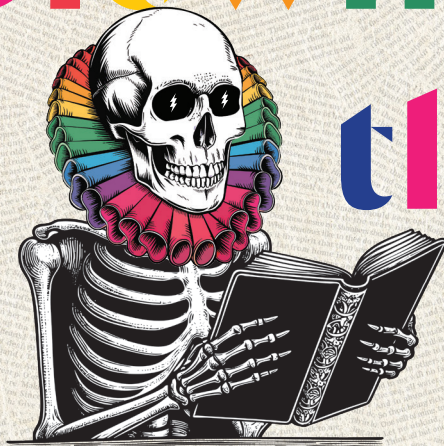


Clowns in the Burial Ground



THE GRATEFUL DEAD, LITERATURE,
AND THE LIMITS OF PHILOSOPHY

Christopher K. Coffman

Clowns in the Burying Ground



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THE GRATEFUL DEAD,
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THE LIMITS *of* PHILOSOPHY

DUKE

Christopher K. Coffman

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For Kathleen

If I had the world to give . . .

And for Beckett, Dashiell, and Sidney

Let the words be yours

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Note on Sources

I follow, throughout this book, the titles and lyrics of Grateful Dead songs as presented in Alan Trist and David Dodd's *The Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*. Rather than cite each lyric individually, I rely on their collection as the authoritative source. Fans of the Grateful Dead will know that there are some variations between sung lyrics and published lyrics, and also between the Trist and Dodd collection and other reliable sources for lyrics such as Robert Hunter's *A Box of Rain*. I believe Trist and Dodd provide a consistency and authority that strikes the best balance among competing versions of the lyrics and titles.

Dates, locations, and setlists of most Grateful Dead concerts are generally well documented. Nevertheless, the records of some performances, especially in the band's early years, are more obscure and not infrequently incomplete. I have relied on *DeadBase 50*, compiled and edited by John W. Scott, Stuart Nixon, and Michael Dolgushkin, for all information of this sort.

Bob Dylan's career is much entangled with that of the Grateful Dead. He changes the lyrics to many of his songs, sometimes substantially, in performance. In the interest of achieving some level of consistency, and rather than cite each of his lyrics individually, I rely on Dylan's official website (<https://www.bobdylan.com/songs/>) as the authoritative source for his song lyrics.

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Introduction
BEYOND DESCRIPTION:
ART AT THE LIMIT

A central contention of this book is that the Grateful Dead engaged the literary tradition to a degree that is woefully underrecognized. A corollary argument is that the literary tradition provided the band with terms to articulate, and to interrogate, the concerns and challenges it faced at various points in its career. The band's participation in this tradition took many forms. In terms of social history, the band was friendly, and sometimes shared the stage, with a number of contemporary poets and novelists. Too, individual band members frequently expressed interest in particular texts and authors. Likewise, many notable authors wrote about the band, with a greater or lesser degree of appreciation, not infrequently acknowledging the inspiration the Grateful Dead's music and lyrics provided. Perhaps more important than these personal ties and predilections are the many intertextual connections between the literary canon and Grateful Dead song lyrics. At one fairly superficial level, these connections were expressed via allusion—the lyrics of the songs adopted images, motifs, and expressions from a wide array of texts. Yet, more complex varieties of intertextuality are evident in the lyrics as well, including the inflections of particular genres and modes of literary expression and the perspectives and conventions defined by the governing assumptions of one or another literary movement or era. While all the aforementioned aspects of the Grateful Dead's literary identity will be treated more extensively in the following chapters, this introduction considers an even more fundamental connection between the Grateful Dead and literature: the degree to which its lyrics engage certain problems in philosophical aesthetics that have been central to the Western tradition for almost the entirety of the modern era.

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Courting the Fragment

An entrance to the Grateful Dead's engagement with some of the foundational problems of philosophical aesthetics can be found in remarks by band members themselves on the lyrical and musical elements of their compositions. Guitarist Jerry Garcia often remarked on his fondness for fragmentary song lyrics—ones that fall somewhere short of exhaustive conceptual completion or narrative conclusion. In a 1987 interview, for example, Garcia reflected on the contrast between lyricist Robert Hunter's original version of "Terrapin Station" and the one recorded and performed by the Grateful Dead: "He's got one version [that] has a beautiful conclusion, where everything comes together finally in the end. I prefer the open—you don't know what happened, we don't know what happened. . . . It's like the storyteller makes no choice—and neither do we. And neither do you, and neither does anybody else. I prefer that."¹ More than a decade earlier, Garcia articulated the point in more general terms:

Personally, I have this hang-up about songs, I'm fascinated by fragments. I'm fascinated by fragments because of my involvement in traditional music, there's a lot of things around that are fragments of songs, old traditional songs, and there'll be like this tantalizing glimpse of two or three verses of what was originally a thirty-verse extravaganza, and there'll be like two or three remaining stanzas left in the tradition, that you read them or hear them and they're just utterly mysterious and evocative, for odd reasons. . . . I like for a song to be speaking to the mysterious. . . . I like songs that are more evocative than, say, thought-provoking or obvious.²

It is worth noting that Garcia does not display any desire to reach for the complete traditional song of which only a part still exists. His point is, instead, that while a few lines or verses of an old song may have first been merely part of a whole, the independent presentations of those lines or verses have, over time, taken on new value. Furthermore, the significance that the surviving part of an earlier composition had in its original context seems less remarkable, to Garcia, than the "fragments" that have persisted and consequently become "utterly mysterious and evocative." Similar assessments of the appeal to the Grateful Dead of a song that enjoys a fullness and coherence in its incompleteness and narrative disjunction appear in a number of Garcia's and Hunter's other remarks.³ Intriguingly, Garcia's assertions that the fragmentary nature of those songs of which he is fondest provides their power are

more than somewhat reminiscent of his and other band members' remarks on the nature of the musical compositions that accompany such lyrics.

Of the Grateful Dead's many compositions, "Dark Star" is viewed by both musicians and fans as particularly notable. The special acclaim reserved for this piece is succinctly expressed in David Shenk and Steve Silberman's *Skeleton Key*: "'Dark Star' is considered . . . the ultimate . . . song, but the word 'song' doesn't do it justice. [It] is more an approach, a platform for exploration, a gate swinging open to THE ZONE."⁴ As these sentences assert, "Dark Star" is regarded as the Grateful Dead piece most open to musical adventurousness and most likely to deliver the magical, transformative experience that so many listeners sought when attending shows.⁵ Yet, it would be a misunderstanding to hear the song as being so entirely different from other Grateful Dead compositions as to be in its own category—not because it is not necessarily exceptional in itself, but because it bleeds into performances of all the band's material. Garcia once made exactly this point, saying, "'Dark Star' is a little of everything we do, all the time. . . . I mean, our whole second half is 'Dark Star,' you could say."⁶ The "second half" to which Garcia here refers is the second set of the standard-format Grateful Dead concert, during which the band tended to pursue the more innovative and outré improvisational possibilities in its music.

While Garcia makes significant claims about what we might call the meta-physical dimensions of music, in asserting that "Dark Star" is everywhere, in "everything," and "all the time," Grateful Dead keyboardist Tom Constanten poses the notion in a sense that is perhaps even more profound, arguing, "'Dark Star' is going on all the time. It's going on right now. You don't begin it so much as enter it. You don't end it so much as leave it."⁷ Bassist Phil Lesh made a similar point about the band's music in general, describing the phenomenon that occurs when everything is unfolding particularly well on stage as an opening to "the eternal moment . . . where music really lives." He adds, "Music is about bringing eternity to time."⁸ Lesh's perspective on the Grateful Dead's music, and Constanten's perspective on "Dark Star" in particular, frame its work as a receptiveness to a wellspring of musical possibility that exists outside the band. This understanding allows one to consider any performance of "Dark Star" (or any other Grateful Dead piece) as a portion of a much larger whole—a whole that resides in a seemingly eternal space to which the band has access, but which can only be partially exposed by individual performances. Together, Constanten's, Lesh's, and Garcia's comments propose that the Grateful Dead's music is situated within a framework that

transcends and contextualizes the music played by the band on a given night. From this perspective, each performance by the band is the result of the musicians' exploration of the limits of this framework and provides musicians and listeners alike with glimpses of the transformation of the potential into the actual. Celebrating "Dark Star" as the composition that most strongly foregrounds the idea that a given performance is only an evocative fragment of a piece that exists on a grander scale is remarkably like Garcia's comments about the power of the lyric fragment. In the cases of both lyrics and musical compositions, the Grateful Dead's performances would seem to derive some of their power from the suggestion of truths that resist total incorporation or expression within the bounds of a single piece, as offered on a given night.

Furthermore, one could approach the band's performances, beyond the specific nature of the lyrics sung or the music played, in terms of a similar model of parts evoking a greater whole. Whatever their individual strengths or shortcomings, on one night or across their careers, band members often described the Grateful Dead as much greater than the sum of its parts. One articulation of this dimension of the band's identity comes from Lesh, who points to the vision of "group mind" provided in Theodore Sturgeon's 1953 novel *More Than Human*. In that text, as Lesh explains, "the protagonists each have a single paranormal talent . . . and are joined by a quadruple paraplegic who acts as a central processing unit. The process by which they become one is called 'bleshing,' from a combination of *mesh* and *blend*."⁹ In a 1991 interview, Garcia makes a similar point, speaking of the individual members being subsumed by a "larger consciousness" when the band is at its best.¹⁰

That live performances by the Grateful Dead evoke something greater than the sum of individual contributions was sensed not only by the group, but by listeners as well. Bill Walker, who provided the cover art for the band's 1968 album *Anthem of the Sun*, writes:

I recall back in the late 60s or early 70s that the "entity" which sometimes manifested itself at a Dead show, when the Band and the audience seemed to achieve a transcendent state of rapport and unity, was affectionately referred to as The Beast. This was believed to be a manifestation of the sum total of energies of the Band, the audience and the location. The music was the breath and pulse, the audience its life and animation and the place gave its form (i.e., if the show was inside it had a different form than if was happening outside). There was no individual identity, one was just another part of the breathing, dancing, singing organism—like just another cell in the organism contributing

your energy to its life, and the organism in turn nourished and animated you.¹¹

What Walker calls “The Beast” would seem to be akin to what others call the “X-Factor” or “The Zone,” a special component of the very best Grateful Dead performances that resists easy description. While the vagueness of some of the terms used to describe this ineffable phenomenon point to mystery and the importance of place in its realization and shaping, Walker’s metaphor remains notable for its compatibility with the idea that whatever it is that emerges from the best Grateful Dead performances exists on a level that synthesizes and transcends setting, band, and audience. Others follow Walker in describing the power of the band’s best nights as animate. Drummer Mickey Hart “has said ‘the wolf walked’ after certain sets,” and famed mythographer Joseph Campbell regarded the synergy and ecstasy he observed at a Grateful Dead show as “Dionysus talking.”¹² While the terminology and conception change somewhat from commentator to commentator, such remarks demonstrate that many in and around the band regard even the very best performances as only a portion of a much greater whole—one that, at least metaphorically, has a life of its own.

Garcia’s comments on the evocative power of the lyric fragment, Constanten’s, Lesh’s, and Garcia’s assertions that the performance of an individual Grateful Dead piece articulates only part of a whole composition that eludes coherent expression, and the band’s and fans’ conclusions that the performances by individual musicians are but one element in a much grander and more complex process together highlight the degree to which many central aspects of the Grateful Dead, as conceived abstractly and as realized in performance, are shaped by an evocative encounter signaled by varieties of incompleteness. In recognizing the centrality of evocative incompleteness to the Grateful Dead’s work, one uncovers an important point at which its music intersects with a central concern of modern continental aesthetics—a concern that is fundamentally literary: the function of the fragment in expressing the limits of philosophy.

A Genealogy of the Literary-Philosophical Fragment

Few thinkers have done as much as Jean-Luc Nancy to articulate the import of the fragment for modern philosophy, and for this reason, some familiarity with his thought on this front is helpful. While Nancy has approached the philosophical value of the fragment from many perspectives across his career,

his most important consideration may be that undertaken with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in their *The Literary Absolute*. An attempt to understand better Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's discussion of the fragment may be aided by a reminder regarding its philosophical genealogy, which arguably begins with the disruptive implications for the philosophical subject of Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy.¹³ Prior to the eighteenth century, the subject was generally viewed as unitary and self-affirming—as, for example, in the Cartesian cogito. While the unsettling of the assumptions undergirding the pre-eighteenth-century subject was not among Kant's explicit intentions, it did grow out of his attempts to provide a more secure foundation for philosophical thought.¹⁴ Kant's overturning of traditional understandings of the subject is tied to his arguments regarding the multiple faculties involved in the process of forming knowledge about the world—faculties he describes across the first part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* roughly as follows: Humans apprehend things in the world at a “sensible,” or sensory, level (an “aesthetic” activity); the sensible is understood via a schematic judgment or evaluation of its content; and reason generates inferences based on these judgments (a “logical” activity). As this very brief summary suggests, Kant believes reason operates in the realm of Ideas, which are formed prior to, and thus remain independent of, the subject's experience of the sensible world. Consequently, Ideas cannot in themselves be represented sensibly, and the reasoning mind cannot consider things in the world directly, or at all, unless and until the sensible has been schematized by the imaginative work that makes them available to reason's conceptual and categorical principles.¹⁵ So, our knowledge of the world is therefore of “phenomena,” which is to say, of our representations of things; furthermore, while things in the world—or “noumena”—do exist, they are never knowable in themselves, but only as they have been subjected to those mental processes of representation that allow us to reason about them.¹⁶ In short, Kant's philosophy proposes a gap between our knowledge of things in the world and the things themselves; while this gap can be bridged by certain perceptual and intellectual faculties, it can never be closed.

Kant further proposes that the subject, in order to consider itself, submits itself to a similar process of representation. It is made an object of intellectual attention by representing itself to itself, in a fashion akin to that process of representation that transforms noumena into phenomena. Too, like noumena, the subject as it is in itself remains finally unknowable to itself. So, in place of immanent self-knowledge, Kant's conception of the subject is that of one that encounters itself as a representation; that is to say, the understanding of the subject is eminently an aesthetic one. In conceiving the process of

knowing the self on the same terms as the process of knowing the world, Kant sidesteps David Hume's proposal that the subject is little more than an epiphenomenon of empirical experience, while issuing a provocative challenge to pre-eighteenth-century conceptions of the subject. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy succinctly describe this challenge as a "hiatus introduced at the heart of the subject."¹⁷ The limit to self-knowledge Kant's transcendental philosophy proposes has many implications, three of which are most worth mention. First, the Kantian subject is not unitary, but something more like an empty form. Second, the Kantian subject is not self-affirming, but rather serves as an indication of a profound uncertainty. Because reason encounters an approximation behind which the actual self remains unknown, one must acknowledge the impossibility of achieving the sort of complete understanding of the self on which an authoritative system of knowledge could be based. Finally, Kant's argument leaves somewhat unaddressed the intriguing problems of whence the material that the self employs in its self-representation comes and why the self is compelled to reflect on itself in the first place.

There are several possible responses to the problems that Kant's arguments seem to produce. One influential option is that of German Idealism, as realized in the writings of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling and G. W. F. Hegel, via Friedrich von Schiller and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the latter of whom proceeds by turning away from those things in themselves that Kant suggests lie behind or beyond the phenomenal. In terms of the subject, Fichte articulates a position that is in some senses more Kantian than Kant's own arguments, defending the idea of a self-positing "I" that generates itself in an ongoing process of free invention.¹⁸ Hegel later follows a similar course of argument in his *Science of Logic*.¹⁹

Another path forward, more pertinent here, is pointed out by early German Romanticism, which partially takes shape within and thus overlaps with Idealism, although it diverges from it in some important regards. Philosophical Romanticism, beyond the work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, reached its maturity in a circle that formed in Jena and produced the short-lived *Athenaeum*, a journal that ran to six issues between 1798 and 1800. The Schlegels—August Wilhelm, Caroline, Friedrich, and Dorothea—were at the center of this concern, but several other major poets and thinkers were brought into its orbit. The group thus also includes, among others, Novalis, Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Fichte and Schelling. While significant differences could be observed between the position of the Romantics and the Idealism of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, the most germane here is the Romantic willingness to

accept the possibility—indeed, the productive necessity—of incompleteness: of a paradoxically unsystematic system that suggests the completion of philosophy outside of philosophy, or, perhaps more accurately, of the dissolution of the boundary between philosophy and a non-philosophical absolute (which is, for these thinkers, literature), that achieves something philosophy cannot. This conception of the absolute presents itself in the fragment, a form Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy declare to be “the romantic genre *par excellence*.”²⁰

A central terminological point must be emphasized before unpacking more fully how the fragment performs the sort of extra-philosophical work the Romantics ascribe to it, for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy use “fragment” in a specific fashion. They take pains to establish that the Romantic fragment with which they are concerned is distinct from a *Bruchstück*. The latter, German term describes the residue of an irrecoverable ensemble, and therefore primarily highlights the act of breaking. For example, *Bruchstück* could be used to describe a shard of pottery that provokes us to mourn the destruction of the decorated vase of which it was a part, or a verse from a now-lost song that calls us to think about the failures of sense resulting from the gaps in the lyrical text. While the Romantic fragment is not, they continue, a *Bruchstück*, they also want to remind readers that it is not complete. It is not the *pensée* or *maxim*, instances of which are like fragments in their brevity, but unlike them because their concision promises an exhaustive and self-contained entirety of a sort that the fragment avoids. So, the Romantic fragment is neither a partial remainder of a lost whole nor a unitary artifact. Instead, it is “a determinate and deliberate statement” that both elides the “dispersion or the shattering” of a work (unlike the *Bruchstück*) and “involves an essential incompleteness” (unlike the *pensée* or *maxim*).²¹ Thus, the accidental or involuntary nature of fragmentation stages a “plurality” that is “the exergue of the total, infinite work.”²² The Romantic fragment therefore falls short of achieving entire unity, but gestures toward the inexhaustible processes that underlie creative powers in general. The significance of the literary and philosophical implications of this position demands a more developed articulation of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s thought.

Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe on the Literary-Philosophical Fragment

Nancy arrives at his interest in the Jena Romantics and his specific formulation of the nature of the literary-philosophical fragment due to a line of thought that challenges the validity of Kant’s claims regarding the intellectual

purity of philosophical inquiry. Nancy explains in *Logodaedalus* that Kant wants to secure the space of philosophical discourse by following the example of the conceptual purity of mathematics, which can offer its insights with remarkable precision.²³ In this way, Kant aligns philosophical language with the eminently rigorous presentation of mathematics, and he also relegates all non-philosophical uses of language to the inferior position of mere “literature.” Yet, Nancy argues, Kant here makes an unsupported claim because the idea that the language of philosophy is somehow purer than the alternative implies the possibility of standing outside philosophical language to compare it to other kinds of writing—something one cannot do without hypocritically sacrificing the very position of philosophical purity one seeks to preserve. In this sense, the desire for philosophical precision reveals that what lies outside of philosophy is architectonic to and inaccessible within philosophy. Consequently, Nancy regards Kant’s assertion that philosophical language enjoys an exceptional conceptual clarity as problematic, insofar as philosophical invention is, from the first, entangled with literary invention in general; while a philosophical rigor may be conceptually maintained within certain bounds, the explanation of that rigorous philosophy requires presentation in language that is not philosophical in itself. To put this even more succinctly, as soon as thought presents itself, it becomes something other than philosophical thought. Nancy concludes that the literary exists in balance with philosophy, for the legitimacy of Kant’s attempt to articulate the autoproduction of philosophy has revealed its dependence on literature.

While Nancy’s observation regarding the inconsistency of Kant’s position is provocative, he was not the first to propose the interdependence of philosophy and literature: Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy find agreeable predecessors (via the intermediaries of Maurice Blanchot and Friedrich Nietzsche) in the Jena Romantics. These thinkers certainly recognize those relations between philosophy and literature toward which Nancy’s own thought leads. As Friedrich Schlegel concisely asserts in his critical fragment 115, “Poetry and philosophy should be made one.”²⁴ For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, this sort of claim declares a comfort with, and recognizes the importance of, exchanges between philosophical and non-philosophical expressions—as Kant’s arguments did not. The claim also highlights the power of the literary as conceived by the Romantics, for whom “romanticism is neither mere ‘literature’ . . . nor simply a ‘theory of literature.’ . . . Rather, it is *theory itself as literature* or, in other words, literature producing itself as its own theory”; they continue, “The literary absolute is also, and perhaps above all, this absolute *literary operation*.”²⁵ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s point is that literature properly

understood is both individual texts that unfold within certain bounds and also a set of tacit arguments about the nature of literature, the use of language, and the value of artistic expression in general. Literature is consequently an “absolute” because its individual works constantly engage questions about the nature of literature at a level that surpasses and contextualizes the nature of those individual works; just as, according to Nancy, literature surpasses and frames the language of philosophy. This absolute, then, is the point at which literary practice brushes up against philosophical thought. Here, literature is both philosophy and the limit of philosophy. It houses those intellectual spaces against which the narrowly philosophical defines itself by contrast, even as it operates via a more fundamental or encompassing authority.

Furthermore, the Jena Romantics’ conception of literature as an “operation” positions the literary absolute not as a rigid border, but as a context responsive to that which it contains. Neither a static nor a stagnant entity, true literature is a productive, fluctuant, and adaptive process rather than a completed task. Friedrich Schlegel declares, in *Athenaeum* fragment 116, that the “particular essence” of poetry is “that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected.”²⁶ Consequently, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy express philosophy and literature via the following formula: “*Work in progress* henceforth becomes the infinite truth of the work.”²⁷ According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, this early Romantic prioritization of production, in contrast to product, indicates an attraction to “the essence of poiesy, in which the literary thing produces the truth of production itself, and thus . . . the truth of the production *of itself*.”²⁸ This shift away from an exclusive concern with the nature of the literary work as understood entirely within its own bounds favors expansion over contraction and creation over inanition. For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, the “literary absolute” unites the finite and signals an unrepresentable infinite. Literature is therefore a kind of production that tacitly articulates the terms of its own production, enacting what philosophical understanding cannot.

A final point that makes the Jena Romantics attractive to Nancy is their conception of the nature of the productive activity that characterizes literature. As Blanchot asserts, “literature” signals for the Romantics “the totality of forms of expression,” and the term therefore includes not only the sort of obviously constructive activities one might expect to find when considering creative activity, but also the various related “forces of dissolution.”²⁹ The Romantics thus make space for incompleteness and discontinuity to be regarded as principles of form, rather than only as unproductive or disruptive forces.³⁰

Blanchot's arguments find their predecessors in Friedrich Schlegel's writings, which recognize the necessity of an interchange between order and disorder that demands one rethink the distinction between creation and destruction. In fragment 1048, for instance, he proposes, "When the end is reached, it should start again from the beginning, alternating between chaos and system, chaos preparing for the system and then a new chaos."³¹ Likewise, in his *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, he writes that the poetry of his era is marked by the inclusion of a certain kind of chaos: "a chaos of everything sublime, beautiful, and charming . . . like the Chaos of old out of which, according to legend, the world emerged."³² Such are the ideas that lead Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy to declare "chaos . . . the locus of possible generations, of potential production."³³ From this perspective, the creative work "is at once part and whole, in keeping with the fragmentary logic itself," as it "never ceases to assemble and disperse itself."³⁴

The idea of destruction as an act of creation is hardly new. Mikhail Bakunin, not the first to make the point, might have articulated it most forcefully when he introduced it into the political sphere in 1842, declaring, "The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!"³⁵ Yet, the Jena Romantics differ from Bakunin not only in their primary areas of intellectual interest, but also in the degree to which they emphasize the mystical role of the agent of creative destruction. Friedrich Schlegel, in his idea 131, writes, "To become an artist means nothing other than to consecrate oneself to the gods of the underworld. In the enthusiasm of annihilation, the meaning of divine creation is revealed for the first time." These sentences not only bridge the space between the death of the self and the emergence of truth but also precede, in Schlegel's text, a clause that anticipates the Grateful Dead's skull-and-lightning-bolt insignia, known to fans as a "Stealie": "Only in the midst of death does the lightning bolt of eternal life explode."³⁶

In this way, the Jena Romantics, and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy after them, find in the fragment a means to move from a consideration of the limits of philosophy to meditations on the power of literature, and from reflections on creative activity to interrogations of the nature of the artist. They also move from these topics to a response to Kant's reformulation of the subject. Following the Romantics, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy describe the creative act as a process that proceeds from the artist's dedication of the self to death—the event via which the terms of creation are discovered. These terms are likewise those they ascribe to the subject in general, which does not find itself so much as it creates itself by means of a dance between dissolution

and ambiguity on the one hand (with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's model found in Novalis) and between shaping and systematization on the other (following a "Schlegelian path").³⁷ From their perspective, in other words, one's efforts to think about the nature of artistic activity are of a piece with thinking about other creative activities, including the creation of the self. As they write, "We ourselves are implicated in all that determines . . . literature as auto-critique and criticism as literature. Our own image comes back to us from the mirror of the literary absolute."³⁸

The productive exchanges between creation and destruction that Nancy and the Jena Romantics discuss in relation to the subject are, in fact, anticipated somewhat in Kant, who adds yet another dimension to the point when he claims that the imagination works according to the terms of freedom.³⁹ One aspect of the subject's constituent freedom is a productive freedom-from, the security that celebrates nothingness as a space allowing presence; the other is a freedom-to, a liberty to organize experience into comprehensible representations. Hegel, too, affirms this understanding of the connection between freedom and the interplay of nothingness and creation, writing, "In its highest form . . . nothingness would be freedom. . . . This highest form is negativity insofar as it inwardly deepens itself to its highest intensity; and in this way it is itself affirmation."⁴⁰ Here, nothingness is a foundation of existence. Neither absent nor present, it is the necessary condition of creation, for it stages a playful tension out of which emerges that which exists. For Nancy, this necessity of freedom for thought is found at the shifting limit between the understood and the mysterious: "Every thinking is . . . a thinking about freedom at the same time that it thinks by freedom and thinks in freedom. It is no longer exactly a question here of the limit between the comprehensible and the incomprehensible. Or rather, what happens here in the free arising of thought, happens precisely on this limit, as the play or very operation of this limit. The limit of comprehending defines thinking. Thus thinking is always thinking about the incomprehensible—about this incomprehensible that 'belongs' to every comprehending, as its own limit."⁴¹

For these reasons, to produce a fragment—in Nancy's sense of the literary-philosophical fragment—is to court central mysteries that take shape in writing, at the limit of philosophy. The fragment is not only itself, but also a statement of the terms of its creation and the terms of creation in general. It figures artistic activity as well as the nature of the active subject, recalling the interplay between creation and destruction, and the freedom on which that exchange relies and from which it emerges.

Three Varieties of Incompletion: The Literary-Philosophical Fragment and the Lyrics of the Grateful Dead

As the preceding section of this introduction explains, the celebration of the fragment by Nancy and many of his predecessors in the Western philosophical tradition derives from their recognition that the fragment's incompleteness signals something much grander than itself: the fundamental mysteries of creation—mysteries that stand at the limits of rational comprehension and define artistic activity and the self in terms of the interplay of destructive and productive forces. While each of the various forms of incompleteness that characterize the concept of the Grateful Dead as a platform for creative exercise—including its appreciation of the evocative power of the lyrical fragment; the understanding that any one performance of a composition reveals only a part of its whole; and the sense that the contributions of one participant in a performance are relatively minor in comparison to the collective event engendered at the intersection of audience, musicians, and setting—lends itself to consideration in light of the literary-philosophical fragment, this book's interest in the literary valences of the Grateful Dead directs attention primarily to the manner in which its lyrics exemplify the several ways that it serves as a conduit for the creative and destructive energies at productive and endless play in the “eternal moment” to which the band and many listeners felt the ensemble offered access.

The chapters that follow this introduction explore the band's lyrics in relation to specific literary texts and contexts at key points across the Grateful Dead's career. In this section of the introduction, I undertake three preliminary interpretations in the interest of illustrating the viability of the approach used throughout. Each case touches on, in one or more senses, three arguments that will return in different forms throughout the succeeding chapters: first, that the lyrics of the most powerful Grateful Dead songs, in addition to doing whatever else they do, are always engaged in the ongoing critical project of teaching us how to listen to Grateful Dead songs; second, that the controlling idea of the band's best lyrics is found in “Terrapin Station,” particularly Hunter's claim that a true storyteller's “job is to shed light / and not to master”; and, third, that Nancy's discussion of the literary-philosophical fragment provides an interpretive guide that can help us to understand better how Grateful Dead songs open themselves to self-reflection and productive inconclusions. These broad similarities aside, each of the following three

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readings foregrounds a different aspect of the evocative power of the fragment. The first, a reading of “Dupree’s Diamond Blues,” considers how the complex narrative form of that piece transforms sources transmitted by the folk music tradition into a critical commentary on the processes of that transmission. The second reading, which addresses “Let It Grow,” focuses more explicitly on the literary tradition, particularly on how the songwriters have drawn on an ancient poetic genre to present the interplay between destruction and production that characterizes creation in general. The final interpretation below, of “Saint of Circumstance,” approaches that song as a reflection on the sort of playful indeterminacy that, Nancy argues, reveals a vision of the self as born out of a meditation on freedom undertaken at the limit of thought.

“Dupree’s Diamond Blues” allows listeners to see the degree to which Grateful Dead lyrics reshape traditional folk materials, both honoring their conventions and offering commentary on their reception and reinterpretation. The song also, especially in its handling of narrative form, calls listeners to engage in critical interpretation themselves. In other words, as much as the song reshapes a well-known folk story, it also acknowledges the complexity of that act, inviting listeners to consider its implications through meta-lyrical reflection. While this is a fair amount of work to accomplish within the bounds of a relatively short composition, Hunter and Garcia are helped by the strength of the piece’s traditional origins. The song draws on the conventions of murder ballads, and particularly examples of the “bad man” sub-genre written about the murderer Frank DuPre. The first of these compositions was recorded in 1925, only a few years after DuPre’s death, and several others soon followed. The audio recordings were joined, as early as 1926, by print transcriptions of unrecorded folk pieces on the same topic. Several such songs, notably versions by such relatively well-regarded performers as Brownie McGhee (1955), Dave Van Ronk (1959), Harry Belafonte (1962), and Peter, Paul, and Mary (1965), appeared on records in the decade or so before the Grateful Dead offered its own versions.⁴² In every case, the narrative follows the course of events in the last year or two of the killer’s life. Those familiar with “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” will recognize the skeleton of the historical tale. To secure the affection of Betty Andrews, DuPre undertook a desperate armed robbery of a jewelry store in Atlanta in 1921. In the process, he killed one man and badly wounded another. After a manhunt that spanned several states and garnered significant media attention, he was apprehended, tried, and sentenced to death by hanging, a punishment carried out in late 1922.⁴³

“Dupree’s Diamond Blues” was not the Grateful Dead’s first engagement with the story of DuPre and its presentation in popular song. The band

played a traditional piece devoted to the topic, “Betty and Dupree,” at least twice in 1966. The first known performance of that song by the Grateful Dead is from a rehearsal session on March 2. The second known version is live, from the December 1 show at the Matrix in San Francisco. Furthermore, Nicholas Meriwether asserts that two of Garcia’s pre–Grateful Dead folk music outfits, the Wildwood Boys and the Black Mountain Boys, featured the song in their coffeehouse-era performances.⁴⁴

While the 1966 performances of “Betty and Dupree” are strong for the era, the DuPre piece that the Grateful Dead offered a few years later, “Dupree’s Diamond Blues,” persisted much longer as part of the band’s repertoire. At least one account places the debut of this song in late 1968, but more likely contenders for the debut are January 20, 1969, during a studio session at Pacific Recording in San Mateo, and January 23, 1969, live at the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco. A studio recording was released on the album *Aoxomoxoa* later that year. Following the first half of 1969, “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” had an uneven performance history. It disappeared entirely for more than half a decade, reemerging with a handful of airings in 1977 and 1978, before winning a regular place in the rotation throughout most of the 1980s, and ultimately returning for two performances in the 1990s. Songs about DuPre were therefore in setlists from the very start, and they remained—particularly as “Dupree’s Diamond Blues”—a somewhat inconsistent presence throughout the band’s career.

An appreciation of the degree to which the Grateful Dead’s “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” both participates in the folk tradition and turns an acutely self-aware and critical eye on naive engagements with that tradition requires some consideration of its narrative structure. The arrangement of the song’s lyrics is fairly simple. With one exception, the verses and chorus each have four lines, with end rhymes in a rough AABB pattern. The first three verses are followed by a chorus, that sequence is repeated, and the whole is capped by a final verse. What is more intriguing about “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” than the structure of its verses and chorus are the shifting temporality and voicings of its narrative events. Consider some alternative approaches to the one Hunter uses. One option for the author of a popular song is to tell the tale entirely through a single diegetic or extradiegetic narrator.⁴⁵ An example of the former would be Ma Rainey’s mid-1920s version of a Stagger Lee song, “Stack O’ Lee Blues,” which is told entirely from the perspective of the titular killer’s girlfriend. Another song telling the Stagger Lee story, such as “Stack-erlee,” the 1947 Alan Lomax field recording of a singer named Bama at Parchman Farm, is slightly more complex. Primarily an instance of extradiegetic

narration, it contains several passages that directly introduce the voices of Stacklerlee and his victim, Billy Lyon. This inclusion of characters' voices provides a sense of immediacy and temporarily shifts the feel of the narrative in the direction of a first-person account, even though the song as a whole holds itself aloof from any single perspective in the world of the story.

Unlike many folk songs, those composed about DuPre were from the first more like Bama's approach to composing a Stagger Lee song, as is evident from examples included in Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson's 1926 collection *Negro Workaday Songs*. One version transcribed therein, simply titled "Dupree," begins in the third person ("Dupree was a bandit . . .") but offers a number of verses largely given over to first-person voices, always introduced directly with a similar formula, as in "Betty tol' Dupree," "Dupree tol' the Lawyer," "The judge tol' Dupree," and so forth.⁴⁶ Another DuPre song Odum and Johnson include foregrounds the act of telling in its very title, "Dupree Tol' Betty." In this case, listeners encounter the voices of the characters involved from the song's start, and the third-person narrative voice vanishes almost entirely, having been reduced to a formulaic mechanism for the direct introduction of characters' speech.⁴⁷ These tendencies demonstrate that, unlike many other folk songs—even examples of the "bad man" genre, such as those about Stagger Lee—songs about DuPre (and Betty) were composed from the beginning with an impressive variety of voices, one of which was often that of a narrator. This is true as well of the first DuPre song played by the Grateful Dead, "Betty and Dupree," which introduces the voices of both titular characters and a narrator.

"Dupree's Diamond Blues," however, moves more quickly between a greater variety of narrative perspectives, voices, and time frames than we encounter in even the most complex of its predecessors in the folk tradition. The ambiguities engendered by that complexity cause the listener to experience something of the disorientation felt by the characters in the song, but they also foreground the degree to which the Grateful Dead resist offering merely another reiteration of the DuPre legend. Instead, the band injects a strong dose of uncertainty into its interpretation and, in doing so, maintains that inconclusion that Nancy regards as central to the nature of the fragment as a productive force. An appreciation of this inconclusion is evident in the complications of agency and action signaled by the third verse:

Down to the jewelry store packing a gun,
says, "Wrap it up, I think I'll take this one."
"A thousand dollars, please," the jewelry man said
Dupree, he said, "I'll pay this one off to you in lead."

Several noteworthy elements are evident here. One is the narrator's failure to introduce immediately the agents of the verse's initial actions. While the jewelry man is identified as speaking in line 3, it is not until the final line that listeners can confidently attribute the verse's other speech to Dupree.⁴⁸ Likewise, whoever serves as the subject for "down"—presumably a colloquialism for "went down," "goes down," or "is going down"—is obscure. The lack of initial identification of the actors and speakers in the verse creates temporary uncertainty in the listener, who is forced to suspend understanding on the point for at least a few bars.

A similar uncertainty in the identification of speakers and their actions obtains at the level of the song as whole. The song's narrator, introduced simply as "I" in the first line, begins the tale not by immersing the listener in it, but also by establishing several kinds of distance. One of these is the distance between the narration of the song in the present and the narrator's presentation of himself in his early youth (the song's initial line immediately returns listeners to the narrator's personal past, with "When I was just a little young boy"). The second distancing occurs when the speaker hands over the verse to the directly introduced voice of his "Papa," who offers the advice "Son, you'll never get far." The temporal distance between the narrator-in-present and the narrator-as-child, as well as the provisional handing over of authority to the narrator's "Papa," result in some confusion about the speaker of the second verse, which begins, "Well, baby, baby wants a gold diamond ring." Who speaks these words, and in what time frame are they being articulated? The father seems to have fallen silent, but, as the above remarks on the third verse make evident, we cannot be certain we have encountered the voice of Dupree. Consequently, the second verse possibly presents the thoughts of the song's initial, first-person narrator. So, while a listener familiar with the historical DuPre narrative may be inclined to conclude that the first voice in the song is the same as that of the second verse, and that both verses are being told from Dupree's perspective, the third verse's direct introduction of Dupree's speech suggests instead that the narrated thoughts of the second verse, which conclude, "When I get those jelly roll blues / . . . I'd go and get anything in this world for you," are, in fact, those of the song's initial speaker, who, like Dupree, is experiencing the powerful disorientation that comes with desire, and perhaps also contemplating the theft of a ring that could be used to secure his own Betty's affection.

Furthermore, the temporal confusion is reinforced by the third verse. Beyond the ambiguous tense of the colloquial verb form "down," listeners may register quick movements between present- and past-tense narration, from

“says” in line 2 to “said” in line 4. Hunter has done something quite striking. The action described—Dupree stealing the ring from the jeweler—would transpire in moments, but the signals of narrative time for that action slide sharply between “then” and “now.” That later verses consistently present the Dupree narrative in the past tense suggests that the “down” and “says” at the start of the third verse may have been actions of the narrator, and that the action of the song transitions into the Dupree narrative only in the middle of the third verse. Wherever one draws the line between narrator and Dupree, and between past and present, the verse’s slippery narrative temporality creates a sense that time frames are collapsing, emphasizing the parallels between the narrator’s situation and Dupree’s.

These complexities extend across the remainder of the piece, preserving and reinforcing the sort of uncertainties that make fragments so productive. The chorus begins without any introduction of a speaker, but the formulaic opening “Well, you know, son . . .” recalls the address of “Papa” to the primary narrator at the start of the song, “Son, you’ll never get far.” The first verse and third verses after the initial chorus offer a return of Dupree’s voice and are largely given over to his conversation with the “Judge,” as introduced with the conventional syntax of “Judge said . . .” and “Dupree said . . .” The fifth verse stands out because it narrates events about Betty in a somewhat different form. The fourth line of the verse comprises only four short syllables, “then go on out,” a strong contrast to the final line, which, like the closing lines of several other verses, requires that the singer rapidly deliver a lot of words (thirteen syllables’ worth, in this instance). Thus, the contrast between the very short fourth line and the closing words, “and find another sweet man’s gonna treat her with style,” highlights the inconstancy of Betty, who not only does not mourn Dupree for very long, but also seems to be sleeping with the hanging judge (“Son, I know your baby well”). The final verse, which follows a repetition of the chorus, apparently returns us to the initial speaker and his reflections on Dupree’s story.

Overall, the many shifts in narrative speaker and time frame in “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” alternately distance the listener from, and draw the listener closer to, the events of the narrative, much in the fashion that the speaker of the song seems to be wavering between following in Dupree’s footsteps and learning the lesson that the murderer’s tale offers about the dangers of desire. So, while the Grateful Dead’s contribution to the canon of songs about Frank DuPre follows the example of many predecessors in its inclusion of multiple voices, “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” extends the possibilities of that trait to a radical degree, adding powerful ambiguities in narrative time and agency

that universalize the DuPre story and subordinate it to another narrative—one that frames and, in some regards, mirrors that of the titular bad man. In this sense, it is not so much a song about DuPre as it is a parable illustrating the wisdom of the father's assertion that "you'll never get far." Hunter and Garcia would offer frame tales that function in similar ways in later years, as in the cases of "Wharf Rat" and "Terrapin Station."

Another way to contextualize what Hunter and Garcia have done in complexifying the tradition's relatively modest narrative structure is to approach the frame tale as a reflexive comment on the degree to which the Grateful Dead's present remains connected to the American musical past. New iterations of folk music, as Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell argue, are typically understood to derive some of their power from the incorporation of sources deemed "authentic" within the context of a particular community.⁴⁹ The notion of authenticity can be so fraught, however, that it may be better to think of the musical past more in line with the terms proposed by Burt Feintuch, who conceives "*tradition* as a territory of the imagination rather than as a standard for some notion of authenticity."⁵⁰ From this perspective, Hunter and Garcia are not so much drawing on a pristine past that they have inherited, but instead exploring the territory of the imagination, opened when one ponders what the idea of a connection to the folk song tradition means for rock and roll bands in late 1960s California. Seen in this light, the song's initial speaker's reflections on the tale of Dupree—his effort to weigh his own desire's moral value against the lessons of the parable of Dupree—might be heard instead as the songwriters' meditation on the ways rock songwriters and musicians can learn from folk songs such as those about DuPre. We might therefore say that Hunter and Garcia do not so much give listeners a traditional song, but rather a version of tradition that recognizes that simply offering a narrative song about a familiar topic is not enough. "Dupree's Diamond Blues" is not only a song about DuPre, or about the initial speaker's thoughts about the moral value of Dupree's story, but also a critical commentary that calls listeners to reflect on how the musical past relates to the musical present.

To hear "Dupree's Diamond Blues" as a song about how new music is related to musical traditions brings reflection on the piece into territory amenable to Nancy's suggestion that the fragment's power is in part projective, anticipating and defining the terms of its own creation. For popular musics, the projective implications of a text are mediated by the folk tradition, which may lend a new performance the gravitas of authenticity, or, alternately, may bury the contemporary in the weight of the past. Hunter declared his

“Dupree” song one of his “studied efforts to continue the oral tradition”; but while Hunter emphasizes continuity with the past, Garcia’s take on the piece is somewhat different, drawing attention to the contemporary context for the historical: “Hunter and I always had this thing where we liked to muddy the folk tradition by adding our own songs. . . . It’s the thing of taking a well-founded tradition and putting in something that’s totally looped.”⁵¹ So, while the Grateful Dead’s “Dupree” is continuous with the past in some regards—including the attribution of the crime to the irresistible sweetness of “jelly roll,” the formulaic direct introductions of a variety of speakers, and the generic expectations listeners bring to a bad man song—it is also a conscious effort to trouble the past, recognizing that the richest tales offer possibilities for their own realization that may stray from models that answer to the narrow standards of strict traditionalism.

If “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” offers a model for engaging folk tradition while preserving and even foregrounding spaces for supplements to that tradition, other Grateful Dead lyrics explore the potential of other sorts of incompleteness, ones no less entangled with traditions, but in this case, more conventionally literary. “Let It Grow,” which is the second part of the longer composition “Weather Report Suite,” enjoyed some longevity as an element of the Grateful Dead’s performance repertoire. First aired in late summer 1973, it reappeared with regularity until the end of the band’s career. The lyrics are a meditation on natural cycles and recount a revelatory encounter with divinity via the workings of the natural world. The degree to which “Let It Grow” focuses on the “work of men,” such as hauling water, chopping wood, plowing fields, and planting and harvesting, as the “seasons round,” allows one to recognize that the most direct literary predecessors to the song are the ancient and modern georgic poems. The term “georgic” derives from the influential example of Virgil’s *Georgics*, which, like other poems of the type, describe human relations with the natural world, and especially such agricultural topics as caring for livestock, appreciating the plow and similar technologies, making wine, cultivating apiaries, and maintaining orchards. This genre is one of poetry’s most persistent, informing countless works from the ancient world to those of such more recent poets as Robert Frost, Wendell Berry, and Gary Snyder.

Whatever the song’s other inspirations, it is hard to deny the similarity between the lyrics of “Let It Grow” and some passages that appear early in the first of Virgil’s *Georgics*. Here, for example, is Grateful Dead lyricist John Perry Barlow’s fourth verse:

The plowman is broad as the back of the land he is sowing
 As he dances the circular track of the plow ever knowing
 That the work of his day measures more than the planting and
 growing
 Let it grow, let it grow, greatly yield

And here are a few lines from Virgil:

The time has come for my groaning ox to drag
 My heavy plow across the fields, so that
 The plow blade shines as the furrow rubs against it.
 Not till the earth has been twice plowed, so twice
 Exposed to sun and twice to coolness will
 It yield what the farmer prays for; then will the barn
 Be full to bursting with the gathered grain.⁵²

As one can see when excerpts like those above are set one after the other, Barlow's lyrics and Virgil's poetry share both topical and sonic similarities. In terms of the former, it is apparent that poem and song alike represent the farmer, the repetitive circularity of plowing, the sense that greater forces are invoked by honest labor, and the joy of a good harvest. Furthermore, Barlow also follows Virgil in his poetics. In the case of Virgil, as quoted above in David Ferry's translation, the repetition of words such as "twice" and "plow" across a handful of lines creates the sense of returning to the same place. In the original, the similar shaping and repetition of words and sibilants in two phrases that share the same line in this passage—"bis quae solem, bis frigora sensit"—establishes structural similarities between hot and cold, two states we generally think of as opposed rather than alike. That the sonic patterns are amenable to evocations of the psychological balance felt upon returning to the familiar, and to the parity between contraries, signals that the diverse topical elements are part of a unifying whole, one the plowman enacts as he comes around in his circle of labor. Barlow's lyric achieves something of the same effects with a variety of sonic strategies, including repetition ("growing / Let it grow, let it grow") and the reappearance of some key phonemes across the verse, as in the *gr-* of "growing" and "greatly," the *-owing* of the end rhymes ("sowing," "knowing," "growing") in the first three lines of the stanza, internal rhyme ("back" and "track"), and visual rhyme (the *-ow* of "plow" is sonically different from that of "sow," "know," and "grow," but it creates unity on the page). Like Virgil, then, Barlow finds

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in aural repetitions and variations a reflection of the meaning of the lyrics, enacting a wonderful instance of “the sound of sense,” to borrow a phrase from Robert Frost.⁵³

Because “Let It Grow” follows earlier examples of georgic poetry in its emphasis on the labor that defines our interactions with the earth, as well as the aptness of the cyclical to right living, it also participates in the genre’s traditional recognition that even the humblest activities allow for the contemplation of moral considerations. Indeed, the genre typically presents agricultural work as a figurative lens for ethical comment, which is one of the reasons georgic poetry is usually considered more ambitious and rewarding than nature poems in the simpler, generally more static, and rougher traditions of the bucolic lyric or eclogue. The definitive georgic poem prior to Virgil is certainly Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, which foregrounds the ethical via the speaker’s declarations that the text intends to offer his less-than-scrupulous brother the knowledge necessary to earn an honest living. Because the speaker seeks to mount as many justifications for his advice as possible, the narrowly agricultural content of *Works and Days* is supplemented with mythic evidence in the form of stories about Prometheus and Pandora, rhetorically resonant animal fables, and a meditation on necessity driven by a vision of human history as slowly declining in grandeur across five eras. Additional support for the arguments of *Works and Days* derives from occasional nods to Hesiod’s other (grander) poem, the *Theogony*, one of the greatest sources of ancient myth, which make it evident that the rightness of particular courses of action has been established by the gods, who alternately reward and punish mortals for their choices.⁵⁴ In short, the agricultural labor featured in the typical georgic poem is not only tied to the cycles of the natural world, but also informed by ethical concerns.

“Let It Grow” thus follows earlier examples of the genre not only in its focus on the degree to which agricultural labor is definitive of human existence, but also in its placement of that labor in relation to the divine. Unlike Hesiod, Barlow somewhat resists naming the divinity that governs the action described. When the song asks, “What shall we say, shall we call it by a name?” the response is a conventional figure of pointlessness: “As well to count the angels dancing on a pin.” As speech fails, however, a space for the emergence of truth opens, and the speaker of the song recognizes that “the name is on the earth.” Finally, the heavens roar an answer to the question to which human speech was unequal:

We will not speak but stand inside the rain
 And listen to the thunder shout
 I am, I am, I am, I am.

These closing lines are deeply indebted to a variety of prior texts. Most directly, they unite the climactic final section of T. S. Eliot's great Modernist poem *The Waste Land* with a biblical episode. In the case of Eliot's work, the equation of the divine voice with thunder derives from the example of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, in which Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, speaks as thunder in order to recommend three virtues to mortals: self-control, charity, and compassion.⁵⁵ The other cultural element the song's thunderous voice brings into play is the "I am" observed in the Judeo-Christian tradition as the divine name. Fairly early in the biblical book of Exodus, the prophet Moses expresses concern that the message he brings from God will be disputed—on the basis that he is a false prophet or because he has been deceived by some power other than God—so he asks, "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them?" God replies, "I AM THAT I AM: . . . This shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."⁵⁶ In other words, the final lines of "Let It Grow" draw allusions to moral virtues as described in one of Asia's great religious texts together with the spiritual authority of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and they do so in the context of the georgic, a poetic genre deeply informed by the historical and mythic aspects of ancient literary exercise. This daring mix of sources displays the sort of global reach the Grateful Dead's corpus exhibits, as when it moves from the Arabian Desert of "Blues for Allah" to the American Southwest of "El Paso," and from the "Copper-dome Bodhi" of "China Cat Sunflower" to the "El Salvador" of "Standing on the Moon." The wide cultural net Barlow employs celebrates the synthesis of various forces into a new form, unifying diverse elements in a fashion that reminds the audience that, as is often the case in the Grateful Dead experience, the harmony of the whole provides more than any one part could hope to offer.

"Let It Grow" concludes with the repetition of the chorus, with its divine voice, but before closing my remarks on this song, I want to backtrack slightly to the final verse. It begins, "So it goes," and concludes, "Seasons round, creatures great and small, up and down, as we rise and fall." The "round" of the "seasons," and, more powerfully, the "rise and fall" of the people who walk the path of life, would seem to offer the interplay between destruction and

creation that signals, per Nancy's remarks on the fragment, the terms of creation more generally. The fall into chaos and the structured emergence of life are not only the passage from winter cold to spring planting, summer growth, and fall harvest, but also a figure of our lives. Here, then, is that image of the self Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy assert will be offered by the fragment. The song's establishment of a congruity between agricultural labor and the shape of the individual life, both under the aegis of the divine voice, reveals the "the name . . . on the earth," the creative power that can be articulated as the act of self-recognition: "I am."

The power of "Let It Grow" is profound, but it is not exceptional in that sense among the Grateful Dead's songs, a fact that testifies to the remarkable abilities of the band's lyricists. As a third and, for this introductory chapter, final analysis of Grateful Dead lyrics in relation to tradition and to the fragment, I turn to the song "Saint of Circumstance." The band premiered this piece in concert on August 31, 1979, and included a studio version on the album *Go to Heaven* in 1980. Although it would persist in the repertoire for roughly a decade more than "Lost Sailor" (another song that debuted in the same era), "Saint of Circumstance" was almost always preceded by "Lost Sailor" prior to that piece's retirement in early 1986. The "Lost Sailor > Saint of Circumstance" medley is thus context for the song as many fans know it. In the following paragraphs, I want to approach "Saint of Circumstance" in relation to a few poetic predecessors and, via the insights they afford, to offer remarks on the relevance of Nancy's insights about the interplay of creation and destruction evoked by the fragment, his arguments asserting that the process of literary creation modeled by the fragment is aligned with the process that generates the philosophical subject, and his suggestion that the limit of thought is a space of freedom.

As many listeners doubtless recognize, there are significant lyrical connections between "Lost Sailor" and "Saint of Circumstance," especially in their nautical imagery and the repetition of variations on the theme of "dreaming." To the extent that one hears "Saint of Circumstance" as a sequel of sorts to its frequent partner, it would seem to relate a time when the titular "lost sailor" found, at least provisionally, a safe harbor. On the surface, the first verse offers something one might find in a typical love song. The speaker declares he has "crossed the line" to arrive in a place that "must be heaven," where he encounters someone who appears to "be [an] angel." The song is filled with images and figures of uncertainty that culminate in the speaker's departure from the apparent heaven, driven by a sense that the place has somehow fallen short of

the mark. The nature of that insufficiency is, at least upon cursory consideration, fairly vague—a sense the speaker describes only as a “feelin’.”

The song’s power deepens when one registers its several literary predecessors. There are, of course, many major literary nautical tales, from the stories of Sindbad in *The One Thousand and One Nights* and the whale of the Book of Jonah to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, among many others. Nonnautical narratives are also relevant to “Saint of Circumstance,” especially those driven by the dramatic situation of the homeward journey undertaken by so many protagonists of narratives, both nautical and otherwise. Among the relevant pieces, two in particular stand out: Homer’s *Odyssey* and Dante Alighieri’s *Commedia*, especially for the latter’s treatment of the intersection of erotic and religious discourse.

Erotic poetry has traditionally drawn on tropes of sainthood and divinity to describe the beloved. Examples can be found in Dante, Petrarch, John Donne, Sir Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare, and many others. For a single illustrative text, consider Romeo declaring Juliet at one point a “dear saint” who can support his “faith” and at another his “god.”⁵⁷ There is also, however, a long history of erotic language serving as a means to explore sacred love, a phenomenon perhaps most familiar to Western readers in the form it takes in the Song of Solomon. As Aldo S. Bernardo explains, the convention extends across millennia, as when medieval mystics described the relation between God and the believer as a marriage—one involving, at its extreme, everything from wedding gowns and love games to marital beds and copulation.⁵⁸ The tradition thus treats the congruency between the erotic and the spiritual in a bivalent fashion, one consequence of which is that one may hear “Saint of Circumstance” as a song merely about a restless lover approaching a metaphorically heavenly beloved, or as a song about a spiritual searcher resorting to the language and imagery of everyday romance in order to explain his quest. Either way, the intersection of erotic and spiritual desires finds a powerful precursor in Dante’s epic poem, the *Commedia*.

Whether one regards “Saint of Circumstance” as describing a search for earthly love or as a search for a spiritual home does not change a central point, namely that both sorts of seekers are assailed by difficulties. Such a challenge is described as wind in the first verse, which reveals the speaker as a Job-like (or, to keep L. Frank Baum in mind, Dorothy-like) victim of circumstance, “Driven by the wind / Like the dust that blows around.” The idea of a sailor riding the wind is not much of a stretch, but to hear the song

as one that uses nautical imagery in service of describing a love affair frames such a scene in a fashion that echoes a famous moment in Dante's *Commedia*. Dante's poem is about a spiritual seeker, a man who, midway through life, has fallen off the path of faith and must journey through the realms of the afterlife to return his soul to the right course. His journey begins with a descent into hell, which Dante envisions as an immense pit with different levels, or circles, to which various sorts of sinners are consigned by divine judgment. In the fifth canto of this first part of the poem, the *Inferno*, the pilgrim enters the second circle of hell, where the souls of the lustful are blown about eternally in a great whirlwind. Dante describes it as a place

that
groans like the sea in a storm, when it is lashed by
conflicting winds.⁵⁹

As with most of Dante's underworld, the punishment is suited to the sin. Just as lustful sinners were impelled by uncontrollable desire in life, so they are being pushed by irresistible forces in death. Here, Dante's character speaks with a pair of adulterous lovers from his own late-medieval Italy. The woman of the pair explains their condition and the sinful acts that earned them their spot in hell, a moment typical of the *Inferno* in the sense that it presents evil to teach good. Dante's pilgrim in this way learns by example, securing his own faith by confrontation with the horrors of sin. Dante's use of the image that Barlow employs to describe the speaker of "Saint of Circumstance," "Driven by the wind / Like the dust that blows around," is thus particularly illuminating. It allows listeners to recognize that the speaker, like Dante's pilgrim but unlike those unrepentant souls he meets in hell, has not yet gone so far astray as to be beyond redemption. Just as Dante's pilgrim knows he is back on the right track when he emerges from hell and can "look again at the stars," so the "Saint of Circumstance" will sight his journey by the "dog star."⁶⁰

The "dog star," more conventionally known as Sirius, is among the brightest in the sky, and thus has served many cultures as a navigational aid. However, its literary valences are not insignificant; nor are they as promising as Dante's stars in terms of their value to spiritual navigation. Sirius is mentioned several times in ancient works, including Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Homer's *Iliad*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*. In all these poems, it is a harbinger of danger. The *Iliad* makes the point quite clearly: "Brightest of all is he, yet he is a sign of evil, and brings much fever on wretched mortals."⁶¹ So, while Dante's poem would seem to be one ancestor of the star imagery in "Saint of Circum-

stance,” the song is also indebted to ancient texts for images that regard such lights as having dubious or even harmful value to viewers.

The dangers the speaker of the second verse faces are also emphasized by Barlow’s allusion to an episode from Homer’s *Odyssey*. The reference is found in the following lines:

When the night’s about to fall
I can hear the sirens call
It’s a certain sort of sound

Homer’s work describes the homeward journey of the Greek hero Odysseus following the Trojan War. He is beset along the way by a variety of hardships. One of these is an encounter with the monstrous Sirens, about whom the enchantress Circe warns him, “Sirens . . . beguile all men who come to them. . . with their clear-toned song, as they sit in a meadow, and about them is a great heap of bones of moldering men, and round the bones the skin is shriveling.”⁶² So, in “Saint of Circumstance,” hearing “the sirens call” speaks either to a moral laxity on the part of the speaker, whose attention so easily slips that heaven itself cannot keep it; or serves as a means to register the fact that the heaven he has reached is a false one.

Intriguingly, Barlow’s allusion to Homer very much resembles one employed by Dante in the second part of his *Commedia*, the *Purgatorio*. Whereas the lustful souls of the *Inferno* show Dante how debased love is a sin that leads to punishment, there are also purer forms of love—one of the most august of which is emblemized by the figure of Beatrice. When Dante’s pilgrim finally encounters Beatrice face-to-face, in canto 30 of the *Purgatorio*, she takes him to task for his failures, particularly his susceptibility to distraction. In attending to so many other concerns, he has neglected to focus on her—whose way of loving is the expression not of lust’s corrupting desire, but of the soul’s wish to move toward God. Beatrice compares his temptations to the song of the Sirens, and instructs him in the art of resistance, telling him that she does so

so that [he] may bear
the shame of [his] mistakes, and when [he] hear[s]
the Sirens another time [he] may be stronger.⁶³

Beatrice’s point is valuable in relation to “Saint of Circumstance” in a fashion that goes well beyond Barlow’s use of an allusion earlier employed by Dante. She reminds her audience that seeming gratifications may be false ones—ones we need both intellect to identify and will to resist. In other words, a heaven

“close enough to pretend” is no heaven at all. Ultimately, Dante’s pilgrim will find satisfaction only when his soul is returned to the right path, just as Odysseus will reach home only after overcoming the call of the Sirens and others who hinder his efforts. Indeed, the similarity between the spiritual rectification of the sort Dante’s pilgrim experiences and the homecoming voyage of Odysseus has encouraged readings of Homer’s poem as an allegorical spiritual journey for centuries; an early example of such an argument can be found in Plotinus’s *Enneads*.⁶⁴ As the speaker of “Saint of Circumstance” departs for a new adventure, he abandons the temporary shelter provided by the expired heaven and follows the examples of both Dante’s pilgrim and Odysseus, moving closer to home because wiser with regard to temptation.

As the above points hopefully illustrate, the literary context of “Saint of Circumstance” brings the adventures it describes into sharper focus. The erotic dimension of the song does not disappear entirely in light of this context, but rather encourages listeners to hear such carnal distractions in the fashion of a reader of Homer or Dante. That is to say, the literary allusions in “Saint of Circumstance” make a reading of the song as primarily about romantic love more difficult to maintain, shifting one’s understanding of it in the direction of a heroic or spiritual quest. In this sense, the speaker’s reaching the end of the proverbial rainbow (another echo of Baum) mentioned in the second verse, in a place that “must be heaven,” only to abandon it for an indeterminate future when his “sails are fillin’,” dramatizes the sort of creative interplay between stability and disorder, or form and chaos, that Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe found the German Romantics celebrated as the definitive component of creative power. From this perspective, “Saint of Circumstance” is not only about erotic, heroic, or spiritual adventure, but also about artistic development.

A reading of “Saint of Circumstance” as a reflexive comment on creative activity is further supported by the song’s debt to Dante’s presentation of Beatrice, who appears not only in the *Commedia*, but also in his earlier text, *Vita Nuova*. In both, she is cast as something of a muse, bearing the authority of one who can encourage and pass judgment on Dante’s artistic development. As Maria Christina Fumagalli writes, “In the *Vita Nuova*, she is Dante’s inspiring source for his artistic apprenticeship, and in the *Commedia* she reappears to sanction Dante’s destiny as the founder of a new vernacular tradition.”⁶⁵ Hearing “Saint of Circumstance” through the lens of Dante encourages a reading of the song’s movements between tempestuous disarray on the one hand and calm on the other as a narrative about the singer’s own development and creative power. In this sense, the song is its own origin myth, presenting the

tale of the singer's self-creation. Returning to Nancy may remind us that such moments arise from the evocative power of the poetic fragment.

These final points deepen the conceptual implications that govern the end of the song. As Nancy and others in the philosophical tradition on which he draws argue, thought arises at the border between the comprehensible and the incomprehensible—a limit that opens into a space of freedom. “Saint of Circumstance” repeats numerous times the formulae of incomprehension that these philosophers view as characteristic of the liberating borderlands: “Well I never know, just don’t know”; “Never could read no road map / And I don’t know what the weather might do”; “Sure don’t know”; “Holes in what’s left of my reason”; and so forth. The song also indicates the speaker’s compulsion to engage these gaps in understanding, as in

Sure don’t know
What I’m goin’ for
But I’m gonna go for it
For sure

The conclusion of the song,

Maybe goin’ on a feelin’
Maybe goin’ on a dream
Maybe goin’ on a feelin’

replicates both the failure of understanding—for feelings and dreams are very much outside the demesne of reason—and a willingness to enter the space of mystery, of not knowing, as a way of advancing the ongoing process that the German Romantic philosophers saw as the heart of creation and the foundation of freedom. In this sense, the song is a paean to risk-taking in the service of understanding, to the exercise of freedom to define oneself where conventional terms of subjective self-invention stumble. Like “Dupree’s Diamond Blues” and “Let It Grow,” “Saint of Circumstance” foregrounds for listeners these processes of creative exercise, resisting conclusion while offering for contemplation the definitive characteristics of creative work performed by Grateful Dead music.

Each of the following chapters extends the preceding introduction to the Grateful Dead’s engagement with the literary tradition and philosophical aesthetics. In most cases, the arguments commingle the sort of close textual analysis exemplified by the readings above and remarks on cultural history and literary tradition. These extensions find additional focus via a roughly chronological examination of how the band’s lyrical engagement

with particular topics in these areas allowed the Grateful Dead to ponder publicly the course of its own career, even while teaching listeners what some of the central features of Grateful Dead music are—including its evocation of the productive exchange between creation and destruction that Nancy celebrates in his remarks on the Romantic fragment.

Chapter 1 launches this project with a consideration of the band's extensive interactions with and artistic debts to the Beat generation. Neal Cassady, in particular, offered the young musicians a sense that they were joining a contemporary movement that was very much invested in literary exercise. Although some aspects of these interactions are relatively well-documented, much remains to be thought and said about the degree to which Beat aesthetics helped transform a Bay Area dance band of moderate proficiency into the Grateful Dead proper. This book's reading of the early Grateful Dead will treat the band's connections to the literary Beats not only as a matter of historical record, but also as a way to apprehend the degree to which its engagement with Beat literature opened the door to the conditions of and possibilities for their art. The chapter's arguments gain focus via engagement with Sascha Pöhlmann's formulation of American literature as a "future-founding poetry." Pöhlmann argues that American poetry often conceives of itself as an exercise in national self-presentation, a vision of the cultural present that serves as a fragmentary foundation for the American future. Yet the poetry and fiction of the Beats, the first generation to write in the shadow of the Cold War's constant threat of nuclear annihilation, were crafted at a moment when there seemed to be a very real chance that there was no future at all. The tension between the impulse to undertake the work of the future, and the possible total futility of the effort, shaped the Beats' understanding of their relations to the American past and future, and, as chapter 1 will show, left its mark on the Grateful Dead on several fronts.

The following chapter begins with Garcia's fascination with Frankenstein's monster, a theme he raised in interviews repeatedly over the course of his career. Critical accounts tend to focus on the cinematic work that was his introduction to the creature, Charles Barton's 1948 feature film *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. I elect a different starting point: the lyrical reference to Mary Shelley in "Ramble on Rose." That song is a sort of comic-book catalog of American popular culture, but beneath the fun hide some rather dark passages. Too, the piece numbers among those that may be regarded as material for an unrecorded third volume in the Americana trilogy that includes *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, a sequence of albums that features many thieves, brawlers, and other ne'er-do-wells in its songs.

Along the way, these records map part of the American gothic tradition, in which Frankenstein's creature would find a not inhospitable home. This chapter surveys that ground, defending the Grateful Dead's early 1970s songwriting as rooted in a tradition that is not only musical, but also literary, and that is very much amenable to my overall contention about the frequency with which the band confronted the central mysteries of its art and of our being. The songs "Dire Wolf" and "Friend of the Devil" are particularly illuminating on this front, and this book's readings situate them in relation to not only Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but also an array of other texts, including poems by Robert Burns, Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and Goethe's *Faust*. This context helps one see the degree to which the Grateful Dead found in the exceptional fragmentation and distortions of gothic literature terms with which the band could articulate the challenges its community and its music faced in the early 1970s, as well as its possibilities for evolution as the cultural environment drifted away from the regnant conditions of the late 1960s.

The third chapter focuses primarily on "Althea," a song the band debuted live in 1979 and performed more in 1980 than in any other year. Although the title and some of Hunter's comments indicate classical sources for the lyrics—material to which chapter 3 devotes some attention—the primary interest here is the piece's several Shakespearean allusions. The chapter thus takes the form of three related inquiries: the nature of the song's Shakespearean material and its contribution to the work as a whole, the ways in which the uncertainties articulated by the song's primary speaker reflect the band's situation when this piece was most prominent in the repertoire, and the degree to which allusions to *Hamlet* allow a reading of "Althea" as a confrontation with the insoluble mystery that is the source of art. These inquiries are framed by commentary on Shakespeare's own debt to the ancient Roman poet Ovid and the Shakespearean influence on other Grateful Dead songs, from "Rosemary" to "Black Muddy River," but especially "Mountains of the Moon."

In the summer of 1987, Bob Dylan joined the Grateful Dead for a short tour as coheadliners, during which time the band found itself with a hit record and single, and a level of popularity and media attention greater than it had ever experienced. At the same time, Dylan's career was in something of the doldrums—after the "Christian phase" that divided his fanbase in the late 1970s, Dylan offered a relatively unremarkable sequence of albums in the 1980s. Much more than their shared dates with Tom Petty in 1986, the brief 1987 tour transformed both Dylan and the Grateful Dead. Dylan began singing and recording some of Hunter's songs—issuing in the early 1990s a couple of acoustic roots records that displayed a reconnection with some of his (and

American recorded music's) earliest inspirations—and, by the end of the decade, had entered a period of exceptional songwriting and performance. Too, selections from Dylan's catalog—rarely long absent from the Grateful Dead's set lists—became, at almost the same time, a regular part of nearly every concert that the Grateful Dead played.

While the *Dylan and the Dead* album that stands as the only officially sanctioned document of the collaboration usually receives low marks from fans of both artists, the transformation of Dylan's career in the following decade, and the shifts in the Grateful Dead's live repertoire during an era that was one of the high points in its performance career, point to a collaboration that was much more important than is usually recognized. My fourth chapter looks closely at the relationship between these artists on their own terms and in relation to the shared literary touchstone of Arthur Rimbaud. Rimbaud is important to both Dylan and Hunter, and his formulations of the poet and of poetry are rich in relation to the rethinking of the subject and the source of creative potential described in the German Romantics' discussion of the literary fragment.

The final years of the Grateful Dead saw fewer new original songs than some earlier eras, but several that emerged were quite remarkable. Too, Hunter began publishing more poetry than ever before, a phenomenon that points toward the cultivation of a more conventional literary identity by someone whose song lyrics were, after the success of *In the Dark*, reaching ever-wider audiences. The final chapter gives this phenomenon of Grateful Dead lyricists working as published poets its due, reading Hunter's books in particular as a contribution to the literary tradition on which the band had drawn for so many years. While there is some extant commentary on Hunter's work, most of it reads the poetry as the counterpart to the songwriting. This book looks instead at Hunter's poetry as a more purely literary exercise by acknowledging his debt to Modernist authors such as James Joyce, Eliot, and, especially, Rainer Maria Rilke. Hunter published translations of Rilke's two most important books of poetry; taken together with his other work as a wordsmith, these translations evince an ongoing debt to the Austrian poet's mystical efforts to reconcile art and the world.

As the preceding pages indicate, one implication of this book's argument as a whole is that the Grateful Dead was not merely influenced by the literary tradition, but in some real senses a participant in it. This book's conclusion assesses some of the most significant ways that the band's participation repaid the tradition on which it drew. Examples include a number of works by the late twentieth century's most notable journalists and essayists, such as

Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, which engages the band's world throughout; Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*, one of his books in which references to the band are sprinkled; and Joan Didion's *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, which appraises the San Francisco Haight-Ashbury scene in part through interactions with the band.

Too, the conclusion looks at fictions and poems that mention the band and its music, either in passing or with sustained attention, such as James Merrill's "Self-Portrait in Tyvek™ Windbreaker," Richard Brautigan's "The Day They Busted the Grateful Dead," David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, Douglas Coupland's *Polaroids from the Dead*, and Philip K. Dick's *VALIS*. In all these works, one finds examples of the Grateful Dead's roles as an emblem of the conundrums of late twentieth-century popular culture and an inspirational embodiment of countercultural iconoclasm. Taken together, these literary texts show how the band members' activities contributed to the literary traditions that inspired them throughout their career.

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Notes

INTRODUCTION. BEYOND DESCRIPTION

- 1 Garcia, "Jerry Garcia Interview."
- 2 Garcia, "Peter Simon Interviews Jerry Garcia, 1975," 50:20.
- 3 See, for example, Garcia, "Grateful Dead Revisited"; Hunter, "Fractures of Unfamiliarity and Circumvention in Pursuit of a Nice Time"; Hunter, "Song Goes On," 117–21; Hunter and Garcia, "Hunter/Garcia; Words/Music," 209–10.
- 4 Shenk and Silberman, *Skeleton Key*, 51.
- 5 See, for example, Shan C. Sutton's "The Deadhead Community." The band also acknowledged the power of the music to change its audience. Drummer Mickey Hart asserted, "We're in the transportation business. We move minds" (McNally, *Long Strange Trip*, 538). Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh formulated the same point in a similar fashion: "The Grateful Dead group mind was in essence an engine of transformation. . . . As long as the only things we cared about were exploration and ecstasy, that's how long it remained pure" (Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 333).
- 6 Garcia, "Jerry Garcia Interview."
- 7 Trist and Dodd, *Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*, 52.
- 8 Heching, "Grateful Dead Bassist and Founding Member Phil Lesh Has Died at 84."
- 9 Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 56n. Sturgeon is a descendent of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Williams, "Theodore Sturgeon, Storyteller," 330). One definition of "bleshing" in *More Than Human* reads, "Everyone all together being something, even if they all did different things. Two arms, two legs, one body, one head, all working together, although a head can't walk and arms can't think. . . . Maybe it was a mixture of 'blending' and 'meshing,' but . . . it was a lot more than that" (Sturgeon, *More Than*

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Human, 148). In terms of the relation between this science-fictional concept and the music of the Grateful Dead, it is interesting that one of the characters has a hard time explaining blessing and resorts to the metaphor of “a band,” with “everyone playing different instruments with different techniques and different notes, to make a single thing move along together” (210). As another character puts it more succinctly elsewhere, “*Multiplicity is our first characteristic; unity our second*” (358). Sturgeon served as a model for Kurt Vonnegut’s recurrent character Kilgore Trout; Vonnegut remarked of Trout in an interview, “He was modeled after Theodore Sturgeon, a really swell science fiction writer. . . . I think it’s funny when someone is named after a fish” (Vonnegut, interview). Vonnegut’s books were long a fascination of the Grateful Dead, and Garcia in particular.

- 10 Garcia, “Jerry Garcia Reflects.”
- 11 Walker, “Anthem,” 24.
- 12 Shenk and Silberman, *Skeleton Key*, 333, 336.
- 13 In traditional philosophical discourse, the “subject” is the mental construct that unifies our perceptions and thoughts into a self-identifying whole. One might think of it as that version of ourselves that we think of as “I.”
- 14 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 152; Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 13, B 27.
- 15 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 276; Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 145–46, B 185.
- 16 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 347; Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 249, B 306.
- 17 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 32.
- 18 Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 65; Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämtliche Werke*, 10.
- 19 Hegel, *Logic*, 536.
- 20 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 40.
- 21 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 41–42.
- 22 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 48.
- 23 Nancy, *Logodaedalus*, 90–94.
- 24 Friedrich Schlegel’s “Lucinde,” 157.
- 25 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 12.
- 26 Friedrich Schlegel’s “Lucinde,” 175.
- 27 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 48.
- 28 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 12.
- 29 Blanchot, “*Athenaeum*,” 166.
- 30 Blanchot, “*Athenaeum*,” 172.
- 31 Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, 283; translation mine.
- 32 Schlegel, *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, 21.
- 33 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 52.
- 34 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 73.

- 35 Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 57.
 36 Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde," 253.
 37 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 56–57.
 38 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 16.
 39 Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, 86.
 40 Hegel, *Logic*, 162.
 41 Nancy, *Experience of Freedom*, 54.
 42 Blackman, "'Betty and Dupree.'"
 43 Hughes, *Hanging the Peachtree Bandit*, 9–14, 102–5 passim.
 44 Meriwether, "12/1/66," 120–21.
 45 A diegetic narrator is one in the world of the story. An extradiegetic voice comes from outside the story world(s) inhabited by characters.
 46 Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, 55–56.
 47 Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, 57–59.
 48 The delay in naming the subject of an action, in this case, a speaker, creates an ambiguity that has a variety of effects on the audience. Stylisticians recognize this as a traditional literary figure: cataphora.
 49 Hill and Bithell, "Introduction to Music Revival," 20.
 50 Feintuch, "Revivals on the Edge," 9.
 51 Garcia, "Hunter/Garcia; Words/Music," 210; Jackson, *Garcia*, 158.
 52 Virgil, *Georgics*, 5–7.
 53 Frost, *Selected Letters*, 133.
 54 Hesiod, *Hesiod* 1:87. See esp. line 11.
 55 Eliot, *Collected Poems*, 68–69, 75; Nikhilananda, *Upanishads*, 239–40.
 56 Exod. 3:13–14, *Scofield Reference Bible*.
 57 *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.2.90–107, 2.1.156. Here and in all following quotations, I rely on Shakespeare, *Riverside Shakespeare*.
 58 Bernardo, "Sex and Salvation," 306.
 59 Alighieri, *Inferno*, 5.28–30.
 60 Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, 34.139.
 61 Homer, *Iliad*, 455.
 62 Homer, *Odyssey*, 451.
 63 Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, 31.42–45.
 64 Plotinus, *Enneads*, 54.
 65 Fumagalli, "Derek Walcott's *Omeros*," 21.

CHAPTER 1. THAT'S WHEN IT ALL BEGAN

- 1 Weinreich, "Locating a Beat Aesthetic," 51.
 2 Garcia, "Jerry Garcia Reflects."
 3 *Portable Jack Kerouac*, 566, 568; Foye, introduction to *Herbert Huncke Reader*, xvii.
 4 Charters, introduction to *Portable Beat Reader*, xix–xxii.
 5 Pöhlmann, *Future-Founding Poetry*, 1–3.
 6 Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 252.