

Notes:

Lines cross-referenced in the poem appear verbatim unless otherwise noted.

### *Epigram*

Cf. *The Sound and the Fury*, William Faulkner

### *Absence*

Line 1: Cf. “Keeping Things Whole,” Mark Strand: “In a field/I am the absence/of the field.”

Line 14: Cf. “To the Reader,” Charles Baudelaire: trans. James McGowan. “Our sins are stubborn, our contrition lax”

Lines 26-28: Adapted from “The Dead Flag Blues,” Godspeed You! Black Emperor. According to interviews, the spoken word section comes from an unfinished screenplay written by guitarist Efrim Menuck. “The car’s on fire, and there’s no driver at the wheel.”

Lines 31-35: Cf. “Zone,” Guillaume Apollinaire; trans. Ron Padgett. The lines in French read, “between the street Aumot-Thiéville and the avenue des Ternes.”

Line 37: “Playing Possum,” Earl Sweatshirt (a.k.a. Thebe Neruda Kgositsile). The line is drawn from the name only.

Lines 49-51: Cf. *The Unquiet Grave*, Cyril Connolly. “There are but two ways to be a good writer: like Homer, Shakespeare or Goethe, to accept life completely, or like Pascal, Proust, Leopardi, Baudelaire, to refuse ever to lose sight of its horror.”

Lines 53-55: Cf. Canto 3 of Dante Alighieri’s *The Inferno*. The translated lines read, “THROUGH ME THE WAY INTO ETERNAL SORROW./ THROUGH ME THE WAY AMONG THE LOST PEOPLE./ ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE.” Trans. Robert M. Durling. Capitalization original. These are words inscribed on the gates of hell.

Lines 62-63: Cf. *The Waste Land* T.S. Eliot, “What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow”

Lines 65-66: A common finger-picking technique among guitarists is to keep a quarter note pulse on the root note of a chord with your thumb.

Lines 75-77: According to legend, composer Sergei Rachmaninoff wrote “Prelude in C# Minor” after waking from a dream in which he was attending his own funeral.

Line 77: Painter Jackson Pollock would use toothbrushes to spread the paint across his canvas

Line 78: Snaketime is a term used by a composer who went by the name “Moondog,” which he described as “a slithery rhythm, in times that are not ordinary.” He wrote in this time signature because, according to him, “I’m not gonna die in 4/4 time.”

Lines 82-86: Cf. Luke 1:46-48

### *Meaning*

Line 1: Cf. Song 243, John Berryman

Line 5: “The poet is the priest of the invisible.” Wallace Stevens

Line 19: Cf. “The Tennis Court Oath,” John Ashbery.

Line 23: Cf. “The Fish,” Marianne Moore

Line 23: Cf. *Tender Buttons*, Gertrude Stein. “What language could instruct a fellow.”

Line 30: See *Absence*, Lines 75-77

Lines 31-32: “Prelude,” E.E. Cummings.

Line 39: This line is adapted from two sonnets in Rainer Maria Rilke’s collection, *Sonnets for Orpheus*. One is entitled “1:11,” the other “2:1.” The lines in English read, “Scan the Heaves, you invisible poem!” Trans. Christiane Marks.

Line 40: Cf. “Hyperballad,” Bjork. “I go through all this/Before you wake up.”

Lines 49-50: These lines are adapted from the song “Fear of the Unknown and The Blazing Sun,” Colin Stetson. At the beginning of the song, Laurie Anderson reads, “Of all the wires, it was the wires, that were the wires for empathy.”

Line 55: Cf. “Bad Blood,” Arthur Rimbaud. “I have the white blue eyes of my Gallic ancestors.”

Line 56: Cf. “Fulbright Scholars,” Ted Hughes. “Your Veronica Lake bang. Not what it hid.” The poem is addressed to his late wife, Sylvia Plath.

Line 57: Cf. "Personal Poem," Frank O'Hara. "I have only two charms in my pocket/an old roman coin Mike Kanemitsu gave me."

### *Fear*

Lines 5-6: Cf. "Traction in the Rain," David Crosby.

Lines 11-12: Cf. "Five Poems," Frank O'Hara

Line 15: Estragon is one of the two protagonists in *Waiting for Godot*, though their names are never said outright in the play.

Line 19: The refrain "I am forever waiting" appears repeatedly in the poem "I Am Waiting," by Laurence Ferlinghetti.

Line 20: Cf. *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare. "Frailty, thy name is woman!"

Lines 23-28: This stanza is built from the description Dan gives of a recurring nightmare he has in the film *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch.

Line 32: The kingdoms of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone for being full of sin.

Lines 36-39: In Paul Thomas Anderson's "There Will Be Blood," protagonist Daniel Plainview says these words to an individual he believes to be his brother.

Lines 45-46: Cf. The opening lines of Laszlo Krasznahorkai's *Seiobo There Below*

Line 47: "From No Part of Me Could I Summon a Voice," Colin Stetson. Reference is in name only.

### *Despair*

Line 1: Cf. *The Executioner's Song*, Norman Mailer. Gary Gilmore says, "See you in the darkness," to his brother Mikhail, in their last exchange before his death. Prior, Mikhail and Gary's mother had been fighting to postpone the date of Gary's execution

Lines 2-5: These lines are constructed from the description of Gary Gilmore's execution in the above text.

Line 8: The stage directions for Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* begin: "A country road. A tree."

Line 10: Cf. "gay chaps at the bar," Gwendolyn Brooks. "We knew how to order. Just the dash/ Necessary."

Line 17: Cf. *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare.

Line 20: Cf. "The Walls Do No Fall," H.D.

Lines 25-28: This stanza is adapted from the closing monologue of "Synecdoche, New York," by Charlie Kaufman

Lines 30-32: Luke 1:78-79

Lines 35: Cf. The closing lines of *Absalom! Absalom!*

Lines 38-39: In *Macbeth*, King Macbeth is promised immortality so long as Birnam Wood, the forest outside his kingdom, doesn't come to Dunsinane.

Lines 41-42: The first section of *The Waste Land* is entitled "The Burial of the Dead." Its final stanza beings: "Unreal City./ Under the brown fog of a winter dawn./ A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many."

Line 43: In an episode of the television series *The West Wing*, deputy Chief of Staff Joshua Lymon is being evaluated for, and is eventually diagnosed with, PTSD. At one point, an aid turns to Josh and says "The bitter taste in your mouth was adrenaline."

Line 46: "Maybe every novelist wants to write poetry first, finds he can't, and then tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And, failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing." William Faulkner

### *Silence*

Lines 1-5: Cf. *Underworld*, Don Delillo

Lines 9-14: Cf. "Dejeuner du Matin," Jacques Prevert. "and he left/under the rain/without a word/and i put/my head in my hands/and i cried."

### *Peace*

Line 1: Cf. "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," Charles Wright.

Line 2: Cf. *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Line 3: Cf. “Running Up That Hill,” Kate Bush.

Line 8: A reference to “Cold Was the Ground, Dark Was the Night,” Blind Willie Johnson.

Line 11: “Rememory” is a term used by author Toni Morrison, most commonly in her novel *Beloved*. It is meant to define the ways in which we re-live our memories: going beyond remembrance, the ways our memories can manifest themselves in our lives, almost as if they were still happening in real time.

Lines 15-17: Cf. “Cantiga 31: The Empty Grave” *The Cosmic Canticle*, Ernesto Cardenal

Lines 23-25: Exodus 20:18-19

Line 24: “What the Thunder Said” is the final section of *The Waste Land*.

Lines 26-27: Both a reference to “Pink Moon” by Nick Drake and the opening line of *The Waste Land*, “April is the cruelest month.”

Line 28: Cf. “daybed,” FKA Twigs (a.k.a Tahliah Debrett Barnett). “child-like is my answer.”

Line 36: Cf. “Motion Picture Soundtrack,” Radiohead.