

“Hee Haw:”

Singing and performing song lyrics on Nick Cave and The Birthday Party’s album *The Birthday Party* (1980)

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This article attempts to interpret the performative aspects of Nick Cave’s singing and song lyrics written in collaboration with the guitarist Rowland Stuart Howard (1959–2009), Mick Harvey, Vincent Eugene Craddock (also known as Gene Vincent), and William Douchette (also known as Bill Davis). I focus specifically on the album *The Birthday Party* (1980), which Nick Cave recorded together with his band The Birthday Party. This analysis, representative of rock song lyrics studies, is an interpretative trace and a reflection on the beginnings of this outstanding songwriter, rock musician, and singer’s career. I argue that the Australian singer, beginning with his first songs recorded with the band The Boys Next Door (*Door, Door* from 1979), writes about love, pain and loneliness, and above all, each new album by the author of *Into My Arms* records the experience of longing. *The Birthday Party*, therefore, is no different; it expresses regret and sadness – the feelings of the author/singer, the narrating/singing “I,” the lyric-musical persona or, in other words, the singing and performing subject.

The Birthday Party is The Boys Next Door’s second album. It was released in 1980 by Missing Link Records. Roughly two years later, the album was re-released, with a different cover, with only the name *The Birthday Party* written on it. It is therefore considered The Birthday Party’s first album.¹ The album was recorded between June 1979 and February 1980 at Richmond

¹ Cf. Tanya Dalziel, Karen Welberry (ed.), *Cultural Seeds. Essays on the Work of Nick Cave* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009).

Recorders Studios in Melbourne and engineered by Tony Cohen. This album is distinctly different from its predecessor, the debut album *Door, Door* (released in 1979). The songs on the album are punk, dark and chaotic, a sound which later became emblematic of The Birthday Party's style. Virtually all the songs on this album were later released on the *Hee Haw* EP (1988), a compilation of The Birthday Party's early recordings.

The album, which will be discussed in this article, consists of ten tracks. Cave wrote the lyrics to four songs and co-authored the lyrics to one (in collaboration with Howard and Mick Harvey, a multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, bass, keyboards and drums). Cave wrote the lyrics to the songs numbered: 1, 2, 3 and 6. Howard wrote the lyrics to four songs (4, 5, 7, 8), and one song is a cover of *Catman* (1957), written by Gene Vincent and Bill Davis and originally recorded by The Blue Caps. The lyrics to all the songs form a coherent structure, convey a clear message, and together form a harmonious, well-thought-out, and ordered whole. It is undoubtedly one of the most important albums in the history of rock music, and therefore it should be analyzed in more detail. The present article is preceded by my two other studies devoted to the beginnings of Nick Cave's career;² in these works. I present the first three artistic incarnations of the Australian musician, as these three achievements paint a fascinating portrait of this remarkable vocalist and pianist's early work.

The album was recorded by five artists: Nick Cave (vocals), Mick Harvey (guitar), Rowland S. Howard (guitar), Tracy Pew (bass guitar), and Phill Calvert (drums). The EP's running time is only 32 minutes and 3 seconds and, as have I mentioned before, it consists of ten tracks. The longest song is *The Friend Catcher* (4:22; it is the sixth song on the album and the first song on the B side), and the shortest song is *Waving My Arms* (2:15, it is the seventh song on the album and the second song on the B side). The album was structured with care: it opens with the dynamic, "fiery," crazy track *Mr. Clarinet* (3:42), and ends with the equally "wild," crazy, anxiety-driven, insane and ironic *Happy Birthday* (3:50). Such a structure brings the listener aesthetic pleasure as they listen to a "narrative" – a musical and textual whole: we begin with a song that is a disturbing cry for love, for marriage, a song that is a metaphor for loneliness, pain, and longing for a loved one, and ends with a mocking, grotesque, and ironic confession of the singing "I," who claims that the birthday party is actually quite a dark celebration, because it bitterly reminds one about the passage of time and death, evoking constant fear and terror; the song's lyrical subject reminisces about the party celebrating his eleventh birthday.³

The main theme of the lyrics is the different dimensions, sides, and "sounds" of love; it can be said that the lyrical subject of these songs is a man telling/singing about his emotional experiences with his beloved. Loneliness, longing, and waiting for the loved one, looking for her, wanting

² Paweł Tański, "Antropologia słowa Nicka Cave'a na jego debiutanckiej płycie z zespołem The Bad Seeds *From Her to Eternity* (1984)" [Nick Cave's Anthropology of words on his debut album released with The Bad Seeds *From Her to Eternity* (1984)], *Kultura Współczesna* [Contemporary Culture] 2 (2021): 31–47; *ibid.*, "«Sound of hername». Interpretacja tekstów piosenek z debiutanckiej płyty *Door, Door* Nicka Cave'a z zespołem The Boys Next Door" [«Sound of hername»: Study of song lyrics on Nick Cave's debut album *Door, Door* released with The Boys Next Door], *Czas Kultury* [Time of Culture] 3 (2021): 31–40.

³ I quote the lyrics to the songs from this album after: <https://genius.com/artists/The-birthday-party>, date of access 22 Feb. 2022, cf. ["The Birthday Party"]. We will not find these lyrics on Nick Cave's website. The earliest lyrics posted on the website date back to Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' album *From Her to Eternity* (1984) ["Lyrics"].

to be with her are expressed throughout. Alienation leads to madness. The lyrical and musical “I” argues that man is a miserable, pathetic, weak, and scared creature; man may be driven mad (*Happy Birthday*) or be filled with sadness, despair, bitterness, guilt, struggling with reality, and trying to come to terms with the terrible fear caused by the awareness of how fragile life is, the fleeting nature of life, and the passage of time (*Waving My Arms*, *The Red Clock*). The world which emerges from the lyrics is ruled by darkness and nihilism; human existence is constantly threatened by unnerving experiences, and traps lurk everywhere. The pessimistic dimension of the lyrics is emphasized by the music – it is full of anxiety, madness, anger and guitar distortions, brilliantly used to enhance the sound of the album, and finally – we have the great use of vocal effects, about which I will write more later in this article. The fundamental aesthetic category of the discussed song lyrics is the grotesque: it emphasizes the absurdity, weirdness, strangeness and ridiculousness of man and the world, and ultimately reveals an extremely pessimistic diagnosis, namely that man is a sick, twisted creature – prone to violence, likely to harm others – man is superficial, selfish, frightening and disgusting. Let us consider the following examples:

I put on my coat of trumpets
(*Mr. Clarinet*),

Dancing like a chimney sweep
I look ridiculous
All hands and feet
The hat's on wrong
(*Hats On Wrong*),

Halls echo with the sounds of his footsteps
Water drip drops from the ceiling
Shadow of a bird
Race! Race! Race! Race! Race! Race!
Race to the door and see what's scratching
Groaning Walls did they hear you?
Hair of the dog, hair of the dog, hair of the dog

Turning purple is the colour of murder
(*The Hair Shirt*),

And the
Guilt parade
The guilt parade
Parade, parade

Wave and say hello
(*Guilt Parade*),

The numbers soft as soap
And tend to bend in addition

They're much too wan for me
I'd prefer some consistency

And I say "Question:
When is a door not a door?"
And I say "That's not right!
Answer: when it's ajar!"

(Riddle House),

You and your lungs and your wrist
They throb like trains
Choo choo choo
It's a prison of sound
(The Friend Catcher),

Waving my arms
In motion
About a lot
(Waving My Arms),

The red clock goes drip toc
Drip toc as it rains cats and dogs
That break on the footpath
Put your hand out the window
Get stripped to the claw bone
(The Red Clock),

It's a very happy day
We are at lots of fun fun fun
And it's ice-cream and jelly
And a punch in the belly
How much can you throw over the walls?

And see how his face glows
It's a bike! What a surprise
It's a big bike. What a big surprise
It's a red bike. What a red surprise
Oh, what a surprise

But the best thing there
But the best thing there
Was the wonderful dog chair
Was the beautiful dog chair
That could count right up to ten

It could count right up to ten
 It went woof, woof, woof, woof, woof
 Woof, woof, woof, woof, woof
 (*Happy Birthday*).

The most important stylistic device here is irony; the lyricists use it to convey the vision and truth about the subject – to show man as a comic, yet terrifying, imperfect, flawed product of the evolution of the universe, a miserable creature ruled by detestable desires. From this perspective, *homo sapiens* is not a “thinking reed,” but rather “thoughtless grass,” “unconscious and passive club-rush,” devoid of inner moral laws. Charles Baudelaire wrote in *The Flowers of Evil* that “Pascal’s abyss went with him at his side;” similarly, the people depicted in Cave and Howard’s songs are individuals who carry an endless abyss within – they are miserable creatures wandering among “Les Fleurs du mal,” flowers of evil. Linguistically, brevity and compactness appear to play a major role in the lyrics. It should be noted that Nick Cave’s first attempts at songwriting are characterized by brevity; they are, in a way, lyrical miniatures, lyrical “microns,” maximally condensed intensifications of “entangled objects.” They are governed by minimalism.⁴ Let me then at this point turn to the critical context of “micrology:”

Descending into the linguistic particles of a poem, tracing the movement of how the smallest threads are interwoven, chasing after the arrangements of concepts or images outlined in this micro scale represents a new encounter each time with the enigma of a text’s agency. As in experiments in the natural sciences, at the nano level we observe hitherto unknown phenomena involving the self-organization of literary works, produce new knowledge about these processes, capable of freeing us from previously existing certainties regarding the orders and disorders of literature. Micropoetics thus becomes knowledge about organs that we didn’t know texts possessed, but also about how these tools create their own organon, i.e. a new sequence of categories, principles for reading, and cognitive methods. What is more, discoveries of this kind simultaneously give a glimpse into the dynamic process of organization, the internal links that join texts in certain self-regulating orders, to a large measure independent of their contexts. That is not the end of the matter, because this movement of organization helps us understand the discrete phenomenon of texts’ interconnections with a multiplicity of external phenomena, the text’s prototyping of new kinds of connections, their production, and the awakening of their activity. Through micropoetics we can understand how it is possible for a literary work to become a centre for the crystallization of new forms of organization, new organs whose functions are not purely literary. The uncontrollable, uncodifiable, unpredictable world of new knowledge about textual organization is therefore simultaneously a world of new connections between texts and the world, and between the modes for organising the world of texts and new approaches to this.⁵

Nick Cave and Rowland Stuart Howard use repetitions in their lyrics. And while stanzas and refrains are a given in the poetics of verbal and musical works, Cave and Howard use repetitions in/as microforms, microstructures, which they saturate with bitter irony that cuts like a knife; they construct grotesque worlds/lyrical situations and create tragic heroes, standing at the edge of an abyss, melancholic, lonely and desperate for love. In the particles of musical phrases, there are confessions

⁴ Cf. “Micropoetics”, *Forum of Poetics*, spring/summer (2017).

⁵ “Micropoetics”, 4–5.

of overwhelming experiences pulsating with sadness, grief, loss, emptiness, depression, the dark undercurrent of existence. A black sun of decay, dust, ash, smoke and nothingness shines over this bleak landscape. Howling, depression, hopelessness, and fear reign here. Nick Cave conveys these emotions using different means, from a voice full of pain, through screams, imitating a barking dog, grunts, imitating a braying donkey, mocking "polite" vocals, to angry chanting, rebelling against the stunted reality, the "wasteland." Critics have written about the work of the author of *Ghosteen* from this period that "Cave's vocals invest the album with an ominous undercurrent, but the overall ambience hardly suggests the insanity that lay ahead;"⁶ "neither John Cale nor Alfred Hitchcock was ever this scary;"⁷ the Australian artist does not sing – "no one else has ever suffered with a more effective sonic display than what's in these grooves."⁸ Although Cave's vocalizations are not that innovative, they date back to the works of earlier "screamers" in the history of rock and roll, such as Iggy Pop or Alan Vega from Suicide, his singing with The Birthday Party still remains powerful and expressive.⁹ The voice of the creator of *Push the Sky Away* endows the album with an ominous power;¹⁰ "a raging beast filled with agonized howling, braying Cave vocals flung against a backdrop of violently attacked guitars and no-wave horn noise."¹¹ The following phrases were used to describe the band and the music: "16 minutes of sheer hell," "funereal dirges," "stunning gruesomeness," "harrowing lament," "visions of bloody madness."¹² The singing and the performance of the song lyrics by Nick Cave and by Rowland Stuart Howard, Mick Harvey, Vincent Eugene Craddock and William Douchette recorded on *The Birthday Party* (1980) may therefore be described as musical miniatures – textual and vocal expressions of rebellion,¹³ filled with irony. The modalities and vocalizations as well as the tone of voice used by Cave express the scale of his anger at the world, while the brevity of the verbal layer of the songs shows the accidental nature of life.¹⁴ This form of artistic expression – condensed lyrics which expresses contestation and the accidental nature of existence – lends itself to the analytical strategy of a verbal-musical miniature.¹⁵ Cave skillfully uses his vocal range, as mentioned earlier, in order to fully functionalize the structure of the textual and the musical singing subject and use it in the communicative act, emphasizing the intensity of the metaphors of longing, sadness, helplessness, unhappiness, guilt, remorse, injustice, loneliness, pain, anger, despair, desperation, fear caused by the impending death; in a word, all the problems he sings about.

When Cave sings, his voice is, to paraphrase Roland Barthes,¹⁶ right at the encounter between (English) language and music, or more precisely, popular music – punk rock music. It should be briefly explained what kind of punk music I have in mind – I certainly am not referring to the British music scene of the 1970s, where existential and philosophical topics did not play a major role (as it was dominated by rebellion against the system). Rather, Cave is drawing on pre-punk American bands

⁶ Ira Robbins, David Sheridan, *Birthday Party*, <https://trouserpress.com/reviews/birthday-party/>, date of access 23 Feb. 2022.

⁷ Robbins, Sheridan.

⁸ Robbins, Sheridan.

⁹ Robbins, Sheridan.

¹⁰ Robbins, Sheridan.

¹¹ Robbins, Sheridan.

¹² Robbins, Sheridan.

¹³ Cf. Piotr Michałowski, "Miniatura poetycka" [Poetic miniature], *Pamiętnik Literacki* [Literary Diary] 2 (1994): 116–135.

¹⁴ Michałowski.

¹⁵ Michałowski.

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, "The grain of the voice", trans. Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text* (Fontana Press, 1972): 181.

from the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Cave's vocal performances are based on alliterations, word-plays, homonyms, onomatopoeic associations, such as in the following fragments:

her white stockings and red dress that goes
swish, swish, swish around her legs of lace
marry me, marry me alive

marry me, marry me alive
oh maybe, oh maybe lie down

I love her, love her, love her
love her love her love her love her
(*Mr. Clarinet*),

The skulls are just like stepping stones
The river's littered with little bones
(*Hats On Wrong*),

Race! Race! Race! Race! Race! Race!
Race to the door and see what's scratching
Groaning Walls did they hear you?
Hair of the dog, hair of the dog, hair of the dog

Turning purple is the colour of murder
Turning purple is the colour of murder
Turning purple is the colour of murder
Turning purple is the colour of murder

What's in your eye?
Said what size?
Left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right
What's in your eye?
Said what size?
Left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right
(*The Hair Shirt*),

The happy monotony
It drags like a nail
And it ladders your mealy mouth
Into splintering smiles

And the
Guilt parade
The guilt parade
Parade, parade

Wave and say hello
 Wave and say hello
 Wave and say hello
 Wave and say hello
 (*Guilt Parade*),

I, cigarette fingers
 Puff and poke
 Puff and poking the smoke
 It touches the ground

You and your lungs and your wrist
 They throb like trains
 Choo choo choo
 It's a prison of sound

Of sound

She by a chinny chin chin
 Eee-oh eee-oh
 Like a Zippo smokes the way
 Poke around
 (*The Friend Catcher*),

It's all rough and tumble
 The commotion of new
 And we feel rather shiny
 In our signalling suits
 And explode into ho, ho, ho, ho, ho
 It's our manifesto
 (*Waving My Arms*),

It could count right up to eleven
 It went woof, woof, woof, woof, woof, woof, woof, woof, woof
 Woof, woof, woof
 (*Happy Birthday*).

In Cave's singing performances, language encounters a voice, to paraphrase Roland Barthes again, and the voice is produced twice: by the English language and by punk music. This is very important because this very convention of rock music, this genre, punk rock, is well integrated with the structure of the musical and the linguistic subject on the analyzed album; in its vocal aspect, it is a catalyst for songs and their composition. Cave's voice plays a crucial role – it directly supports the metaphorical *habitus* of discord, rebellion, anger, and contestation, negating the symbolic order, limiting human freedom and independence, i.e. a field of power, a socio-political system that pulsates "over the intelligible, the expressive: here, thrown in front of us like

a packet, is the Father, his phallic stature.”¹⁷ As Barthes writes, “the grain’ is that: the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue; perhaps the letter, almost certainly *significance*.”¹⁸ Cave’s singing body builds the counter-cultural dimension of the songs; let’s put it bluntly: the Australian artist’s singing (and thus the lyrics to the songs) are the *habitus* of a man who metaphorically expresses the value system of the punk movement, a symbolic field of axiological structures of the subversive potential of the rejected, the “rotten,” who in their garages play rough, dirty, wild, noisy and hard rock music. Thus, two types of texts emerge in Cave’s vocal performances: the pheno-text expressing the network of punk’s critical discourses, and the geno-text, as Barthes writes: “it is that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language – not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sound-signifiers, or its letters – where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that work. It is, in a very simple word but which must be taken seriously, the *diction* of the language.”¹⁹ Cave’s signing is therefore the *habitus* of the diction of his language and punk language – those romantics of late modernity, lonely outsiders of industrial civilization, precursors of grunge voices, guitars, drums, rhythms, and songs which express anger and disagreement with the world. Let me at this point explain the meaning of the phrase “Hee Haw” referenced in the title of this article. It is, of course, the title of The Birthday Party’s EP; the phrase refers to a “braying donkey.” I have chosen to include it in the title of this article because it perfectly characterizes what I have been trying to interpret, namely the semantics of Cave’s singing and lyrics written by him and other members of the band. The singer’s self-ironic metaphor perfectly conveys his active punk disposition; the efficiency of his emotional language in vocal “monodramas.” In the words of Pierre Bourdieu, it is “the basis for the unintentional invention of regulated improvisations.”

As far as the theme of the lyrics are concerned, the songs on the analyzed album may be divided into three groups – the subjects of these songs ask for love and friendship (*Mr. Clarinet*, *The Friend Catcher*) and desire (*Cat Man*); they are obsessed with pain (*The Hair Shirt*, *Riddle House*), the passage of time (*The Red Clock*, *Happy Birthday*) and death (*The Hair Shirt*); and they notice man’s ridiculousness (*Hats On Wrong*) and shortcomings (*Guilt Parade*, *The Hair Shirt*, *Waving My Arms*). These three themes: love, the experience of time, and the absurdity of human existence are bound by the most important trauma of the lyrical “I,” namely a feeling of intense loneliness in an evil and cruel world. The album in question is therefore a lamentation of a man defeated by despair, to whom only bitter irony is left. Seeing grotesque figures and situations everywhere, he finds hope in mockery and the grotesque. Cave’s voice emphasizes the grotesque reality; dirty guitar sounds correspond to the “singing donkey,” expressing hate for the world, and the garage sound of the whole reminds one of the birth and the explosion of punk rock in the 1970s in the UK and the United States, from where it took over the world.

The three most interesting songs on the album, representative of The Birthday Party’s oeuvre, are: *The Hair Shirt* (the third song on the album, 4:04), *Hats on Wrong* (the second song on the album, 2:47) and *Guilt Parade* (the fourth song on the album, 2:46). They are filled with anxiety, entrapment, and enslavement and show the dark side of human nature. The first song

¹⁷Barthes, 182.

¹⁸Barthes, 182.

¹⁹Barthes, 182-183.

tells the story of a crime; the second song is a mockery of human "masks," brilliantly described by Witold Gombrowicz in his works, and the third song talks of a man who feels remorse for his offenses and the fact that our species is bound to commit immoral deeds. I stated at the beginning of this article that the album was planned and structured with great care, so now it is worth emphasizing the fact that the lyrical narratives have their own dynamics; they attract the attention of the listener, if only because the excellent opening track is followed by an equally great song – it is moving and pessimistic despite grotesque images:

Dancing like a chimney sweep
 I look ridiculous
 All hands and feet
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on
 It's wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong,
 wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong

The skulls are just like stepping stones
 The river's littered with little bones
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on
 It is on wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong
 It's on wrong, wrong, wrong,

The grass is green
 The sky is blue
 My feet are bound in bamboo
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on wrong
 The hat's on
 It's on wrong, wrong, wrong
 It's on wrong, wrong
 The hat is on wrong, wrong
 My hat is on wrong, wrong
 On my skull
 Look at me, my hat is on wrong
 My hat's on wrong

(*Hats On Wrong*).

Making a cover of *Catman* (2:30) the penultimate song on the album was also a successful artistic strategy. *Catman* is an ironic story about desire, sexuality, and physicality:

Catman's coming, better look out
 Catman's coming, running about
 Catman's coming, looking for a girl
 Better hide your sister, man

C is for the crazy hair do that he wears around
 A is for the arms that he'll sneak around your waist
 T is for the taste on the lips belong to you, yeah man

M is for the mean things that this mean man does
 A is for all the hearts that he has ever broke
 N is for the names on the list you may be on

Catman

Catman's looking for a woman all day long
 Better watch out
 Better watch out
 You better watch out because you're gonna get kissed
 You better watch out because he is in your midst

Catman

You better watch out because of Mr. catman
 Catman

The last song on the A side, *Riddle House* (2:47), asks questions about the limits of knowledge and freedom, while the first song on the B side is *The Friend Catcher* (4:21). Inspired by a rather prosaic situation, smoking a cigarette, the narrator tells his tale; however, the song is actually about the human body, the boundaries of the skin. Similes and metaphors are used here in an interesting way – they are used to reflect on the human voice, on the possibilities of language, speech, singing; the song is therefore also a self-referential reflection:

You and your lungs and your wrist
 They throb like trains
 Choo choo choo
 It's a prison of sound

Earlier, I discussed the first and the last songs on both sides of the album, and I also mentioned what is in the “middle” of side A, so I should also write about the “middle” of side B. *Waving My Arms* is the seventh song in total and the second song on the B side; in turn, *The Red Clock* is the eighth song (the third song on the B side). Both songs talk about time, its human experience, passing, the fleeting nature of reality, movement, and the inevitability of death. When one truly listens to how the album is structured, one discovers that the songs were dynamically organized, and that they connect with one another, creating self-reinforcing and self-propelling structures. These dynamic interconnec-

tions help one understand how the songs connect with a multitude of external phenomena, how the verbal and musical works invent and create new kinds of relationships, how they activate different contexts. It all boils down to, of course, the praxis of punk counterculture, mentioned many times in this study, "exercises in engagement," rebellious acts committed by people united around this axiological sphere. Using mockery, irony, and a sharp tongue, Nick Cave sang in a unique way about man's eternal problems – miserable existence, melancholy, harsh realities of everyday life. The Birthday Party and Cave's expressive punk singing performances on *The Birthday Party* paved the way for Cave's future career, which led the artist to collaborate with the outstanding multi-instrumentalist Warren Ellis (b. 1965). Theirs is an aesthetic of musical minimalism, much different from the Australian pianist's punk roots. And with much different singing performances. The beautiful album *La Panthère Des Neiges* (released on December 17, 2021) is a tangible proof of this.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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KEYWORDS

rock performance

PUNK

the grain of the voice

the geno-text

song's language and style

HABITUS

ABSTRACT:

This article attempts to interpret the performative aspects of Nick Cave's singing and song lyrics written in collaboration with the guitarist Rowland Stuart Howard (1959–2009), Mick Harvey, Vincent Eugene Craddock (also known as Gene Vincent) and William Douchette (also known as Bill Davis). I focus specifically on the album *The Birthday Party* (1980) which Nick Cave recorded together with his band The Birthday Party. This analysis, representative of rock song lyrics studies, is a receptive trace and a reflection on the beginnings of this outstanding songwriter, rock musician, and singer's career. I argue that the Australian singer, beginning with the first recordings with the band The Boys Next Door (*Door, Door* from 1979), writes about love, pain, and loneliness, and show how each new album by the author of *Into My Arms* records the experience of longing. *The Birthday Party*, therefore, is no different; it expresses regret and sadness – the feelings of the author/singer, the narrating/singing "I," the lyrical and the musical persona or, in other words, the singing and performing subject. Cave's signing is a metaphor for the *habitus* of punk song miniatures, which are lyrical and vocal expressions of rebellion, filled with irony, while the main principle of the poetics of these works is the grotesque.

voice

rock lyrics

the pheno-text

SINGING

THE LYRICAL AND MUSICAL “

Nick Cave's work

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Paweł Tański (b. 1974) – university professor at the Department of the History of Polish Literature and Cultural Tradition at the Institute of Literature, the Faculty of the Humanities, at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. His research interests include the anthropology of modernity, the ethnomusicology/anthropology of music (song studies, rock song lyrics), performance studies, somaesthetics, Polish twentieth-century literature and Polish twenty-first-century literature (mainly poetry). Author of seven scientific monographs. He has recently published: *Głosy i performanse tekstów. Literatura – piosenki – ciało* [Voices and performances of lyrics. Literature – songs – body] (2021), *Nowe sytuacje polskiego rocka. Teksty – głosy – interpretacje* [New situations of Polish rock. Texts – voices – interpretations] (2016). He is also the co-editor of 22 volumes of edited collections and eight thematic issues of academic journals, including: *Kultura wobec nieświadomego. Studia (post)psychoanalityczne* [Culture and the unconscious. (Post)psychoanalytical studies] (2017), “*Chodząc w ich butach*”. *Depeche Mode – muzyka, zjawisko, recepcja* [“Walking in their shoes.” Depeche Mode - music, phenomenon, reception] (2017), “*Głowa mówi...*”. *Polski rock lat 80.* [“The head says ...” Polish rock of the 1980s] (2018), 3 volumes in the *Kultura rocka* [Rock culture] series (2019), *Kultura rocka 4. Muzyczny rok 1969* [Rock culture 4. The musical year 1969] (2020), *Song Studies. Poetyka i polityka wytwarzania piosenki* [Song Studies. The poetics and politics of song production] (2021). |