



*Dire et Chanter Les Passions*  
DCLP



REVUE

INTERNATIONALE



DIRE ET



CHANTER



LES PASSIONS



**01** Les Voix de l'émotion

sept 2021

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(par ordre alphabétique)

Marc JEANNIN et David POULIQUEN  
Enseignants-chercheurs à l'Université d'Angers

Directeur de publication :

Jean-François BIANCO  
Enseignant-chercheur à l'Université d'Angers



Revue à comité de lecture  
International peer-reviewed journal

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Marjorie GRANDIS
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Revue annuelle (1 numéro/an)

Revue en open access et disponible sur : [www.dclp.eu/revue-dclp](http://www.dclp.eu/revue-dclp)



Langues de publication : français, italien, anglais

@ : [contact-revue-dclp@dclp.eu](mailto:contact-revue-dclp@dclp.eu)

ISSN : 2804-0074

Dépôt légal : février 2021

## Présentation de la *Revue internationale Dire et Chanter Les Passions*

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La *Revue internationale Dire et Chanter Les Passions* (revue DCLP) est une revue à comité de lecture qui publie des articles rattachés à la thématique principale de l'expression des passions. Elle propose des sujets de réflexion interdisciplinaires de qualité, notamment autour de la voix et des émotions qu'elle suscite, selon des angles d'approche divers et originaux. La revue DCLP publie dans le domaine des sciences humaines et sociales, en format numérique et/ou papier, des articles émanant de chercheurs, d'experts, de spécialistes, d'artistes et de personnalités rayonnant dans une sphère nationale et/ou internationale. La revue DCLP publie des numéros thématiques et également des hors-séries, et une rubrique varia. Cela souligne l'engagement résolu de la revue DCLP en faveur du décloisonnement des savoirs et la diffusion des connaissances.



## DEGREES AND LIMITS OF EXPRESSIBILITY IN POPULAR SONG

Adrian Grafe, Université d'Artois

### *The Mask and the Fame*

Out of Hibbing, Minnesota close up to the flame  
Just like a woman or an actor you changed your name  
You wrote a tune for the boxcars, and winds to take flight  
From the coke as it smelts and the fumes in the night

Sleep in the back seat of a broken-down car  
To keep yourself warm you bust and burnt your guitar  
You set out to know what was true and what false  
You sang until dawn then played a last waltz

Lowlife, highlife, to be of neither you claim  
Houselights go up, darkness descends  
On the apron you sing of making amends  
While the canvas of love is waiting in white

You were always a free man out on parole  
You stifle again as the bells take their toll  
The Mesabi Range could not freeze you or frame  
But you're just like us beneath the mask and the fame

You found the ore but you've given us more  
Twisting your fate till you fell to the floor  
Beauty calls out, but the moon is no star  
And it's closing time now in this lousy bar

You're back on the road, so free and so glad  
With all of the friends you never knew you had  
Here's to Virginie, Amber, Sir Christopher, too—  
And the hitcher by the highway-side we never knew was you

### INTRODUCTION: “MAKE PASSIONATE MY SENSE OF HEARING”<sup>1</sup>

Song is a language in its own right, and has the properties, advantages and limits of any language. A song won't extend the limits of expressibility in popular song just because the author or performer wants it to. It will have to correspond to some necessity or call, either within the artist or within the world. To quote Victor Hugo: *La musique exprime ce qui ne peut pas être dit et sur quoi il est impossible de rester silencieux*<sup>2</sup>. Music expresses what cannot be said, and about which it is impossible to stay silent. Hugo presumably means: what cannot be said *in words*. And he says “music”, not “song”. But if it cannot be said in words, that doesn't matter: maybe it can be said in words and music together. What matters is the artist's attempt to

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<sup>1</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I, sc. I, l. I.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Claire-Marie Le Guay, *La vie est plus belle en musique*, Flammarion, 2018, p. 76. All translations from the French in this essay are by the author.

broaden expressibility in relation to what she cannot stay silent about. But is this irresistible urge to expression enough?

More germane to our purposes, then, may be a statement by Edward Bond, the playwright, who says that “our passions and emotions are part of the means of [orientating ourselves], and of obtaining knowledge of the world (especially in the sense of ‘canny’ knowledge or insight) [...]”<sup>3</sup>. It seems possible that orientation and insight are valid claims for art—although it depends which works one means.

Edward Bond describes art as “the rational process of creation”; art has always been rational, creating “meaning and purpose” in an irrational world<sup>4</sup>. If this view is valid, it explains the art of song. The most emotionally driven song, in order to be viable, needs some kind of basis in rationality. For the singer, this means a grasp of vocal technique and performance, and the ability to get inside the song, to own it; for the author or authors it means an ear for metre and verbal rhythm (if the song has words), a sense of what goes into the structure of a song in terms of melody as well as of lines and stanzas and so on. Not for nothing is a song often referred to familiarly as a number. Music, poetry and song are counting and mathematics<sup>5</sup>. So the successful transmission of emotion needs to be grounded in reason, musical and verbal structure.

There probably are limits to expressibility, if verbal language alone is the tool or medium of expression. “[T]he expression of one’s feelings calls for resources which language cannot supply<sup>6</sup>.” Eliot means verbal language here. But if music is added to language, if language is added to music, if song is itself a language, and if the music of language is attended to so that language is perceived as more than verbal, as perhaps supravocal, then one can explode the limits of expressibility, or at the very least extend them.

Conversely, we remember Mahler’s remark: “The essence of music does not lie in its notes<sup>7</sup>.” The essence of a song does not lie in its notes, nor in its lyrics. So where does it lie? One answer might be: in the emotions it makes the listener feel, thanks to its blend of thought and feeling.

## 1 “ALL MY POWERS OF EXPRESSION AND THOUGHTS SO SUBLIME”

Popular song has shown itself, in its lyrics at least, to be aware of its own limits. This acknowledgement is capable in itself of producing great songs. One template for this is Pete Townshend’s “Can’t Explain”, which chimes exactly with Eliot’s point, since it is about the difficulty in expressing one’s feelings:

Got a feeling inside, can’t explain,  
It’s a certain kind, can’t explain,  
I feel hot and cold, can’t explain,  
Yeah, down in my soul, yeah, can’t explain<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Bond, introduction to *The Fool*, in *Plays Three*, Methuen: London, 1994, 77-78 (1987).

<sup>4</sup> Bond, *ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>5</sup> Bob Dylan once said of his music: “it’s mathematical music.” Cf. Jonathan Cott (ed.), *Dylan on Dylan: The Essential Interviews*, “Television Press Conference, KQED (San Francisco), December 3 1965”, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd: London, 2007, pp. 61-80 (p. 63) (2006).

<sup>6</sup> T.S. Eliot, Banquet Speech, Nobel Prize in Literature 1948. This <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1948/eliot/speech/> This important statement of Eliot’s was made known to me by Christopher Ricks in a talk he gave on “Dylan’s Resources” at Université d’Artois, December 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Le Guay, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Pete Townshend, “Can’t Explain”, song performed by The Who, 1965.



George Harrison never was able to say just what that “something” about his lover was that moved him so, and admits ignorance in the song<sup>9</sup>. Mark Knopfler’s Romeo admits to the trouble he has in offering Julie a decent serenade: “I can’t do the talk like they talk on the TV/I can’t do a love song like the way it’s meant to be.../All I do is kiss you, through the bars of a rhyme<sup>10</sup>.” Dylan, too, bewails the inadequacy of his own art when he is in “Mississippi”: “All my powers of expression and thoughts so sublime/Could never do you justice in reason or rhyme<sup>11</sup>”. Dylan puns on the set phrase “neither reason nor rhyme”: his lines are an encomium in music, reason and rhyme, and paradoxically they are, perhaps, an encomium *to* music, reason and rhyme. Here, we get to the heart of what popular song can do. The beauty of the song cannot measure up to the beauty of the beloved.

The paradigm for the song about the impossibility of singing is undoubtedly Biblical: how not to mention the wonderful Psalm 137 known by its first line, “By the rivers of Babylon”? Many times sung and adapted in hymn form, classical music and popular music, the psalm is matchless as the psalmist bewails the Jewish people’s captivity and stresses that the people have no choice but to refuse to sing because the pain of exile is too keen. It is the perfect song about being unable to sing:

<sup>1</sup> By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept  
when we remembered Zion.

<sup>2</sup> There on the poplars  
we hung our harps,

<sup>3</sup> for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;  
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

<sup>4</sup> How can we sing the songs of the LORD  
while in a foreign land?

<sup>5</sup> If I forget you, Jerusalem,  
may my right hand forget its skill.

<sup>6</sup> May my tongue cleave to my palate  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not consider Jerusalem  
my highest joy.

In other words, may I be prevented from all forms of expression if I do not express my love of the Holy City. And here in exile, I can only sing the fact that I cannot sing the praises of Jerusalem, “my highest joy”. The feeling the psalm conveys is at once melancholic, robust and combative.

“Warble, child; make passionate my sense of hearing” says Adriano de Armado to Moth in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. To examine the creative process and the work in and of itself is not enough. The listener’s expectations and response come into play; and we are entitled to ask what the listener’s expectations are, since a song and its emotional quality need to be registered, and accepted or rejected by the audience, and this is related to the performance of the work.

## 2 PERFORMANCE, ALCHEMY AND *DUENDE*

What does one want when one listens to a song? What does one want when one sings a song? Presumably the listener and the singer, if they know what they want, both want the same thing: high-quality music. What makes high-quality music high-quality? What defines quality in a

<sup>9</sup> “Something”, song written by George Harrison, on the Beatles’ *Abbey Road* album, 1969.

<sup>10</sup> “Romeo and Juliet”, by Mark Knopfler, on the Dire Straits album *Making Movies* (1980).

<sup>11</sup> Bob Dylan, “Mississippi”, *The Lyrics 1961-2012*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012, p. 582.

song, in a performance? These things are not the same. A great song is a great song. But if it's not performed with quality then the feeling, the emotion, the aesthetic emotion, will be missing or ruined. Even a virtuoso performer, like a virtuoso athlete or sportsman, will not turn in a virtuoso performance every time he performs. Conversely technical proficiency guarantees nothing. Too much technique, or pure technique, will leave the listener cold. A world-class singer, musician or orchestra, however technically supreme, will, from time to time, turn in a poor performance, be it note-perfect.

The poet Geoffrey Hill gave this advice to young poets: "don't try to be sincere, don't try to express your inmost feelings; do try to be inventive<sup>12</sup>". Emotion especially in song can so easily tip over into kitsch and melodrama. It is inventiveness, then, that can lead to a high degree of expressibility and communication. Dylan would seem to agree with Hill, in some sense, since he considers that the artist's emotion or emotions have nothing to do with the art: "The thing you have to do is make people feel their own emotions. A performer, if he's doing what he's supposed to do, doesn't feel any emotion at all. It's a certain kind of alchemy that a performer has<sup>13</sup>." Alchemy may be a difficult term to apply metaphorically to the arts, but when Dylan uses the word alchemy it is possible to understand what he means.

Lorca's essay "Play and Theory of the Duende" is a model of the very thing it describes. Here, perhaps, one will recognize something of what Dylan was aiming at when he used the word "alchemy". It is perhaps hard to define the *duende*, it is best seen and experienced in action. *Duende* is an aesthetic quality, and a human experience. As said above, the need exists for a solid structural basis on which to build the song and thus enable it to convey emotion. Once, in a tavern in Cadiz, an Andalusian flamenco singer, Pastora Pavon, sang a song. Lorca describes what happened on that occasion as if he had witnessed the event himself:

She sang with her voice of shadows, with her voice of beaten tin, with her moss-covered voice, and with her voice tangled in her long hair. She would soak her voice in *manzanilla* or lose it in dark and distant thickets. Yet she failed completely; it was all to no purpose. The audience remained silent [...]

Only, a little man said sarcastically in a very soft voice, said: 'Viva, Paris!' as if to say: 'Here we do not care for ability, technique, or skill. Here we care for something else.'

At that moment Pastora Pavon got up like a woman possessed, trembling like a medieval mourner, and drank, in one gulp, a huge glass of *cazalla*, a fire-water brandy, and began to sing without voice, breathless, without subtlety, her throat burning, but — with *duende*. She managed to tear down the scaffolding of the song, to make way for a furious and fiery *duende*, that made the listeners tear their clothes [...] She had to tear apart her voice, because she knew experts were listening, who demanded not form but the marrow of form, pure music with a body lean enough to float on air. She had to divest herself of skill and safety: that is to say, banish her Muse, and be helpless, so her *duende* might come, and deign to struggle with her at close quarters. And how she sang<sup>14</sup>!

From the point of view of Anglo-Saxon culture, this might seem a little excessive. Adèle is a supremely stylish and mature singer, with undoubted ability to work the *duende*, but British

<sup>12</sup> <https://bookhaven.stanford.edu/2015/05/geoffrey-hill-bids-farewell-to-oxford-the-craft-of-poetry-is-not-a-spillage-but-an-in-gathering/>

<sup>13</sup> Mikal Gilmore, "Bob Dylan Unleashed", interview with Bob Dylan, Rolling Stone, September 27, 2012 <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/bob-dylan-unleashed-189723/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Spanish/LorcaDuende.php>; cf. Ted Hughes, "Inner Music", in Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose, William Scammell (ed.), London: Faber & Faber, 1994, 246-247. Hughes works from another translation; I have combined the two.

audiences, at least, have not been known to tear their clothes when listening to her. The *duende* is valid both for the composer and the performer. The great thing about the *duende* is its uncontrollability. It is like a cat. It may be summoned and not come. It may not be summoned, yet come anyway. The most technically accomplished orchestra may deliver a mediocre performance —unless, that is, what Lorca calls the *duende* accompanies it and, as it were, fills its sails. Elsewhere, in another reflection on aesthetics, Lorca wrote: “What is admirable in a spirit is to receive an emotion and interpret it in various ways, all of them different and contrary<sup>15</sup>.” A song then changes meanings according to how it is interpreted. Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land” began life as a protest. His America was not Irving Berlin’s in “God Bless America”, which Guthrie felt (rightly or wrongly) was only for the privileged. Guthrie later decided he wanted a more optimistic version of his song, and excised some of the original, radical verses<sup>16</sup>. When Bruce Springsteen came to interpret the song in the mid nineteen-eighties, he darkened its mood by slowing it down to about a third its original rhythm, and adding an E minor chord, if one accepts the familiar idea that the minor chords bring depth or darkness to a melody. With his interpretation, Springsteen managed both to celebrate America, which had become Guthrie’s aim, and to decry economic policies which tended to neglect certain categories of working-class people. It comes as no surprise that it was during this same period that Springsteen wrote and performed “Born in the USA”, which manages to be both a triumphant hymn to the Republic, and the speaker’s cry of shame at having been born in the USA.

### 3 TAKING CARE

*Le dialogue humain ne vit que d'être aussi une réponse aux choses et au monde. Telles sont la lieutenance et la compassion du chant<sup>17</sup>.*

A garden at night, in the London borough of Hampstead. A Cockney Londoner, a young poet who is also, not so coincidentally, a qualified doctor, sits out in that garden. He wrote odes and sonnets, longer songs and little songs.

When Keats eulogized the nightingale, he defined the art of song: he praised his nightingale for singing “in full-throated ease<sup>18</sup>”. The bird’s “throat” is its instrument, its ease is its total, instinctive mastery of its art, reassured and reassuring. Not full-hearted or even whole-hearted, though not excluding such qualities either: rather, full-throatedness. And not mastery, nor proficiency, but ease. Keats, archetypal outlier that he was, had to struggle to make his voice heard, but when it did pour forth, it was redolent with ease.

Keats identified the most popular song of all when he eulogized the nightingale: “The voice I hear this passing night was heard/In ancient days by emperor and clown”. The art of song is a leveler in the best sense of the term, not a dumbing-downer. The nightingale’s voice, the poet’s voice, the singer’s voice, is no respecter of persons, be they emperor or clown, prince or pauper. That is what moves Keats, the ostler’s son who struggled all his short life to remain faithful to his poetic vocation. At the end of *Nightingale* ode, Keats asks: “Was it a vision, or a waking dream?/Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?”

Emotions and passions can be accompanied by illusions. Perhaps song is a form of artistic expression that can help and enable the listener to shed illusion. The greatness of a song like

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.kazu-classicalguitar.co.uk/essays/generation-27/part4/theory-and-play-duende-federico-garcia-lorca>

<sup>16</sup> On the complex genetic history of the song, cf. Lynne Margolis, “Inside Woody Guthrie’s ‘This Land is Your Land’” on the American Songwriter website, <https://americansongwriter.com/behind-the-song-this-land-is-your-land/lynnemargolis/>, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L'inoubliable et l'inespéré*, Desclée de Brouwer, 2000, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey N. Cox (ed.), *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009, p. 457-460.

“Born in the USA” does not lie in its crowd-rousing quality, or not only in that, but in its ambiguity: is it a massive celebration of America, or a lament for America, or both? The same goes for “We take care of our own”, about which critic Ann Powers wrote: “Springsteen brings out big emotions and then requires we drop the delusions that often accompany them<sup>19</sup>.” Springsteen laments a lack of solidarity among people: “I’ve been stumbling on good hearts turned to stone,/The road of good intentions has gone dry as a bone<sup>20</sup>”. But the chorus-line, the title-line, may be more optimistic—unless it is ironic. In his own way, Springsteen espouses an ethics of care.

We may agree that there is no ethical onus on an artist other than to create a good work of art. But there is something art can do and which can engage our emotions. It has no obligation, moral or otherwise, to do it. But it can do it. Because the vulnerable and fragile can and do engage our emotions, the voice of the song, the voice of the singer, the voice and voices of the emotions enter into the realm of the unheard or forgotten voices, the voices of the downtrodden, the ignored, the marginal, the fragile and vulnerable.

Here is a beggar whom you don’t pity, and to whom you don’t give out of pity. You give to her because you respect, and are touched by, the pride she takes in not begging.

### ***Beggarwoman***

The old beggar woman who goes by my side  
She’s five feet tall, and she’s ten feet wide  
She lives in a cave in the mountain so high  
She’s warm as a feather, she’s light as a sigh

She’ll send you to Paris, but you end up in L.A.  
She’ll be outside the palace, but you’re too far away  
She’s the razor that cuts your heartstrings in two  
She’s the memory of silence when she’s born anew

And the old beggar woman who goes by my side  
She never complains, she’s my perfect guide,  
She’ll stand or she’ll fall by the words she proclaims  
To the old beggar man full of struggle and pain

She’s champagne and bubbles , she’ll tickle your nose  
She’s a whole world of troubles, that nobody knows  
Whatever she wants is whatever you give  
The old beggar woman is hungry to live

And the old beggar woman will not be denied  
She refuses to beg, or lay down her pride  
She’ll stand or she’ll fall till she’s not there at all  
Like the young beggar maiden who runs from my side

## **4 “THE SONG DOESN’T MATTER”**

Aretha Franklin, who was not a natural explainer, said of one of her own genres of song: “Soul to me is a feeling, a lot of depth and being able to bring to the surface that which is happening

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2012/01/19/145454546/we-take-care-of-our-own-springsteens-new-wave-of-social-protest>

<sup>20</sup> Bruce Springsteen, “We Take Care of Our Own”, from his *Wrecking Ball* album, Sony, 2012.

inside, to make the picture clear<sup>21</sup>.” Catharsis may not always be what the art of song aims to achieve, although it is what it certainly can achieve: the sense of clarification that Franklin describes. After this, in the same interview, Aretha Franklin goes straight on to say: “The song doesn’t matter... It’s just the emotion, the way it affects other people<sup>22</sup>.” What emotion? Whatever it takes to move the listener, it doesn’t matter what the song is about, or what the emotion in the song is, or how much there is. The paradox is that you need the song in order to move people: but it is the moving that matters, not the song. Again paradoxically, if the song itself does not matter, singing it does.

### CONCLUSION: “SINGING IS BEING”

A music-lover, a song-lover lives with songs, and perhaps with the singers who sing them, and the composers who wrote them. They become part of the life of the listener, since the latter has an emotional commitment to the composers, songs and singers he or she enjoys and admires.

Our emotions and affects are intrinsic to our humanity, to what makes us human. But perhaps there is more to human being than emotion; thus whatever the singer may voice, it can and will at times be more than emotion (or perhaps even less or other than emotion). In the first quatrain of the third of his *Sonnets to Orpheus* (sonnets and therefore songs), Rilke writes: “Singing [...] is not desiring/... Singing is Being<sup>23</sup>.” In response to this, Jean-Louis Chrétien comments: “Le chant est existence, notre existence la plus propre, mais aussi la plus commune, lorsqu’il se souvient de chanter en oubliant celui qui chante, lorsqu’il cesse d’être notre expression<sup>24</sup>”. From this perspective, the art of song is both our own and universal, becoming so when the singer enables the song, enables his own singing, to forget him, so that he becomes pure song, just as Yeats asked: “O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,/How can we tell the dancer from the dance?<sup>25</sup>” We may want to ask: “How can we tell the singer from the song?” Further on in his sonnet to Orpheus, Rilke urges the young lover to “learn to forget his impulsive singing”, since “True singing is a different kind of breath.” The last line of Rilke’s sonnet, the line that follows this one, reads: “A breath about nothing. A breeze in God. A wind.” Rilke says in the poem that the young man’s voice “pries open his mouth”, but dismisses this as impulsive singing, and is clearly trying to get at something else. He seems to be calling for a deeper necessity than impulsiveness; and Jean-Louis Chrétien mentions the ideas of sacrifice and wounding in relation to song: true song must, at some level, take into account both the spiritual dimension and that of suffering and its role in art. “Behind every beautiful thing there’s been some kind of pain<sup>26</sup>.” This is one realm where the limits of expressibility can be extended.

So how to go about singing and telling the passions? By singing and telling *with passion*.

Aside from the expression of the various emotions, perhaps the reason why the singer sings, and what the audience picks up, is that singing makes him feel alive. It makes him feel more

<sup>21</sup> Aretha Franklin, as quoted on the back cover of Gerri Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*, London: Macmillan, 1984.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus*, A. Pouin Jr. (trans.), Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977, First series, Sonnet 3, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L’arche de la parole*, Paris: PUF, 1998, p. 129. “Singing is Being, our most personal existence but also our commonest one, whenever the song remembers to sing forgetting the one who sings, and ceases to be our expression.”

<sup>25</sup> W. B. Yeats, “Among Schoolchildren”, *The Poems*, Daniel Albright (ed.), London: Everyman/J.M. Dent, 2001, p. 263.

<sup>26</sup> Dylan, *op. cit.*, p. 566.

alive. Instead of saying with Descartes, *Je pense donc je suis*, we say with Rilke and Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Je chante donc je suis*. I sing therefore I am.

The question of ethics in art was raised above, and it was argued that the only moral obligation on the singer or songwriter was to produce a good song. Here, one would argue after Jean-Louis Chrétien that singing itself is being. However, singing is not only about being but, in a quite different, less poetic and philosophical register, about well-being. Not only about doing good work, but about feeling good, and this explains why song is a naturally popular art, and a natural one. It is not given to everybody to write poetry or fiction, or sculpt, but everybody or almost everybody can sing. As this quotation from contemporary musician Brian Eno suggests, singing is a cause of human well-being, as he said in his *Singing Manifesto*: “I believe that singing is the key to long life, a good figure, a stable temperament, increased intelligence, new friends, increased self-confidence, heightened sexual attractiveness and a better sense of humour<sup>27</sup>.”

Emotion can be brought within the range and possibilities of the expressible in song. One Romantic view of emotion is that, like the *duende*, it is uncontrollable, and precisely because it is uncontrollable, it commands our attention and, sometimes, our aesthetic admiration. This analogy with nature can only go so far; and it is not the only Romantic view of emotion and art. But perhaps one might consider controlling emotion, adjusting it, making it juster, fairer. *Le mot juste, la note juste, la voix juste*: these things go far beyond questions of pure aesthetics. A ready definition of a just emotion is not available. But the late Australian poet Les Murray may help. Perhaps one emotion which is not as common in song as one might have thought is relief: if anything, rather the opposite is true<sup>28</sup>. About finding his Catholic faith, Murray said in an interview: “No one I knew was much good at forgiving. Suddenly here was a world in which you could forgive, and it looked like a wonderful relief<sup>29</sup>.” In a world in which, on a global scale, human beings are crying out for justice, forgiveness is a necessity. Among rage, passion, love, terror and other emotions, often unchosen and uncontrolled, the *decision* to forgive is one that can trigger a truly fertile abundance of relief for both the forgiver and the forgiven. That relief in this specific context is a deeply sweet feeling.

### ***Forgiving World***

This world is for giving  
Not for judging or being condemned in  
This world is for giving  
Nobody locked out or hemmed in

Strait is the gate of forgiving  
Such a steep learning curve  
Anytime anyone forgives you  
You know it's more than you deserve

Not much good at forgiving  
All the harm that you do to yourself  
Forget the woes into the night you hurled  
Look around for that forgiving world

Not the mighty, wealthy or well-dressed

<sup>27</sup> <http://bigdaddystevieb.blogspot.com/2009/01/brian-enos-singing-manifesto.html>

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bob Dylan, “All along the Watchtower”, from the *John Wesley Harding* album (1967): “There’s too much confusion/I can’t get no relief” or Bruce Springsteen, “Atlantic City”, from the *Nebraska* album (1982): “Now there’s trouble bustin’ in from out of state/And the D.A. can’t get no relief”.

<sup>29</sup> Nicolas Wroe, “A Life in Writing: Les Murray”. *Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/nov/22/les-murray-poet-life-profile>

Man convinces  
It's the poor, the powerless and dispossessed  
Reign as princes

In this forgiving world  
Look around for this forgiving world  
Look inside for that forgiving world

The fighting and fret and the fever  
The warrior ashamed of his fear  
Or the trust of a true believer  
Not a million miles from here

This world is for giving  
However you clasp and you clutch  
This world is for giving  
Can you ever forgive too much

Maybe you're wanted for murder  
Or you've offended your friend or your wife  
When you're weary of pretending, and you're ready for mending  
That burden of guilt that you hide

When you enter that forgiving world  
There is no target to attack  
Once you lay your hand to that plough  
You know there's no looking back

Come in to this forgiving world  
Where you can forget about pains long past  
In this forgiving world  
You can breathe at last<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The songs "The Mask and the Fame", "Beggarwoman" and "Forgiving World" are by the author.

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