

In the Aeroplane Over the Sea by Neutral Milk Hotel



Total Songs: 11

The King of Carrot Flowers, Pt. One

The King of Carrot Flowers, Pt. One Lyrics[Verse 1]

When you were young, you were the king of carrot flowers
And how you built a tower tumbling through the trees
In holy rattlesnakes that fell all around your feet
And your mom would stick a fork right into daddy's shoulder
And dad would throw the garbage all across the floor
As we would lay and learn what each other's bodies were for

[Verse 2]

And this is the room one afternoon, I knew I could love you
And from above you how I sank into your soul
Into that secret place where no one dares to go
And your mom would drink until she was no longer speaking
And dad would dream of all the different ways to die
Each one a little more than he could dare to try

As we would lay and learn what each other's bodies were for

ANNOTATION:

This is a reference to scenes in *The Diary of a Young Girl* where Anne explores her body and her sexuality, accompanied or not by Peter.

And your mom would drink until she was no longer speaking

And dad would dream of all the different ways to die
Each one a little more than he could dare to try

ANNOTATION:

The parents continue to loathe themselves and their relationship, with alcoholism and suicide being central to their unfulfilled lives. The song is full of love and disdain, contradicting one another in each verse.

And this is the room one afternoon, I knew I could love you

And from above you how I sank into your soul
Into that secret place where no one dares to go

ANNOTATION:

Beautifully articulated, the two share a sexual relationship that exceeds a physical touch and transcends to their souls harmonizing into one.

Also, tying it together with the ode to Anne Frank that rolls through the album, this line could simply represent Jeff reading Anne's diary. Sinking into her soul (the book) and reading her secrets, where no one ever goes most times.

When you were young, you were the king of carrot flowers

And how you built a tower tumbling through the trees
In holy rattlesnakes that fell all around your feet

ANNOTATION:

The introductory lines portray a youthful imagination, as a child you can pretend to be any character you chose. The ['tower']([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tower_\(Tarot_card\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tower_(Tarot_card))) tarot card is representative of an ill omen, foreshadowing the coming verses. Rattlesnakes, relative to Christianity, are viewed as deathly evil so it's interesting to deem them 'holy.'

<http://images.rapgenius.com/c331ab78b5461f28528ece67c408c088.300x214x1.png>

"When you were young you were the king of carrot flowers", in the context of the Tarot (see: "[The Fool](#)") is a contradiction. The king in tarot cards represents mastery of whatever type of card it is, and carrot flowers are carrots that grew real old. How can someone young be the master of growing old? They then built a Tower (which in tarot cards actually represents danger, crisis, destruction, and liberation) on that lie which of course tumbles when people realize the lie they're telling.

The "holy rattlesnakes" can refer to the snakes used in snake-handling by some Pentecostal churches, although the idea of 'holy' rattlesnakes can also be found in America's indigenous religions. To their imagination the lightning in the sky was similar to a serpent and was therefore considered holy.

This is visible in this picture:

http://www.artres.com/C.aspx?VP3=ViewBox_VPage%26RAQF=1%26IT=ZoomImageTemplate01_VForm%26IID=2UNTWAAX68CX%26LBID=22SITWCII33%26PN=2%26CT=Search%26SF=0

And your mom would stick a fork right into daddy's shoulder

And dad would throw the garbage all across the floor

ANNOTATION:

As is the case with most of Jeff Mangum's lyrics, we are left without a definitive explanation. We have, however, learned that Mangum's parents did have an unstable relationship, and, on one occasion, his mother stabbed his father with a fork, who then threw the garbage can across the floor. Considering this, Mangum may be personifying two distinct parts of his personality.

Whether this is body and soul, innocence and wisdom, or any other pairing, we will not know.

It is also possible that Mangum is placing this story in an alternate setting, in which two step-sibling's parents are arguing.

There's a stark juxtaposition here between the negative (violence and hatred) and the much more positive (love and sexuality) functions of the body, which is a common theme throughout [the album](#). (See, specifically, "[Oh Comely](#)" for other examples).

The distinction between just "mom" and the more endearing and loving (and in modern times, sexual) "daddy" is a reference to Anne's preference for her father Otto while she felt cold and even hostile to her mother.

It's possible that the image of "mom" stabbing "daddy" with a fork comes from *Infinite Jest*, in which this is one of numerous examples of casual acts of domestic violence that David Foster Wallace describes to create an overall picture of dysfunctional families.

The King of Carrot Flowers, Pts. Two & Three

The King of Carrot Flowers, Pts. Two & Three LyricsPart Two

[Verse 1]

I love you, Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, I love you, yes I do

I love you, Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, I love you, yes I do

And on the lazy days, the dogs dissolve and drain away

The world it goes and always waits

The day we are awaiting

Part Three

[Verse 2]

Up and over we go

Through the wave and undertow

I will float until I learn how to swim

Inside my mother in a garbage bin

Until I find myself again

Again, oh-oh-oh-oh

[Verse 3]

Up and over we go

Mouths open wide and spitting snow

I will spit until I learn how to speak

Up through the doorway as the sideboards creak

With them ever proclaiming me

Me, oh

[Verse 4]

Up and over we go

The weight it sits on down and I don't know

I will shout until they know what I mean

I mean the marriage of a dead dog sing

And a synthetic flying machine

Machine, oh-oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh-oh

(Okay)²²Embed

The dogs dissolve and drain away

ANNOTATION:

The lyrics represent a repeating theme of decomposition representing death and dissolving. It also represents the repeating themes of people/things becoming liquid.

Part Three

ANNOTATION:

The lyrics for this part of the song appear on [Synthetic Flying Machine](#), a track from the earlier Neutral Milk Hotel album *Hype City Soundtrack*, although the melody is different here.

<https://images.genius.com/30a7db188207659ede4e756d79cca5cd.500x500x1.jpg>

The weight it sits on down and I don't know

ANNOTATION:

According to Jeff Mangum himself, this bit of the song did not have any written lyrics. It can pretty much be interpreted as whatever you hear it as.

<https://youtu.be/gAddjdscR4M?t=960>

Always waits

ANNOTATION:

Here, on the lyrics sheet, the words "always waits" are replaced with "all awaits".

The world it goes and

ANNOTATION:

The world goes on in on, day by day, yet the day of redemption and change, where only happiness will be established, is awaited and will come.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/5ab009def3e5345520db935bcc3a2884.900x953x1.png>

An alternate possibility is that these lines herald a birth (referenced in each of the song's later verses) that has yet to come, yet is greatly anticipated: "all awaits the day we are awaiting." The opening lines' reference to Jesus Christ supports this reading, as the Messiah's impending birth in the Bible was heralded and was awaited by the Jews for centuries (and still is by many). Likewise, Christians today still wait for Christ to return in the apocalypse.

Of course the nature of the impending birth (or rebirth) in this song, whether it is literal, figurative, divine, or personal, is open to interpretation.

And a synthetic flying machine

Machine

ANNOTATION:

[Synthetic Flying Machine](#) was an early project by Jeff Magnum, and also an [early title for this song](#), used on [Hype City Soundtrack](#).

<http://images.rapgenius.com/bkhik7lz2ov1yrngh4d7xy22y.500x594x1.jpg>

Up and over we go

Through the wave and undertow
I will float until I learn how to swim

ANNOTATION:

Sticking with the anticipated birth/rebirth in the first verse, this verse uses imagery of pre-natal development – "Floating [...] inside my mother in a garbage bin" – to describe a state of personal change and rebirth. "Mother in a garbage bin" is potentially a metaphor for a loss of self or identity that the narrator wants to work himself out of. As the final line of the verse suggests, the goal is a personal one: "find[ing] myself again."

In a device that repeats in each of the song's verses, the narrator turns the situation he is in to his advantage via an act of sheer defiance and willpower. The apathetic, passive, act of "floating" in an inchoate state devoid of identity or self (much like a fetus in a womb) is transformed into an active means of self-assertion and reclaiming lost identity when it becomes a necessary step in learning how to "swim."

Inside my mother in a garbage bin

ANNOTATION:

This line is related to the overall theme of humans being disposable, which relates to Anne Frank and the Holocaust (see "it's so sad to see the world agree that they'd rather see their faces filled with flies," or "I know they buried her body with others, / her sister and mother and 500 families.") This imagery describes fetus floating in the womb of a pregnant Holocaust victim who was thrown into a mass grave like a piece of garbage. The fetus is swimming through the waves and undertow in utero, and can only float because they haven't been born and can't swim yet. In the final line, the baby reveals that he will float until he "finds himself again," i.e., is reborn in the next life.

It is also important to consider this line and the rest of Part 3 outside the context of Anne Frank and the Holocaust, given it was written, at the earliest, in 1991, five years before [On Avery Island](#). In an interview, Jeff stated that the second verse is about a dark time when he lived with his mother.

This could be a reference to Part 1 of this song, where Jeff says:

And mom would stick a fork right into daddy's shoulder / And dad would throw the garbage all across the floor"

In that light, the line could mean that the mother is a receptacle for a lot of verbal, emotional, or even physical abuse from the father. He lays all his negativity, aggression, and disappointment (his garbage) in her.

I love you, Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, I love you, yes I do

ANNOTATION:

The lines "I love you Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ I love you" are replaced in the booklet for the album with a small explanation by Jeff.

...and now a song for Jesus Christ. And since this seems to confuse people I'd like to simply say that I mean what I sing although the theme of endless endless on this album is not based on any religion but more in the belief that all things seem to contain a white light within them that I see as eternal.

This line suggests an ambiguity as to who he loves. Like some of E.E. Cummings' poetry, it is intended to be read multiple ways--he may be referring to the girl that he was talking about in the first track of the album or Jesus Christ.

He said in a 1997 [Q&A](#) with the zine Puncture:

The thing about me singing about Christ; I'm not saying "I love you Christianity." I'm not saying "I love all the fucked-up terrible shit that people have done in the name of God." And I'm not preaching belief in Christ. It's just expression. I'm just expressing something I might not even understand. It's a song of confusion, it's a song of hope, it's a song that says this whole world is a big dream-- and who knows what's gonna happen.

In the Aeroplane Over the Sea

In the Aeroplane Over the Sea Lyrics[Verse 1]

What a beautiful face
I have found in this place
That is circling all 'round the sun
What a beautiful dream
That could flash on the screen
In a blink of an eye and be gone from me
Soft and sweet
Let me hold it close and keep it here with me

[Verse 2]

And one day we will die
And our ashes will fly
From the aeroplane over the sea
But for now we are young
Let us lay in the sun
And count every beautiful thing we can see
Love to be
In the arms of all I'm keeping here with me

[Verse 3]

What a curious life
We have found here tonight
There is music that sounds from the street
There are lights in the clouds
Anna's ghost all around
Hear her voice as it's rolling and ringing through me
Soft and sweet
How the notes all bend and reach above the trees

[Bridge]

Now how I remember you
How I would push my fingers through
Your mouth to make those muscles move
That made your voice so smooth and sweet
But now we keep where we don't know
All secrets sleep in winter clothes
With the one you loved so long ago
Now he don't even know his name

[Verse 4]

What a beautiful face
I have found in this place
That is circling all 'round the sun
And when we meet on a cloud
I'll be laughing out loud
I'll be laughing with everyone I see
Can't believe
How strange it is to be anything at all

And count every beautiful thing we can see

Love to be
In the arms of all I'm keeping here with me

ANNOTATION:

This song is optimistic lyrically despite its melancholy melody, and this line proves it. Even though we all may die one day, it is important we appreciate all the beautiful things that connect us to other people, dead or alive; in that way, nobody really dies and we can keep the spirits of those who are no longer with us "here".

That is circling all 'round the sun

ANNOTATION:

This line references the passage of time, and bears some similarities to another line with a similar meaning in "[Holland, 1945](#)".

Now she's a little boy in Spain
Playing pianos filled with flames
On empty rings around the sun
All sing to say my dream has come

In a blink of an eye and be gone from me

ANNOTATION:

The verses of this song are written in anapestic tercets (unstressed, unstressed, stressed), which gives the verses a slow, loping feeling. However, the choice to break meter and end the verse on two stressed syllables (not counting the tercet), draws attention to the last line, and the singer's feelings of longing.

Now he don't even know his name

ANNOTATION:

Continuing from the previous line, this could either refer to an old boy/girlfriend that has abandoned their past; forgetting about their relationships and regrets and moving forward in life - able to throw the memory they kept away.

Alternatively in the case of [Jeff Mangum](#), this again could refer to [Anne Frank](#), as history has moved on from her death, less and less people are aware of the events that happened to her during World War II. In the case of [Anne Frank](#) herself, she is long dead and her brain no longer functions - she can perceive and remember nothing, let alone her own name.

What a curious life

We have found here tonight
There is music that sounds from the street
There are lights in the clouds

ANNOTATION:

From Jeff's eyes, he looks at the people walking in the streets, children playing, music sounding in the air. In essence, he's admiring the utter wonder that is life.

But from Anne's perspective, the lights in the clouds are airplanes, and the music from the street is the sound of the bombs dropping. This line is also an imagining of life in the Annex (the hidden space that Anne and her family lived in), where the only way to perceive the outside world around them while so isolated is music from the streets outside and the lights they see in the sky above them.

Jeff is embracing the "curious" nature of living so far removed from society while being so close, and finding beauty in it

And when we meet on a cloud

I'll be laughing out loud
I'll be laughing with everyone I see

ANNOTATION:

Even though he and Anne haven't met yet, he finds a type of spiritual connection with her. Once he dies, however, Jeff envisions meeting her in the afterlife, using the stereotypical cloud to suggest that the two are destined for Heaven. This would elicit a happiness that causes a burst of ecstatic laughter that he shares with everyone around him.

What a beautiful face

I have found in this place

ANNOTATION:

In this album-long ode to Anne Frank, he comments here upon how beautiful Anne was, even at such a young age, and how wonderful it is to share the same planet as she did. Even though the two were separated by decades, they both are humans on the same Earth, a fact that makes his connection to her even more real.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/3bc6e1914eb39dbef556fdcc04e5bb14.635x477x1.jpg>

Can't believe

How strange it is to be anything at all

ANNOTATION:

Jeff Mangum expressed to [Pitchfork](#) that he often dreamed about his soul being in his body, and that it "freaked" him out to analyze life and the human condition.

With the one you loved so long ago

ANNOTATION:

A photo of an old boy/girlfriend, that you want to forget about; or perhaps a loved one that is now gone, that you don't want to be sad about anymore. You wish the memory were a secret to you, but you just can't throw it out. In Jeff's case, the object perhaps isn't a picture, but instead a copy of Anne Frank's diary. The book literally represents the person, because she is dead.

All secrets sleep in winter clothes

ANNOTATION:

2 possible meanings spring to mind...

1. All secrets sleep in the dark, cold parts of our soul. It is cold, so they wear winter clothes. And they are not active, because we don't think about them; thus, they are sleeping.
2. This interpretation is the one I am leaning more towards, compared to #1; I have found that Jeff's lyrics tend to be able to mean things more specific than #1 lets on; it seems to me that when he mentions a secret, he is probably referring to a specific "secret" in the real world, not a generalization. With that in mind:

Many secrets are represented by objects. A photo, a letter, a napkin with lipstick on it. These sentimental objects are kept in our drawers; the drawer that you wouldn't look at much might also contain "winter clothes". The clothes you ONLY wear when it is snowing. It doesn't get looked at much, and neither does the secret, because they are in the same drawer.

Two-Headed Boy

Two-Headed Boy Lyrics[Verse 1]

Two-headed boy
All floating in glass
The sun, it has passed
Now it's blacker than black
I can hear as you tap on your jar
And I am listening to hear where you are
I am listening to hear where you are

[Verse 2]

Two-headed boy
Put on Sunday shoes
And dance round the room to accordion keys
With the needle that sings in your heart
Catching signals that sound in the dark
Catching signals that sound in the dark

[Chorus]

We will take off our clothes
And they'll be placing fingers
Through the notches in your spine
And when all is breaking
Everything that you could keep inside
Now your eyes ain't moving, now
They just lay there in their climb

[Verse 3]

Two-headed boy
With pulleys and weights
Creating a radio played just for two
In the parlor with a moon across her face
And through the music he sweetly displays

Silver speakers that sparkle all day
Made for his lover who's floating and choking with her hands across her face

[Chorus]

And in the dark we will take off our clothes
And they'll be placing fingers through the notches in your spine
And when all is breaking
Everything that you could keep inside
Now your eyes ain't moving, now
They just lay there in their climb

[Verse 4]

Two-headed boy
There's no reason to grieve
The world that you need is wrapped in gold silver sleeves
Left beneath Christmas trees in the snow
And I will take you and leave you alone
Watching spirals of white softly flow
Over your eyelids and all you did
Will wait until the point when you let go

Now your eyes ain't moving, now

They just lay there in their climb

ANNOTATION:

This lyric holds two clear meanings:

1. The two-headed boy is in shock, or dying.
2. When a reader is engulfed in something they are reading, they tend to stare at the book while letting their head climb up and down the page; keeping their eyes still.

The sun, it has passed

Now it's blacker than black

ANNOTATION:

The time of pure innocence and happiness for Anne Frank is over once the new era of Nazi occupation has taken hold. The black sun, or "sonnenrad", is a symbol steeped in European pagan tradition but is most known for its link to the Waffen SS, particularly upon the floor of Wewelsburg Castle.

<https://images.genius.com/62dd032017d6f012690a4de4542eed1c.1000x1000x1.png>

Whether Mangum knew this detail about the sonnenrad or not, it still seems to link in well with the perceived meaning of this lyric.

And I am listening to hear where you are

I am listening to hear where you are

ANNOTATION:

The importance of these lines lies within the way that Jeff sings them.

He sings these lines very loudly, almost losing the musicality and becoming pure screaming. I think that this was supposed to show Jeff's desperation to reach out to Anne and save her from her inevitable fate, and he is angered at his futility, making him scream out his inner turmoil.

This is echoed in the lyrics themselves: "I am listening to hear where you are", he is searching for Anne, looking for some way to help her, almost as if he is in the dark, listening out for any direction.

Will wait until the point when you let go

ANNOTATION:

This is the opposite to the ending of ["Two-Headed Boy, pt. Two"](#). Here, the lustful Boy lets go of his desires as Anne is brought away to her death, left to only long for her once-living self. In pt. Two, Anne voluntarily leaves the two-headed boy due to his attachment to lust but must not let his anger get the best of him.

All floating in glass

ANNOTATION:

Historically, medically significant specimens would be preserved in sealed jars; likely, the two-headed boy is a conjoined stillbirth preserved in such a way. Taken with the more magical and psychedelic themes of *In the Aeroplane...* and Neutral Milk Hotel as a whole, the character of the two-headed boy, especially with reference to some of the imagery at [the end of the album](#), can be seen as a living, miniature boy, trapped in a jar by Anne Frank, forced to love her and watch her life go by from afar.

This reading of the boy as a literal boy in a jar makes sense when the boy is taken to be Jeff - just as the boy must watch Anne's life be destroyed, without ever being able to interact with or protect her, Jeff can only read through the pages of her diary, never able to contact her. This also works into the comparison of the two-headed boy as Janus, god of cycles, as Jeff's only meaningful contribution to Anne's story is starting it over again; finishing the book and returning to the beginning.

And dance round the room to accordion keys

With the needle that sings in your heart

ANNOTATION:

In these two lines, Jeff Mangum uses a technique known as a [deliberate mondegreen](#) to create a double meaning within his lyrics and present conflicting images of innocence and evil.

The words "needle that sings in your heart" conjure an image of Two Headed Boy dancing to music. The object of "the needle" is used to represent the needle of a record player that "sings in [the boy's] heart" by moving the boy's emotions.

However, the words "needle that sings in your heart" can also be perceived audibly as "the needle that [sinks] in your heart, which reinstates the song's theme of [the Nazi's Experiments on Jewish prisoners in concentration camps](#).

Notably, the next track, "The Fool", which "Two-Headed Boy" seamlessly leads into, is a waltz featuring accordion playing, which the Boy is told to dance to in this line.

And when all is breaking

Everything that you could keep inside

ANNOTATION:

This line truly does refer to "all" in its assertion that all is breaking. On the surface, Anne's bones, the things she literally keeps inside, could potentially be broken (the idea of bones is established with the earlier lines about placing fingers in the notches of her spine). Anne Frank will also break emotionally, from the trauma and stress she internalizes while in hiding. And ultimately, the two-headed boy's world is breaking as everything that Anne kept inside, her private thoughts in her diary, is unleashed. This refers to the two-headed boy reading her diary.

We will take off our clothes

And they'll be placing fingers
Through the notches in your spine

ANNOTATION:

While in the dark, hiding from Nazi planes, Two Headed Boy and Anne Frank will take off their clothes together. In this sense, Jeff Mangum implies sexual connotations between them.

However, this is quickly subverted by other people "placing fingers through the notches in [her] spine." The moment is no longer intimate and soft, as it has been intruded upon by an outside party that wishes to dissect Anne.

Likely, it is the Nazis who will force the Boy and Anne to disrobe, and later leave nothing of Anne but a skeleton.

Another interpretation is that Mangum is personifying the physical copy of Anne Frank's diary. We remove the clothes (cover) of the book. We place our fingers on the spine to steady the book while we read.

Two-headed boy

ANNOTATION:

Additionally, the two-headed boy may be the combined characters of Peter van Pels, Anne Frank's love interest while in hiding, and Lutz Peter "Petel" Schiff, whom Anne Frank wrote about many times in her diary. In the song, she reaches out to both the hidden and the incarcerated, as she lets herself be comforted by her memories of them.

It could also refer to the male character (who is probably Jeff) on the album being of two minds, split between shameful lust and his futile desire to "save" the kaleidoscopic female character, taking the form of a ghost, Anne, a trailer park girl, a conjoined twin sister, and others. He loses his innocence across the story of the album.

One's sexuality is very much a part of them, but it can also hinder relationships (cheating, lust, etc.). A man's connection with his sexuality isn't always positive. This also goes along with all of the examples on the album of unhealthy connections (Siamese twins). Jeff is really hammering the thought that certain functions and relationships that require a connection between two people or things can be extremely negative. Autonomy is important.

A notable two-headed god was Janus, the Roman god of closures and openings, cycles and war & peace times.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/3c245c313a3ff7fb30169f0dca38dad7.600x667x1.png>

This image is used to describe a never ending circular exercise that memory is when we remember our youth or childhood. In Janus, a two-headed boy would signify someone who's not able to see the present; melancholy for the past and anxiety about the future is the only thing a two-headed boy would be able to feel.

The Fool

The Fool Lyrics[Segue from Two-Headed Boy]

De-doo...

[Instrumental]6Embed

Holland, 1945

Holland, 1945 Lyrics[Intro]

Two, one, two, three, four

[Verse 1]

The only girl I've ever loved
Was born with roses in her eyes
But then they buried her alive
One evening, 1945
With just her sister at her side
And only weeks before the guns
All came and rained on everyone
Now she's a little boy in Spain
Playing pianos filled with flames
On empty rings around the sun
All sing to say my dream has come

[Chorus]

But now we must pack up every piece
Of the life we used to love
Just to keep ourselves
At least enough to carry on

[Verse 2]

And now we ride the circus wheel
With your dark brother wrapped in white
Says it was good to be alive
But now he rides a comet's flame
And won't be coming back again
The Earth looks better from a star
That's right above from where you are
He didn't mean to make you cry
With sparks that ring and bullets fly
On empty rings around your heart
The world just screams and falls apart

[Chorus]

But now we must pack up every piece
Of the life we used to love
Just to keep ourselves
At least enough to carry on

[Verse 3]

And here's where your mother sleeps
And here is the room where your brothers were born
Indentations in the sheets
Where their bodies once moved but don't move anymore
And it's so sad to see the world agree
That they'd rather see their faces filled with flies
All when I'd want to keep white roses in their eyes

And now we ride the circus wheel

ANNOTATION:

When one rides a circus wheel, they go around and around and around. Mangum is using this as a metaphor to describe not only Anne Frank's continuously boring life while hiding, but also in life in general. At times it can feel like we are just going through the motions and doing everything over and over again just the same.

The concept of reincarnation, which is central to this song, is often described in terms of a wheel or a cycle.

Jeff has often used carnival-like imagery in his work, and Neutral Milk Hotel has an EP titled Ferris Wheel on Fire.

On empty rings around your heart

ANNOTATION:

Note the change in this line from the conclusion of Verse 1.

On empty rings around **the Sun**

The bolded words being replaced with "*your heart*".

As other commenters have noted, the lines

The Earth looks better from a star / That's right above from where you are

appear to be metaphorically speaking of taking an objective view of events occurring on Earth - atrocities in particular, if viewed in light of the song's subject matter.

Essentially, one can easily be dismissive of the suffering created by war ("*little boy in Spain*" - Spanish Civil War) and even genocide (i.e. the Holocaust) without having experienced these things oneself.

Coming to this line in question, the significance of the change from "the Sun" to "your heart" is indicative of a viewpoint shift, from cold facts to actual subjective experiences. We can see this in Verse 3 (multiple examples, mainly "*bodies once moved but don't move anymore*", "*faces filled with flies*").

"...empty rings around the Sun" most likely meaning "empty years" (the Earth's orbit around the Sun being a year), the alternate line we examine here seems peculiar in that we are not entirely sure what would circle a person's heart.

My interpretation here is that, this being from a subjective point of view, the unstated subject performing empty rings around the person (most likely Anne Frank), could be the world itself. This is due to, subjectively, any event happening occurs in our field of vision, and the world cycles through changes while our "hearts" remain observing the motion of external events in relative stasis.

This shift in viewpoint is impactful - an empty year of a planet does not invoke emotions, but an empty year of subjective experiences for a person is far more evocative.

He didn't mean to make you cry

With sparks that ring and bullets fly

ANNOTATION:

This entire verse is about someone who's lost someone to suicide. On the lyrics sheet, the words "dark brother" are followed by "(h.p.)", and a writer for the Boston Phoenix in 1998 mentioned that this "H.P." was a family member of one of Jeff's friends. "The earth looks better from a star... that's right above from where you are," meaning that the deceased person is watching over a loved one, that he's always with them and that the place he is now is superior, which is why he won't be coming back, not that the world looks better when he's far away because he's missing the little grimy details.

Many Jews pondered the existence of a God during the Holocaust, for obvious reasons. If there is a God then why would he let us suffer in this way? In this line, Jeff expresses that, even after all that happened, "He" as in God, didn't mean for this to happen. This was all the making of humans with their war and hatred.

These lines may also be about the "dark brother," Jeff's friend who committed suicide, and his loved ones who mourned his loss. They are likely in direct relation to the lines in [Two Headed Boy, Pt.2.](#)

The only girl I've ever loved

Was born with roses in her eyes
But then they buried her alive

ANNOTATION:

The only girl he's ever loved (Anne Frank) was born with beauty surrounding her and her mind, expressed in the roses metaphor. But then the war came and took her, **burying her alive** in a way because the Holocaust didn't let her live her whole life as it should've been. It killed her from the start.

The "roses in her eyes" line is likely to be a reference to the White Roses Society in Europe during WW2 which was a non-violent intellectual resistance movement against Nazi Germany between 1942-1943. The White Rose Society was comprised of students who anonymously penned and distributed flyers speaking out against the Nazi regime. Anne Frank's writings could be viewed in a similar light to those of The White Rose.

<https://images.genius.com/469698b9a971b123bc7c313ef2b3f0ea.1000x750x1.jpg>

The Earth looks better from a star

That's right above from where you are

ANNOTATION:

Perhaps Jeff is giving us some food for thought by challenging us to judge the travesties of the Holocaust with subjectivity, rather than by just remember a few memorable faces ([Adolf Hitler](#), [Anne Frank](#) [Oskar Schindler](#)...).

<http://images.genius.com/c238de61c23d626269fabb0d256cc2ec.1000x625x1.jpg>

If we look at the Holocaust objectively, we may not grasp how evil and horrific things were. This is linking back to his idea of Earth looking better from afar.

Now if we get personal, and think about the millions that died, the millions more who were slaves, the poverty, disease, famine, destruction, torture and lies that were spread because of Anti-Semitism, we realize that humans are cruel, and the Earth loses its prettiness.

<http://images.genius.com/dc7bec6714c45e9a2dabc59dc7d758d2.628x353x1.jpg>

Things often look better in retrospect once they are done and all over, because we might like to linger on the good side of them. Perhaps he believes that Anne would be looking back onto the Earth from a "star" after her death, thinking to herself that everything looks better afterwards than when you're actually in it, or that even he will look back on his life at the point of his own death with more happiness than he has now.

Now she's a little boy in Spain

Playing pianos filled with flames

ANNOTATION:

Small part of what story [Jeff Mangum](#) conducts is for Anne Frank being resurrected in "a little boy in Spain", and him being a resurrection of Anne Frank's boyfriend-at-the-time "Peter Schiff". Pianos with flames is Mangum's phenomenal, perpetrating surrealism, suggesting heat maybe, danger, the power of music.

'Pianos filled with flames' might be a reference to a way of bombing which was popular during the civil war in Spain, apparently often used by nationalists.

The "playing pianos filled with flames" could be seen as some sort of imagery for people being burned alive. Incredibly morbid, but visual. Like they're on fire, frantically flailing the hands up and down ("playing pianos while filled with flames" not "playing pianos that are filled with flames").

Otherwise, it could refer to Anne Frank's diary. The diary is the "music" that she now plays, telling the pain she felt, hence the "flames".

It is also possible (although very unlikely) that the term about the "little boy in Spain refers to" reincarnation and the story of the child piano player Pepito Arriola. The boy had amazing piano skills as a toddler which many people believe to be the result of reincarnation. Arriola lived in Spain in the early 20th centruy (before Anne Frank), but the artist may use him as a general reference for reincarnation rather than specifically meaning Anne Frank was reincarnated as him.

All when I'd want to keep white roses in their eyes

ANNOTATION:

[The White Rose](#) was a non-violent, intellectual resistance group in Nazi Germany that stood for an end to fascism and war. Six of their most prominent members were beheaded in 1943.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/643186113c89e5e95ee42cc8246e0927.468x286x1.jpg>

However, Jeff has stated he didn't know about them until after the album was released. It's most likely a reference to the first line "the only girl I ever loved was born with roses in her eyes". Since white is a symbol for innocence, Jeff may be saying that he wanted them to be innocent, but the world corrupted and destroyed them.

On empty rings around the sun

All sing to say my dream has come

ANNOTATION:

A prominent and important quote from *The Diary of a Young Girl*:

I see the eight of us in the Annex as if we were a patch of blue sky surrounded by menacing black clouds... [They loom] before us like an impenetrable wall, trying to crush us, but not yet able to. I can only cry out and implore, "Oh ring, ring, open wide and let us out!"

The rings are empty, i.e. there is nothing beyond them and no way out.

"Empty rings around the sun" is also referring to years meaninglessly spent - the Earth orbits around the sun making "rings" around it and each ring around the sun is one year. An empty year would be one in which nothing happens and is not meaningful

Rings are also used to symbolize marriage and commitment hence empty rings could also be a reference to the rings no longer being on their fingers. In fact, in a direct tie-in with the inspiration of Anne Frank in this song, one of the iconic photographs of the Holocaust is of rings taken from victims in order to salvage the precious materials.

<http://images.genius.com/59d6285d62f031623b3299f739b8a624.1000x519x1.jpg>

One evening, 1945

With just her sister at her side
And only weeks before the guns
All came and rained on everyone

ANNOTATION:

By 1945, Anne Frank and her family were deported to the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland (then occupied by Nazi Germany).

A typhus epidemic had spread throughout the camp of Bergen-Belsen in 1945 which claimed both the lives of Anne and her sister Margot, just weeks before the camp was liberated in April 1945.

But now we must pack up every piece

Of the life we used to love
Just to keep ourselves
At least enough to carry on

ANNOTATION:

Anne Frank and her family moved to Holland from Germany in 1933 when the Nazis gained power. They had to remain in hiding for two years starting from 1942 until they were betrayed and sent to concentration camps.

The diary she wrote was dated until August 1st 1944, the month she was found, and she died in March 1945 of typhus, along with her sister. However, her father survived and was given her diary by Miep Gies and Bos Voskuil, who helped harbor her and her family, when he returned to Amsterdam.

To "pick up every piece of the life we used to love" refers to one's mind longing for their early life through a lens of nostalgic daydreams - clinging onto those memories and using them as a means to continue to live, for the beauty of those little moments is a gift in life.

This is not only a song about Anne Frank, but also about reincarnation. The chorus is referring to trying to keep enough of you and your spirit so that you can carry it on with you after death and subsequent reincarnation.

Communist Daughter

Communist Daughter Lyrics[Intro]

One

[Chorus]

Sweet communist, the communist daughter
Standing on the sea-weed water
Semen stains the mountain tops
Semen stains the mountain tops

[Verse]

With coca leaves along the border
Sweetness sings from every corner
Cars careening from the clouds
The bridges burst and twist around
And wanting something warm and moving
Bends towards herself, the soothing
Proves that she must still exist
She moves herself about her fist

[Chorus]

Sweet communist, the communist daughter
Standing on the sea-weed water
Semen stains the mountain tops
Semen stains the mountain tops

[Outro]

Dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee16Embed

With coca leaves along the border

ANNOTATION:

"Coca leaves" are what cocaine is made from.

Standing on the sea-weed water

ANNOTATION:

Note that the lyric is *on* the seaweed water, not *in*. This is a reference to Jesus Christ, who was able to walk on water. This album contains several references to Jesus Christ and holy figures, sometimes in relation to Anne Frank, and other times to Jeff Mangum's own fascination with Jesus Christ directly.

Jeff told the zine Puncture the following in a 1997 [Q&A](#)

The thing about me singing about Christ; I'm not saying "I love you Christianity." I'm not saying "I love all the fucked-up terrible shit that people have done in the name of God." And I'm not preaching belief in Christ. It's just expression. I'm just expressing something I might not even understand. It's a song of confusion, it's a song of hope, it's a song that says this whole world is a big dream—and who knows what's gonna happen.

Cars careening from the clouds

The bridges burst and twist around

ANNOTATION:

"Cars careening from the clouds, the bridges burst and twist around" is a metaphor for airplanes dropping bombs.

The lyric about bridges might be a reference to the Ludendorff bridge, which was bombed multiple times. You can see the "twisting" of the bridge 40 seconds in from this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKYHSwoYReY>

Semen stains the mountain tops

Semen stains the mountain tops

ANNOTATION:

Keeps in key with the "fertile" theme of the song, while calling to mind the image of a snowcapped mountain.

The representation of semen staining mountain tops perfectly illustrates the concept of [androcentrism](#), which stems from an [ecofeminist](#) perspective of [anthropocentrism](#). Simply put, the semen stained peaks represent the influence of male domination in society on women and aspects of the environment.

This is also a statement that nothing is truly innocent. Even the beautiful image of snow-capped mountains can be perverted by the description of "semen staining the mountain tops."

And wanting something warm and moving

Bends towards herself, the soothing
Proves that she must still exist
She moves herself about her fist

ANNOTATION:

This verse is about masturbation. She wishes to be intimate with a real person: wanting something warm and moving. But she is lonely and the closest thing she can get to the real thing is through masturbation. She does this to prove "that she must still exist."

Sweet communist, the communist daughter

ANNOTATION:

As fascism swept through Europe in the middle of the 20th century, the communists were often the good guys. Fascists believed in order and hierarchy while communists believed in equality and brotherhood and such. Historically, communists have fought on the front lines against fascism, the rise of which has often been enabled by liberal or social democratic governments who sought to preserve the status quo. Therefore, the communist daughter is a girl who is rather idealistic about politics and doesn't understand why people are so violent toward each other.

This could even be a direct Anne Frank reference. Though she wasn't a communist (she was too young to really have firm political ideas), she shared that idealistic spirit. Describing her as the communist daughter could be like saying she didn't care about any nation or race, she saw herself as a part of humanity and responsible for the whole thing.

Taken figuratively, and along the album's theme of lust, the idea of a "communist" daughter centers around the idea of sharing everything. The attractive girl is being shared and passed around by everyone - as would be the case with any commodity in a communist community. The girl is being used, and this is ultimately the meaning behind her moniker. This can also be considered a "co-option" of the Communist Daughter; because communism and socialism are popular amongst the working class, fascists often adopt the moniker of communism with none of the policies in order to get ahead politically. In the sense of the song, the girl is being made out to be less moral than she is by her sexuality.

Oh Comely

Oh Comely Lyrics[Verse 1]

Oh comely
I will be with you when you lose your breath
Chasing the only
Meaningful memory you thought you had left
With some pretty, bright and bubbly
Terrible scene that was doing her thing on your chest
But, oh comely
It isn't as pretty as you'd like to guess
In your memory, you're drunk on your awe to me
It doesn't mean anything at all
[Verse 2]

Oh comely
All of your friends are all letting you blow
Bristling and ugly
Bursting with fruits falling out from the holes
Of some pretty, bright and bubbly
Friend you could need to say comforting things in your ear
But, oh comely
There isn't such one friend that you could find here
Standing next to me, he's only my enemy
I'll crush him with everything I own

[Chorus]
Say what you wanna say
And hang for your hollow ways
Moving your mouth to pull out all your miracles aimed
For me

[Verse 3]
Your father made fetuses with flesh licking ladies
While you and your mother were asleep in the trailer park
Thunderous sparks from the dark of the stadiums
The music and medicine you needed for comforting
So make all your fat fleshy fingers to moving
And pluck all your silly strings and bend all your notes for me
And soft silly music is meaningful magical
The movements were beautiful, all in your ovaries
All of them milking with green fleshy flowers
While powerful pistons were sugary sweet machines
Smelling of semen all under the garden
Was all you were needing when you still believed in me

[Chorus]
Say what you wanna say
And hang for your hollow ways
Moving your mouth to pull out all your miracles aimed
For me

[Bridge]
Do do do, do do do, do
Do do do, do do do, do
Do do do, do do do, do

[Verse 4]
I know they buried her body with others
Her sister and mother and five-hundred families
And will she remember me fifty years later?
I wished I could save her in some sort of time machine
Know all your enemies
We know who our enemies are
Know all your enemies
We know who our enemies are

[Bridge]

La-la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la la la la

La-la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la la la la

Dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee

[Verse 5]

Goldaline, my dear

We will fold and freeze together

Far away from here

There is sun and spring and green forever

But now we move to feel

For ourselves inside some stranger's stomach

Place your body here

Let your skin begin to blend itself with mine

[Outro]

La-la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la la la la

La-la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la la la la

La-la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la-la

Dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee

"Holy shit!"³⁵Embed

In your memory, you're drunk on your awe to me

It doesn't mean anything at all

ANNOTATION:

The opening words of these lines begin with a continuation of the previous line with "In your memory," directly following "it isn't as pretty as you'd like to guess." The sensations and memories described in this verse are just that, memories; memories that never happened, nonetheless. The rose tinted view that nostalgic reflection and wishful thinking gives us does not affect reality.

Jeff's desire to know and be intimate with Anne, a major theme of the album, is ultimately futile. "It doesn't mean anything at all" is his moment of acknowledgement, emphasized by the comparison to Anne's permanently unexplored sexuality.

Chasing the only

Meaningful memory you thought you had left

With some pretty, bright and bubbly

Terrible scene that was doing her thing on your chest

But, oh comely

It isn't as pretty as you'd like to guess

ANNOTATION:

This is Jeff's exploration into the [fairly innocent sexual experimentation with another girl that Anne Frank recorded in her diary](#).

[I remember that once when I slept with jacque I had a strong desire to kiss her, and that I did do so. I could not help being terribly inquisitive over her body, for she had always kept it hidden from me. I asked her whether, as a proof of our friendship, we should feel one another's breasts, but she refused. I go into ecstasies every time I see the naked figure of a woman, such as Venus in my art history book, for example. It strikes me as so wonderful and exquisite that I have difficulty in stopping the tears rolling down my cheeks. If only I had a girlfriend!](#)

Jeff makes a veiled reference to breast-fondling with the "doing her thing on your chest" line; by Anne's account, this did not actually happen, although she very much wanted it to. The line "It isn't as pretty as you'd like to guess" likely refers to the fact that while the act never happened, Anne wishes it had, intoxicated by the prospect. This reflects the very clear and present yet impossible love that Jeff expresses for Anne throughout the album, which would be completely incompatible if she were solely attracted to women.

Much like Jeff's own fantasies in this song and those prior, he is commenting on the fact that Anne Frank never had nor will have a real chance to pursue these feelings, and how her perception of them (as personally valid as the feelings may be) is sensationalized and naïve.

Say what you wanna say

And hang for your hollow ways

ANNOTATION:

This lyric is an obvious metaphor. In the literal aspect of the song, he neglects the girl, being entirely ignorant to her as a person. He won't listen to anything she has to say, and she is quite dead to him.

This mirrors the way that the Nazis dehumanised the Jews through blatant and intentional ignorance. In this sense, "hang for your hollow ways" has a much more literal meaning, the Jews (he thinks mostly of Anne specifically) were killed for the Nazi's beliefs that Jews shouldn't be treated as people.

"Hollow ways" likely describes Nazi dehumanisation of the Jews; "hollow" as in lacking something eminently human, they were somehow not the same, not as good as the pure German race.

Do do do, do do do, do

Do do do, do do do, do

Do do do, do do do, do

ANNOTATION:

The improvised sounds Jeff uses are reminiscent of *nigunim*, a form of Jewish prayer involving repeated phrases like "dai-dai", a shortened form of "dayenu", the Hebrew word for "enough", or "bim-bam", a shortened form of the English word "cherub", to a certain tune.

Here is an example of a *nigun* to the tune of the French national anthem, "[La Marseillaise](#)".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T63gRGuZP7k>

This is logically a piece of evidence towards the theory that *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea* is about the life of [Anne Frank](#), the posthumously famous Holocaust victim and diarist.

"Holy shit!"

ANNOTATION:

Jeff Mangum recorded this entire song- guitar, as well as vocals- in just one take. The "Holy shit!" heard here is a relic left from a stunned band member who was recording the session, but it's unknown who exactly it was.

From Kim Cooper's 33 1/3 book on *In the Aeroplane over the Sea*:

Surprisingly, "Oh Comely," at 8:18 the longest song on the album, was recorded in a single take by Jeff by himself. The other musicians clustered around [producer] Robert [Schneider] in the control booth and in the tiny adjacent room for what they thought was just a test take as Jeff tried out the mic placement. Robert remembers feeling claustrophobic, with maybe twenty people standing around him. The rooms were laid out so Robert could hear Jeff's playing through the speakers, but also ambiently through the air. Although he was only supposed to play a verse or two, Jeff powered through the song, stunning his friends with a beautiful, passionate performance no less amazing for the uncontrolled moments when he veers out of tune. At the finish, everyone burst into spontaneous cheers and applause---you can hear someone, possibly Scott Spillane, yell "Holy shit!" at the end of the track if you listen closely. The final version is almost exactly what Jeff played that day, with the addition of horn overdubs and a couple of places where Robert went in and doubled the vocal.

We know who our enemies are

ANNOTATION:

[Like earlier](#), our enemies here are actually *ourselves*—the parts of us who hurt the people we love, the parts of us who leave instead of staying.

This connects to the theme of time and time travel that runs throughout *ITAOTS*. If we had a time machine, which choices would we make differently? Who would we save?

But, oh comely

There isn't such one friend that you could find here
Standing next to me, he's only my enemy
I'll crush him with everything I own

ANNOTATION:

The girl has no one, and the narrator wants to kill the part of him who deserted her due to feelings of guilt. He is his *own* enemy.

This is possibly connected to the song "[Two Headed Boy](#)", with its themes of dual identity and rejecting the self.

Notice the connection here to the climax of the song: "We know who our enemies are".

Thunderous sparks from the dark of the stadiums

The music and medicine you needed for comforting

ANNOTATION:

<http://images.rapgenius.com/0d0829c68a016919361d9741740f8d78.630x420x1.jpg>

The protagonist of the song, a troubled teenage girl, feels disconnected from her father and lives in relative poverty, but takes solace and "comforting" in the "thunderous sparks" of arena rock and metal concerts in "the dark of the stadiums." This inspires her to play her own songs in the next line.

The movements were beautiful, all in your ovaries

ANNOTATION:

This is a double entendre that builds on the music/sex metaphor:

1. A movement can be a musical section, that is, "a unit of a larger work that may stand by itself as a complete composition. Such divisions are usually self-contained. Most often the sequence of movements is arranged fast-slow-fast or in some other order that provides contrast." [Benward & Saker (2009), Music in Theory and Practice: Volume II.]([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_\(music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_(music))) Note that "Oh Comely" is arranged exactly like this, although its parts do not compose full-fledged movements in musical terms.
2. The different positions performed during the sexual act.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/6dc6229315e1ce7ab73b007a2a167773.560x406x1.png>

All of them milking with green fleshy flowers

While powerful pistons were sugary sweet machines
Smelling of semen all under the garden

ANNOTATION:

This is so full of sexual innuendo I don't even know where to start.

The green bit of green fleshy flowers describes the scene. They are making love in a garden; and while a flower of flesh usually refers to pussy in poetical terms, I'm bent to thinking that we can also understand it by it's phallic resemblance due to the line that follows-- perhaps a knowing call back to [The King Of Carrot Flowers](#).

<http://images.rapgenius.com/6148fa8d3b1ae1ad0cfa21fde5defb5a.236x329x1.jpg>

A piston is a device used to control the passage of air in brass instruments in order to bend all the notes that it can achieve. It's phallic shape and being referred to as powerful conveys masculine potency, furthermore being an instrument that one must blow into strongly suggest that there is a blowjob going on -- add this to the fact that "milk" and "sugary sweet" both refer to the palate, while "milk" also bears a strong resemblance with semen, and voilà. After all, it has already been said that the comely girl can pull out miracles with her mouth. In the narrative of the song, we can also understand that this is part of the music they are listening to in which the brass comes in, full crescendo.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/a95f28d92589ecd0633c168ec7e37171.1000x779x1.jpg>

Finally the climax comes and there is semen all over the place -- note that the music also gets faster and stronger. The garden here is a double entendre, it refers both to the place in which they are and to the feminine garden of delights, located in-between the thighs, a.k.a *The Origin of the World* by Gustave Courbet:

<http://images.rapgenius.com/0e74f50b7020460825c9bb700a3068d0.1000x827x1.jpg>

Ghost

Ghost Lyrics[Verse 1]

Ghost, ghost, I know you live within me feel as you fly
In thunderclouds above the city into one that I
Love with all that was left within me til we tore in two
Now wings and rings and there's so many waiting here for you
And she was born in a bottle-rocket in 1929
With wings that ringed around a socket right between her spine
All drenched in milk and holy water pouring from the sky
I know that she will live forever, she won't ever die

[Chorus]

And she goes and now she knows she'll never be afraid
To watch the morning paper blow into a hole
Where no-one can escape
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee

[Verse 2]

And one day in New York City, baby, a girl fell from the sky
From the top of a burning apartment building 14 stories high
And when her spirit left her body, how it split the sun
I know that she will live forever, all goes on and on and on

[Chorus]

And she goes and now she knows she'll never be afraid
To watch the morning paper blow into a hole
Where no-one can escape
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee8Embed

All drenched in milk and holy water pouring from the sky

ANNOTATION:

This is a reference to Anne's purity. Milk is often used to represent youth and innocence. <http://images.genius.com/ea3a60f60d8989bad046230706ba0103.500x417x1.jpg>

To watch the morning paper blow into a hole

Where no-one can escape
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee
Deee-dee-dee-dee

ANNOTATION:

Jeff Magnum is perhaps stating that Anne/The Anne Frank Inspired Character/Himself should not fear death as through the media (symbolized here with the largest form at the time of Anne's death; Newspapers) we will be remembered.

Every event that has ever been called historic, and for that matter any event that has been remembered by a vast group of people has undergone a process of being recorded by the media.

<http://images.genius.com/47d69bbf23e898ed8a08d59e48f7da80.1000x724x1.jpg>

This could also be Jeff expressing his view on [Nazi Propaganda](#), and how throughout the regime, it worsened until people pretty much believed everything [Adolf Hitler](#) and his party forced upon them.

<http://images.genius.com/f07cc8005bf0dd854dc1e6da15608dd9.1000x676x1.jpg>

Her body, how it split the sun

I know that she will live forever, all goes on and on and on

ANNOTATION:

After death, the characters throughout the album find peace as their souls transcend beyond the tragedy of their mortality.

And one day in New York City, baby, a girl fell from the sky

From the top of a burning apartment building 14 stories high

And when her spirit left

ANNOTATION:

Mangum explores a different tragedy, one that may be more common in our current society than death caused by a mass genocide of a human race.

In New York City, in the 80s and 90s, landlords might burn down an apartment building in order to collect insurance money, as many buildings were in extreme disrepair, and could not legally be rented out. The East Village was notorious for this, and there are many stories of squatters being killed in this fashion. I can't say for sure, but I wonder if this is what Jeff is referring to in this line.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there were often fires in textile factories housed on tall apartments, and girls would often jump out of the windows to their deaths.

I know that she will live forever, she won't ever die

ANNOTATION:

In *The Diary of a Young Girl*, Anne Frank professed she no longer feared death, "I've reached the point where I hardly care whether I live or die. The world will keep on turning without me, and I can't do anything to change events anyway. I'll just let matters take their course and concentrate on studying and hope that everything will be all right in the end."

The line "And she goes and now she knows she'll never be afraid" was used in an earlier Neutral Milk Hotel song called "My Dream Girl Don't Exist". In the album's lyrics sheet, "she won't ever die" is changed to "all won't ever die".

And she was born in a bottle-rocket in 1929

With wings that ringed around a socket right between her spine

ANNOTATION:

[Anne Frank](#) was born in Frankfurt, Germany on June 12, 1929 to parents Otto and Edith Frank.

<http://images.genius.com/c3e78ac285c713fe8c6a56d3ae3509bb.250x336x1.jpg>

This lyric has a vast contextual importance, as by 1929 many things had began to build up, including [The Wall Street Crash](#) and the [Nazi Regime](#).

Ghost, ghost, I know you live within me feel as you fly

In thunderclouds above the city into one that I

Love with all that was left within me til we tore in two

Now wings and rings and there's so many waiting here for you

ANNOTATION:

Jeff Mangum explained to [Puncture Magazine](#) the song derived from the idea of a ghost existing within his home.

When I started writing "Ghost," the song that goes [he sings] "Ghost ghost I know you live within me," we thought we had a ghost living in the house, in the bathroom. So I locked the door and started to sing to the ghost in the bathroom. But that was sort of like singing about the ghost who we thought was whistling in the other room, and that kept waking me up, and then also a ghost that may or may not live within me. And it ended up being a reference to Anne Frank, too. A lot of the songs on this record are about Anne Frank."

Mangum refers to the ghost as "whistling", which may have influenced the outro of this song, where an eerie, theremin-like synthesizer (as well as Julian Kostner's singing saw) perform the vocal melody in his place. This could be interpreted as the song's titular ghost delivering the final lines.

[untitled]

[Instrumental]

ANNOTATION:

The climax of *In the Aeroplane over the Sea*, this untitled instrumental begins similarly to many other songs on the album, albeit without the vocals of Jeff Mangum. Accompanied by arcade-like synths, Jeff strums a simple chord progression of E to B before some extremely distorted guitars and drums come in, turning the song into a manic, triumphant march that contrasts the slow dirge of ["The Fool"](#), the album's other instrumental. The untitled instrumental is led by what sounds to be a bagpipe, blasting a melancholy celebration of life to contrast the stories of death that bookend the track. Just when the song seems it cannot get any more boisterous, all the instruments drop out, leaving just Jeff's guitar and the bagpipes, before all return alongside some backing vocals. The song reaches a final climax that ends on a massive, blasting E chord.

Many interpret this track as a celebration of the life of Anne Frank. At this point in the album's arc, Jeff has [learned of Frank](#), [fallen in love with her](#), [fallen into despair over her passing](#), and [come to terms with her death](#), and the untitled instrumental serves as the emotional crescendo that comes with the realization that Frank will always be alive as long as her story is told.

Two-Headed Boy, Pt. Two

Two-Headed Boy, Pt. Two Lyrics[Verse 1]

Daddy, please hear this song that I sing
In your heart there's a spark that just screams
For a lover to bring a child to your chest
That could lay as you sleep
And love all you have left like your boy used to be
Long ago wrapped in sheets warm and wet

[Verse 2]

Blister please, with those wings in your spine
Love to be with a brother of mine
How he'd love to find your tongue in his teeth
In a struggle to find secret songs that you keep
Wrapped in boxes so tight
Sounding only at night as you sleep

[Bridge]

And in my dreams you're alive and you're crying
As your mouth moves in mine, soft and sweet
Rings of flowers 'round your eyes and I'll love you
For the rest of your life when you're ready

[Verse 3]

Brother, see we are one in the same
And you left with your head filled with flames
And you watched as your brains fell out through your teeth
Push the pieces in place
Make your smile sweet to see, don't you take this away
I'm still wanting my face on your cheek

[Bridge]

And when we break, we'll wait for our miracle
God is a place where some holy spectacle lies
When we break we'll wait for our miracle
God is a place you will wait for the rest of your life

[Outro]

Two headed boy, she is all you could need
She will feed you tomatoes and radio wires
And retire to sheets safe and clean
But don't hate her when she gets up to leave
(creaking, guitar hitting floor, footsteps)²¹Embed

Daddy, please hear this song that I sing

In your heart there's a spark that just screams

ANNOTATION:

The album starts with the perspective of a friend of someone with dysfunctional family and suicidal father.

Now it's coming full circle (or ring) when the actual son/daughter asks for catharsis

Jeff is using Anne's story to understand the present

(creaking, guitar hitting floor, footsteps)

ANNOTATION:

This ties in to the last line of the album, as Jeff is getting up to leave, just like the girl mentioned in the song. This symbolism also clearly relates to Jeff's musical career. He finished the album, and was satisfied because he felt he'd been able to express everything he wanted through the music of Neutral Milk Hotel and simply did not need to make more.

He did help out others with their music, and contributed to a few different projects, but with his own narrative, everything was complete.

Much like the album's themes of death, he is putting his songwriting to rest and only embarking on a few tours and scattered live shows to display the thing he has created, scattering the ashes of his music over everyone interested in hearing it.

For a lover to bring a child to your chest

That could lay as you sleep
And love all you have left like your boy used to be

ANNOTATION:

At the end your inner child will come back in the form of your own child interested in the same kind of things that you used to consider important. Thus, the balance is restored and you become a wiser, tender person, learning from a new little child that is seemingly similar to you. All in all, you recover some emotional stability and transcendence "in life". That's why, afterwards, Mangum will sing: God is a place where some holy spectacle lies, i.e., life itself.
<http://images.rapgenius.com/d91a171293912ae5bb132e0560e99221.425x640x1.jpg>

Also, think about the concept of the "two headed boy". The father had a newborn child that didn't have any disabilities or deficiencies. It's easier for the father to love and appreciate this child, because it is normal. Also the last line can be taken much more literal. As kids grow older and become adults, they grow apart from their parents. They argue, and have different ideas about the world. It's easier for a parent to love a child when they are younger and more innocent.

Blister please, with those wings in your spine

Love to be with a brother of mine
How he'd love to find your tongue in his teeth
In a struggle to find secret songs that you keep
Wrapped in boxes so tight
Sounding only at night as you sleep

ANNOTATION:

These lines are definitely a reference to Anne Frank. In fact it's likely the predominant (and perhaps sole) reference. Looking back at "[Ghost](#)" we have the lines:

And she was born in a bottle-rocket, 1929 /
With wings that ringed around a socket / right between her spine

As that is one of the most explicit references to Anne Frank (1929 being her birth year), it stands to reason this is as well.

That said, as this song essentially combines the themes of all previous songs (mother, father, baby, love/lust, siblings, meeting and leaving, etc.). The Anne Frank reference, though definite, could be trivial, meaning that all previous characters and themes throughout the album are becoming interchangeable.

Mangum is known for piecing together songs with old material and themes amongst the new, similar to the amalgamation of symbols in the album's climax. In this light, *blister* is perhaps another reference to Goldalene from "[Oh Comely](#)," the 8th track of the album.

Goldalene has sacrificed herself to keep her sister alive (being a conjoined twin comes with many complications), which has left a big blister on her side where she used to live. These lines are also reminiscent of the first track of the album - "[The King Of Carrot Flowers Part 1](#)" - in which Mangum sings:

[And your mom would stick a fork right into daddy's shoulder / And dad would throw the garbage all across the floor / As we would lay and learn what each other's bodies were for](#)

Some interpretations offer the idea that the above lyrics refer to half siblings, which could indicate "Two Headed Boy Pt. 2" as an intertwining story about his half-brother's theoretical sexual relationship with the now-separated twin girl. However, in Kim Cooper's [33 1/3 book on Aeroplane](#), she explains that the song's original lyrics may have bearing on the end product's meaning:

A few months before the album was recorded, Jeff was singing *Aeroplane*'s final song with slightly, yet significantly, different lyrics. The changes are telling, because they suggest that this song, one of the most beautiful on the record, is part of the Anne Frank cycle. The early "Sister please" becomes the euphonious, but nonsensical, "Blister please" on the album.

"Blister," however, in keeping with the upper section of this annotation, is a portmanteau of "brother" and "sister," further lending credibility to the blending and mixing of symbols here in the end.

For the rest of your life when you're ready

ANNOTATION:

The promise of love that sadly came too late, this is Jeff realizing how much he loves Anne, and putting forward his love for her. This could be seen as a desperate attempt, as Anne Frank has long been dead.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/ecc81b7aff420cfbe2629e311d630038.1000x664x1.jpg>

In Jeff Mangum's famous performance of an earlier version of this song at "Jittery Joe's", he replaces this line with

"And I'll love you, **Nineteen forty and five**"

This line shows that the song was originally meant to tie into the Anne Frank theme of the album.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRw9NqvOM9M>

As your mouth moves in mine, soft and sweet

ANNOTATION:

Her mouth moving in his refers to Mangum reading Anne Frank's diary in the voice he imagines her to have (soft and sweet); this connection is so close it feels like a kiss (also soft and sweet). "Soft and sweet" comes from a repeated line in the [title track](#) as well.

Rings of flowers 'round your eyes and I'll love you

ANNOTATION:

Reference to the same imagery from "[Holland, 1945](#)". "Rings" was part of a prominent quote in *The Diary of a Young Girl* as well:

I see the eight of us in the Annex as if we were a patch of blue sky surrounded by menacing black clouds. . . . [They loom] before us like an impenetrable wall, trying to crush us, but not yet able to. I can only cry out and implore, "**Oh ring, ring**, open wide and let us out!"

Brother, see we are one in the same

And you left with your head filled with flames
And you watched as your brains fell out through your teeth
Push the pieces in place
Make your smile sweet to see, don't you take this away
I'm still wanting my face on your cheek

ANNOTATION:

Some people close to Jeff Mangum say that this strophe is about a brother of a very close friend to Jeff, who had committed suicide. This made Jeff even more sad than ever (he was already sad after reading Anne's Diary). The family of that guy was very sad, but Jeff was trying to say that they should think good things about him, not the bad things that he had committed.

In her diary, Anne wrote about a dream she had about a boy she knew named Peter, and mentioned how she enjoyed the feeling of his cheek on hers. Later on in her diary she mentions how with Peter (the one she was living in the annex with, not the one from the dream) she enjoyed laying/sitting with him, and feeling his cheek. Jeff has taken this as a way to express the wanting of intimacy with the person mentioned here.

And in my dreams you're alive and you're crying

ANNOTATION:

As the final song on the album, Anne Frank's presence remains consistent and definitive as the underlining concept of *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea*. Jeff Mangum told [Pitchfork](#) that his understanding of world history was limited to the point of being almost nonexistent. Upon realizing this he picked up [The Diary of a Young Girl](#) and devoured the book within two days, then spent three days crying. Mangum expressed that while reading the young girl's diary, she was alive to him, prompting him to write *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea*.

And when we break, we'll wait for our miracle

God is a place where some holy spectacle lies
When we break we'll wait for our miracle
God is a place you will wait for the rest of your life

ANNOTATION:

'God' as expressed in the song is an all encompassing holy entity that can be felt everywhere around the characters of the album. Once they pass, they will 'break' free from their captivity on earth and their souls will be released to the universe. They, however, will not depart to heaven, as assumed in all the monotheistic religions, they instead will 'wait' for their divine miracle. The fact that they will be waiting for eternity for their holy miracle may imply a double meaning to the second line - God and the holy spectacle may both be "lies".

This is perhaps one of the darkest moments in the album, an admission of sorts to the self that if the Nazis were able to come to such power on a base of senseless murder and genocide, it's a ridiculous idea that God could exist and allow it (heavily contrasting ["The King of Carrot Flowers, pt. 2"](#) and its admission of love for Jesus, implying growth of a character in the album). Without God, there will be [no cloud to meet on](#) and no happy ending for Jeff and Anne.
