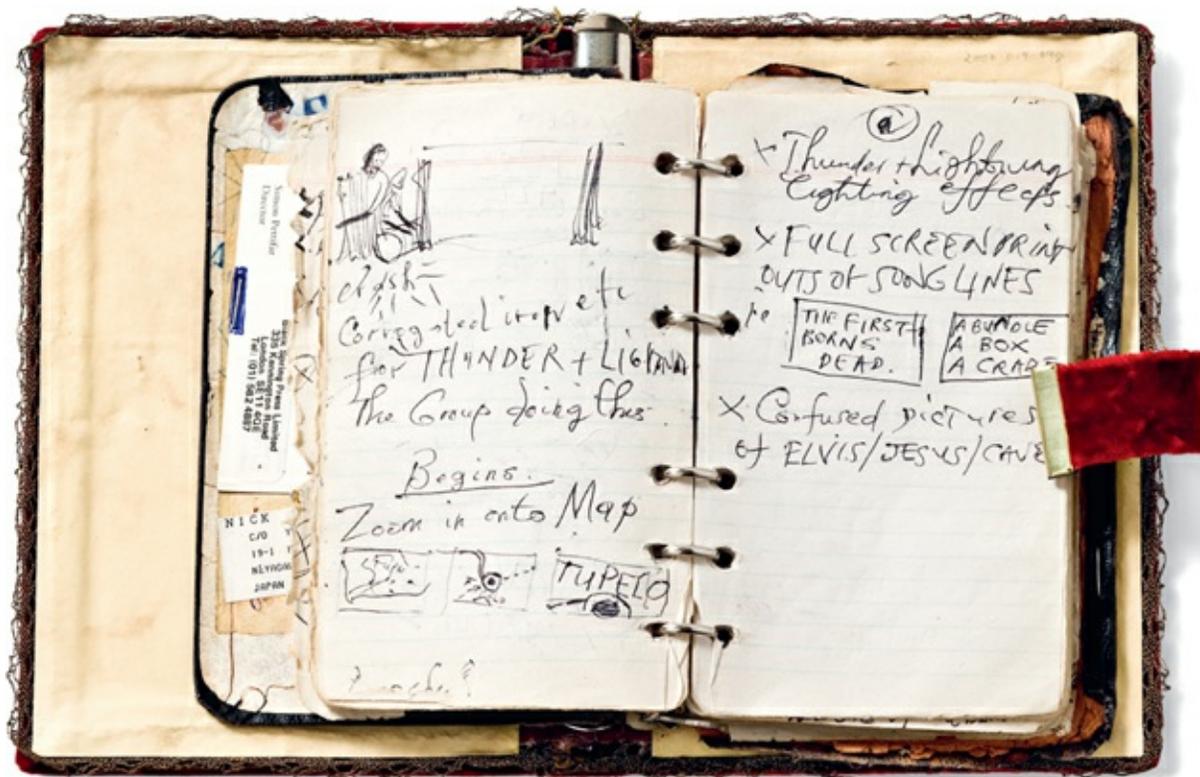
by
NICHOLAS CAVE

BLACK SPRING PRESS

Manuscript for *And the Ass Saw the Angel* by Nick Cave, 1985-87

Published 1989

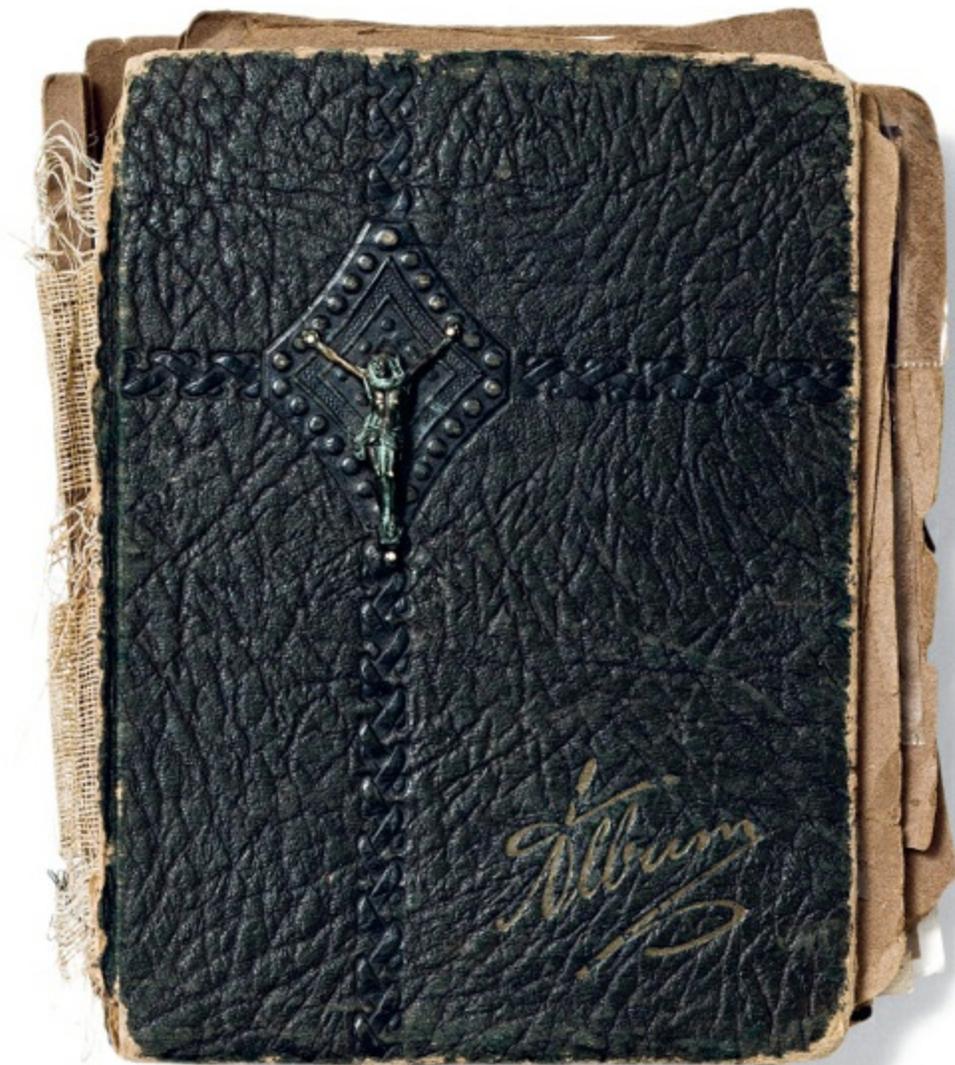
For further reading [here](#)



Notebook with ideas for the 'Tupelo' music video, 1985



Postcard from handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985



Handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985

For further reading [here](#)

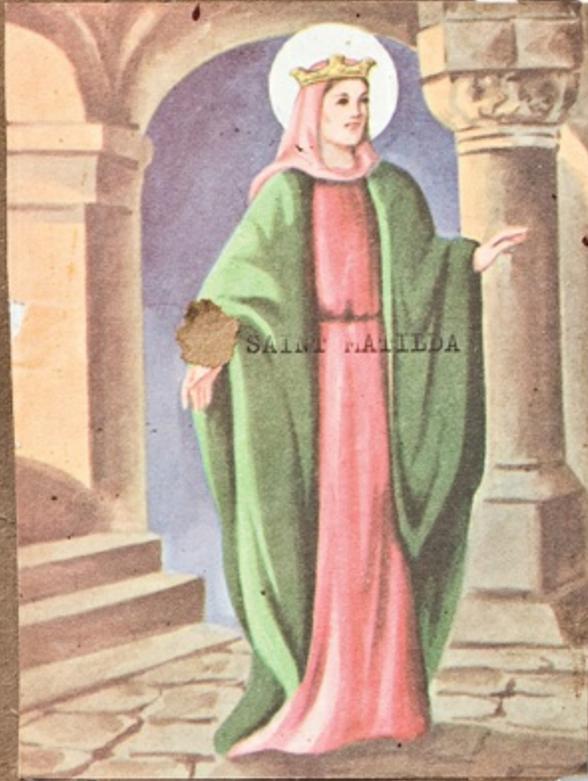


Victorian scrap picture and postcard from handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985

For further reading [here](#)



Drawing and postcard from handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985
For further reading [here](#)



(a)

SAINT MATILDA



Image and postcard from handmade book by Nick Cave, 1985
For further reading [here](#)





Saint Jude Patron Saint of Despair by Nick Cave, 1985

For further reading [here](#)



Three pieces of women's hair stored in a Sarotti A-G Berlin box,
1985

For further reading [here](#)

STRANGER THAN KINDNESS

a song by

\$ ANITA .L. LANE \$

STRANGER THAN KINDNESS by Anita Lane

Stranger than kindness
Bottled light from hotels
Spilling everything.
Wet hand from the volcano
Sobers your skin. *Stranger than Kindness*
You caress yourself and grind my soft
cold bones below.
Your map of desire burned in your slave.
Even a fool can come.
..A strange lit stair
and find ~~(the shadow of)~~ a rope hanging there
Stranger than kindness

§

Keys rain like heaven's hair.
There is no home, There is no bread.
We sit at the gate and scratch.
The gaunt fruit of passion
Dies in the light. *Stranger than Kindness*
Your sleeping hands, journey
Stranger than kindness.
Your hold me so carelessly close.
Tell me I'm dirty.
I'm a Stranger to kindness

Song lyrics for 'Stranger Than Kindness' by Anita Lane, 1986
Released on *Your Funeral... My Trial* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds,
1986
For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book by Nick Cave with El Greco's
The Crucifixion pasted onto the cover, 1986
For further reading [here](#)

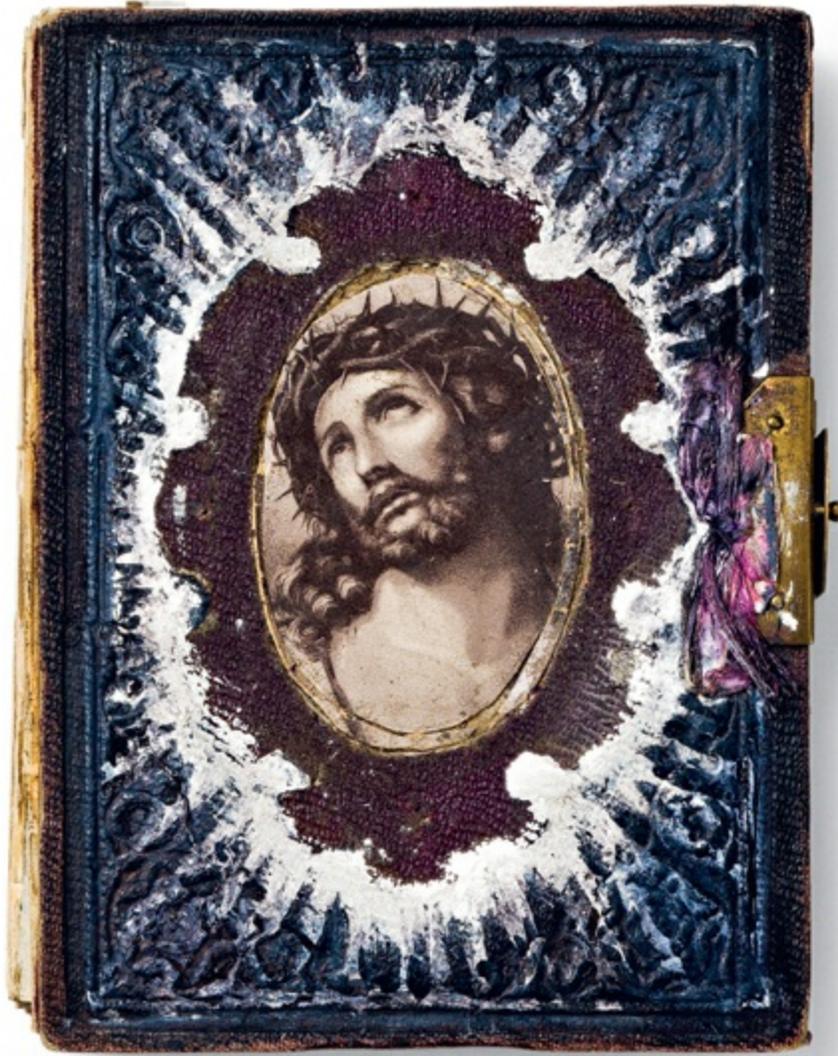


Collage in handmade book by Nick Cave, 1986

For further reading [here](#)

Artwork by Anita Lane in handmade book by Nick Cave, 1986

For further reading [here](#)



Handmade book entitled *Book Number 2* by Nick Cave, 1987



Handmade book entitled *Book Number 2* by Nick Cave, 1987



Painting by Frederic Wall

Owned by Nick Cave while he lived in West Berlin in the 1980s

For further reading [here](#)



Lettera 25 manual typewriter, c. 1975

For further reading [here](#)

DEANNA

by Nick Cave Dec. 1987 Berlin

4 1 O DEANNA
 YEAH DEANNA
 YOU KNOW YOU ARE MY FRIEND, YEAH
 § AND I AINT DOWN HERE FOR YOUR MONEY
 AND I AINT DOWN HERE FOR YOUR LOVE
 I AINT DOWN HERE FOR YOUR MONEY OR LOVE
 I'M DOWN HERE FOR SOUL

GAP
 SOFT 4

2 THERE'S NO CARPET ON YOUR FLOOR
 AND THE WINDING-CLOTH HOLDS MANY MOTHS
 AROUND YOUR KU KLUX FURNITURE
 I CUM A DEATH'S-HEAD IN YOUR ~~SOUL~~ ^{throat}
 § WE MAKE A DEATH PLAN AND A FACT
 WE DISCUSS MURDER AND THE MURDER ACT
 MURDER TAKES THE WHEEL OF THE CADILACT
 AND DEATH CLIMES IN THE BACK

8 3 OH DEANNA
 SWEET DEANNA
 OH DEANNA
 THIS IS A CAR
 THIS IS A GUN
 AND THIS IS DAY NUMBER ONE
 § OUR LITTLE CRIME OF HISTORIES
 BLACK AND SMOKING ~~WAS~~ ^{WAS} TREES
 AND HONEY IT AINT A MYSTERY
 WHY YOUR A MYSTERY TO ME

SOFT 4

4 4 WE WILL EAT OUT OF THEIR PANTRIES
 AND THEIR PARLOURS
 ASHY LEAVINGS IN THEIR BEDS
 AND WE'LL UNLOAD INTO THEIR HEADS
 § ON THIS MEAN ~~MEAN~~ MEAN SEASON
 ON THIS MEAN MEAN SEASON
 BUT THIS ANGEL THAT I'M SQUEEZING
 SHE AIN'T BEEN MEAN TO ME

GAP
 SOFT 4

5 OH DEANNA
 YOUR MY FRIEND
 YOUR MY PARTNER
 IN THIS HOUSE UPON THE HILL
 § AINT DOWN HERE ^{SOFT 4}
 " " " " ^{LOUD 4}
 " " " " ^{SOFT 4}
 I'm down here 4 ya soul

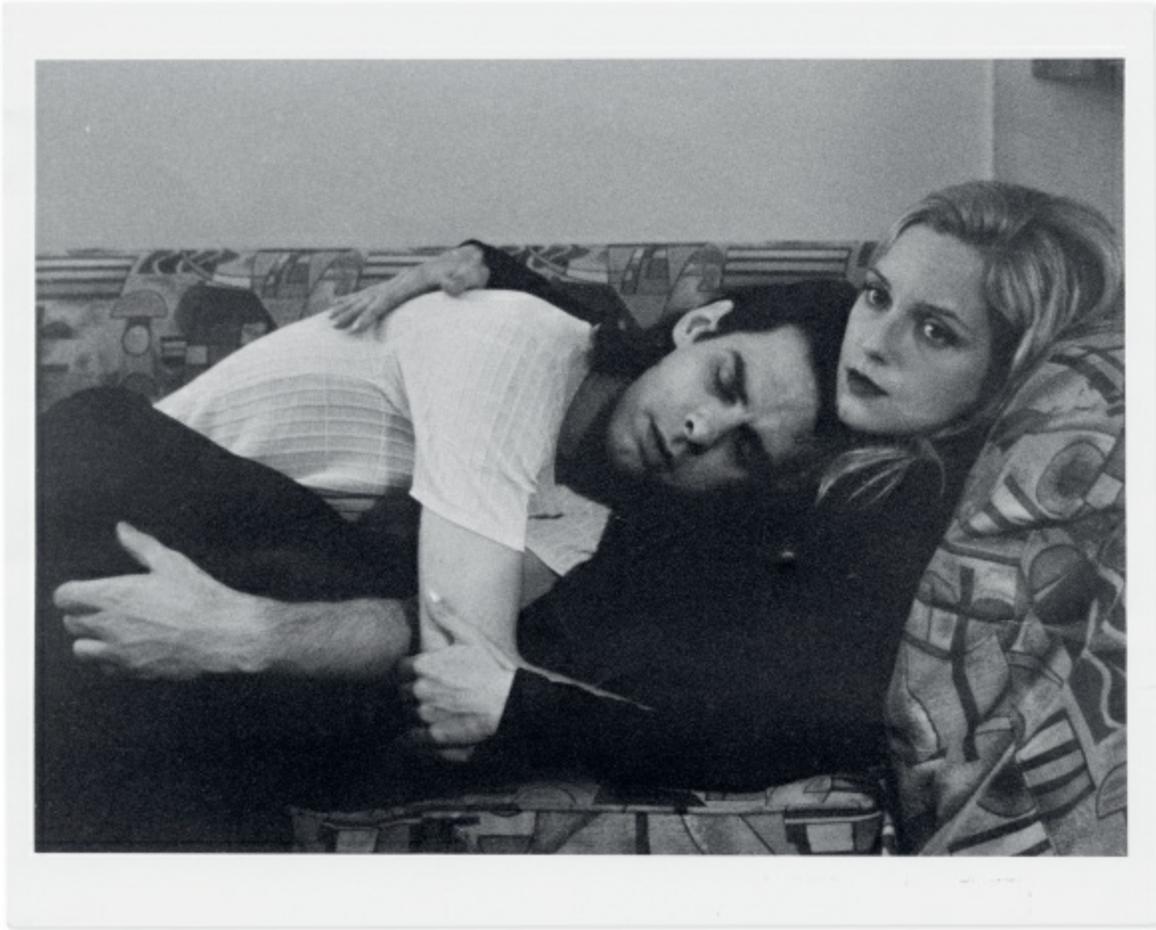
6 O DEANNA
 I AM A-KNOCKING
 WITH MY TOOL-BOX AND ~~MY~~ STOCKING
 HE WILL MEET YOU ON THE CORNER
 YES, YOU ~~SQUEEZE~~ POINT IT LIKE A FINGER
 AND SQUEEZE IT'S LITTLE THING
 HEAR THE KICK, FEEL THE BANG
 § AND LET'S NOT WORRY ABOUT IT'S ISSUE
 DON'T WORRY BOUT WHERE IT'S BEEN
 DON'T WORRY BOUT WHERE IT HITS
 CAUSE THAT JUST AINT YOURS TO SIN

8 7 NO THAT JUST AINT YOURS TO SIN
 § THAT ~~JUST~~ ~~ADMT~~ ~~YOURS~~ ~~TO~~ ~~SIN~~
 SWEET DEANNA
 I AINT GETTING ANY YOUNGER
 E DEANNA YOUR MY FRIEND
 THE SUN, A HUMP AT MY SHOULDER
 I DON'T INTEND GETTING ANY OLDER
 O DEANNA
 § WELLY I AIN'T DOWN HERE FOR YOUR MONEY
 AND I AIN'T DOWN HERE FOR YOUR LOVE
 I AIN'T DOWN HERE FOR LOVE OF MONEY
 I'M DOWN HERE FOR YOUR SOUL

Song lyrics for 'Deanna' by Nick Cave, 1987

Released on *Tender Prey* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1988

For further reading [here](#)



Nick Cave and Deanna Bond, c. 1988
Photograph by Wendy Joy Morrissey
For further reading [here](#)

MTC 9814577
001461- (9)
MERCY SEAT by NICK CAVE BERLIN/LONDON/MELBOURNE 88

(Spoken) Um, it began when they come look me from my home
And put me here in Dead Row
Of which I am ~~wholly~~ nearly wholly innocent, you know
And I'll say it again
I .. am .. not .. afraid .. to .. die ..

~~It~~ I began to warm and chill
to objects & their fields
a ragged cup, a twisted mop
the face of Jesus in my soup
these sinister dinner deals
the meal trolleys wicked wheels
a hooked bone rising from my food
all things either good or ungod

(Sung)
And the mercy seat is waiting
And I think my head is burning
And in a way I'm yearning
to be done with all this measuring of truth
An eye for an eye
And a tooth for a tooth
And anyway I told the truth
And I'm not afraid to die

(Spoken) Interpret signs and catalogue
A blackened tooth, a scarlet fog
the walls are bad, black, bottom kind
they are ^{the} sick breath at my hind
they are ^{the} sick breath at my hind
they are ^{the} sick breath at my hind
they are the sick breath gathering at my hind

(Sung) In Heaven His throne is made of gold
The ark of His testament is stoned
A throne from which I'm told
All history class unfold
Down here it's made of wood and wire
And my body is on fire
And God is never far away

This verse is at the * sign

Song lyrics for 'The Mercy Seat' by Nick Cave, c. 1988

Released on *Tender Prey* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1988

For further reading [here](#)



'Kylie' bag owned by Nick Cave, c. 1992

For further reading [here](#)

Well I leaned across the counter
+ squeezed the trigger tight ~~triple~~
+ when I shot I was so handsome
it was the angle, was the light

I am the man for which no God waits
of which ~~of~~ ^{the whole world} ~~of~~ women years
I am marked by darkness + by blood
+ one thousand powder burns

~~Challenge~~ wife she started wailing
when hands were the dirt
In ~~the~~ ^{the corner of} ~~the~~ ^{she} ~~was~~ ^{clapping} ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~head~~ ^{her} ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{gun} ~~upon~~ ^{her} ~~her~~ ^{neck}
and the spray was fine + pink
her ^{Sister Slobhan}
And little ~~thing~~ ^{thing}

And her trade from dusk till dawn
who boasted upon her swollen breast
was this town white ~~to~~ ^{was} ~~born~~
out-shining in the corner Well, I ~~swung~~ ^{swung} ~~my~~ ^{my} ~~gun~~ ^{gun}
as I approached her like a thief ^{the Madonna panted as}
like the ~~Madonna~~ ^{on the church house wall}
painted in whale blood + banana leaf
I shot her through the heart I ~~snapped~~ ^{snapped} ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~head~~ ^{head}
then ~~horribly~~ ^{horribly} ~~span~~ ^{span} ~~around~~ ^{around}
to see Caffrey rising from his seat
+ shot that ~~mother~~ ^{mother} ~~down~~ ^{down}
Mr ~~Connelly~~ ^{Caffrey}

I have no free will "I sang
in ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~corner~~ ^{corner} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~church~~ ^{church} ~~house~~ ^{house}
+ Mrs ~~Holmes~~ ^{Holmes} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~door~~ ^{door} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~screamed~~ ^{screamed}
you really should have heard her
And I sang + laughed + howled + wept
+ panted like a pup
I blew a hole in Misses Holmes
+ her husband he stood up and screamed
"see you in Hell" he ~~screamed~~ ^{screamed} ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~me~~ ^{me}
you ~~oh~~ ^{oh} ~~Evil~~ ^{Evil} ~~man~~ ^{man}
+ I paused a while to ~~assess~~ ^{assess} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~powder~~ ^{powder}
If I have no free will how can I
be morally culpable I wonder
I shot Richard Holmes in the stomach
+ gingerly he ~~set~~ ^{set} ~~down~~ ^{down}
"Is that it back" he whispered wearily "No offense"
Then ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~lay~~ ^{lay} ~~upon~~ ^{upon} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~ground~~ ^{ground}
"no offense taken" I replied to him
~~he~~ ^{he} ~~gave~~ ^{gave} ~~a~~ ^a ~~weary~~ ^{weary} ~~cry~~ ^{cry}
+ with blazing wings I neatly aimed
blew his head completely off
I've lived in this town near 30 years
I ~~lose~~ ^{lose} ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~recollections~~ ^{recollections} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~mine~~ ^{mine} ~~I~~ ^I ~~change~~ ^{change}
+ I ~~lose~~ ^{lose} ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~recollections~~ ^{recollections} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~mine~~ ^{mine} ~~I~~ ^I ~~change~~ ^{change}
And as I turned upon the town like ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~bird~~ ^{bird} ~~Brooks~~ ^{Brooks}
I thought of St. Francis + his sparrows
+ when I shot down the youthful Richardson
it was ~~Satan~~ ^{Satan} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~arrows~~ ^{arrows}
(I remembered)

Notebook containing song lyrics for 'O'Malley's Bar' by Nick Cave, 1991-96
Released on *Murder Ballads* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1996
For further reading [here](#)

Well one man said, stop all this mess
 This is not a violent town
 + before the man could draw his knife
 Well I took my gun + my gas press
 + blew that mother-fucker down
 A-ha-ha A-ha-ha - ha
 A-ha-ha - A-ha-ha

With a deadly mother-fucker in my hand
 Ah-ha-ha Ah-ha-ha

What I've read the writing on the wall
 What cannot rise in time must fall

A man came stalking down the hill
 + spun around, I did not stall
 What cannot rise in the death must fall
 I wrote it in blood upon

*There goes a man
 with a gun
 who got that
 look of concentration
 and the murder
 was in his
 mind
 he was
 the
 one
 who
 did
 it*

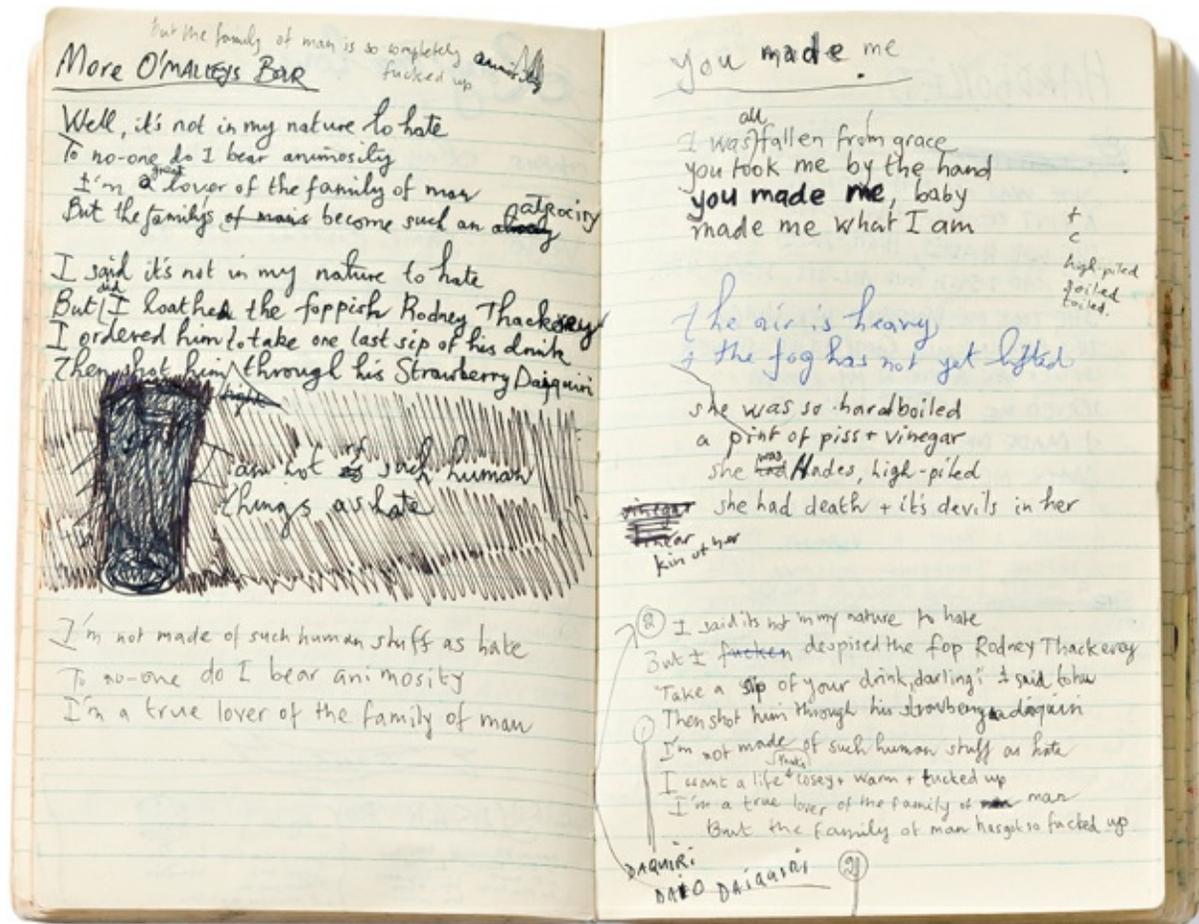
IF I FOR A MOMENT DROPPED MY GUN

I'M GONNA HURT SOMEBODY
 WITH REALLY HARD THIN, CHEAP ELECTRIC
 guitar

I am tall + I am thin
 walk between a swagger + a sway
 I have been known to look quite handsome
 in a dark + brooding sort of way
 I am a man who digests entire countries
 of which he rarely returns
 And I walk all covered in darkness
 + in blood + in powder burns
 O Malley

I am tall + I am thin. (and of an enviable height)
 I like to fuck + I like to fight
 + I've been known to be quite handsome
 From a certain angle + in a certain light
 And sometimes my eyes are blue as ice
 sometimes they're steely grey
 + when I go to town each Friday night
 In dark and brooding sort of way
 Well I entered into Malley's
 Said O Malley I have a thrust
 O Malley simply smiled at me
 Said you would be the first
 Said you would be the first

Notebook containing song lyrics for 'O'Malley's Bar' by Nick Cave, 1991-96
 Released on *Murder Ballads* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1996
 For further reading [here](#)



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'O'Malley's Bar' by Nick Cave, 1991-96

Released on *Murder Ballads* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1996

For further reading [here](#)

PAPA WONT LEAVE YOU, HENRY.

** Italics*

Verse 1
I WENT OUT WALKING THE OTHER DAY
THE WIND HUNG NET AROUND MY NECK
MY HEAD IT RUNG WITH SCREAMS AND ORGANS
FROM THE NIGHT I SPENT AMONGST HER BONES
AND I PASSED BESIDE THE MISSION HOUSE
WHERE THAT MAD OLD BUZZARD, THE REVEREND
SHRIEKED AND FLAPPED ABOUT LIFE AFTER YOURS DEAD
WELL, I THOUGHT ABOUT MY FRIEND, MICHELLE
HOW THE ROLLED HIM IN LINOLEUM
AND ~~HE~~ SHOT HIM IN THE NECK
A BLOODY HALO, LIKE A THINK-BUBBLE
CIRCLING HIS HEAD
AND I BELLOUED AT THE FIRMAMENT
LOOKS LIKE THE RAINS ARE HERE TO STAY
AND THE RAIN PISSED DOWN UPON ME
AND WASHED ME ALL AWAY
SAYING
PAPA WONT LEAVE YOU, HENRY
PAPA WONT LEAVE YOU BOY
PAPA WONT LEAVE YOU, HENRY
PAPA WONT LEAVE YOU, BOY
WELL THE ROAD IS LONG
AND THE ROAD IS HARD
AND MANY FALL BY THE SIDE
BUT PAPA WONT LEAVE YOU, HENRY
SO THERE ISNT NO NEED TO CRY
AND I WENT ON DOWN THE ROAD
* ~~he~~ he went on down the road
* I WENT ON DOWN THE ROAD
* ~~he~~ he went on down the road

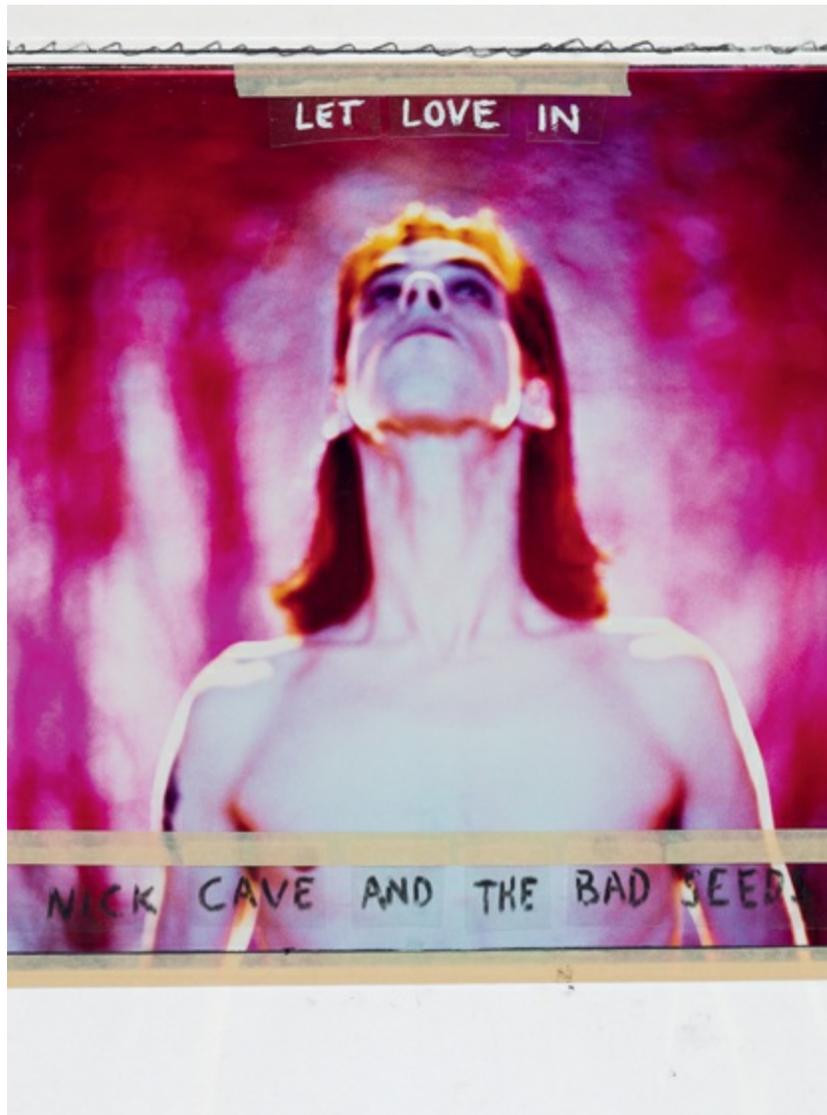
Verse 2
WELL THE MOON IT LOOKED EXPANDED
LIKE SOMETHING YOU SHOULD FITY
SPENT AND AGE-SPOTTED
ABOVE THE SIZZLING WIRES OF THE CITY
IT REMINDED ME OF HER FACE
HER BLEACHED + HUNGRY EYES
HER HAIR LIKE A CURTAIN
FALLING OPEN WITH THE LAUGHTER
AND CLOSING WITH THE LIES
AND THE GHOST OF HER STILL LINGERS ON
THOUGH SHE'S PASSED THROUGH ME
AND IS GONE

CONTINUED

Song lyrics for 'Papa Won't Leave You, Henry' by Nick Cave, c. 1991
Released on *Henry's Dream* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1992
For further reading [here](#)



Still image from
'Red Right Hand' music video, 1994
Directed by Jesse Dylan

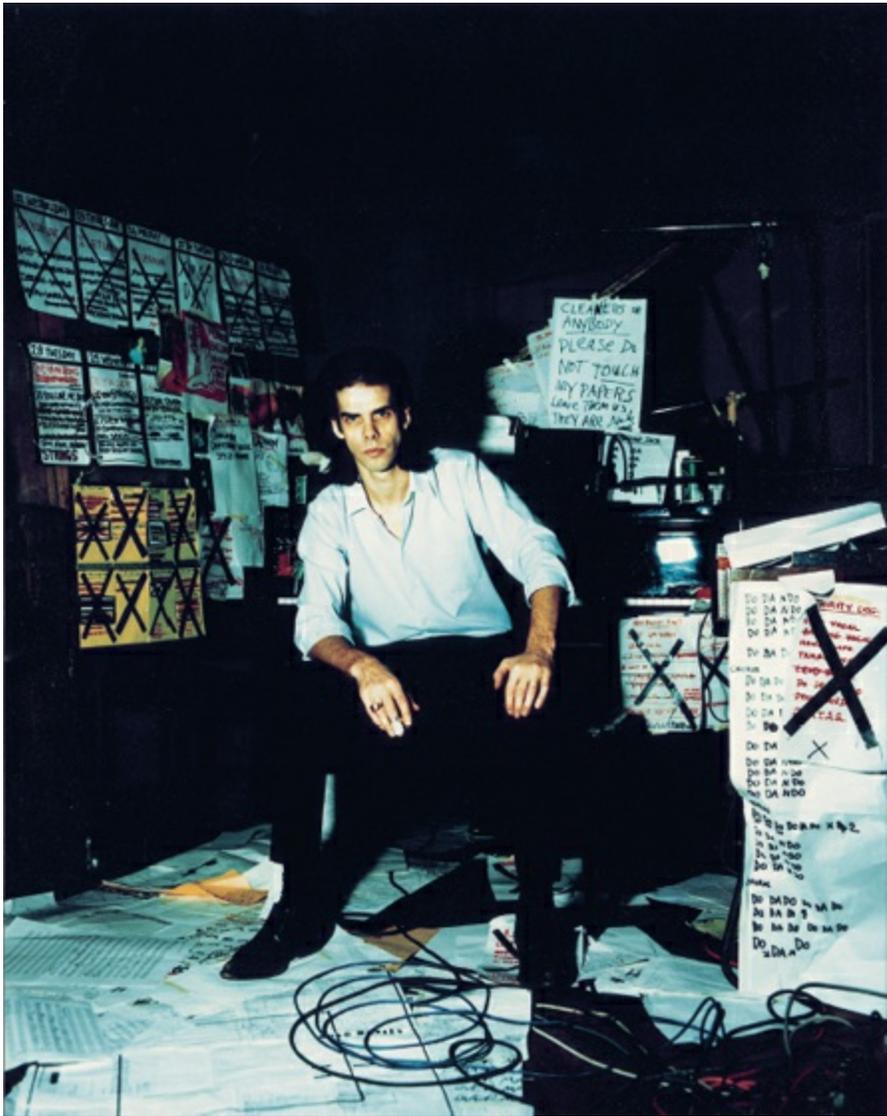


Layout for *Let Love In* cover by Nick Cave, 1994

Photograph by Polly Borland



Drawing by Nick Cave for hotel reparation charity t-shirt, 1993



Nick Cave, Metropolis Audio, Melbourne, 1994

Photograph by Polly Borland

For further reading [here](#)

2015/11

FAR FROM ME

FINAL VERSE

YOU SAID THAT YOU'D STICK BY ME
 THROUGH "THE TRUCK AND THROUGH THE TRAIN"
 THOSE WERE YOUR VERY WORDS
 MY FAIR WEATHER FRIEND
 YOU WERE MY BRAVE LITTLE LOVER
 AT THE FIRST TASTE OF TROUBLE WENT RUNNING BACK TO MOTHER
 FAR FROM ME
 FAR FROM ME
 WELL MAY YOU STAY AND FOREVER ALWAYS BE
 FAR FROM ME
 FAR FROM ME

AT THE FIRST TASTE OF TROUBLE WENT RUNNING BACK TO MOTHER

YOU WERE MY BRAVE HEARTED LOVER
 WHO FLED LIKE A
 RAT

AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE

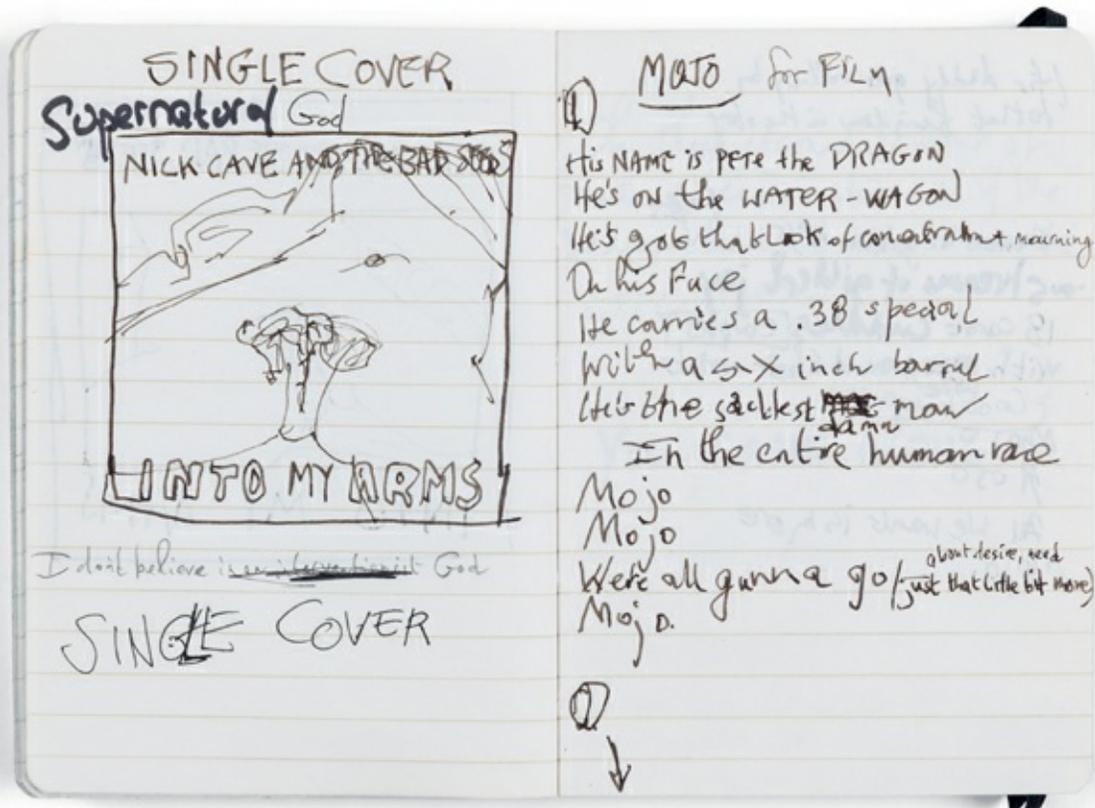
BRAVE HEARTED LOVER
 THE BRAVE LOVER

YOU WERE MY TRUE
 RUNNING LIKE A DOG
 SO FAR FROM ME
 FAR FROM ME
 WELL MAY YOU STAY AND FOREVER ALWAYS BE
 FAR FROM ME
 FAR FROM ME
 RID OF ME

Song lyrics for 'Far From Me' by Nick Cave, c. 1996
 Released on *The Boatman's Call* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 1997
 For further reading [here](#)



The Sacred Heart of Jesus, date unknown
For further reading [here](#)



Notebook with Nick Cave's initial proposal for the 'Into My Arms' cover.

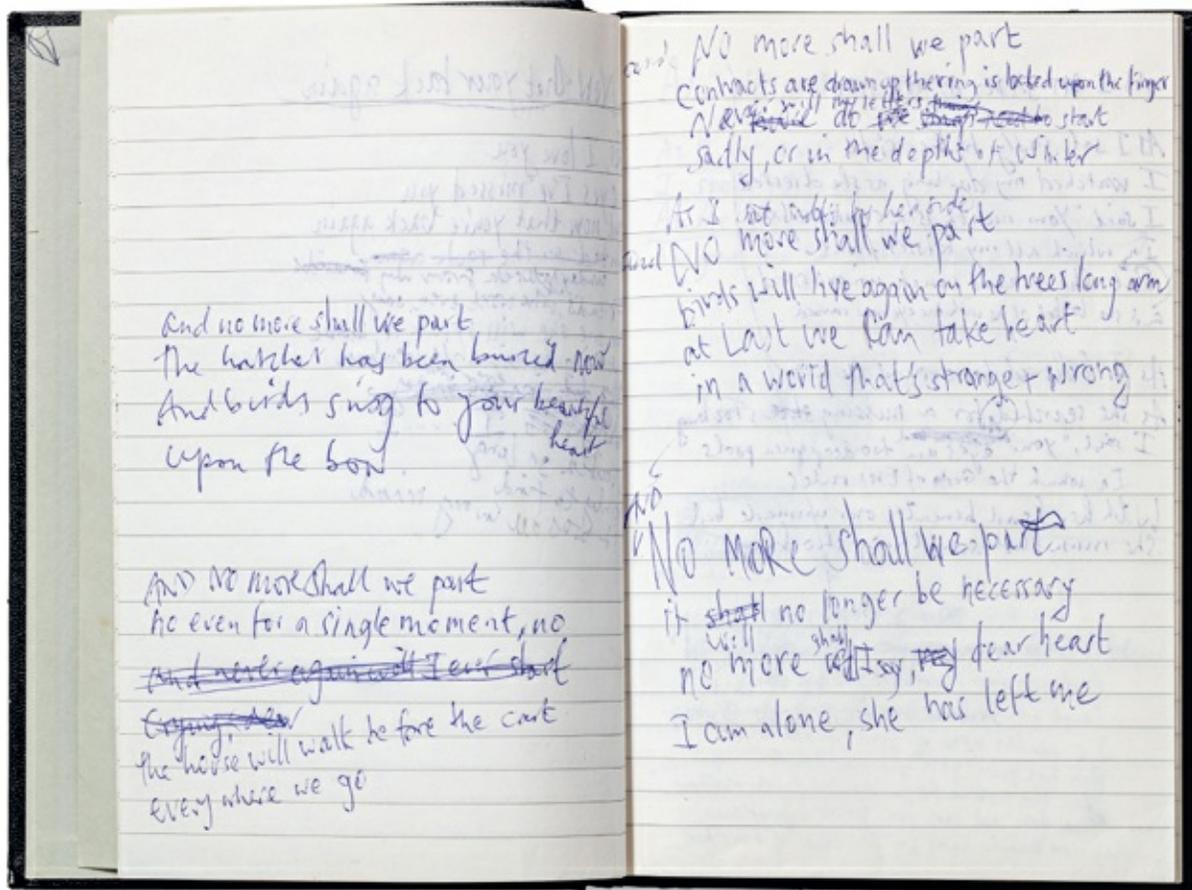
Rejected by Mute Records, 1996



Susie Bick, 1990

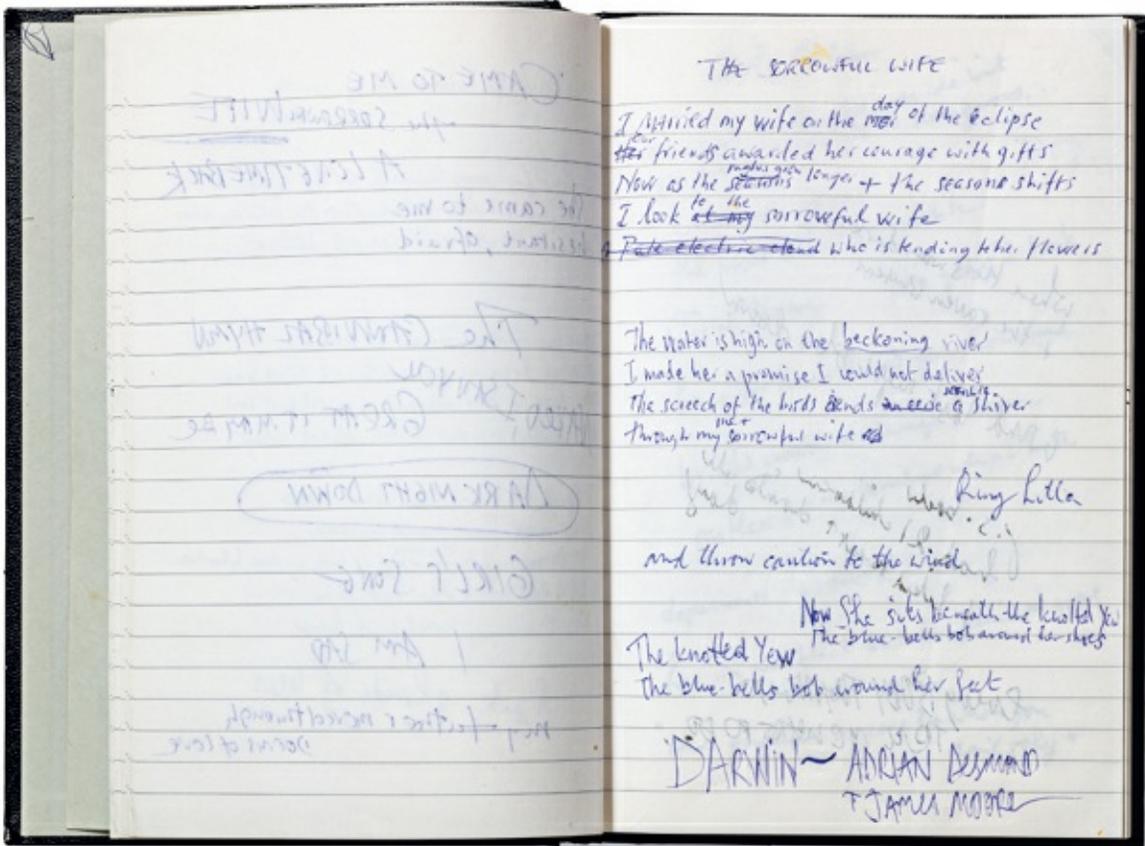
Photograph by Dominique Issermann

The first time I saw Susie was at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and when she came walking in, all the things I had obsessed over for all the years – pictures of movie stars, Jenny Agutter in the billabong, Anita Ekberg in the fountain, Ali MacGraw in her black tights, images from the TV when I was a kid, Barbara Eden and Elizabeth Montgomery and Abigail, Miss World competitions, Marilyn Monroe and Jennifer Jones and Bo Derek and Angie Dickinson as *Police Woman*, Maria Falconetti and Suzi Quatro, Bolshoi ballerinas and Russian gymnasts, Wonder Woman and Barbarella and supermodels and Page 3 girls, all the endless, impossible fantasies, the young girls at the Wangaratta pool lying on the hot concrete, Courbet's *Origin of the World*, Bataille's bowl of milk, Jean Simmons' nose ring, all the stuff I had heard and seen and read, advertising and TV commercials, billboards and fashion spreads and Playmate of the Month, Caroline Jones dying in Elvis's arms, Jackie O in mourning, Tinker Bell trapped in the drawer – all the continuing, never-ending drip feed of erotic data came together at that moment in one great big crash bang and I was lost to her and that was that.



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'And No More Shall We Part' by Nick Cave, 2000

Released on *No More Shall We Part* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2001



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'The Sorrowful Wife' by Nick Cave, 2000
Released on *No More Shall We Part* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2001
For further reading [here](#)



Nick Cave, Susie Bick and Luke Cave, 1998

Liss Ard Estate, Skibbereen, West Cork Islands, Ireland

Photograph by Dominique Issermann

White beard. The sky is a lovely pale blue and clouded and a warm sun is streaming through the window onto my desk as I write. That's it, I'm off.

10 SEP 2001

2:00 pm. This morning, blue skies with some clouds and a chill in the air as I drive Luke to school, radio babbling and mega tons of stalled traffic. Went back to bed. In office late, hammered down by things but feeling better now. Huge cloud, like a giant baby on its back with a smashed in face sails past my window, warm sun on my desk.

11 SEP 2001

12 SEP 2001

13 SEP 2001

14 SEP 2001

15 SEP 2001

16 SEP 2001

17 SEP 2001

6:10 Clear, pale blue sky with small clouds, the air chilled, in the yard, with my fog and cup of tea. Planes move overhead. The birds still throw their food around. Usual hurt in the stomach, the lacking, poisonous anxiety. Driving to the office, the air cold, the sky clouded over now and here, now

at my desk, the sky is a steely grey and ghost-planes cross the top right hand side of my window, shrouded in cloud. The tree that frames the left side of my window, ~~is~~ is whipped by the wind. The weather is getting interesting, cloud is interesting, wind is interesting, rain and thunder and lightning are interesting as I sit here, at my desk, feeling no things will ever be the same, feeling it's all business-as-usual.

11:04 Wind savage now, blasting down the Lot's Road and cold. 11:15 Back out on the street down to shop to buy lighter, I forgot the first time (my brain, by the way, actually feels numb) I move beyond the penumbra of the power-station, the clouds part and warm sunlight pours down on me. The clouds themselves, now backlit, show their leaden bellies.

13 SEP 2001

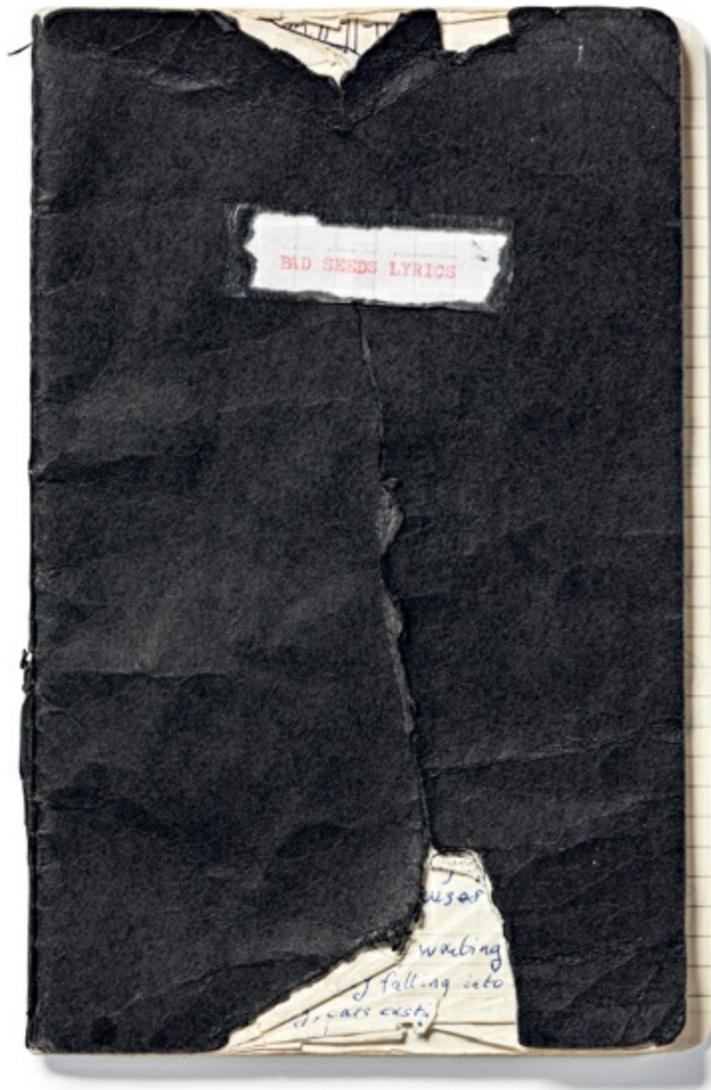
7:30 am. Drizzling grey rain from a grey sky and cold. Later at 11:00 am rain persists but as I drive to office becomes a light spit. Wind moves tree gently outside my window, the leaves wet from interesting rain. The sky above seems uniform silver/grey but on closer inspection cloud cover moves rapidly, violently. I wait for a plane to cross right hand corner of window but see none, the planes lost within the angry cloud.

Notebook known as The Weather Diaries by Nick Cave, 2000-01
For further reading [here](#)



Painting entitled *On the Sofa* by Louis Wain, 1927

For further reading [here](#)



Notebook entitled *Bad Seeds Lyrics*, 2007

Dig, Lazarus, Dig

Can you really imagine someone in my ^{position} eyes?

I don't know what it is but there's definitely

Dig yourself Lazarus something going on
Dig yourself back in the hole ^{upstairs}

I hear my ^{sister} ~~mother~~ wailing + a lot of scraping

I don't know what it is but there is definitely something
Dig yourself Lazarus ^{back forth of chairs}

Dig yourself back in the hole ^{going up upstairs}

I can hear chairs uncomfortable and ^{my name being mentioned} ~~somebody~~ saying
I don't know what it is but there is definitely

something going on upstairs

I am, by all accounts, dead ^{and}

But what do we really know of the dead + ^{and all their aff's} ~~what~~ ^{actually}

I don't know what it is but there's definitely something ^{comes}

lying in his CRADLE-GRAVE

like makes

its the little things that float up a before your eyes
these are the sort of things you remember

When you are deep in your demise
o + my sister wailing + whole lot of scraping of
I don't know what it is... chairs

What's your name and trouble? Chandler
I don't know what... ^{and lets put ~~some~~ ^{some} order to my}

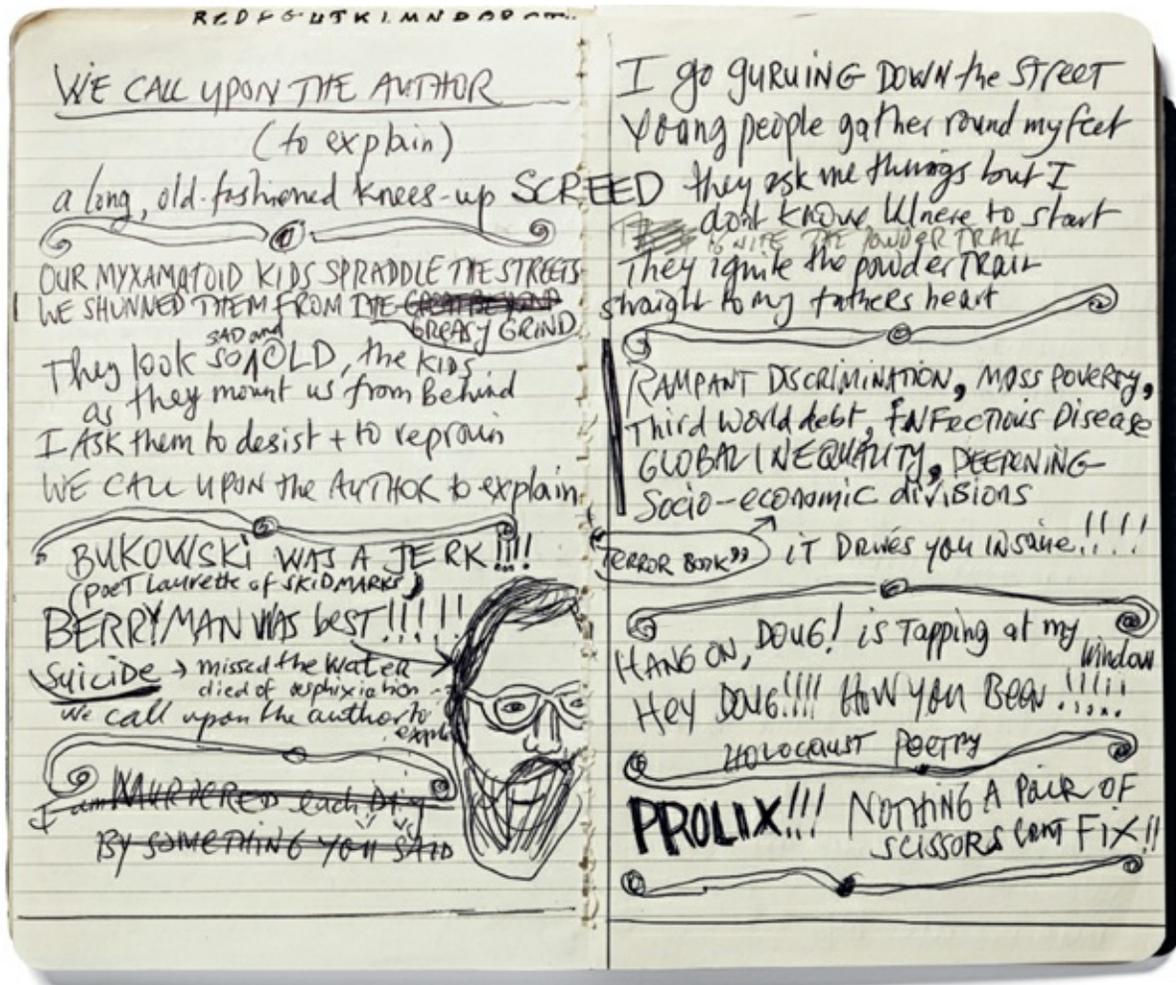
Nothing moved in the neighbour hood, not even a dog

Love is at large ~~in~~
hiding out in New York
in some bolt-hole

atomised like a strawberry milkshake Floods of remembering

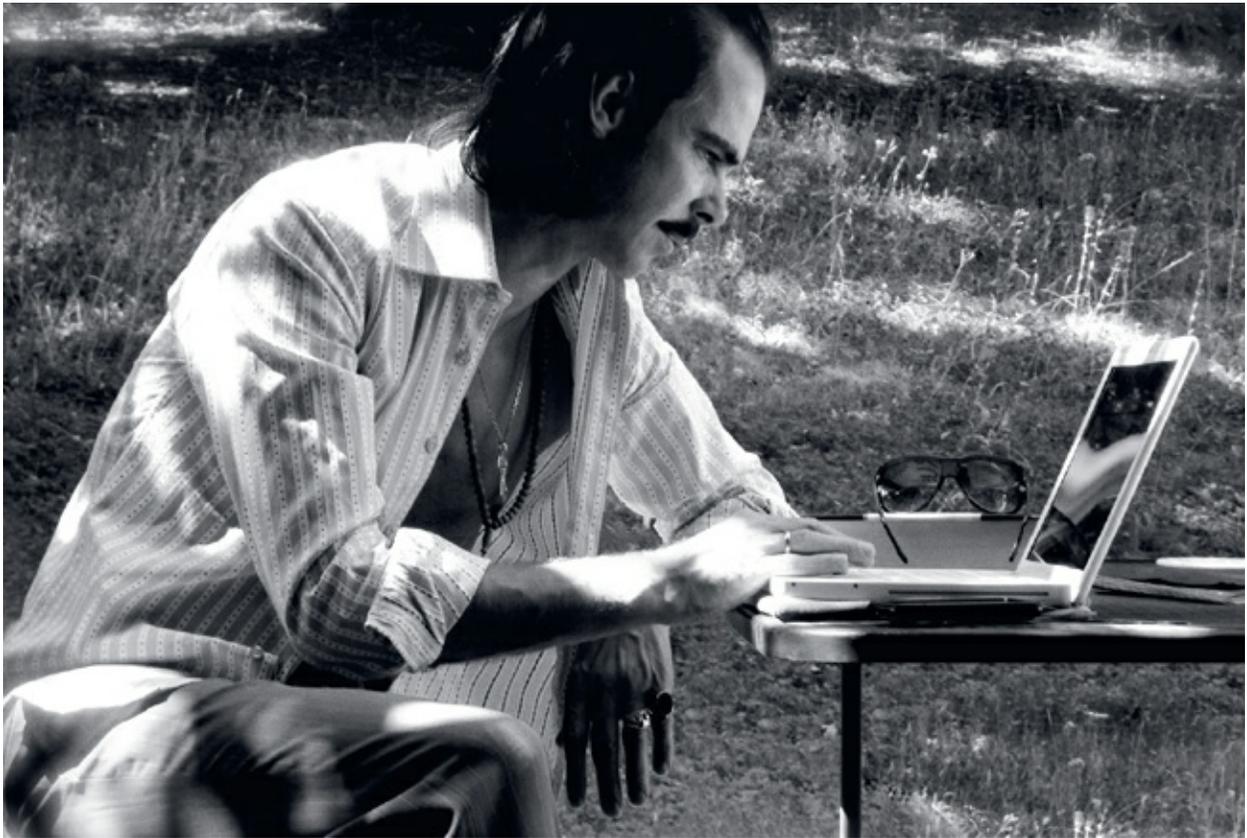
The only thing I have against the rain is that it makes you wet.

Notebook containing song lyrics for 'DIG, LAZARUS, DIG!!!' by Nick Cave, 2007
Released on DIG, LAZARUS, DIG!!! by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2008



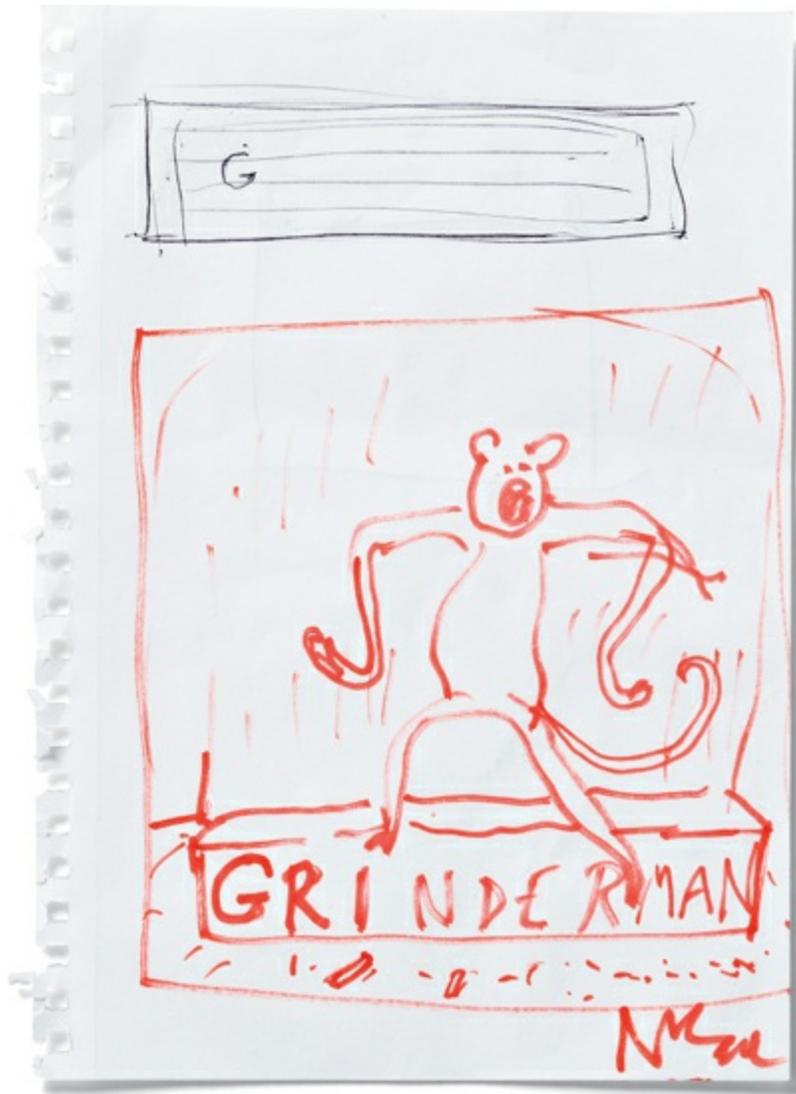
Notebook containing song lyrics for 'We Call Upon the Author' by Nick Cave, 2007

Released on DIG, LAZARUS, DIG!!! by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2008



Nick Cave writing the final chapter of *The Death of Bunny Munro* on holiday at Villa Lina, Italy, 2008

Photograph by Dominique Issermann



Sketch for *Grinderman* cover by Nick Cave, 2006

For further reading [here](#)



Grinderman cover, 2007 Photograph by Polly Borland

I saw you standing there on Dec. Day
You were a revelation
I could not find a single word to say
As I fell out of the brain + onto the station

NO PUSSY BLUES

I can't help but think, ~~with~~ standing up here
in all this applause, gazing down
~~at the young~~ from a face that's finished

I saw a girl in a crowd
I changed one, I changed one
I asked her could I take her out
but I could see she didn't want to

I changed the sheets on my bed
I combed the hairs across my head
Sucked in my gut but she'd you said
that you never wanted to

I thought I try another face
I drank a ~~bottle~~ ^{couple} of Conac
I threw her down upon her back
But she laughed and said she just

I played her that song about a big brass bed
I played her Barry White instead
She looked her lips + groaned + said
She just did not want to

MORE LATER →
~~She~~ E.A. as she made her bed
Thought
she changed her sheets
gave up, she's gone,
I ~~wasn't~~ ^{wasn't} here but she came on round
with nothing on but her dressing gown
~~she looked at~~ ^{she looked at} lips + lay right down
But I damn suddenly I just
didn't want to

DEPTH CHARGE ETHEL
I got know a woman that a river runs through
She is famous through out the land
People bathe in her, you know I do
But lately it's getting completely out of hand
It might seem like I'm ~~laying~~ ^{laying} it on a bit thick
But I love her right down to her little shoes
And ~~but~~ if you want her, you better get in there fast
Around about now there's a ticket box + a queue
Depth Charge Ethel, is something special

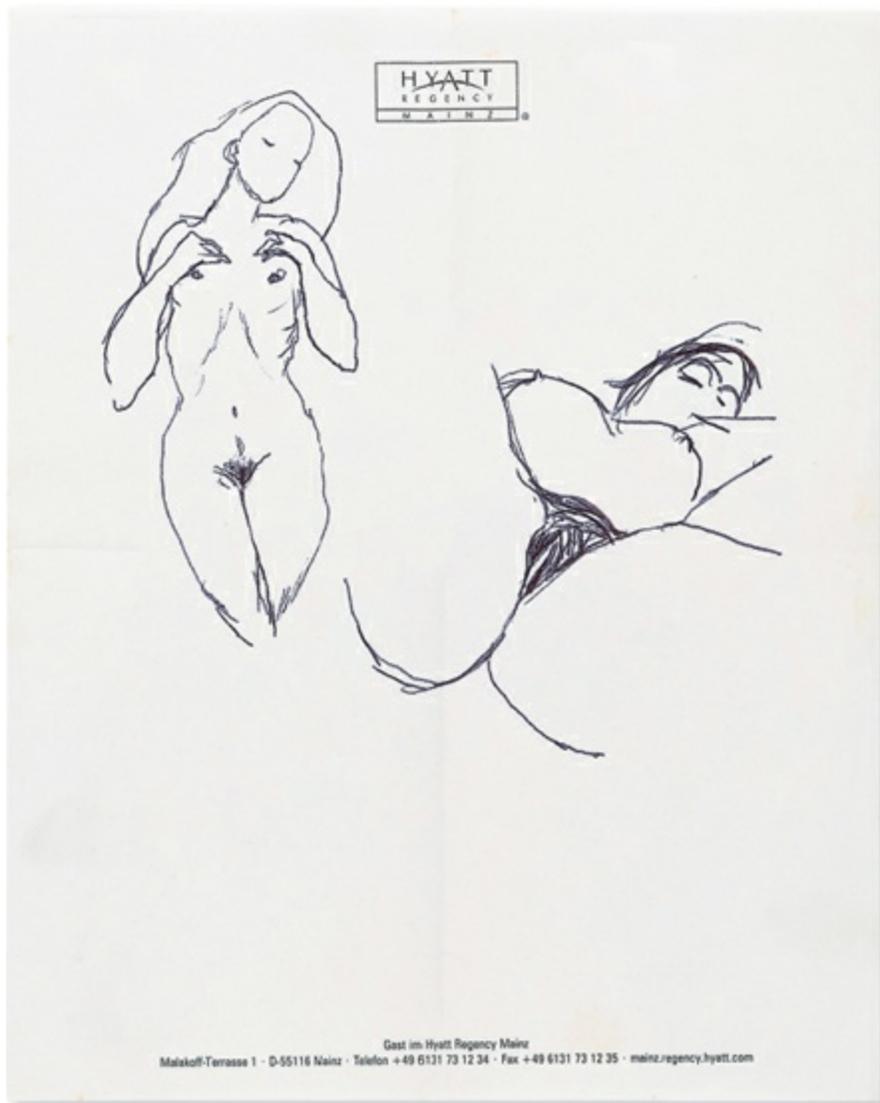
She thinks it's truly beautiful the way we can all love one another
~~it's~~ ^{something} special the night's star-lit cover
I'm in a taxi-cab under a yellow street light
I know more gramma send me Depth Charge Ethel
Depth Charge Ethel is something special
I think I got a solo coming on

Notebook containing song lyrics for 'No Pussy Blues' by Nick Cave, c. 2006
Released on Grinderman by Grinderman, 2007

HYATT
REGENCY
MAINZ



Gast im Hyatt Regency Mainz
Malakoff-Terrasse 1 - D-55116 Mainz - Telefon +49 6131 73 12 34 - Fax +49 6131 73 12 35 - mainz.regency.hyatt.com



Doodles by Nick Cave

Hyatt Regency, Mainz, 11 November 2006

Later used for the Grinderman singles 'Get It On' and '(I Don't Need You To) Set Me Free', 2007

For further reading [here](#)





Doodles by Nick Cave

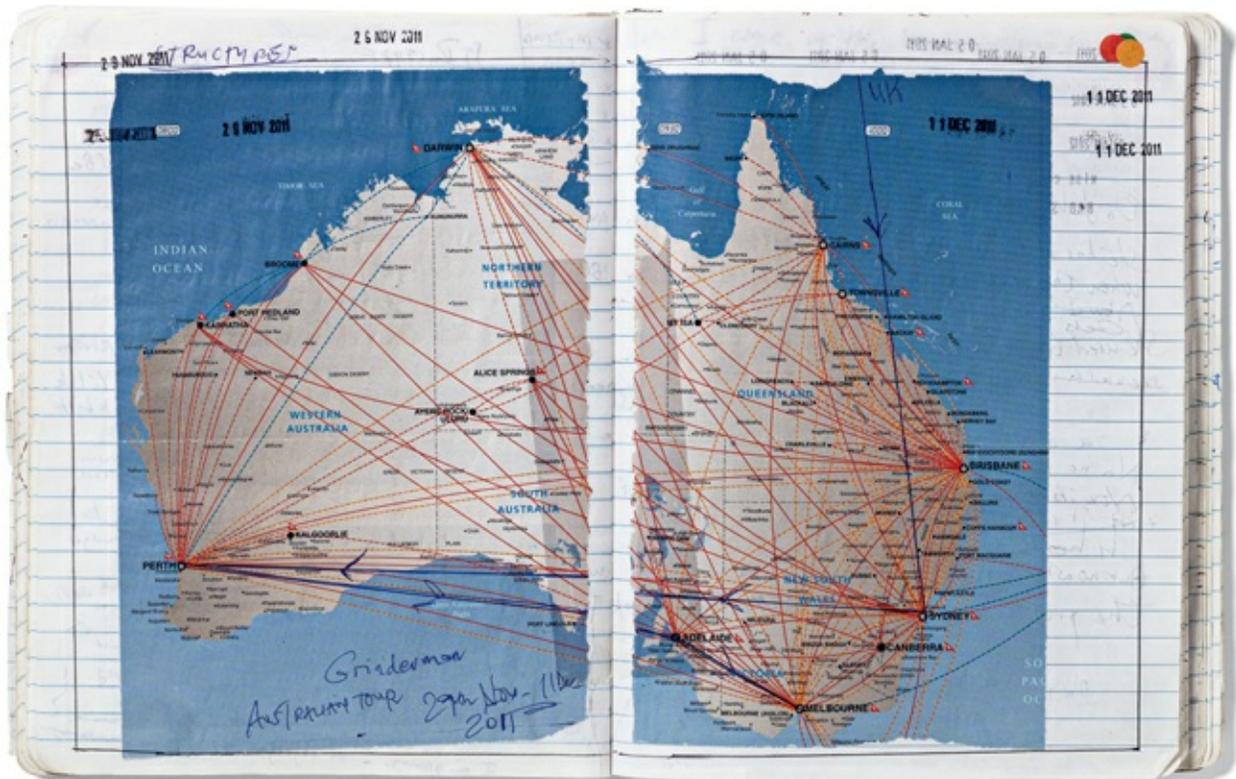
Four Seasons Hotel, 5 and 6 December 2019

For further reading [here](#)

Her ~~hair~~ ^{is} the colour of milk
 She got ~~hands~~ ^{white} as she weaves web of
 spiders silk ~~that glows~~
 When my baby comes she finds
 While I pray ~~for the~~ ^{praying} Atlantis, ~~she is~~ ^{she is} crouched like an
 praying mantis ~~I pray~~
 When my baby comes
 While I've got you out ~~there~~ ^{there} feel they washed their lives on
 booze + drugs + husbands + wives + making money
 (they don't do that on the carpet)
 When my baby comes
 They had ~~pistols~~ ^{pew pew pew}
 as I staggered from their ~~mouth~~ ^{mouth} ~~quart~~ ^{quart} ~~big~~ ^{big} mushroom
 cloud ~~with~~ ^{with} I'd ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~50 years~~ ^{50 years}
 boom boom boom
 They had p. stop, they had guns, my skirt ~~was~~ ^{was} my
 skirt ~~was~~ ^{was} much older from under their mushroom
 cloud
 When my baby comes
 Just how long you gonna be my baby
 Just how long you gonna be my baby
 When you come boom boom boom
 They had pistols they had guns my skirt ~~was~~ ^{was} my
 skirt ~~was~~ ^{was} much older from under their mushroom
 cloud
 When my baby comes
 Just how long you gonna be my baby
 Just how long you gonna be my baby
 When you come boom boom boom
 This is better
 When my baby comes

When my baby comes she comes
 Thank God we don't get all our hurts at ~~the~~ ^{the} one time,
 That'd be a really really bad thing
 When my baby comes
 Thank God we don't get all our olds at the one time
 Listen to me talking ~~practically~~ ^{practically} in ~~my~~ ^{my} hospital gown
 Best thing about this place are the showers
 The worst thing is the visiting hours - ~~hey don't do~~ ^{hey don't do}
 that on the carpet!
 When my baby comes
 Well they had pistols, they had guns, they threw
 me on the ground + amplified into me I was only 15,
 when my baby come ~~yeah~~ ^{yeah} boom boom boom
 Just How long you gonna be my baby x 4
 She got ~~hands~~ ^{the} the colour of milk + her hair ~~is~~ ^{is} like a praying
 mantis ~~she~~ ^{she} weaves ~~the~~ ^{the} spider silk
 When my baby comes ~~she is~~ ^{she is} crouched like a praying mantis
 I pray for the lost city of Atlantis ~~she is~~ ^{she is} crouched like a praying mantis
 When my baby comes
 While I've got you out ~~there~~ ^{there} feel they washed their lives on
 booze + drugs + husbands + wives + making money?
 (they don't do that on the carpet!)
 There is a ~~part~~ ^{part} you can't help, but ~~think~~ ^{think} ~~are~~ ^{are} you gonna
 come out of this one stove - When my baby comes
 When they threw me on the floor, I was fifteen, skirt ~~was~~ ^{was} my
 skirt ~~was~~ ^{was} much older from under their mushroom cloud
 When they finished I ~~was~~ ^{was} about ~~thousand~~ ^{thousand} ~~of~~ ^{of} feet
 When my baby comes, I was like about
 a ~~hundred~~ ^{hundred} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~some~~ ^{some} ~~feet~~ ^{feet} ~~long~~ ^{long}

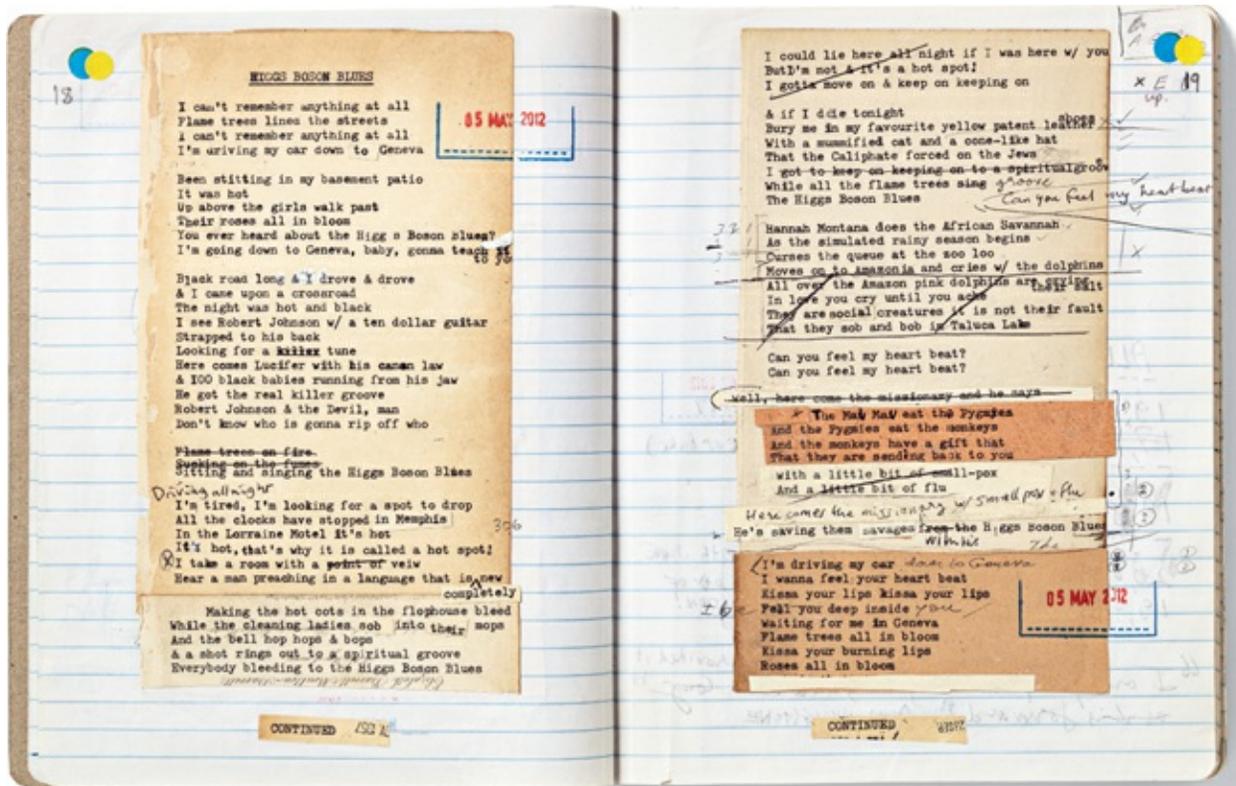
Notebook containing song lyrics for 'When My Baby Comes' by Nick Cave, 2009
 Released on Grinderman 2 by Grinderman, 2010



Notebook containing route of Grinderman Australian Tour, 2011



Custom-made notebook
Owned by Nick Cave, 2014
For further reading [here](#)



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Higgs Boson Blues' by Nick Cave, 2012

Released on *Push The Sky Away* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2013

30 SEP 2011
 30 SEP 2011

WIDE LOVELY EYES

You wave at the sky with wide lovely eyes
 Wave ~~at~~ + wave goodbye
 Waves and waves of love. Goodbye

then turn and travel on
 through the gated garden with your ^{secret} key
 + through down the darkened tunnel that leads to the sea

Where the mermaids + the mermen play
 you watch the stamburst ^{in the sky} so shy
 + on to the pebbled beach with wide lovely eyes
 At you wave at the ^{sky} with wide lovely eyes
 + wave ^{say} goodbye

Crystal waves + waves of love, you ^{say} goodbye

--- 2 ---
 No point to wonder who or what went wrong
 when you depart all context it is gone
 + just the darkened tunnel that leads to the sea

blue 30 SEP 2011
 You dress at waves ^{billows} with wide, lovely ² strides
 that measure the ~~width~~ ^{width} of a heart beat; the ~~width~~ ^{width} of a
 along the street + lately stories about
 they've taken down the fun-fair
 They've hung the mermaids from the street lamps
 + at night ^{all I seen to} you hear their cries by their hair
 melting into mine.

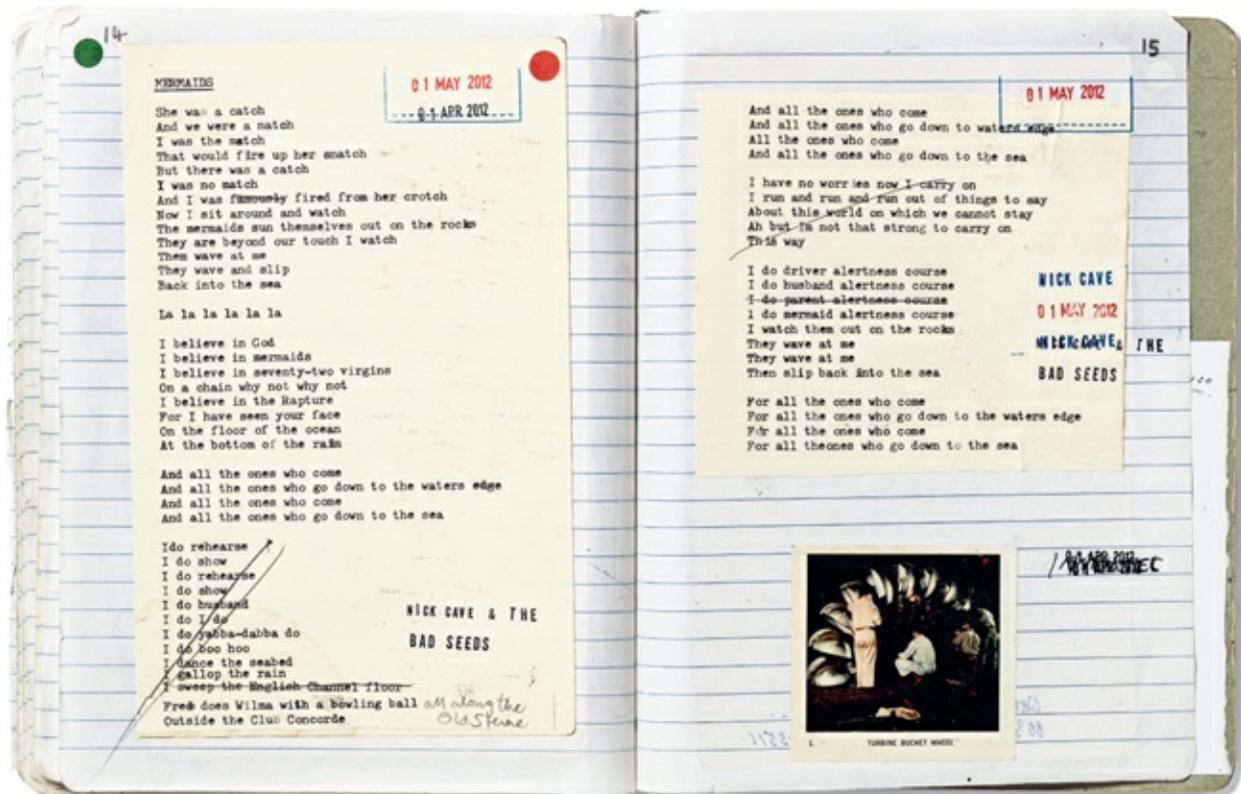
+ with wide lovely eyes you wave at the sky
 at the high window, back + forth + back + forth + side
 waves of ~~pearls~~ ^{pearls} + love, you wave + say goodbye
 blue + love

The universe expands. I am expanding
 see your hand like butterfly's landing
 (you've dismantled the fun-fair + shot down the notes)

all among the myths and legends we create
 and all the ^{laughing} stories that we tell our friends
 Close the window. It's getting late
^{clean up the mess}
 + through the tunnel and down to the sea
 + on the pebbled beach, so shy
 you wave + wave with wide lovely eyes
 mystic waves + waves of love; you wave + say goodbye

Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Wide Lovely Eyes' by Nick Cave, 2011

Released on *Push The Sky Away* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2013



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Mermaids' by Nick Cave, 2012
Released on *Push The Sky Away* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2013

☆ SICK ☆ BAG ☆ SONG ☆

24 JUN 2014

As a lovely
thing to read
under the vast
black, first blue
sky was
banned in Denver Colorado

DENVER, CO

WOLFGARTNERING
by PATTI SMITH
called
about

In Denver outside ~~a back~~ ^{named} ~~up~~ ^{followed} I buy a lovely little book

~~I am standing on stage at the~~

I pick up Patti ^{deep end} by her breasts + drop her in ^{my sick BAG}
~~In Denver~~

~~I am a single screeching thing~~

~~I thought I had given everything~~
~~there was to give~~ ^{I look inside}

**Please place in waste receptacle
after use** ^{holding back fingers}

~~I WAS WRONG~~ <sup>in a dark, deserted
corner was a</sup>

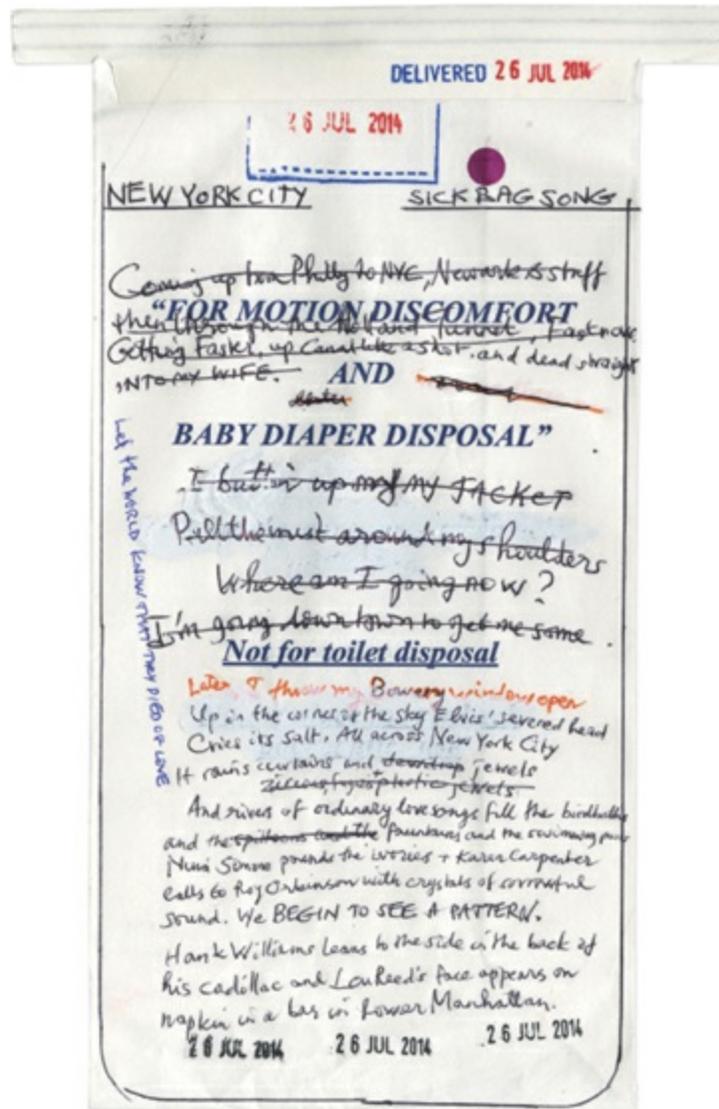
Not for toilet disposal <sup>tiny
Bryan Ferry</sup>

Do not place in seat back
pocket after use

I see a tiny Gertrude Stein + a tiny Emily
^{Dickinson}
and a tiny Philip Larkin and a tiny W.H. Auden
John Berryman w/ MR. BONES thru his nose.

FRAGILE

BRYAN FERRY STORY ^{In Song 1993}
DELIVERED 24 JUN 2014
DELIVERED 24 JUN 2014



Original sick bags from *The Sick Bag Song* by Nick Cave, 2014

Published 2015

For further reading [here](#)



Susie and Nick Cave, wedding photograph, 1999

01 MAY 2014

JESUS ALONE

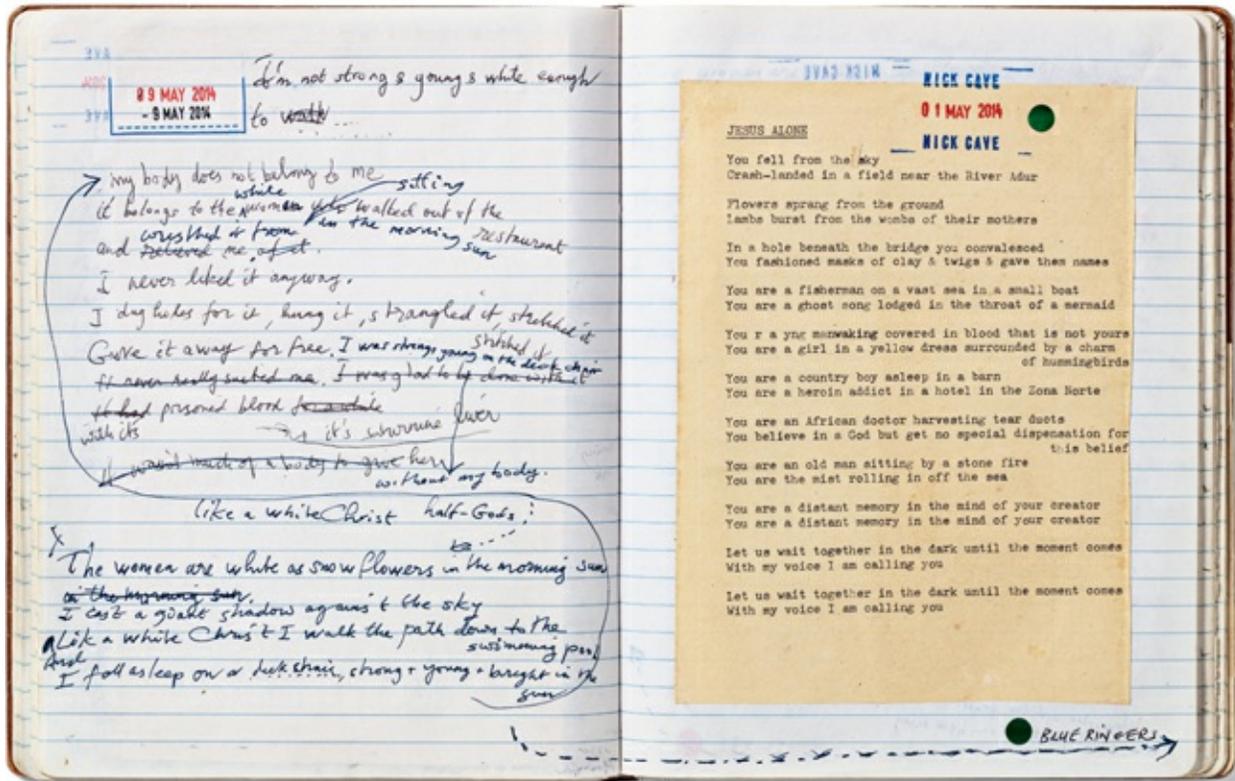
She rolled me deep inside her silk
 I kissed the Spider woman, I pushed deep into her silk
 I kissed the Spider woman, I pushed deep into her silk
 Ancient Persia sprang from stream of urine
~~Africa~~ Dashed Africa from a tiny drop of milk
^{years}
 Slavery was abolished only for it to raise its ugly head again
 Slavery was abolished only for it to raise its ugly head again
 My wife rises from the bed

My wife rises in the dawn, steps over piles of sleeping children
 I call for water, but they are deaf to my demands
 In keep to the edges, I do not go inside the towns
 I am a young man I sleep in a hole beneath the bridge. I am a young man
 I call for water but they are deaf to my demands
 I lay down and sleep for years
 I call for water through the cracks, but my demands fall on deaf ears

Steam rises from the water
 The mist rolls off the sea
 I call for water thru the cracks, but there is no one there to hear me
 I make figurines from clay. I give them names
 You are a ^{sticks} ~~fisherman~~ ^{little empty boat}
 You are a fisherman ^{on a vast sea in a small boat}
 You are a song - a ghost song - lodged in a ~~throat~~ ^{throat}
 You are a young man, covered in blood. It is not yours
 You are a girl in a yellow dress, surrounded by a chain of humming birds
 You are a country doctor leaping over a stile sleeping ^{in a field}
 You are the mist rolling off the sea ^{in a basket}
 harvesting ~~beards~~ ^{beards} + ~~clippers~~ ^{clippers} in a ^{straw basket}
 You are a African doctor ^{with a pocket watch} ^{interest's}
 I believe in God, but this belief is of no practical use
 but I get a special dispensation from this holy fiction
 You are a ~~man~~ ^{pulling the rain down on the heads of my men}
 You are a ~~man~~ ^{and hung up from the eaves of my home}
 I am tangled in a web of backwards ^{thought}
 Memory stands on my window ledge ^{threatens to jump}
 You walk into ^{cafe in Jerusalem} ^{Tel Aviv} ^{city the name of your creator}
 You are a distant memory in the mind of your creator
 You are an old man sitting around a stone fire with a wild dog

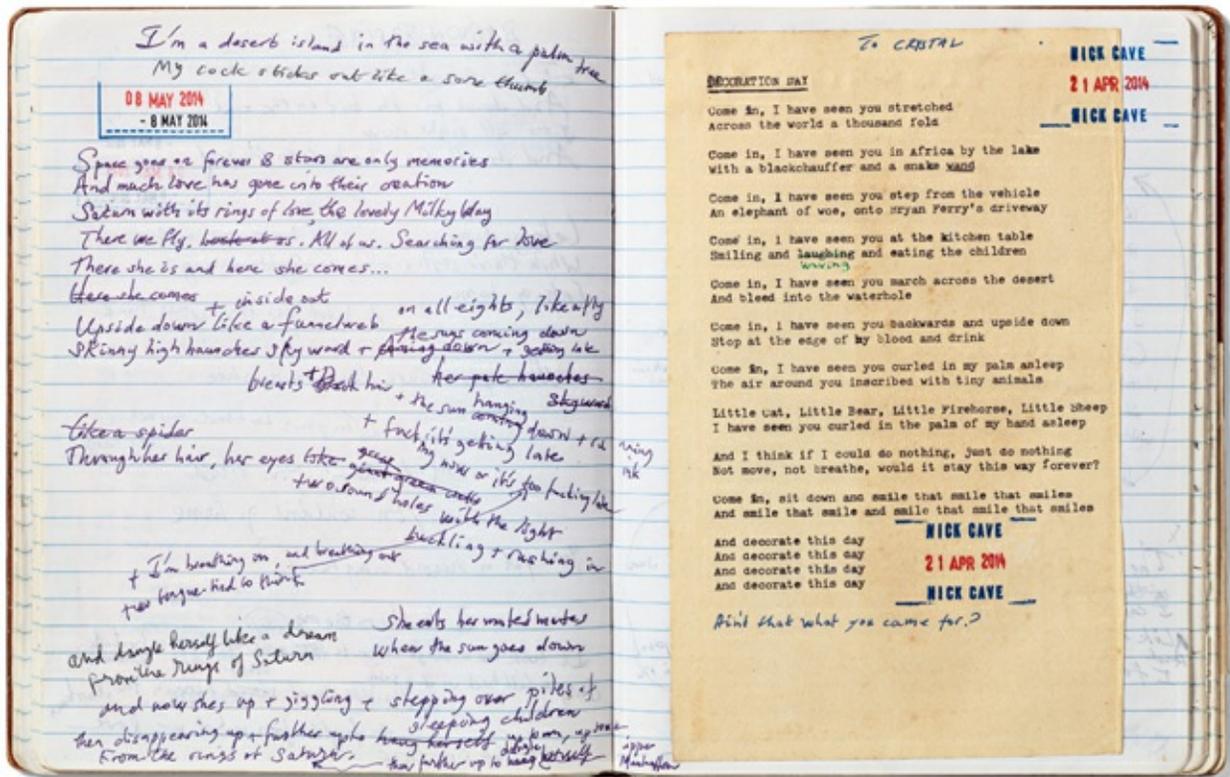
Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Jesus Alone' by Nick Cave, 2014

Released on *Skeleton Tree* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2016



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Jesus Alone' by Nick Cave, 2014

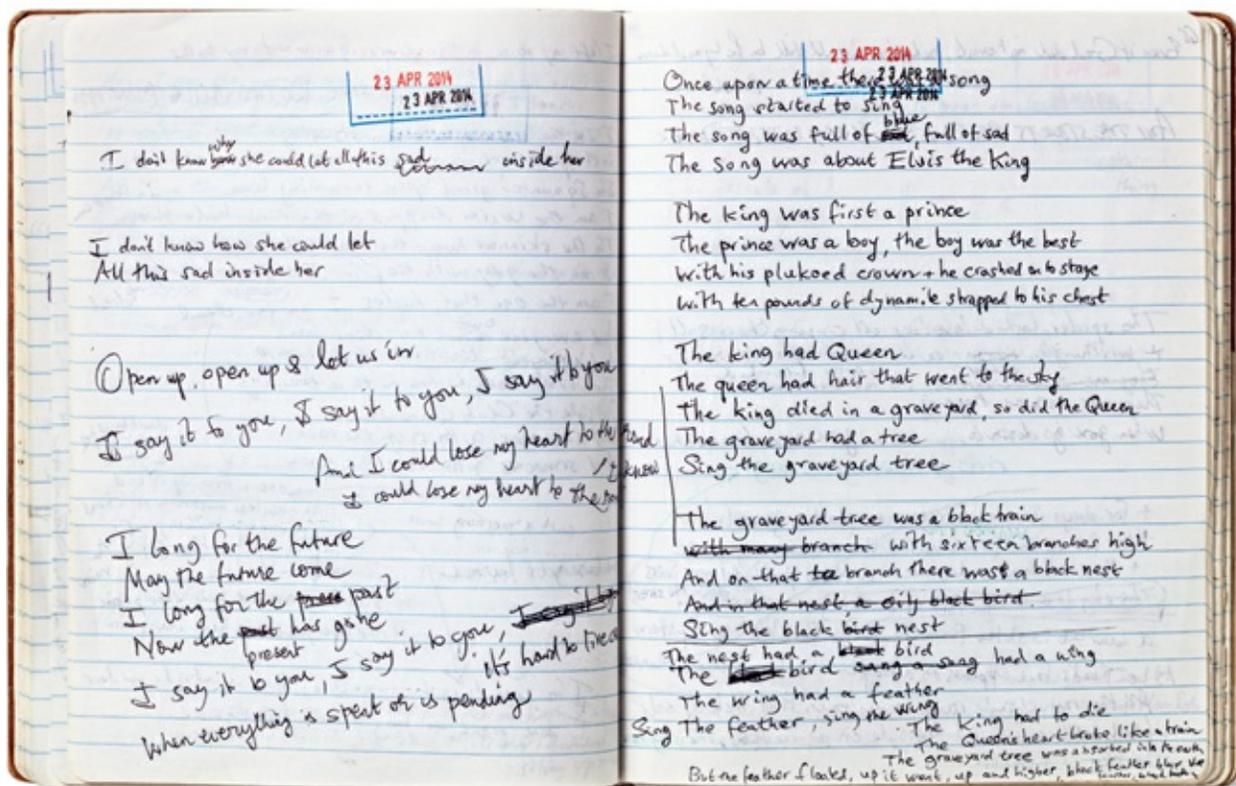
Released on *Skeleton Tree* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2016



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Rings of Saturn' by Nick Cave, 2014 (left page)

Released on *Skeleton Tree* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2016

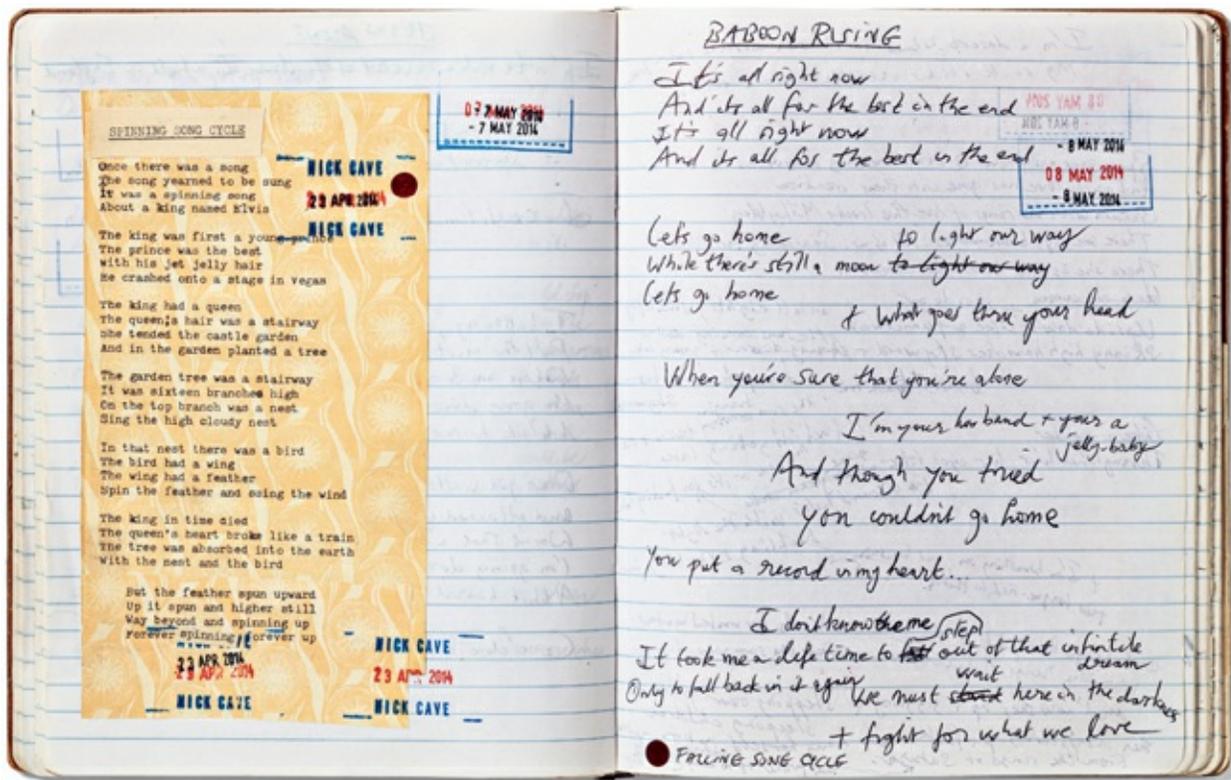
Unreleased song lyrics for 'Decoration Day' by Nick Cave, 2014 (right page)



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Spinning Song' by Nick Cave, 2014

Released on *Ghosteen* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2019

For further reading [here](#)



Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Spinning Song' by Nick Cave, 2014 (left page)

Released on *Ghosteen* by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, 2019

Unreleased song lyrics for 'Baboon Rising' by Nick Cave, 2014 (right page)

For further reading [here](#)



Susie and Nick Cave, 2019
Photograph by Casper Sejersen

WIFE WITH EYES CLOSED

She sleeps and dreams to be before
She seems to go there more and more
She turns her back but not with any malice

She says she dreams of beasts run wild
That circle around a rainbow child
Cavorting through a many-roomed palace

And sometimes a black witch flies by
With a wrath that blackens the entire sky
The beasts all watch through a special telescope

And in time I leave her there and go
To the world clawing against the window
Hey, I'm not saying there isn't any hope

For I can see a moment in between
The waking horror and the sleeping dream
Where the world and she are breathless beautiful
Where the world and she are breathless beautiful

CONTEXTUALISATION



COLIN CAVE

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave's father, Colin Cave, was a handsome and ambitious intellectual, who made a deep impression on people wherever he went. Remembered as an inspirational teacher of literature and drama, Colin Cave established the Wangaratta Adult Education Centre, and wrote the introduction to a book about Australia's legendary bushranger called *Ned Kelly: Man or Myth*, receiving the Wangaratta Citizen of the Year Award in 1971.

Moving to Melbourne with his family, Colin Cave became the Director of the Victorian Council of Adult Education in 1972, a position he held until his untimely death in a car accident in 1979. Throughout his life, Colin Cave shared his love of literature with his children, reading *Lolita* to son Nick, and writing several unpublished manuscripts. Cave was twenty-one when his father died. Cave left Melbourne for London shortly afterwards with *The Birthday Party*.



LOLITA

[HERE](#)

When Nick Cave was nine or ten, his father sat him down and read him the first paragraph of Nabokov's *Lolita*. 'Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins.' His father, Cave has written, 'deconstructed each sentence'. It was a lesson in how to write and how to read. Cave watched his father expand and dilate. 'I could tell by the way it empowered him that he felt he was passing on forbidden knowledge.' It was instructional but also meaningful. 'In many ways, it was the most intimate moment I ever spent with my father.'



THE CHOIR

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave was in the Wangaratta Cathedral Choir for three years, attending church two or three times a week. It was there that he became familiar with the stories of the Bible. These stories had a profound effect on him and became the basis of many of his songs, continuing up to the present time.

'I have never considered myself a Christian as such, but the Bible has always spoken to me in a way that other religious texts don't. I don't know how much this has to do with nostalgia and reliving my childhood, or just the sheer majesty of the actual texts themselves. I don't know, but the Christian stories just captured me and never really let me go.'



WANGARATTA

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave's childhood in Wangaratta was idyllic. He lived with his loving parents and his siblings Tim, Peter and Julie Cave. In the morning, his mother Dawn Cave would let them out of the house barefoot and they'd only return at teatime. The landscape in Cave's memory remains Edenic: 'The

eucalyptus trees, the willows drooping over the muddy river, the smell of rain on the bitumen, rabbit-shooting, the cathedral, the slaughter house.'



DAWN CAVE

[HERE](#)

Raised as an Anglican, Nick Cave's mother, Dawn Cave, is a role model of how to live a kind and generous life. Dawn Cave was a school librarian first at Wangaratta High School, and then Firkbank Girls School in Melbourne where she fostered the value of education with her students. Along with husband Colin Cave, she appeared on stage with the Warracknabeal Dramatic Society, and as a violinist played on the track 'Muddy Water' from *Kicking Against the Pricks*, released by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds in 1986.

From a young age, Dawn Cave encouraged and supported her son Nick through piano lessons, choir practice, art classes, appearances at local Eisteddfods and his transition to Caulfield Grammar as a boarder. When Cave moved to London in 1980 and then West Berlin in 1982, Cave and his mother corresponded regularly, their letters keeping them in close contact in between his trips back to Australia. When in Melbourne, Cave lives with his mother, now aged ninety-three, talking, reminiscing and solving the problems of the world.



KOROWA GIRLS' SCHOOL

[HERE](#)

Influenced by David Bowie and The Sensational Alex Harvey Band, Nick Cave in costume and make-

up, prancing on stage, was joined by his more subdued friends Phill Calvert, Chris Coyne, John Cocivera, Howard (last name unknown), Mick Harvey and Brett Purcell in a group established while students at Caulfield Grammar. Performing at school socials such as those hosted by Korowa Girls' School, along with church halls, the band – then unnamed and driven to gigs by members' parents – performed covers and some original material.

After completing their Higher School Certificates and launching themselves into art school, hair-dressing and the public service, Cave, Calvert and Harvey came back together and were joined by Tracy Pew, and later Rowland S. Howard, to form The Boys Next Door in 1977.



ART SCHOOL

[HERE](#)

In 1976, Nick Cave enrolled at Caulfield Technical College to study painting and to pursue his love of art. 'All the things I loved,' Cave has written, 'found their voice in art school.' After going to an all-boys private high school where he and his friends were regularly called 'fags', art school thrilled him. 'I was suddenly in a world of young artists full of ideas.' Art school radicalised Cave. He savoured conversations with other students and loved working beside them in the studio. He remembers one young woman who painted detailed mythological paintings only to deface them the next day with angry-looking male genitalia. 'I learned not just about art but how to question, how to be.' Cave was 'horrified' to fail his second year because 'all I ever wanted to be was a painter'.

The influence of this intense period of his life resonated far further. From his first days in London writing to his mother Dawn Cave about the wonder of visiting the National Gallery, all the way to his room in Berlin, with walls covered with prints of famous works of art by Piero Della Francesca, Matthias Grünewald, Stefan Lochner and El Greco, to his own practice – seen in the creation of collages and album covers – and his ongoing interest in the art of outsider Louis Wain, Cave's is a creative life informed by art.

Cave's time at Caulfield introduced him to lifelong friends and colleagues including artist Tony Clark,

photographers Polly Borland and Peter Milne, and most significantly, his future girlfriend and artistic collaborator, Anita Lane.



THE SAINTS

[HERE](#)

‘The Saints,’ Nick Cave said, ‘were kind of Godlike to me ... they were just so much better than everybody else.’ In 1977 The Saints came down from Brisbane to Melbourne and Cave and his friends saw them at the Tiger Room. The band’s first single ‘(I’m) Stranded’ was released a few months before The Sex Pistols’ ‘God Save the Queen’. The Tiger Room went on to host Blondie, The Stooges and eventually The Birthday Party, as well as other punk-rock royalty. ‘They changed everything,’ Cave recalls, ‘there was no going back after witnessing The Saints.’ lived with her progressive parents and older brother. Besides ‘Stranger Than Kindness’ and ‘From Her to Eternity’, Lane also contributed lyrics to ‘A Dead Song’, ‘Dead Joe’ and ‘Kiss Me Black’, using the exquisite corpse method, by passing a piece of paper back and forth, trading lines. The couple split in 1983 but they continue to keep in touch.



THE BOYS NEXT DOOR

[HERE](#)

The Boys Next Door was a rehearsal for The Birthday Party, the group they were to morph into. The band developed musically with an awkward confidence as they began performing regularly at inner-city venues such as the Seaview Ballroom in St Kilda, a suburb of Melbourne.

Influenced by post-punk and new wave, and wearing op-shop suits, bow ties and occasional eye-liner, the release of a cover version of 'These Boots Are Made For Walking' in 1978 and Rowland S. Howard's song 'Shivers' the following year defined their early pop-styled angst. By this time, most of the band members had moved out of their suburban homes with the exception of Cave, whose attic bedroom in Airdrie Road, Caulfield, became a regular haunt.

In an attempt to understand his son's burgeoning musical career, Colin Cave secretly attended one or two gigs, telling his son enigmatically that he 'looked like an angel'. Colin Cave's death in an accident happened soon after this, when Cave was just twenty-one. His father never had the chance to see Cave's career as a musician, songwriter and author fully realised. Cave later said that his father's death had come 'at a point in my life when I was most confused'. Following the release of *Hee-Haw*, The Boys Next Door played their last Melbourne show in February 1980 before moving to London and making their transition to The Birthday Party.

ANITA

[HERE](#)

Anita Lane and Cave wrote 'From Her to Eternity' together. 'Ah wanna tell you about a girl', Cave begins. A girl who haunts the song's speaker. 'The desire to possess her is a wound'. Cave met Lane in 1977, when they were both at art school in Melbourne and Lane lived with her progressive parents and older brother. Besides 'Stranger Than Kindness' and 'From Her to Eternity', Lane also contributed lyrics to 'A Dead Song', 'Dead Joe' and 'Kiss Me Black', using the exquisite corpse method, by passing a piece of paper back and forth, trading lines. The couple split in 1983 but they continue to keep in touch.



Post-Cave, Lane released two solo albums: *Dirty Pearl* (1993) and *Sex O'Clock* (2001). She also contributed to both Mick Harvey's Serge Gainsbourg tribute albums *Intoxicated Man* (1995) and *Pink Elephants* (1997). Lane sings the parts originally sung by Jane Birkin and Brigitte Bardot. Lane has

never spoken about Cave except to say to a reporter, 'I wish I never met the guy.'



THINGS I'M NOT HAPPY WITH

[HERE](#)

Asked to comment on the list, Nick Cave has said, 'I wrote that when I was very young ... and confused. I'm very glad I didn't implement some of those changes. Mick, for example, became my chief collaborator, completely indispensable, for twenty years, and Phill, well, I always had a real soft spot for Phill, he was a lovely guy, but his drumming was ultimately at odds with what the band wanted to do, I think.'



LISTS

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave has always been a list-maker. 'Things I'm not happy with, within *The Boys Next Door*' features the existential items '2. The synth as an instrument' and '5. 50% of our material'. In the later 'Shopping List', Cave reminds himself to buy floral shirts, hair dye and a crucifix. He also lists the books he asked his publisher Black Spring Press to buy for him while he worked on his first novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel*: Decent Dictionary, Encyclopedia, Book of Mythological Gods. Later, when Cave saw that the cost of the books had been taken out of his royalty statement he was 'more than aggrieved'.



HORN OF PLENTY

[HERE](#)

This painting of Nick Cave by Anita Lane was done in 1977. It is called *Horn of Plenty*. Anita once claimed that if 'Nick was hit by a bus he would be compelled to write about it in his own blood before he died.'



THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

[HERE](#)

When The Birthday Party arrived in bleak and cold London in 1980, Nick Cave, Phill Calvert, Mick Harvey, Rowland S. Howard and Tracy Pew were in for a shock. Well-known around Melbourne, the band initially struggled to get any kind of confident foothold in this much larger music scene.

After going back to Australia to record *Prayers on Fire*, The Birthday Party had some success which led to extensive touring throughout the UK, Europe and the USA, and developed a reputation for scary, violent and confrontational live shows. No longer living in accommodation with other band members, Cave and Rowland S. Howard resided in squats, beginning a lifestyle increasingly dependent on drugs which accelerated as The Birthday Party reached its artistic climax and collapse.

In 1982, tired of the relentless grind of living in London, The Birthday Party moved to West Berlin, the year that Tracy Pew was jailed back in Melbourne and Phill Calvert was kicked out. German musician Blixa Bargeld recorded some tracks on *Mutiny!*, then the tension between Cave and Rowland S. Howard became unworkable and Mick Harvey departed, bringing to a close the five years of artistic

mayhem known as The Birthday Party.



NICK THE STRIPPER VIDEO

[HERE](#)

The 'Nick the Stripper' video was shot illegally in a rubbish dump in the middle of a hot Melbourne night. The Birthday Party invited friends and associates to come to a party and recreate their version of Hell. People turned up in bunny outfits, carrying pigs' heads; there was a goat, hangman's hoods, Klan costumes; a man brought a crucifix and hung from it the entire night. There was a large cesspit, which they filled with gasoline and set on fire. The 'party' raged through the night and the legendary Birthday Party video of 'Nick the Stripper', directed by Paul Goldman and edited by John Hillcoat – who would become a longtime Cave collaborator – was born.



SWASTIKA

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave was criticised by certain members of the press for using the swastika design on the cover of The Birthday Party's album *The Bad Seed*. Cave always maintained that this was unintentional. This early draft of the cover shows that perhaps Cave was not being entirely truthful.



BLOOD DRAWING

HERE

In the mid-Eighties Nick Cave sometimes drew with his own blood. ‘When you’re an intravenous drug user,’ Cave said, ‘blood plays a big part of your life.’ This particular drawing was done after a long day in the studio recording The Birthday Party’s last album. The Bad Seeds had the music for a song called ‘Mutiny’ but Cave had yet to write lyrics. Cave stayed up all night shooting up amphetamines and heroin, writing the words. ‘What can I say,’ Cave said, ‘it was fucked-up.’



THE BAD SEEDS

HERE

On a musical odyssey, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds inhabit a world of creative transformation and discovery.

Rising from the wreckage of The Birthday Party, original members Nick Cave and Mick Harvey were joined by Blixa Bargeld, Barry Adamson and Hugo Race to form Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. Their first album, *From Her to Eternity*, was released in 1984. The band’s body of work now numbers seventeen albums.

Bringing together individual musicians known independently for their own output and lineage, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds is a story of collaboration, artistic tension and friendship, as members have joined and departed the line-up. The family tree has included Martyn Casey, Warren Ellis, James Johnston, Ed Kuepper, Larry Mullins, Kid Congo Powers, Conway Savage, Jim Sclavunos, George Vjestica, Roland Wolf and Thomas Wydler.

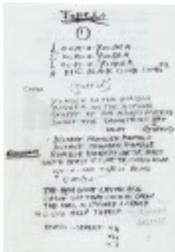
According to Nick Cave, ‘If the band is defined by anything it is the absence of past members. This loss is the engine that drives The Bad Seeds.’



STATUE OF CHRIST

[HERE](#)

This porcelain statue was given to Nick Cave by Victoria Clarke, the wife of his close friend Shane MacGowan, on his fortieth birthday. Cave has kept it beside his bed ever since, as ‘a form of protection’.



TUPELO

[HERE](#)

‘Tupelo’ is a song that draws together two of Nick Cave’s heroes, Elvis Presley and John Lee Hooker. It tells the story of the storm of Tupelo, which is the theme of the John Lee Hooker song of the same name and conflates it with the story of Elvis Presley and his dead twin, born in Tupelo. It also steeps the whole song in dark religion.

Cave has said about John Lee Hooker: ‘I first heard John Lee Hooker on a cassette I had bought at the Camden Market. I had an old beat-up car and I slipped in the tape not knowing what to expect. The first song that came on was “It Serves You Right to Suffer”. When John Lee begins the song with that beautifully phrased and liquid first couplet I was entranced. I had to pull the car over to the side of the road. I have never heard a voice like it, with such a powerful, misanthropic and brooding lyric, and that raw, expressive, improvised guitar. My heart just *melted*. It changed my life: how I sang, how I wrote lyrics, how I phrased songs. It was like hearing Elvis for the first time. A sublime beauty, impossible to endure.’



HOMEMADE DICTIONARY

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave remembers the contact high he got from words even as a child. At ten, reading Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* he thrilled to the lion that waved its tail 'spasmodically' and leafing through a detective novel he found the phrase 'a wicked little gun'. As Cave created the voice for Euchrid, he would read the dictionary and list words that gave off 'a sort of vibration'. Using these words, he created his own dictionary. 'The words I liked were obscene or just plain groovy. I had several of these dictionaries.'

EUCHRID'S CRIB

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave wrote his first novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel* in a series of small rooms around Berlin.



This room, a former maid's chamber, had to be crawled up into. The ceiling was too low for Cave to stand. Miscellaneous items lined the walls: three locks of hair, possibly from sisters, found inside an old box of chocolates; pages from the Bible; a picture of Elvis and one depicting faith, hope and charity. Cave found himself as he wrote, over-identifying with Euchrid, his novel's main character. Euchrid is also a collector; in his beloved swamp he gathers animal skulls and skins. In his clapboard shack beside a sprawling junk-heap, he collects ephemera from his own body: used bandages in a box labelled 'strips' and his scabs in a tobacco tin 'lined with cotton wool'.



HANDMADE BOOKS

[HERE](#)

While the church is heavy on rules, on doctrine, no place has been made in conventional religion for the human body. In these notebooks Nick Cave gathers images of burlesque, Christ and Mary found in flea markets, as well as drawings and even his own blood, to develop a unique theology that encompasses both sexual desire and desire for divinity. God may be dead, but this means we have to work, as Cave does, to create our own God, one who will sustain and nourish us. 'Despite what's gone on in my life,' Cave told an interviewer who asked what the presence of God felt like, 'I've always felt it. I just had a different concept of what *IT* was.'

Asked about his 'art' works done through the Eighties, Cave has said, 'I don't see these things as "art" works at all. They feel to me like fetish objects, or religious artefacts, the terrible residue of an over-stimulated mind. The pictures themselves are made from blood and hair and glue and found objects, such as pornographic photographs, religious prayer cards, kitsch lenticulars, lyrical ideas and so on. They were often the springboards for the songs themselves. The drawings came first.'

Cave collected religious pictures, cutting them from art books found in second-hand bookshops and flea markets. Two images seemed to dominate – The Blessed Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ and the devotional image of Mary holding the dead Christ. When asked about this, he said, 'To me the image of the mother with child and the grieving mother bookend history – the conception of the world and its ultimate destruction. It is the story of the world itself.'



AND THE ASS SAW THE ANGEL

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave's first novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel* centres on Euchrid Eucrow, a deaf mute born into a swampy backwoods world of drunks and religious zealots.

Writing a novel, which started as an extra-curricular activity, became an obsession. In Berlin, Cave often worked on the book for days without sleeping. Written on a series of borrowed typewriters, Cave carried the manuscript around in a plastic shopping bag. Twice it was lost, once in Berlin and again in London, and as it was his only copy he had to start writing all over from scratch. The novel's prose is intense, gothic, poetic. 'As the storm thickened Abie Poe held high the spirit lamp, waving it wraith-like beside him and allowing its light to fire up his gaunt skull and catch the maddened glint within his eyes.'



HANDMADE BOOK OF FOUND IMAGES

[HERE](#)

This handmade book is the magnum opus of Nick Cave's Berlin years, constructed entirely from found images. It contains hyper-real postcards of flowers, puppies, Brigitte Bardot and Louis Wain cats along with tiny early-twentieth-century sepia portraits of long-forgotten people, female saints from The Children's Miniature Book of Saints and 1950s German pornographic postcards. All these treasures were taken back to his room in Kreuzberg and forensically assembled over many months. This fragile book offers us a glimpse into Cave's obsessions, contradictions and state of mind.



SAINT JUDE COLLAGE

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave wrote in 2007: ‘I’d bought a complete version of Butler’s *Lives of the Saints* in the mid-1980s and so I was pretty clued up with the saints and the various things they endured. St Jude was beaten to death with a club and then beheaded in Persia in the first century. He is the patron saint of desperate situations and lost causes and is “the Daddy of the Blues”. I found the prayer card, or whatever it is, most probably in the flea market in West Berlin, where I found much of my stuff. I’ve stuck some hair onto it because, well, I have a thing about hair and stamped it with the date 1985, because I have a thing about date stamps. So it is, in the end, a rather pleasing conjunction of things I like – decapitated saints, hair and date stamps.’



THREE LOCKS OF HAIR

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave found a box of hair in a Berlin flea market in 1985, a place he frequented regularly. Asked about the hair, Cave wrote: ‘Small, seemingly insignificant pieces of information become the driving motivation for the final work. An insect trapped within a paperweight becomes the impetus for “Girl in Amber”; a misreading of the old jazz standard “Basin Street Blues” triggers “Higgs Boson Blues”; a Catholic prayer card suggests the voyeuristic “Watching Alice”; a hedge full of sparrows becomes the motivating force behind “And No More Shall We Part”. So it was with the box of hair I found in a flea market in Berlin. Inside the box were three locks of auburn hair, stitched at the top, and kept in tissue paper in a chocolate box. The secret story of the three locks of hair became infinitely important and propelled a cascade of ideas that wove their way through my novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel* and various songs. It remains one of my most treasured possessions.’



STRANGER THAN KINDNESS

[HERE](#)

In the mid-Eighties, Anita Lane wrote the lyrics for 'Stranger Than Kindness'. Nick Cave has said that Lane's 'radical, unorthodox way of seeing' influenced him and The Birthday Party. 'We escorted each other into the creative world. She had the ideas. I had the application.' Written near the close of their time together, Cave calls the song an 'autopsy' of the end of a relationship, and 'an extremely uncomfortable song to sing'. Blixa Bargeld wrote the music. Of all his songs, 'Stranger Than Kindness' remains Cave's favourite.



HANDMADE BOOK WITH BLUE TIES

[HERE](#)

Amongst Nick Cave's notebooks, collages and tresses of hair collected from flea markets in Berlin is this larger handmade book with El Greco's *The Crucifixion* pasted on the cover, its contents kept together with blue crepe fabric ties. Replicating the dissonance of Cave's inner world in portable form, the book contains manuscript pages from *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, religious iconography including a print of Christ's feet nailed to the cross with drips of Cave's own blood, and a West German print of the virtues of faith, hope and charity. There is a photograph of Anita Lane and one of Lane's distinctive sketches of Kewpie dolls, this one nailed to a cross, along with collages of Marilyn Monroe for *Your Funeral ... My Trial* and other stuff cut out of magazines for future use.



THE PAINTING OF THE GREEN WOMAN

[HERE](#)

The painting of the green woman was Nick Cave's favourite painting and he hung it in his Berlin office. When asked about it he said, 'The painting was done by a guy called Frederic Wall or something. I think this was the only painting he ever did, I'm not sure, but when I saw it I was instantly drawn to it. Some months later he kicked in my office door and with a carving knife slashed a picture I had above my desk of the Virgin Mary ascending into heaven. I have no idea why he did that. Berlin was like that, though. I sort of stopped being friends with him after that.'



THE TYPEWRITER

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave has used a typewriter on and off throughout his writing career. In Berlin he could not afford his own so he wrote both songs and his first novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel* on a variety of borrowed machines.



DEANNA

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave has said that the songs he has written about relationships have 'become those relationships themselves'. Deanna, the song's namesake, was not happy to have a song written about her. She felt exposed and called the song, when it was at the height of popularity in the late Eighties, 'the bane of my existence'. Nevertheless, Cave feels drawn to writing love songs. '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.'



THE MERCY SEAT

[HERE](#)

In 2000, Johnny Cash covered 'The Mercy Seat'. For Nick Cave this was momentous, Johnny Cash being a fundamental component of Cave's development as a performer and a songwriter.

Cave said of 'The Mercy Seat': 'Songs are ingenious devices that have their own demands. They find their way, whether you like it or not. In the early Eighties I was fully engaged in the writing of my novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel*. I sat in a small room in Berlin, typing away, day and night, sleeping little. When I reached an impasse with the novel, I would scrawl the odd lyric line on a scrap of paper beside me, ostensibly a song about a man going to the electric chair. The song was at best a distraction, a doodle, a song I never looked fully in the eye, or thought much about. But songs have their own yearnings and in time assert their sovereignty. "The Mercy Seat" was such a song. Even when I was singing it I had no idea that the song was important or that I would play it at every gig for the next thirty-five years, or that my hero Johnny Cash would one day record it. It was, as far as I was concerned, an afterthought. I often find that when it comes to song-writing I am the last to know. The songs hold within them a far greater understanding of their potential than I do.'



'KYLIE' BAG

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave wrote in 2007, 'I was on tour in Manchester in 1992 and somebody had given me this drug

that made me like people and I was walking through the streets on my own, really late and somebody took me into a small, dark room and there hanging on the wall of the room was this little shoulder bag – pink and baby blue with the words KYLIE MINOGUE printed on the side. And there was something about that little bag that spoke to me. I don't know, it held such promise, sent shivers up my spine – and I asked the guy if I could have it and he very kindly gave it to me, saying rather unnecessarily that he had a JASON one too, somewhere. I kept that little pink bag with me for years, had it in Japan, across the States, across Europe. I felt I'd kind of rescued it.'



O'MALLEY'S BAR

[HERE](#)

'O'Malley's Bar' is a forensically detailed and very violent epic about a psychopath murdering a bunch of people in a bar. It was initially recorded at the *Let Love In* sessions in 1993. As the song was too long to fit on this record, Nick Cave decided to make an album of murder ballads, so that 'O'Malley's Bar' could have a home. Asked about the unrelenting violence of 'O'Malley's Bar', Cave has said, 'I don't know, sometimes you write a song, and you've just got to kill a whole lot of people'.

“O'Malley's Bar” was written over many months, presenting itself in stages, verses piling up, as they do, endlessly, but the initial idea and preliminary writing was done lying on my back, in my suit, on a banana lounge, around the hotel pool in one of those faceless German cities. It was incredibly hot, I remember, and early in the morning, and I had a hangover you would not *believe*, and nearby there was a group of holiday-makers who were having a good time, or something, so I began, one by one, to describe them (in verse), then name them, and finally and systematically, execute them, on the page. Wonderful things, hangovers, a great creative tool (any artist will tell you), sadly denied to me these days.'



PAPA WON'T LEAVE YOU, HENRY

[HERE](#)

'Papa Won't Leave You, Henry' was one of several songs composed over the crib of Nick Cave's newborn son, Luke. Cave has said, 'They were essentially nursery songs, lullabies, designed to get Luke to sleep: "Papa Won't Leave You, Henry", "The Weeping Song", "Foi Na Cruz". This is the reason something like "Papa Won't Leave You, Henry" is so long and verbose. It was tough getting him to sleep. Maybe I was singing him the wrong song.'



RED RIGHT HAND

[HERE](#)

Many artists, chiefly due to it being the theme of the hugely popular TV series *Peaky Blinders*, have covered 'Red Right Hand' including P.J. Harvey, Jarvis Cocker, Laura Marling and Iggy Pop. At an In Conversation event, Nick Cave said, "'Red Right Hand' follows me around like a stray dog. For many casual listeners, "Red Right Hand" has come to define The Bad Seeds. However, it may be the one of my songs I am least attached to. To my great delight, however, Snoop Dogg recently covered it. He did it playfully and irreverently and with a lot of humour. I was very pleased. Finally, hip-hop has embraced The Bad Seeds!'



LET LOVE IN [HERE](#)

Following recording of the basic tracks for the album *Let Love In* at Townhouse Studios in London in 1994, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds returned to Metropolis Audio in Melbourne to mix and overdub the album. Polly Borland took photographs of the band, family and friends at work and play including detailed images of Nick Cave surrounded by copious amounts of paper such as daily schedules and chord sheets and notes to cleaners not to move ‘my stuff’. On closer inspection, Cave appears to be sitting still in a staged environment belying the slightly erratic, ever-changing process involved in recording and producing an album. Polly Borland went on to take the dramatic and electrifying photographs of the band that were used on the cover of *Let Love In*.



FAR FROM ME [HERE](#)

“Far From Me” took four months to write, the duration of the relationship it describes. The first verse was written in the first week of the affair, and is full of the heroic dreams of the new love. It sets the two lover-heroes against an uncaring world – “a world where everybody fucks everybody else over” – and brings in the notion of physical distance suggested in the title. Verse 1, and all is well in the garden. But “Far From Me” had its own agenda, and was not about to allow itself to be told what to do. As if awaiting the inevitable “traumatic experience”, it refused to let itself be completed until the catastrophe had occurred. Some songs are tricky like that, and it is wise to keep your wits about you when dealing with them. More often than not, the songs I write seem to know more about what’s going on in my life than I do. I have pages and pages of final verses for this song, written while the relationship was sailing happily along. One such verse went: “The Camellia, the Magnolia/Have such a pretty flower/And the bell from St Mary’s/Informs us of the hour”. Pretty words, innocent words, unaware that any day the bottom was about to drop out of the whole thing. As I wrote the final verse, it became clear that my life was being dictated by the largely destructive ordinance of the song itself, that it had its own in-built

destiny over which I had no control. In fact, I was an afterthought, a bit player in its sly, mischievous and finally malicious vision of how the world should be.'

Taken from Cave's 1999 essay, 'The Secret Life of the Love Song'.



JESUS BUST

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave found this marble bust of Jesus at a flea market in Buenos Aires while on tour and carried it all over Europe under his arm. 'Christ,' Cave has written, 'spoke to me through his isolation, through the burden of his death, through his rage at the mundane, through his sorrow.'



THE SORROWFUL WIFE

[HERE](#)

In The Red Hand Files, Nick Cave wrote, 'I remember lying under the old yew tree in Kew Gardens with my wife, Susie, in a vast field of bluebells. It was the year 2000 and we would visit the gardens often that spring. It was a magical time, full of excitement and promise. Susie was heavily pregnant with the twins and we could barely contain ourselves, as we lay there in the shade of the ancient tree, with the children growing inside her, as the momentary bluebells looked on.' Around this time Cave wrote 'The Sorrowful Wife'.



WEATHER DIARIES

[HERE](#)

The Weather Diaries began in 2000 as an ‘antidote to British weather’. In their concentrated detail, the diaries are an act of deep attention. As Nick Cave laments and describes the elements, the weather becomes embodied, complex, nuanced. ‘The weather is getting interesting, cloud is interesting, wind is interesting, rain and thunder and lightening [sic] are interesting...’



LOUIS WAIN

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave learned about the cat paintings of Louis Wain from artist, teacher and friend, Tony Clark. When he first got to England, Cave saw a Wain in a second-hand shop for fifty quid but was ‘in no position to buy it’. Later, the musician David Tibet, another Wain enthusiast, sold Cave several paintings. Since then he has acquired many more. Cave admires Wain’s development from naturalistic cats to humanised cats sitting in living rooms and around dinner tables to the ‘psychedelic’ cats Wain painted while in a mental hospital for schizophrenia. ‘Apart from their extraordinary spiritual energy,’ Cave writes, ‘the Wains, in some kind of way, keep me anchored to my past in Melbourne.’



BUNNY MUNRO

[HERE](#)

The story of Bunny Munro, a salesman and unrepentant leech, began as a screenplay which Nick Cave later turned into a novel. The main motivation behind the book was Valerie Solanas's 1967 *SCUM Manifesto*, a work of strident feminism. 'Every man deep down,' she wrote, 'knows he is a worthless piece of shit.' Bunny is a comedic character, profligate and poetic. After his wife's suicide, he takes his young son Bunny Junior on a road trip defined by grief's denial. Cave credits the gospels as 'ghost stories' for the novel's form and also the idea of 'resurrection through your children' as the driving force of the novel.



GRINDERMAN

[HERE](#)

Grinderman is Nick Cave's creative reset button. Born out of the behemoth that Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds had become around the time of recording the complex double album *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*, Grinderman was the antithesis of The Bad Seeds. The band was small with a shared, organic and collaborative approach to producing music. Working with Warren Ellis, Martyn Casey and Jim Sclavunos, and with the pressure of being the primary songwriter gone, Cave and his Grinderman colleagues were free to set out in new directions performing pure, raucous and untamed garage rock.

So far, Grinderman have recorded two albums, *Grinderman* (2007) and *Grinderman 2* (2010), and left fans wondering and speculating when, or if, Grinderman will return.



DOODLES

[HERE](#)

When asked about his compulsive habit of doodling naked women, Nick Cave said, ‘Well, Queen Victoria doodled horses, Mark Twain doodled whales, Claude Monet doodled paintbrushes, I doodle naked women. Mostly, I draw them sitting at a desk in hotel rooms on hotel stationery. They are a compulsive habit I have had since my school days and I have thousands of them floating around. They have no artistic merit: rather they are evidence of a kind of ritualistic and habitual thinking, not dissimilar to the act of writing itself, actually; I simply sit down each day and write. I have conditioned my brain to behave in this way. It is the applied mind that simply does its work regardless of inspiration. So it is with the doodles of naked women. I am compelled to draw them.’



NOTEBOOKS/SONGWRITING

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave uses notebooks, created especially for him in Australia by Jillian Burt, to make notes for his songs and also the letters he writes in response to fans’ questions on The Red Hand Files. Songs develop at various speeds. A song from his most recent album *Ghosteen* (2019) was found in a notebook from 2013. The notebook pages reveal the anatomy of songwriting, how the lyrics come together, are negated and migrate. When the song is done, Cave types the lyrics and glues them into the notebook. The books are taken into the studio and the lyrics are reworked again as he improvises with his band.



THE SICK BAG SONG

[HERE](#)

In 2015, Nick Cave published what would be a highly personal and heroic saga of his trip around North

America and Canada, written partly on aeroplane sick bags. Cave has said, at an In Conversation event, that ‘*The Sick Bag Song* is the best thing I ever did, as far as I’m concerned.’



GIRL IN AMBER

[HERE](#)

The film director Andrew Dominik claimed recently that Nick Cave was extremely difficult to work with through the filming of *One More Time with Feeling*. Dominik has intimated that Cave was deeply suspicious of the whole premise of the film and was afraid the film would turn out to be ‘mawkish and depressing and exploitative of his son’s death’. Dominik suggested that Cave was determined not to appear victim-like. While Dominik was filming ‘a beautiful shot of Susie Cave walking along the beach in Brighton’, Cave (who was not there) rang his wife and asked her what she was doing. Susie Cave told Cave she was being filmed walking by the sea. Cave demanded the shoot stop and his wife return home. He accused Dominik of making grief-porn. Months later, upon seeing a rough cut of the film, Cave wanted the whole thing scrapped. The story is that he rang Warren Ellis, who had also seen the film, and that Warren Ellis had told Cave ‘to step away from the film and allow it to be’. It was not until Cave saw the audience reaction to the film and the positive effect that it had on other people that he embraced it. He now sees the film as a ‘beautiful gift from a dear friend’. The piece of footage of Susie Cave walking along the beach became an important and iconic feature of the *Skeleton Tree* live shows, accompanied by the song ‘Girl in Amber’.



GHOSTEEN NOTEBOOK

[HERE](#)

Nick Cave has used the same bespoke notebooks to write his lyrics in since 2012, beginning with the *Push The Sky Away* album. He has called them ‘objects of devotion’. Recently he lost his *Ghosteen*

notebook. He said this: 'My notebooks, which are predominately a collection of failed ideas, nevertheless hold great value to me. They are proof of life, and I am never far from one. My notebook for *Ghosteen* was full of songs and it disappeared. I have looked everywhere for it. I sometimes think maybe someone stole it, or destroyed it, or there was some kind of cosmic erasure of it, I don't know, but in the end I probably just left it in a hotel room somewhere, or on a train, or in the back of a car or something. It wouldn't be the first time. Mostly I remain composed and think that it will come back, these things have a way of turning up. I hope so.'

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Nick Cave as a toddler in Warracknabeal, c. 1960

Photograph by Colin Cave Colour photograph

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Colin Cave, c. 1956

Photograph by Ernest Cameron Black and white photograph

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Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov, 1980 (first published in 1955)

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Christmas card featuring choir boys of the Holy Trinity Cathedral,
Wangaratta, 1965

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Still image from *City with a Future - Wangaratta*, 1965

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Dawn Cave, 1958

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Letter sent from Nick Cave to his family while in boarding school, 1971

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Chris Coyne, John Cocivera, Howard (last name unknown), Phill Calvert and Nick Cave performing at Korowa Anglican Girls' School, c. 1975

Photographer unknown Black and white photograph

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Letter from Caulfield Grammar School to Colin Cave, 1975

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Rowland S. Howard, Nick Cave, Ollie Olsen, Megan Bannister, Anita Lane, Bronwyn Adams, Nauru House, Melbourne, 1977

Photograph by Peter Milne Black and white photograph Courtesy of

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Nick Cave at The Saints concert, Tiger Room, Melbourne, 1977
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Song list, The Boys Next Door, 1978
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Painting entitled *Horn of Plenty* by Anita Lane, 1977

Acrylic paint on canvas

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Script for *A Sea Adventure* by Nick Cave, 1980

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Song lyrics for 'Happy Birthday' by Nick Cave, 1980

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Wallet owned by Nick Cave, c. 1985

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Lists by Nick Cave, c. 1979

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Still image from the music video for 'Nick the Stripper', 1981

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Lettera 25 manual typewriter, c. 1975
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Nick Cave and Deanna Bond, c. 1988

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'Kylie' bag owned by Nick Cave, c. 1992

Vinyl with plastic side detailing and woven synthetic strap

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Notebook containing song lyrics for 'O'Malley's Bar' by Nick Cave, 1991-96

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Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Red Right Hand' by Nick Cave,
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Still image from 'Red Right Hand' music video, 1994
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Layout for *Let Love In* cover by Nick Cave, 1994
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Drawing by Nick Cave for hotel reparation charity t-shirt, 1993
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Nick Cave, Metropolis Audio, Melbourne, 1994
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Notebook with Nick Cave's initial proposal for the 'Into My Arms'
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Susie Bick, 1990
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Notebook containing song lyrics for 'The Sorrowful Wife' by Nick
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Nick Cave, Susie Bick and Luke Cave, 1998

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Notebook containing route of Grinderman Australian Tour, 2011

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Custom-made notebook owned by Nick Cave, 2014

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Notebook containing song lyrics for 'Higgs Boson Blues' by Nick Cave, 2011

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Susie and Nick Cave, wedding photograph, 1999

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Susie and Nick Cave, 2019

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nickcave.com

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The
SICK BAG
Song



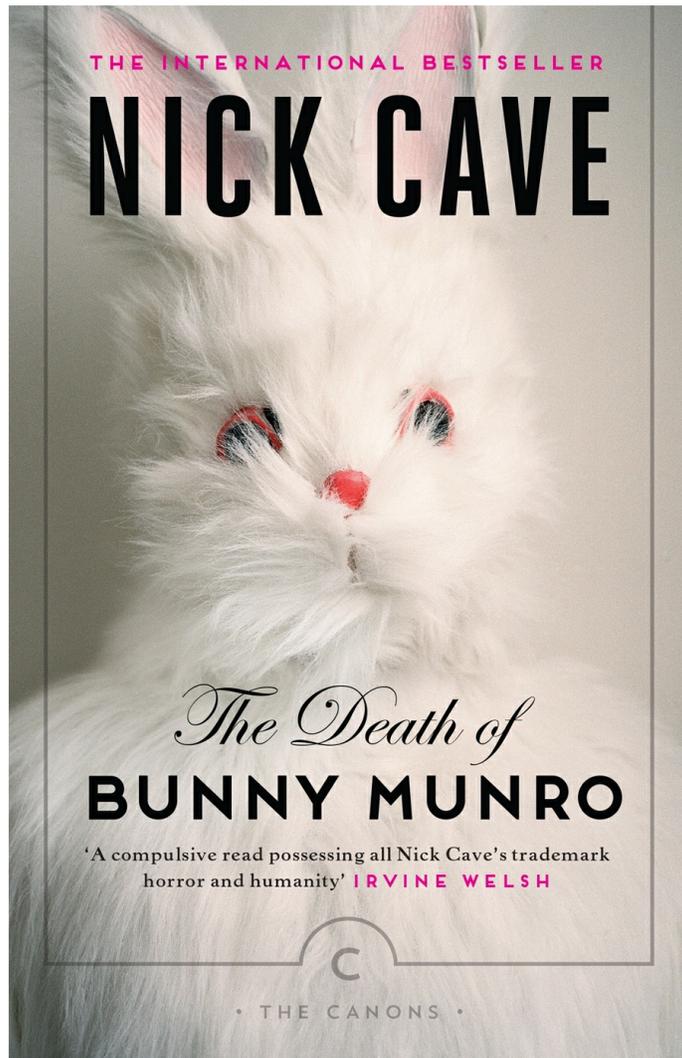
Nick Cave

'An epic chronicle'
INDEPENDENT

'A revelation and a pleasure'

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CANON  GATE



‘Accessible, thrilling and gloriously impolite’
Sunday Telegraph

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