

## ***Brother, Sister***

A little while ago, I started listening to the Rolling Stone list of the 500 greatest albums of all time and I started writing a little bit about each album to memorialize it. After a while, I shifted to writing about some of my personal favorite albums. I found that I had a lot to say about this one in particular, probably because it's one of my favorite albums, it's dense with references to poetry and scripture, and I was coping with the band calling it quits in 2022. Regardless, this post has roughly everything I have to say about the album *Brother, Sister* by mewwithoutYou.

The album, whose name is a reference to "The Cantic of the Sun" by St. Francis of Assisi, follows the lead singer, Aaron Weiss, through a spiritual transformation. This is evidenced by the first line of the album, "I do not exist", which is the same as the last line of the album. However, in the beginning it's a statement that is insisted but not true, and at the end is genuine. The album also features a trio of songs about the progression of a spider withering away. The spider is a symbol of the singer's separate self slowly dying as the album goes along.

I also went through each song and wrote about what is going on musically. It's hard to write about music in words and doubly hard to do so without the pretentiousness of a Pitchfork review, but I did my best. Their lyrics always got a lot of attention, and rightfully so, but I thought only talking about the lyrics would be a disservice to the album as a whole.

Here are links to each of the songs on the album:

1. "Messes of Men"
2. "The Dryness and the Rain"
3. "Wolf Am I! (and Shadow)"
4. "Yellow Spider"
5. "A Glass Can Only Spill What It Contains"
6. "Nice and Blue (Pt. Two)"
7. "The Sun and the Moon"
8. "Orange Spider"
9. "C-Minor"
10. "In a Market Dimly Lit"
11. "O, Porcupine"
12. "Brownish Spider"
13. "In a Sweater Poorly Knit"

### **"Messes of Men"**

<https://youtu.be/thVLmffORRU>

Musically, the song starts with rain and a keyboard before the vocals enter with one cymbal. The instrumentation then includes an acoustic guitar in either ear and an electric guitar in either ear. The electric guitars drop out for "to an anchor ever-dropped", but come back in with accordion

and chimes after that glorious drum fill starting at "napping." After the vocals finish, we get a discordant transition into a groove with a great bass line and some EBow action on one of the guitars. Everything drops out one by one until it's just bass and drums, then just drums.

*"I do not exist,"  
We faithfully insist  
Sailing in our separate ships  
And from each tiny caravel-  
Tiring of trying, there's a necessary dying  
Like the horseshoe crab in its proper seasons sheds its shell  
Such distance from our friends  
Like a scratch across a lens  
Made everything look wrong from anywhere we stood  
Our paper blew away before we'd left the bay  
So half-blind we wrote these songs on sheets of salty wood*

He sees him and some of his friends as punching above their weight on the spiritual path. They're claiming transcendent things like "I do not exist", but for the "I" to not exist, you must not actually exist, you must become one with everything else. Meanwhile, they're sailing in their separate ships and they're so disconnected they can't see anything right (like the speck/mote or log/beam in the eye Jesus talked about in Matthew 7:3). Meanwhile, they're writing bad songs on the salty wood of their separate ships.

---

*Caught me making eyes at the other boatmen's wives  
And heard me laughing louder at the jokes told by their daughters  
I'd set my course for land  
But you well understand  
It takes a steady hand to navigate adulterous waters  
The propeller's spinning blades held acquaintance with the waves  
As there's mistakes I've made no rowing could outrun  
The cloth low on the mast like to say I've got no past  
But I'm nonetheless the librarian and secretary's son  
With tarnish on my brass and mildew on my glass  
I'd never want someone so crass as to want someone like me  
But a few leagues off the shore, I bit a flashing lure  
And I assure you, it was not what I expected it to be!  
I still taste its kiss, that dull hook in my lip  
Is a memory as useless as a rod without a reel*

*To an anchor ever-dropped, seasick-yet-still-docked  
Captain spotted napping with his first mate at the wheel*

*Floating forgetfully along, with no need to be strong  
We keep our confessions long and when we pray we keep it short  
I drank a thimbleful of fire and I'm not ever coming back  
Oh, my G-d!*

He's claiming to have attained something spiritually but he's still caught up in the material world. Checking out other peoples' wives and desiring female companionship generally. His boat's propeller has stopped ("held acquaintance with the waves" - Shakespeare, referencing someone who died at sea) and that's bad because he can't outrun his own mistakes without it. He sees himself as bad (tarnished brass, mildewy glass), and though he wants female company, he wouldn't want anyone who could want him. At some point in the past Aaron has stated he used his faith and the band to make out with women ("bit a flashing lure") but is done with it (because it was not what he expected it to be, and is now a useless memory).

So now he's stationary ("Seasick, Yet Still Docked" is a Morrissey song about being far from where you want, helpless to get there, but sick anyway) or just floating along, letting his mind run his life instead of being in charge himself ("captain spotted napping with his first mate at the wheel"). He's not really trying to live right, just going through the motions of what you're supposed to do (keeps his confessions long and his prayers short).

Then he "drank a thimbleful of fire", experienced a tiny bit of the Holy Spirit, and he's forever changed.

---

*"I do not exist," we faithfully insist  
While watching sink the heavy ship of everything we knew  
If ever you come near I'll hold up high a mirror  
Lord, I could never show you anything as beautiful as You*

At the end of the song, we get an idea of what the ships are supposed to symbolize, which is the knowledge of holy things (as opposed to being), such as the remembrance of scriptures. The line states that they are heavy, and they're sinking them and turning toward God. Last lines may be a paraphrase of Rumi:

*"You have no idea how hard I've looked for a gift to bring You. Nothing seemed right. What's the point of bringing gold to the gold mine, or water to the ocean. Everything I came up with was like taking spices to the Orient. It's no good giving my heart and my soul because you already have these. So I've brought you a mirror. Look at yourself and remember me."*

**"The Dryness And The Rain"**

<https://youtu.be/XYacBt2EvkQ>

In this song, we are treated to a microcosm of mewwithoutYou's unique blend of Judaic, Christian, and Islamic imagery. Musically, we have the main driving guitar groove in the verses with a shimmery guitar over the top. We also have massive choruses featuring guest vocals by Jeremy Enigk of Sunny Day Real Estate and the clapping "fish is in the sea is in the fish" bridge.

*First came a strong wind  
Rippin' off rooftops like bottlecaps  
And bending lamp posts down to the ground  
Then came a thunder, shattering my windows  
But you were not that strong wind or that mighty sound  
That left the barn in shambles  
The rabbit hutch in ruins  
The split-rail fence splintered and the curtains torn  
All the cows out from the pastures  
Trampling on the pumpkins  
And the horses from their stables ambling in the corn*

This is a reference to 1 Kings. After experiencing several phenomena (a wind, and then a fire), Elijah finally hears God whispering to him. So something came along and caused a lot of devastation, but God wasn't the strong wind or the loud sound that destroyed everything. Though not mentioned specifically in the lyrics, the ego or the separate self would presumably be the cause of the devastation.

-----  
*Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam  
Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam*

"Jesus the Soul of God, peace and prayers be upon him"

-----  
*I've flown unnoticed just behind you like an insect  
And I watched you like a falcon  
From a distance as you passed  
Then swooped down to be nearer  
To the traces of the footsteps  
To pick the fallen grain  
From the pressed down dirt and crooked grass  
And I'm gonna take that grain  
And I'm gonna crush it all together  
Into the flour of a bread*

*As small and simple and sincere  
As when the dryness and the rain  
Finally drink from one another  
The gentle cup of mutual surrendered tears!  
Come on!*

This verse strikes me as a perspective change from Aaron to God. God follows him and is going to pick up the grain that fell down during the storm, make it into flour, and mix that flour with the bread, bringing together the grain that fell with the storm that caused it to fall in a sort of reconciliation. They would no longer be separate, but they would surrender to each other (drink from one another).

Alternatively: now Aaron is actively pursuing God.

Before looking at the lyrics, I had always taken it as “Finally drink from one another / The gentle cup of mutual surrender. Cheers! / Come on!” I suppose it still works, but it’s nice to know the real words.

---

*A fish swims in the sea  
While the sea is in a certain sense  
Contained within the fish!  
Oh, what am I to think  
What the writing  
Of a thousand lifetimes  
Could not explain  
If all the forest trees were pens  
And all the oceans - ink?*

A metaphysical explanation of how we are all in God, but God is in everyone as well. What could he possibly think about what is impossible to explain? The last bit is a poetic interpretation of verse 31:27 of sūrat luqmān from the Qur'an:

*And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished  
thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed,  
Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.*

---

*Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam  
Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam  
Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam  
Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam  
Salam, salam, salam, salam*

"Jesus the Soul of God, peace and prayers be upon him"

---

*Nastagh-firuka ya Hoka  
Ya Dhal-Jalah wal-Ikram  
Isa ruhu-lah 'alaihis-salat was-salam*

"We ask for your forgiveness, Oh Judge  
Oh Lord of Majesty and Generosity  
Jesus Christ, the spirit of God, peace be unto you"

---

*Ya Halim, ya Qahhar  
Ya Muntaqim, ya Ghaffar!  
La Ilaha ilallahu, Allahu Akbar!*

Al-Halim (the Forbearing), Al-Qahhar (the Subduer), Al-Muntaqim (the Avenger), and Al-Ghaffar (the Forgiving) are a few of the 99 names of Allah used in Islam.

Additionally, the phrase "Allahu Akbar" means "God is greater" or "God is greatest". The lines offer praise to Allah.

**"Wolf Am I (And Shadow)"**

[https://youtu.be/\\_iRm\\_qph1mc](https://youtu.be/_iRm_qph1mc)

[According to Mike Almquist](#) (the band's manager), this is a song Rickie (the drummer) wrote and brought to the band. It is not surprising as this song is a great drum song. That opening drum beat that gets repeated is so great. I love the tom hits at the ends of the first halves of the verses, like on "meet", and the transition to a different beat mid-verse. Speaking of transitions in the middles of sections, the second halves of the choruses are bigger with added backing vocals. The second chorus specifically features either an Ebow or some other ambient guitar effect after the word "denied" that builds up to the second half of the chorus.

---

*It's the smell of hot summertime trash  
It's the city noise of a busy street  
It's a train derailed and a two car head-on freeway crash  
Each time we meet  
"And if it comes as some sort of a surprise", she said*

*"That I seem so composed  
I've kept this moment closer to my eyes", she said  
"Than the glasses resting on the edge of my nose"*

Two people are coming together and their meeting is not only unpleasant but calamitous. This album contains several images of two things coming together, like the dryness and the rain in the previous track, the wind chime analogy in "In A Market Dimly Lit", and the notes/harmony bit in "O, Porcupine".

This fated meeting is with a woman who has been expecting him and seems to have the upper hand.

---

*Shadow am I!  
Shadow am I!  
A question of a person, no said reply  
Wolf am I!  
Wolf and Shadow cast on the sheep as I pass by  
Shadow am I!  
Shadow am I!  
Or like a  
Wearing-black-socks-and-white-woolen-locks  
Wolf am I, and shadow*

When he goes to meet her, he sees himself as a wolf and a shadow. Being a wolf would mean he's out to prey on the other sheep. He's also a shadow. In psychoanalysis, the shadow personality is the opposite of the persona, the public-facing personality. The shadow is home to all of the repressed parts of a personality someone doesn't want to see about themselves. So he has bad intentions both inside and out.

He's also wearing black socks and white woolen locks, so he's a wolf in sheep's clothing. This is a reference to Matthew 7:15: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." (This verse is immediately followed by "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?", which we will return to in "O, Porcupine".)

---

*She was graceful and green as a stem  
But I walk heavy on delicate ground  
Oh there, I go showing off again  
Self-impressed by how well I can put myself down!  
And there I go again, to the next further removed level*

*Of that same exact feigned humility!  
This for me goes on and on to the point of nausea*

“Graceful and green as a stem” is a reference to “Sisters of Mercy” by Leonard Cohen:

*“If your life is a leaf that the seasons tear off and condemn  
They will bind you with love that is graceful and green as a stem”*

He’s coming into contact with this woman. He must go over delicate ground to be near her, but he walks heavily. Who is this woman he’s meeting? My guess is that the meeting is with God.

My justification is as follows:

- He’s among sheep, or followers of Christ.
- The woman he’s meeting in the first verse is waiting for him.
- Not all encounters with the divine end well, especially if you’re not ready or worthy (like a wolf in sheep’s clothing). Though not directly referenced in the song, this interpretation brings to mind the parable of the wedding feast: a man comes to the wedding feast a king is throwing for his son, but is bound hand and foot and thrown into outer darkness for not wearing the correct wedding attire.

Then he gets caught in his mind by self-judgment (superego behavior in psychological terms), which the mind can keep repeating forever from continually higher points of judgment if left unchecked.

---

*Shadow am I!  
Like a suspicion that's never confirmed  
But it's never denied  
Wolf am I  
No, "shadow", I think is better  
As I'm not so much something  
More like the absence of something  
So shadow am I!  
The whole material world seems to me  
Like a newspaper headline-  
It explicitly demands your attention  
And it may even contain some truth  
Of what's really going on here*

In the first chorus, he’s both a wolf and a shadow. In this chorus, he’s battling between identifying as the shadow or the wolf. People often keep themselves blissfully unaware of their shadow personality (a suspicion neither confirmed nor denied). He settles on being the shadow “as I’m not so much something / more like the absence of something” (which brings to mind “I do not exist” from “Messses of Men”, but in an egotistical and not transcendental sense).



Across most spiritual traditions, followers are not supposed to get caught up in the material world. However, he keeps getting caught up in it because everything he sees is catchy like a newspaper headline meant to draw his attention. And though he's not supposed to get caught up in it, it might actually contain some truth.

-----

*One day the water's gonna wash it away  
One day the water's gonna wash it away  
One day the water's gonna wash it away  
And on that day  
One day the water's gonna wash it away  
One day the water's gonna wash it away  
Nothin' clever to say  
One day, nothin' else to say*

This song has been about frustration with his current state (wolf/shadow). However, he believes that God will relieve him of the sinful aspects of his personality in the future (one day the water's gonna wash it away).

### **"Yellow Spider"**

[https://youtu.be/BE\\_SAvI7TCU](https://youtu.be/BE_SAvI7TCU)

Musically, the track starts with the guitar ringing out, transitioning from "Wolf Am I (And Shadow)". This is the first of the spider trilogy. In an [interview with Lambgoat](#), Aaron states that the spider trilogy was originally one song but Mike Almquist suggested they split into three songs. This allowed them to switch up the instrumentation on each. This one features an accordion and an acoustic guitar.

*We took the twine we used to use  
To tie up tight our tattered shoes  
Twisted twigs and crooked cross  
A necklace for the deeply lost*

This song comes in the wake of the destruction of the last two songs. Amongst the wreckage, he finds some twine and twigs that he fashions into a cross necklace "for the deeply lost." He knows he's lost and he's turning toward God.

There's an interesting use of "we" here, which I take to be the multiple aspects of the inner personality conflict he was going through in "Wolf Am I (And Shadow)" but it could be something else.

-----

*Builder with the broken bricks  
Mother to the baby chicks  
You made this world to look so nice  
I wonder what the next one's like?*

God is the “builder with the broken bricks” and “mother to the baby chicks” (a metaphor that continues in “O, Porcupine”: “While waiting for the mother hen to gather me / Who regretfully wrote “you have a decent ear for notes / But you can’t yet appreciate harmony”).

-----

*Yellow spider, yellow leaf  
Yellow spider, yellow leaf  
Yellow spider, yellow leaf  
Confirms my deepest held belief...*

The spider and the leaf are symbolic of the death of Aaron’s “self”, which starts as yellow and transitions to orange and brown as the album goes on.

In the interview with Lambgoat, Aaron stated:

*It was written as one song based on seeing a brown spider and it was on a brown leaf. I just thought of the way that animals get by and the food is provided for them. Then the leaves fall off of the trees and then they come back the next year, and how everything works real well. So I write all the lyrics keeping that in mind...*

### **“A Glass Can Only Spill What It Contains”**

<https://youtu.be/sozxqP-JAV4>

This song starts with the left guitar alternating between two notes. A second guitar (right ear) comes in playing a chord in individual ringing notes. Drums and bass come in with a two note pickup into the verse. There are a lot of little things to pay attention to in the verses. After “warm milk from my bowl”, the bass and right guitar duck out. They’re added back in after 2 and 4 lines respectively. The second verse features rim clicks on the words “clips” and “claws”. The last verse features changes in the drums and left guitar during “nobody knows me”. The transition into the first chorus is another great moment with the snare on “side” and “walls” coming on beat one of the chorus. The song ends with a guitar solo over the chorus.

-----

*A cat came drifting onto  
My porch from the outside cold  
And with eyes closed, drinking*

*Warm milk from my bowl  
Thought: "Nobody hears me, nobody hears me  
'Cause I crept in so soft!  
And nobody sees me, nobody sees me"  
As I watched six steps off*

This verse starts a recurring theme of the song, which is naiveté. In this verse, a cat drinks warm milk with eyes closed and without a worry in the world, unaware the narrator is watching it in close proximity. It seems like there's an unwholesome connotation here, like he lured the cat there for some purpose.

-----

*Like the peacocks wandering  
The walkways of the zoo  
Who have twice the autonomy  
The giraffes and tigers do  
Saying:  
"No one can stop me, no one can stop me!  
No one clips my claws!  
Now everyone watch me, everyone watch me  
Scale these outside walls!"*

The peacock is also deluded in this verse, but in a different way. The cat thought it was alone when it wasn't. The peacock thinks it's free when it's not. True, it can walk around the zoo, which is better than the other animals the peacock can compare itself to. However, if you have "twice the autonomy" of a caged animal, you just have a bigger cage.

-----

*Oh, you pious and profane  
Put away your praise and blame  
"A glass can only spill what it contains!"  
To the perpetually plain  
And the incurably inane  
"A glass can only spill what it contains!"*

A glass can only spill what it contains is a paraphrase of an Arabic proverb, which basically means we only say things based on who we think we are, or what we've filled our glasses with.

Aaron calls out the overtly religious and the irreverent at the same time, telling them to put away their praise and blame, or stop judging everything based on their perceived identities. From a certain perspective, these seeming opposites err in the same way.

He also calls out the plain and silly, because while they might not be judging, they are still filling themselves with worthless nonsense.

Outside of the Arabic proverb, this chorus reminds me of a Bruce Lee quote: "Empty your cup so that it may be filled; become devoid to gain totality."

It also reminds me of the following Zen story: Scholar Tokusan--who was full of knowledge and opinions about the dharma--came to Ryutan and asked about Zen. At one point Ryutan re-filled his guest's teacup but did not stop pouring when the cup was full. Tea spilled out and ran over the table. "Stop! The cup is full!" said Tokusan.

"Exactly," said Master Ryutan. "You are like this cup; you are full of ideas. You come and ask for teaching, but your cup is full; I can't put anything in. Before I can teach you, you'll have to empty your cup."

-----

*What new mystery is this?*

*What blessed backwardness?*

*The Immeasurable one is held and does not resist!*

*Struck by wicked words and foolish fists of senseless men*

*The Almighty One does not defend!*

This post-chorus part continues the idea of the chorus. It shows that perhaps acting contrary to who they are would be a novel idea for someone who claims to be pious, profane, etc.

It starts with a direct quote from an ancient Church Father named Melito of Sardis, and is specifically referencing the Passion of Christ and how Jesus did not resist it. From the eyes of Jesus' persecutors, that he did not get God to intercede for him proved that he wasn't the Messiah. Paradoxically, fulfilling his role to the utmost without defending himself was *\*exactly\** what proved he was who he said he was.

Another relevant Bruce Lee quote, regarding being held and not resisting: "Be formless, shapeless, like water. You put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it into a teapot, it becomes the teapot."

-----

*I'm halfway listening to what she thinks she knows*

*We're like children dressing in our parents clothes saying:*

*"Nobody knows me, nobody knows me*

*No one knows my name!*

*No, Nobody knows me, nobody knows me*

*Nobody knows me... "*

This whole section reeks of a bad date between two people who basically act like their parents. Most human conditioning comes from our parents. So the two here are being superficial, imitating their parents, holding their real selves back so nobody knows them.

-----

*I half-heartedly explained  
But gave up peacefully ashamed  
"A glass can only spill what it contains!"  
We went from Portugal and Spain  
And in her mind the entire time it rained!  
"A glass can only spill what it contains!"*

I think he's trying to explain his thoughts from the previous verse, but she obviously doesn't agree because he gives up "peacefully ashamed". He concludes that she is a downer, because she seems to see the negative aspects of everything. Another way to think about "a glass can only spill what it contains" is that perception determines reality. If her glass is filled with negativity, that's all she can see.

I don't know what to make of "we went *\*from\** Portugal and Spain." Also, Spain and Portugal are referenced in "Flee, Thou Matadors", but there doesn't appear to be a connection between the songs.

-----

*What new mystery is this?  
In overflowing emptiness!  
The invisible is seen among the shadows and the mist  
Before my doubting eyes  
The infinite appears this time  
The unquestionable is questioned  
But makes no reply!*

Once again, perception determines reality. The invisible is seen, but it's before his doubting eyes.

-----

*What new mystery is this?  
What new mystery is this?  
What new mystery is this?  
What new mystery is this?  
What new mystery is this?*

*"My rabbi"  
My lips betray with a kiss  
What new mystery is this?*

Aaron likens himself to Judas Iscariot (which happens again in "O, Porcupine").

### **"Nice and Blue (Pt.2)"**

<https://youtu.be/bIXhSF72nxs>

This song is a follow-up to "Nice and Blue" from *A To B Life*. There are several direct references that song in the lyrics, which was about Amanda, a former love interest. Musically, the song starts with guitars and drums. Bass comes in with the vocals in the verse, which also features ethereal background "ahhhh" vocals. There is a prechorus before the first chorus that is played again directly after the chorus instead of in the lead up to the second chorus. There's also a glorious lead guitar transition into each chorus. The second chorus is followed by a disjointed bridge and a softer chorus to end the song.

*You were a song I couldn't sing  
Caught like a bear by the bees  
With its hand in a hive  
Who complains of the sting  
When I'm lucky I got out alive!*

*A life at best left half-behind  
The taste of the honey  
Still sweet on my tongue  
And I'd run (Lord knows I've tried)  
But there's no place on Earth  
I can hide from the wrong I've done*

"You were a song I couldn't sing" is a direct reference to "Nice and Blue". The line refers to his relationship with a former love interest, which he now sees as an unattainable goal. By the lyrics, it sounds like he views their relationship as having been based on desire, which he views as bad. He's complaining about whatever painful consequences have resulted from the relationship, though they could have been much worse. He's having trouble moving on ("A life at best left half-behind" is a reference to "A life left half behind" from "Nice and Blue") from his actions, has tried to run from them to no avail.

-----  
*Then I saw a mountain and I saw a city  
(I was once the wine)  
Steadily sinking but suspiciously calm*

*(I was once the wine)*  
*It wasn't an end, it wasn't a beginning*  
*(I was once the wine)*  
*But a ceaseless stumbling on*  
*(And you were the wine glass)*

*There, strapped like a watch on my wrist*  
*(I was once alive)*  
*That's finished with gold but can't tell time*  
*(I was once alive)*  
*Was all or what little pleasure exists*  
*(I was once alive)*  
*Seductively sold and uselessly mine*  
*(When you held me)*

The chorus is all about perspective. He has a negative view and sees only fleeting and cheap worldly pleasures. He looks out at the world, sees a mountain and a city sinking though nobody else seems to notice or care. He remarks on the hollow satisfaction in having a gold watch, but at the end of the day it's useless because it can't tell time.

-----

*Our horse was fast and first from the gate*  
*With the lead of a length at the sound of the gun*  
*And the last of our cash laid down to fate (at 17 to 1)*  
*But by the final stretch in the rear of the pack*  
*That nag limping bad in the back*  
*We reluctantly gave all the money we'd saved*  
*A fifth to the commonwealth and the rest to the track!*

Based on the rest of the song, I assume this verse is back to describing the relationship, which they bet everything they had on despite low odds of winning. They got along amazingly at first but toward the end it was clear they weren't going to make it so they cut their losses, giving up one-fifth in taxes (to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) and the rest to the track.

-----

*Then I saw a forest grow in the city*  
*(I was once the wine)*  
*And a driftwood wall of birdhouse gourds*  
*(I was once the wine)*  
*And I'm still waiting to meet a girl like my mom*  
*(I was once the wine)*  
*(who's closer to my age)*

*(I was once the wine)*

*The true light of my eyes is a Pearl  
(I was once alive)  
Equally emptied to equally shine  
(I was once alive)  
And all or what little joy in the world  
(I was once alive)  
Seemed suddenly simple and endlessly mine  
(When you held me)*

In contrast to the first chorus, he has fully given up the relationship. The city that had been steadily sinking grows a forest and a driftwood wall of birdhouse gourds. New possibilities out of nowhere.

Whereas the worldly pleasures of the first chorus were empty, now he's talking about joy that is simple and endless, which brings to mind the "peace that passeth all understanding" St. Paul talks about in Philippians 4:7.

-----

*I was once the wine  
I was once the wine  
I was once the wine  
And you were the wineglass*

*I was once alive  
I was once alive  
I was once alive  
When you held me*

*But God became the glass  
All things left are emptiness  
Oh, little girl...  
You're just a little girl  
If you look out and see a trace  
Of a dark bed was once my face  
In the clarity of such grace  
Forget all about me*

The ending is similar to "Nice and Blue" except he doesn't call her "my" little girl, and at the end he says "forget all about me" instead of "remember me". He used to live his life for her, there was a time where he felt alive when she held him, but now he has turned to God instead.



## **"The Sun and The Moon"**

<https://youtu.be/rOgTvipsCaM>

This song starts with both guitars in a way that, for a while, made it difficult to get my bearings. The left guitar comes in first with a pickup on the "and" of beat three, but since it's the first sound in the song I always want to think of it as a downbeat. Then the second guitar (right ear) comes in and I want to think it's playing upstrokes but it's actually on the downbeat. The beats are definitively cleared up when the drums come in in full, but the beat is still odd as it emphasizes beats 2 and 4 instead of 1 and 3 as is more common in western music. The chorus switches to emphasize the first beat and includes claps at the ends of phrases. After the last chorus, we have a transition with an atmospheric guitar bit that I'm having trouble finding a word to describe. It ends with a dive into the soft jam at the end of the song, which is constantly changing in little ways. I love the echo on the snare and the drumming in general in this last section.

*Daniel broke the king's decree  
Peter stepped from the ship to the sea  
There was hope for Job like a cut down tree  
I hope that there's such hope for me  
Dust be on my mind's conceptions  
And anything I thought I knew  
Each word of my lips' description  
And on all that I compare to You*

The beginning lines reference 3 people from the Bible who experienced tests of their faith. He hopes there's hope for him in the same way as those three, that he will be able to keep his faith in the same way..

Daniel, from the Book of Daniel, broke the decree of King Darius declaring no one but the king could pray for 30 days. Daniel kept praying and was thrown into the lion's den for a punishment. God shut the mouths of the lions so Daniel was not eaten.

In Matthew 14:25-33, Peter famously steps out from a boat onto water, though starts sinking when the wind picks up.

Job keeps his faith despite having his wealth, children, and health taken away from him. Though he doesn't lose his faith in God, he does go on a large rant about the human condition, during which he says (Job 14:7-10):

*At least there is hope for a tree:  
If it is cut down, it will sprout again,  
and its new shoots will not fail.*

*Its roots may grow old in the ground  
and its stump die in the soil,  
yet at the scent of water it will bud  
and put forth shoots like a plant.  
But a man dies and is laid low;  
he breathes his last and is no more.*

The last four lines state that dust is on his mind's conceptions and words about God. Being one with God has been described as being one with what is in this moment, always new and changing, before thoughts and before words. In this way, all thoughts and words are old. For example, if you step into the cold, you might think "I'm cold", but you felt the cold before the thought and didn't need the thought to tell you that at all.

-----

*The preference of the sun was  
To the south side of the farm  
I planted to the north in a terra-cotta pot  
Blind as I'd become, I used to wonder where you are-  
These days I can't find where you're not!*

He previously did not put forth an honest effort regarding his spiritual growth. Blind, he couldn't find God. Now awake, he sees God in everything..

-----

*Mine's been a yard carefully surface level tended  
Foxes burrowed underground  
My gardening so well self-recommended  
What could I have done but let you down?*

He used to keep up the appearance of doing spiritual work, and would even brag about how good he was at it while there was always trouble underneath.

The foxes referenced are from Song of Solomon, a reference obviously used in the song "The Soviet" and the album title *Catch For Us The Foxes*. They represent personal faults that get in the way of someone's relationship with God. "Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes / that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom."

-----

*The Sun and the Moon  
I wanna see both worlds as One!  
The Sun and the Moon*

*I wanna see both worlds as One!  
The Sun and the Moon  
I wanna see both worlds as One!*

There are few relevant references here. Aaron stated in an interview that “The Sun and the Moon” is a reference to Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gita, during which Krishna confers divine sight on Arjuna so Arjuna can see Krishna’s full divinity:

"You are without beginning, middle, or end; You touch everything with Your indefinite power. The sun and the moon are Your eyes, and Your mouth is fire; Your radiance warms the cosmos."

Second is St. Francis of Assisi’s “Canticle of the Sun,” in which Francis refers to the sun and moon, respectively, as “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon”, which ties into the album title.

Third is “Only Breath” by Rumi, which includes, “I belong to the beloved, have seen the two worlds as one and that one call to and know, first, last, outer, inner, only that breath breathing human being.”

My interpretation of this chorus is that Aaron is seeking a nondual state, or a state in which he will see everything in the universe as inseparable parts of one whole. People in nondual states claim to be able to see apparent opposites, such as night/day, rich/poor, or right/wrong, as inextricably linked instead the “normal” way of seeing everything as separate. Because someone being rich implies someone poor, for example, they are mutually dependent on one another.

Nonduality is also what Thrice is talking about in “Beyond the Pines”, what mewithoutYou is talking about in the first verse of “Julia”, and what Rumi is talking about in this poem they were both drawing from, that there is a place beyond ideas of right and wrong:

*“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,  
there is a field. I’ll meet you there.  
When the soul lies down in that grass,  
the world is too full to talk about.  
Ideas, language, even the phrase ‘each other’  
doesn’t make any sense.”*

-----

*Mine’s been a story, dimly remembered  
And by the time it’s told, halfway true  
Of bad behavior well engendered  
What good is each good thing we think we do?  
Daniel broke the king’s decree*

*Peter stepped from the ship to the sea  
There was hope for Job like a cut down tree  
I only hope that there's such hope for me*

Once again, he's putting his past down and hoping that there's hope for him.

The line "what good is each good thing we think we do?" puts me in mind Matthew 6:3: "But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." The idea here is that intentions matter. If you're doing a "good" thing, you're doing the action for your idea of good. In other words, even "good" things can be self-serving.

*Find a friend and stay close and with a melting heart  
Tell them whatever you're most ashamed of-  
Our parents have made so many mistakes  
But may we forgive them and forgive ourselves*

A call to be open about our faults, forgiving ourselves and others. It's an interesting inclusion in this album that rarely "breaks the fourth wall" (so to speak). This section and the "A Glass Can Only Spill What It Contains" chorus are the only instances I can think of.

-----

*The Sun and the Moon  
I wanna see both worlds as One!  
The Sun and the Moon  
I wanna see both worlds as One!  
The Sun and the Moon  
I wanna see both worlds as One!*

*\*The Sun and the Moon are my Father's eyes\* (repeated)*

**"Orange Spider"**

<https://youtu.be/Y7Q7G7QfC6k>

"Orange Spider" is a continuation of the spider trilogy of songs. Whereas "Yellow Spider" had an accordion with the acoustic guitar, "Orange" has background vocals during the singing portion and two brass instruments at the end (flugelhorn and trombone). The background vocal begins very faintly in the background on the second phrase ("crumbed and sugared...') and gets louder through the phrase. Regarding the vocal track: [according to Mike Almquist](#), Brad Wood (the producer on the album) was playing back a recording of "ridiculously inappropriate" alternate lyrics when Aaron was tracking the song for the first time, and they decided to keep it in.

*A note we wrote the other day  
To any mice who pass this way  
On crumbed and sugared countertops:  
"we must insist  
Your traffic STOP."\*  
In their defense, they don't refuse  
But nonetheless we've come to use  
Snapping traps and poison beans  
(far less diplomatic means)  
Orange spider, orange leaf  
Orange spider, orange leaf  
Orange spider, orange leaf  
Confirms my deepest held belief*

The narrator (a part of an unexplained "we" like in "Yellow Spider") has a mouse problem, probably due to countertops that are in a condition to attract mice (crumbed and sugared). First, they write a note to the mice trying to resolve it peacefully though it had no chance of working. The mice did not stop, so the narrator has resorted to lethal methods.

We find out in "C-Minor" what the mice are in reference to.

### **"C-Minor"**

<https://youtu.be/ib0RoXu9e6g>

This song starts with shakers and bells before one guitar enters. Everyone else comes in in the verse, including a horn playing along with the lead guitar. The first phrase of the chorus is soft before everyone including the background vocals join in. A second horn is added after the first chorus, adding harmony to the line played in the first verse. After the second chorus, they return to the intro before the "it never ends" part. The song ends on the guitars playing their verses with a little ritard at the end of the phrase.

*Our house wrapped in disrepair  
A small mouse peeked out from a hole beneath the stairs  
Nearby to where my dad sat in his favorite chair  
Thinking about the government and muttering a prayer  
So I scattered some oats in hopes she'd stay  
And sat still to stop from scaring her away-  
But she hurried on her little way  
And scurried 'round my mind  
Ever since  
Every day*

Aaron met this “mouse” while he was still living in his parents’ somewhat shabby home. He tried to get her to stay by scattering “oats” and being perhaps overly cautious in sitting still. She left physically but she’s still on his mind constantly. It’s clear from the rest of the song that the “mouse” is a metaphor for someone he was interested in romantically. The oats represent what he was offering in the relationship, which, given the lyrics on the rest of the album and previous albums, may have had a lot to do with his faith.

“Thinking about the government” is a direct reference to Bob Dylan’s song “Subterranean Homesick Blues”.

-----

*Open wide my door, my door, my Lord  
(Open wide my door)  
To whatever makes me love You more  
(Open wide my door)  
While there's still light to run towards  
(Open wide my door)*

This one is pretty self-explanatory: Aaron is asking God to open the door to his heart wide.

-----

*Like water on the dry wood  
Equal parts misguided and misunderstood  
But all the neighborhood  
Watched a fire burn from where they stood  
As the smoke said  
"we're not half as bad as G-d is good"  
Still there's a whisper in my ear  
The voice of loneliness and fear, and I say:  
"Devil, disappear!  
I'm still (ehh... technically...) a virgin  
After 27 years -  
Which never bothered me before  
What's maybe 50 more?*

Water on dry wood is a reference to 1 Kings 18, where God performs a miracle for Elijah by burning up wood in a trench that had pots of water poured on it. The wood burning proved to the people of Israel that the Baal cult was a fraud.

Despite the water on the dry wood, he has witnessed enough to believe in God. However, he still has doubts about the celibate path he’s on.

The “technically” qualification on the virgin bit may be inspired by Matthew 5:28, The Sermon on the Mount: “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

-----

*Open wide my door, my door, my Lord*  
*(Open wide my door)*  
*To whatever makes me love You more*  
*(Open wide my door)*  
*While there's still light to run towards*  
*(Open wide my door)*

-----

*She came back for the oats*  
*But she brought along a "friend"*  
*(It never ends)*  
*The harder the rain*  
*The lower the flowers in the garden bend*  
*(It never ends)*  
*I'd rather never talk again*  
*Than to continue to pretend*  
*That this never ends*  
*(It never ends)*  
*(It never ends)*  
*(It never ends)*  
*(It never ends)*

The mouse returns for the “oats” he had to offer, but this time she has a boyfriend. It is clear that the oats were only offered in a romantic way, and it’s causing him distress.

He is enduring a “hard rain” and he doesn’t foresee it stopping. “The harder the rain / The lower the flowers in the garden bend” suggests that what he’s going through is testing his faith. The story picks up in “In A Market Dimly Lit” with references to the end of Noah’s flood.

### **“In A Market Dimly Lit”**

<https://youtu.be/3N8UTx2LI4>

In this song, we start with a pensive guitar and bass bit, then the accordion comes in. Halfway through the first verse we get distorted right guitar entering with snare clicks. There’s a strong guitar transition into the chorus, which is a great heavy part featuring a lovely recurring bass dive. The intro repeats and goes into the second verse with the full band this time. There’s a

nice little syncopated drum fill at “syncopation”. After the second chorus, there’s an instrumental bridge leading into the last vocal section, which is similar to what I’ve been calling the choruses, except with starts and stops accented with a bunch of flourishes, noises, feedback, and stuff. There’s a drum fill marking the transition to the outro that pauses for the right guitar in a really cool way. The track ends on a dissonant, screechy groove with a cello or something, and did I hear a sheep bleating somewhere in there?

*The bird that plucked the olive leaf  
Has been circling like a record 'round the spindle of my mind  
Where the needle's worn the grooves too deep  
And scratched the wax that's blistered from the heat besides  
From any movement in the room-  
If my cat walked by the arm skipped!  
But to my surprise, my interrupting cat improved  
A sound already so severely compromised*

*The needle's worn the grooves too deep  
The needle's worn the grooves too deep  
The needle's worn the grooves too deep  
The needle's worn the grooves too deep*

He’s endlessly ruminating on the dove Noah sent in Genesis after the flood that returned with the olive leaf, which signified that it had found land. This suggests that he hopes there will soon be peace after a hardship. His cat interrupted his train of thought but it took his train of thought to a new and better place.

I’m not sure it’s worth reading too much into, but his love interest has metaphorically been a mouse in the last two songs and cats kill mice.

-----

*I'm a donkey's jaw on a desert dune  
Beside the bush that Moses saw  
That burned and yet was not consumed  
She's the silver coin I lost  
I'm the sheep who slipped away  
We pray with fingers crossed  
But you listen patiently anyway*

He sees himself as an implement that could be used for God’s will (“donkey’s jaw on a desert dune” - Samson used a jawbone of a donkey to kill his enemies, “beside the [burning] bush” - God).



"I'm the sheep who slipped away" refers to the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), which is immediately followed by the lost coin parable (Luke 15:8-10). Both of these parables are about losing faith and repenting. So he sees himself as one who needs to repent. He also lost contact with either a woman or the divine feminine depending on how you interpret it ("She's the silver coin I lost").

He recognizes his efforts to pray are not honest but God listens patiently anyway.

-----

*I wrote a little song for you  
With a melody I'd borrowed put to words that didn't rhyme  
To repeat what you already knew  
As the stones thrown at your window tapped in syncopation  
You kept a distance out of fear you'd break  
But what good's a single windchime, hanging quiet all alone?  
The music our collisions would make  
Is a sound that turns the road-that-leads-us-back-home  
Into Home*

*The music our collisions make!  
The music our collisions make!  
The music our collisions make!  
The music our collisions make!*

This verse is directed toward the divine feminine. He tries to get her attention with efforts he realizes are not all that impressive. He wants her to join him, saying we're wind chimes, we're no good alone. Come with me, we'll make beautiful music when we collide. But she is afraid and stays away.

Also, there's a Rumi reference in there of "turns the road that leads us back home, into home." I've also seen the idea that the path is synonymous with attainment (enlightenment/salvation) expressed in Eastern traditions.

-----

*I had a rusty spade but I'm not the fightin' sort  
If I was Samson I'd have found that harlot's blade  
And cut my own hair short!  
Then in a market dimly lit I come casually to pay  
You see my coins are counterfeit  
But you accept them anyway*

His efforts failed but he didn't put up much of a fight (had a rusty spade but "not the fighting sort"; as Samson, took his own strength instead of having it taken from him).

He goes to pay back the silver coin he lost. He doesn't have it, so he presents a counterfeit. God sees this and accepts it anyway.

-----

*\*So spare me your goodbyes  
Your waving-handkerchief-good-byes  
Given my tendency to err so on the sentimental side  
I'll spare you my goodbyes  
The truth belongs to G-d  
The mistakes were mine\**

A less than joyful goodbye, but left with the lovely line "the truth belongs to G-d, the mistakes were mine." If I steered you wrong at any point, blame me, don't blame God. This is a line paraphrasing Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, a Sufi mystic. Bawa founded the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in Philadelphia. Aaron has stated that he was introduced to Bawa's teachings by his parents. Bawa's teachings inspired the title and a lot of the content of *It's All Crazy! It's All False! It's All a Dream! It's Alright*.

**"O, Porcupine"**

<https://youtu.be/mZ-kntw8Lio>

Drums begin the song, the guitars enter with the separate parts they play during the verse. The bass entrance marks the transition into the first verse, during which it plays a little groove with starts and stops. After the verse, we get a transition of three slammed notes three times followed by a drum break with vocals previewing the full "in my little world" section later on in the song. This transition leads to what I'll lightly refer to as the chorus, which adds in the guitar in the right ear over the drums. At the end of the chorus, we get the unforgettable "SHHHH!!!", some unplugging sounds, followed by a quiet "listen to it!", straight into the next verse. At "you can't yet appreciate harmony", replacing the "in my little world" slammed section from the first time around, we get a vocalless dissonant buildup with high hat and one snare before the next chorus.

In that next chorus, the right guitar is playing the same dissonant part it was playing in the first chorus, only louder this time. Everything else seems louder too and there is something extra going on with the left guitar between the three note slams but I can't figure out what it is. There's definitely extra noise coming from that side. After the chorus, there is what I'll call a bridge section, which picks up the "in my little world" bit from earlier. After that we get a section featuring drums and percussion with some guitar overhang from the last section and ambient feedback noises. The percussion ends but the drumset keeps going as the background vocals

come back in chanting. Jeremy Enigk from Sunny Day Real Estate returns for the “In darkness a light shines...” part. Guitar feedback leads the transition into the new big closing section with Jeremy Enigk continuing but with background vocals. A short instrumental section rolls right into “Brownish Spider”.

*Without a queen the locust swarm  
Turned the ground to black  
Descending like a shadowy tower on a fish's back  
And scattered the sticks who crawled  
Like snakes in the sand  
As the red clay took the form of a lizard  
Who rushed like a moth to the flame of my open hand*

*(while, in my little world  
My sad, little world...)*

There is a lot going on here. I take it to mean that Aaron is witnessing some momentous things but at the same time, part of him is still stuck in his sad little world. As the song goes on, the imagery continues with other major events in the Bible (the exile of the Israelites to Babylon and the Agony in the Garden).

The locust and lizard references are from Proverbs Chapter 30, which is full of sayings from Agur, son of Jehah. Not much is known about Agur. The lizard and locust are in Agur’s list of creatures that are small but wise.

“The locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks.” Though there is no king to direct the locust, they all work together as one.

“The lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings’ palaces.’ Though the lizard is small enough to grasp in the hand, its small size can provide tremendous opportunity.

Regarding “red clay”, from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam): “Adam literally means ‘red’, and there is an etymological connection between adam and \**adamah*\*, \**adamah*\* designating ‘red clay’ or ‘red ground’ in a non-theological context.”

-----

*A speckled bird humbly inspired  
Ran across the road when it could have flown  
And it made me smile  
And at the water's edge, Babylon  
As we laid and slept, the river wept  
For you, O'Zion!  
The stones cry out*

*Bells shake the sky  
All creation groans...*

*SHHHH!!!*

*Listen to it!*

Here we get references to another critical occasion, when the Israelites were exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. I think this section is about not being in union with God, which causes all of reality to shake and beckon you towards union with God.

“Speckled bird”: This is from Jeremiah before the Babylonians took Jerusalem. The “speckled bird” was in reference to the Jews. There are conflicting interpretations of what this means. The bird is considered to be a vulture, but the “speckled” bit could mean any of the following: the Jews were mixing together different religious practices, the Jews stood out as being special but hated by other nations for it, that the speckles came from blood due to past cruelty. The bird is considered to be a vulture. Jeremiah 12:9 (NIV):

*“Has not my inheritance become to me like a speckled bird of prey that other birds of prey surround and attack? Go and gather all the wild beasts; bring them to devour.”*

“At the water’s edge...O’Zion!” Psalm 137:1:

*“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.” Where the Jeremiah reference was a prophecy, this quote is from the time period when the Israelites were exiled and dreamed of returning to Zion. Zion itself can have various meanings from Solomon’s temple, to all of Jerusalem, to “the World to Come”.*

So I take the sleeping and the exile in Babylon to mean that he is not in union with God. Meanwhile, the stones cry out and all of creation groans. Based on the following quotes, I take this part to mean that while he may not be in union with God, the whole of creation is alive beckoning him toward that union.

“The stones cry out” is from Luke 19:37-40 (NIV):

*When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:*

*“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”*

*“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

“All creation groans” is from Romans 8:18-22 (NIV):

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

-----

*Messes of men in farmer poverty;  
Not much for monks but we pretend to be  
Share a silent meal and a pot of chamomile  
Gypsies like us should be stamped in solidarity*

“Messes of men” is obviously the name of the first track on this album. There is a distinct shift between the isolation expressed in that first song and the community expressed here. Aaron in an [interview](#):

*I went to live in a religious community and they were very intent on trying to live out the teachings of the sermons of Jesus and trying to love each other and put their faith into practice and work towards social justice and bring heaven to Earth and living on Earth as a kind of heaven.*

-----

*\*I held you in my fond but distant memory  
While waiting for the Mother Hen to gather me  
Who regretfully wrote  
"you have a decent ear for notes  
But you can't yet appreciate harmony."\**

I take this as a reference to a human person, probably female based on the use of “sister” later in the song, who he previously had a relationship.

“You have a decent ear for notes... harmony”: I have always taken this line to mean that though he may understand a lot of things, he still has a lot to learn. Specifically, the difference between notes and harmony suggests that what he doesn’t understand has to do with unity, or when separate notes come together to form a harmony.

-----

*O' porcupine perched low in the tree  
Your eyes to mine:  
"you'd be well inclined not to mess with me."  
And at the garden's edge beneath a speechless sky  
As his friends slept, Jesus wept  
And it's no wonder why  
You wanna be set free?  
You wanna set me free?  
Well that can only come from  
A union with the One who never dies*

The porcupine seems plainly symbolic of a temptation. This porcupine is low in the tree, so graspable from his perspective at eye level. A porcupine has quills, which ties in with the lines later about picking figs and grapefruit in sharp environments.

"At the garden's edge... Jesus wept" is a reference to "The Agony in the Garden" before crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-46). Jesus felt sorrow when faced with his own death.

The lines "you wanna be set free? You wanna set me free?": Along with the last section of this song suggests to me that someone is trying to offer him salvation though it's clear to him that it would not be a good idea since salvation can only come from union with God.

-----

*(while, in my little world  
In my sad, little world  
I patched a plaster wall in my little world  
And in my little world, I was waiting (just dying!)  
To take offence at something in my little world  
In my little world  
In my sad, little world  
This is all there is in my little world.)*

Back to his little world, where he's making a big deal out of small things like a hole in a wall or a careless comment because that's all there is. But in that darkness...

-----

*In darkness a light shines on me  
In darkness a light shines on you*

*I never gathered figs from a thorny branch  
I never picked a grapefruit off a bramble bush  
And for the past five- almost six years now!-*

*You know you haven't once looked at me  
With kindness in your eyes  
You say Judas is a brother of mine?  
Oh, but sister in our darkness a light shines  
And all I ever want to say for the rest of my life  
Is how that light is G-d  
And though I've been mistaken on this or that point  
That light is G-d*

He's applying the wolves in sheep's clothing teaching from Matthew 7:15-20:

*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

He reasons that he should not go along with this porcupine because she has not looked at him with kindness in her eyes in a long time. At some point, perhaps to hurt him, she must liken him to Judas, saying Judas is a brother of his. He responds by calling her "sister", which would make her a sibling to Judas as well. But the good news is that in our (shared) darkness a light shines. And though he hasn't been perfect in his understanding, he believes that light is God.

### **"Brownish Spider"**

<https://youtu.be/e3OfB29zCPE>

Musically: guitar from the previous track bleeds into this one, is then cut off. Harp and acoustic guitar are in the rest of the song. The harp part is played by the artist Timbre, who also plays on "In A Sweater Poorly Knit".

*Every thing I'd thought I'd learned  
Ambition and illusion turned  
To drawings on a loose leaf sheet  
Of figs and fruits I couldn't eat*

He realizes that he hasn't actually learned all of the things he thought he'd learned. There are countless spiritual teachings, from parables from Jesus or in any other tradition, that are easily understood by the mind but sometimes take extra time to be known fully.

"To drawings on a loose leaf sheet / Of figs and fruits I couldn't eat": you can draw a picture of food on the page but it's not actually the fruit. In the same way, there are a lot of spiritual teachings in books but they are just words pointing toward something. To quote a different mewithoutYou lyric, "I said water expecting the word would satisfy my thirst."

-----  
*What in her do I require?  
The face of gratified desires  
And what in me does she require?  
The face of gratified desires*

Regarding relationships between men and women, both are looking for merely the “face”, “lineaments”, or outward appearance of gratified desire. The lines imply that neither side is all that concerned about whether the outward expressions are honest or fake. These lines are a reference to William Blake’s *Several Questions Answered*, Part 17 of his *Gnomic Verses*:

1  
*[Eternity]  
HE who bends to himself a Joy  
Doth the wingèd life destroy;  
But he who kisses the Joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity’s sunrise.*

2  
*The look of love alarms,  
Because it’s fill’d with fire;  
But the look of soft deceit  
Shall win the lover’s hire.*

3  
*Soft deceit and idleness,  
These are Beauty’s sweetest dress.*

4  
*[The Question answered]  
What is it men in women do require?  
The lineaments of gratified desire.  
What is it women do in men require?  
The lineaments of gratified desire.*

5  
*An ancient Proverb  
Remove away that black’ning church,  
Remove away that marriage hearse,  
Remove away that man of blood—  
You’ll quite remove the ancient curse.*



-----  
*Brownish spider, brownish leaf  
Brownish spider, brownish leaf  
Brownish spider, brownish leaf  
Confirms my deepest held belief*

*No more spider, no more leaf  
No more spider, no more leaf  
No more spider, no more leaf  
No more me, no more belief*

By the end of the song, the spider, who has descended into a brownish color, is gone along with the leaf. This represents the death of self and “No more me, no more belief” suggests that the self dies along with belief.

### **“In A Sweater Poorly Knit”**

[https://youtu.be/iCVS\\_m9Cqhs](https://youtu.be/iCVS_m9Cqhs)

This song starts with instruments fading into a collage of sound. Then, a lone acoustic guitar for the first verse. After the first refrain, harp, electric guitar, and bass come in. The second verse is drums and both guitars playing in unison without bass, giving it a more intense feel. Taking out the bass in the verse makes the bit after the refrain more full in a pleasing way. This time the post-refrain part still has a harp but adds in an accordion part that is more prominent.

The third verse has bass adding some extra texture to build on the previous verses. The more steady groove is traded for a bit with stops and starts after “train crushed into one.” After the third refrain, background vocals “ahhhhh” added to the harp and accordion. Then horns come back in with the vocals.

The horns, background vocals, and accordion drop out. The guitar drops out in the beginning of the last vocal line. Bass drops out in the phrase after the last vocal line. The song and album end on a harp part.

*In a sweater poorly knit and an unsuspecting smile  
Little Moses drifts downstream in the Nile  
A fumbling reply, an awkward rigid laugh  
And I'm carried helpless by my floating basket raft  
Your flavor in my mind's back and forth between  
Sweeter than any wine, as bitter as mustard greens  
And it's light and dark as honeydew and pumpernickel bread  
The trap I set for you seems to have caught my leg instead*

At this point in the album, the self is gone, and Aaron now likens himself to a baby Moses. From the Bible story, Moses was born during a time when the Pharaoh of Egypt ordered the death of all male Hebrew babies. His mother placed him in a basket and sent him down the Nile, where he was discovered and raised by the Pharaoh's daughter.

His mind is going back and forth between sweet and bitter, light and dark, bringing back the nondual imagery from earlier in the album, most notably in "The Dryness And The Rain" and "The Sun And The Moon".

"The trap I set for you seems to have caught my leg instead": I take this to mean that his "self" set a trap for God to catch and possess God. However, God caught his leg instead and took away his "self", his separateness.

-----

*Go plow some other field, and try and forget my name  
We'll see what harvest yields, and, supposing I'd do the same  
I planted rows of peas, by the first week of July  
They should have come up to my knees  
But they were maybe ankle high  
Take the fingers from your flute to weave your colored yarns  
And boil down your fruit to preserves in mason jars  
And the books are overdue and the goats are underfed  
The trap I set for you seems to have caught my leg instead*

This verse can be seen as directed toward a former romantic partner or the divine feminine or both. The points in favor of it being a human woman are, in my opinion: "plow some other field", "forget my name" and Aaron used to replace the fruit and books lines with: "while I play for passing prostitutes on an out-of-tune guitar / I hear there's someone new – an extra pillow in your bed" ([reference 1](#), [reference 2](#)). The points in favor of the divine feminine are the references to flute, yarns, and fruit, which bring to mind aspect of the divine feminine, such as beauty, art, and abundance.

Regardless of which way you go, they are parting ways. Their lives are separate now so they are working separate fields. "We'll see what harvest yields" is a challenge, he believe that the fruits of his labors will be superior. However, his crops are relatively boring (peas) and are not growing as well as he'd like. I also take the "books are overdue and the goats are underfed" line to be in reference to his farm. Meanwhile, she's playing music, weaving, and harvesting fruit for preserves.

"The trap I set for you seems to have caught my leg instead" - He was certain that the fruits of his labor would be superior but they weren't. He lost the competition he started.

-----

*You're a door-without-a-key, a field-without-a-fence  
You made a holy fool of me and I've thanked you ever since  
And if she comes circling back we'll end where we'd begun  
Like two pennies on the train track the train crushed into one  
But if I'm a crown without a king, if I'm a broken open seed  
If I come without a thing, then I come with all I need  
No boat out in the blue, no place to rest your head  
The trap I set for you seems to have caught my leg instead*

In this verse, we're back to addressing God, the door-without-a-key and field-without-a-fence. These two statements are paradoxical when used together, as are a lot of statements about God. If you're facing a door without a key, you can't get in. If you're facing a field without a fence, there is no boundary at all. A relevant story:

*The eighth-century sage Salih of Qaswin said to his students, "Keep knocking on the door of Allah and never stop, for by His mercy, Allah will eventually open His door for those who sincerely seek Him." The mystic Rabia Al-Adawiyya overheard this statement as she was walking by the mosque and said, "Oh Salih, who said Allah's door is closed to begin with?"*

Anyway, God showed him how foolish he had been in his separateness. Instead of being embarrassed, he's thankful for it.

Then he adds in two lines about the divine feminine returning to his life. If this were to happen, he would experience inner unity/wholeness like a circle is one ("two pennies... crushed into one") and whole ("end where we begun"). "End where we begun is a reference to John Donne's

[A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning](#):

*Such wilt thou be to me, who must,  
Like the other foot, obliquely run;  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
And makes me end where I begun.*

The last lines are references to coming to God with nothing. If he's completely worthless like a broken seed or crown with no king and he comes to God with nothing, he comes with all God requires.

God is always moving and changing. "No boat out in the blue" is a reference to Jesus walking on the water, as described in Matthew 14, Mark 6, and John 6. "No place to rest your head" is from Luke 9:58 and Matthew 8:20: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

-----

*I do not exist, I do not exist, I do not exist*  
*I do not exist, I do not exist, I do not exist*  
*I do not exist, I do not exist, I do not exist*  
*I do not exist, only You exist, I do not exist*

At the end, there is no more “I”. And in contrast to the first line of the album, this is not something he’s falsely insisting on. Instead, it’s just the way it is now.