

Tonal and Expressive Ambiguity in "Dark Star"

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We're saying: "Let's have faith in this form that has no form.
Let's have faith in this structure that has no structure."

—Jerry Garcia, in David Gans,
Conversations with the Dead

In the vinyl Valhalla of rock, the Grateful Dead have earned a special place. Born in 1965 amid the flourishing countercultural movement of San Francisco, the Dead pioneered in the development of musical performances as druglike "experiences," featuring long, unpredictable improvisations and an eclectic mix of influences. As the hippie movement faded, the Dead provided the impetus to a vast culture of followers, known as Deadheads, whose musical and social ideals stem directly from those of the hippies, with elements of pacifism, openmindedness, hedonism, and the use of psychedelic drugs. The Deadhead movement has flourished down to the present day, showing no signs of abatement up to the disbanding of the group in November 1995 after the death of lead guitarist Jerry Garcia. In that year the Dead still ranked fourth in the country in earnings from touring, thanks to the sellout crowds at their many performances; in 1991, they ranked first.¹

With such popular affirmation, who, then, would speak ill of the Dead? To many who do not like them, their music sounds directionless, complacent, and otherwise boring or sloppy; for others even more numerous, distaste for their psychedelic tribal image precludes any serious musical appreciation. The comments of the benchmark *Rolling Stone Album Guide*, tinged with skepticism, offer what seems to be a common mainstream assessment of the group.

As much a phenomenon as a band, the Grateful Dead have over the last quarter century gathered together the far-flung members of their massive cult for live shows that

function less as musical events than as love-ins. The group for a while toured six months a year and boasted a 23-ton sound system, and it's never been the album, but rather the concert that forms the essential Dead document—a fittingly momentary one for a band whose characteristic mood is that of drifting into ether, spacing out on good vibes. Deadheads—ex-hippies or tie-dye wannabes—celebrate the Dead's myth of genial counterculturalism. The songs provide the excuse for the revelry—and they remain songs whose appeal is all but inscrutable to non-initiates.²

More pointedly, for those to whom rock music ideally remains a working-class rebellion against the status quo, the Dead's music does not belong in the mainstream, and perhaps not even in the picture; as Lester Bangs wrote in 1977, "The Dead aren't really a rock 'n' roll band." The growing popularity, around that time, of the stripped-down sounds of punk and Bruce Springsteen—a return, in part, to earlier rock 'n' roll values, opposed to the "genial, spaced-out counterculture" that the Dead had been seen to incarnate—gives particular resonance to his comment.³

If vagaries of taste are inevitable, lapses of musical understanding need not be. When one sheds dismissive or categorical stereotypes to examine the Dead's music on its own terms, its inherent qualities are better appreciated as constitutive of a style that, far from being inscrutable, can be remarkably refined, expressive, and musically satisfying.

It is to justify this statement, and to give an idea of what, to my mind, some of the best of the Dead's music is about, that this essay has been written. It offers an analysis of one version of one of their songs, namely the concert performance of "Dark Star" from 27 February 1969 that appeared on their first live album, *Live/Dead*.⁴ There are several related reasons for this choice. It is one of the most highly regarded renderings of one of the Dead's best-loved songs;⁵ for me, it is one of the most memorable performances in rock music. It highlights essential, enduring, and emblematic features of the group's style. It dates from their early years (1966–70), arguably their most important stylistic period, and was selected by the band for publication at that time. Above all it presents a fertile musical conception, in which aspects of local tonal construction relate to large-scale events in original ways and also relate intimately to the song's expression.

A few comments will be useful as a preamble to analysis. As good as this version of "Dark Star" is, the popularity of the song among fans and its centrality in the band's repertory is based more on a multitude of varying concert performances than on any single recording.⁶ It shows the song usually does not begin a set and rarely ends one,⁷ and its interior is filled with loose and variable improvisatory explorations. "Dark Star," then, is a fine example, some might say a quintessential example, of the Dead's protean approach to music making. For this reason one could approach analysis in different ways, depending on what one takes the song itself to be. If "Dark Star" is considered to be a cumulation of many performances, or a distillation of them, comparison of all available recorded versions might uncover its essential nature.⁸ If, by contrast, it is considered to be a process or experience of creation rather than any finished result, analysis of recordings might be inappropriate or inadequate.⁹

My approach will be to take one particularly well-known performance, that on *Live/Dead*, as sufficiently representative, and sufficiently autonomous, to stand in its

own right as an auditory "score."¹⁰ The analytical project will be specific: to elucidate certain basic tonal issues raised in the performance; to show how they are explored and settled; and to view these tonal matters in relation to the song's expressive goals, particularly in connection with the lyrics. A concluding discussion will raise certain points in light of this analysis concerning the broader expressive message of the band and its relationship to the Deadhead community, past and future.

Several defining moments and elements in the music will serve to orient the analysis. In order of discussion, they are: (1) initial orientations; (2) music of the first verse and refrain; (3) text of the first verse and refrain; (4) beginnings of two major instrumental episodes; (5) climaxes of these episodes; (6) second verse and end of the song. A time-flow diagram is given below, showing the placement of the basic events just enumerated (i.e., 1–6). Time indications are based on readings from the compact disc.

Diagram of basic events in "Dark Star" (version of 2.27.69)

1	4	5	2, 3	4	5	6	6
...BEG .. E1 (C1) ... V1 E2 (C2) ... V2 ... END...							
1:17	1:24	c.4:29	6:04	7:09	c.20:10	21:26	c.22:31

Key to above symbols:

- 1 BEG beginning of song
- 4 E1 beginning of first instrumental episode
- 5 C1 beginning of climax to first instrumental episode
- 2 V1 beginning of verse 1
- 3 V1 text of verse 1
- 4 E2 beginning of second instrumental episode
- 5 C2 beginning of final climax to second instrumental episode
- 6 V2 beginning of verse 2
- 6 END ending of song, i.e., beginning of transition leading to "St. Stephen"

The transcriptions of examples 7.1–7.9, illustrating the different events and episodes named above, represent about five minutes and twenty seconds of music. It is on these passages that my arguments will be based. They concern certain salient moments, notably beginnings, climaxes, and endings; and they focus on melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic features, to the near exclusion of other issues that would be of interest in their own right, including instrumental timbres and styles, textural patterns, and the construction of improvisatory sections. The transcriptions, made from the compact disc, do not attempt to reproduce every nuance of the music.¹¹ However, they do provide an accurate representation of pitches and rhythms of the central tonal instruments, in all cases where they could be simply determined, and offer, therefore, a reasonable basis for discussion.

Initial Orientations

An appropriate entry into analysis is the beginning, for it is here that the tonal point of departure of the song is established and the first tonal questions raised. In the

Example 7.1. End of jam leading to the beginning of “Dark Star,” from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

Example 7.1. (continued)

published recording the music fades in during a jam, nominally in D minor, that precedes the song proper. Example 7.1 shows the passage from the end of the jam, beginning at 0:56, that takes us into the song. The passage begins with relatively open improvisation. While Bob Weir's backup guitar maintains an F chord with what appear to be offbeat attacks, Phil Lesh's bass dominates the texture by loosely related phrases centered on D. Jerry Garcia's lead guitar, meanwhile, concentrates strongly on the note A until measure 12, where he begins to intone a brief formula beginning on B, labeled "(i)" in example 7.1. In measure 15 Lesh picks up formula i in a more complete form, and we realize that Garcia has been calling for, and waiting for, this response. Garcia states formula i once in its full form with Lesh (mm. 16–17, labeled "i") and then moves to begin a second, answering formula in measure 17, labeled "(ii)." Lesh, however, states formula i a third time (perhaps thinking that Garcia would want to state it twice). Hearing this, Garcia aborts his statement of formula ii in order to begin it again, together with Lesh, in measures 18–19 (labelled "ii"). By this time Weir has dropped out: he plays no role here until measure 20.

Notable about the formulas is the lack of clear tonal referent in formula i, based on an ornamented B and a destination note of D, as opposed to the suggestion of a clearer tonal destination in formula ii, based on E and a stronger destination note of A. In this respect the formulas bear a significant relationship to later events, as we shall see. But for the moment, together with the downbeat chord of measure 20, they mainly suggest arrival in a mixolydian A tonality. Judging by the formulas, the



Example 7.2. (a) Mixolydian scale basis for "Dark Star"; and (b) Dark Star progression.

seventh degree, G, appears relatively stable in the Dead's representation of this tonality, compared to the fourth degree D (sharped as a subsemitone to E) and even the tonic A (sharped as a subsemitone to B).

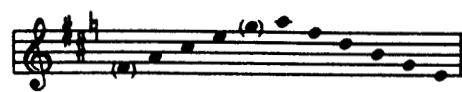
In measure 20 the band settles on the new key, taking up a repetitive two-chord pattern (mm. 20–24) that continues for some time. In retrospect we recognize the two preceding formulas (mm. 16–19) as having constituted a tag, marking a new departure in the music: this tag is the beginning of "Dark Star" proper.¹²

As this passage shows, each of the band members plays a different role in the music. Garcia is usually the melodic leader in instrumental passages. Lesh's bass provides harmonic support, but that role is tempered by a strong tendency to melodic and rhythmic exploration that often results in an independent lead, or counterpoint to Garcia. Weir plays two- and three-note chords and occasional melodies in the upper midrange, sounding largely like a foil or companion to Garcia's melodies. Less obvious than that of Garcia or Lesh, Weir's playing cements or undermines the harmonic and melodic ideas of the other two, and he often plays a role not only of facilitator for the bass and lead, but also of harmonic orientation and goad to them.¹³

The quiet and steady instrumental accompaniment of Weir and Lesh, heard in measures 20–24 of example 7.1, is based on an alternating pair of chords which might be defined as A–E-minor, or 1–5 in A mixolydian.¹⁴ It will return several times in the course of the music, and in important places: before and after the instrumental episodes and around the beginning of both verses (see, for example, the two lower parts in mm. 1–8 of ex. 7.4 and mm. 1–14 of ex. 7.5). It is, therefore, a crucial element of the song's identity and a crucial point of reference for other musical ideas in the song. I shall simply call it the "Dark Star progression." The basic scale for the song, along with this chord progression, is illustrated in example 7.2.

As this example shows, the Dark Star progression is not without ambiguity. First of all, given a regular alternation of triads lacking in a leading-tone relationship, a listener could hear either (or neither) of the chords as tonic. Another possibility in this case, then, would be to hear the progression as 1–4, and the key as E dorian. In the passages leading up to the verses such ambiguity is eliminated by numerous rhythmic, melodic, and contrapuntal factors which tend to establish A as the primary tonal referent. Nonetheless, the binary progression, lacking a clear tonal functionality, allows for the possibility of a blurring or recasting of tonal orientation.

Second, the changeable melodies and chordal voicings of Bob Weir's guitar and Phil Lesh's bass produce a significant ambiguity in the second chord itself, between minor 5 and its relative major, flat 7. For this reason the second chord name is better placed in braces: {5}. The ambiguity of the chord is reflected, in example 7.2, by



Example 7.3. Background third chains in "Dark Star."

the parenthetical placement of two of its notes. Is D to be heard as the inessential seventh of an E-minor triad in this chord, or is E itself to be heard as the episodic "underthird" of a steadier G-major chord? It is significant that, in "Dark Star," there is never an equivalent treatment of the A chord: its relative minor, on F#, is utterly absent from the music (as is any chord built on C# as root; D chords, with A as fifth, are rare). The A chord, therefore, is inherently more stable than its companion, {E}. From this pair of chords may be extrapolated a fundamental alternation, with both harmonic and melodic implications, between two stacks of thirds. The first is centered on the stable tonic A triad; the second—one might say, "the" other stack, in a diatonic sound world, although it is, in melodic terms, a prolongation of the first—is not so much a triad as a flexible grouping of thirds, which may be heard, at different times, as being built on E, G, or other notes, though never on notes that bear a simple third relationship to A (F# and C#). Example 7.3 schematizes this alternation, which involves melody, counterpoint, modal traditions, and the physiology of guitar playing, as well as harmonic intuition.¹⁵ The third chains are related to each other by step and to the principal structural degrees, E and A, by step or by leap. In sum, the basic Dark Star progression, as outlined in example 7.2, presents a gentle opposition between 1 and {5} or, broadly considered in the modal context, 1 and not-1.

Music of the First Verse and Refrain

Following the beginning of the song, illustrated in example 7.1, there is an instrumental episode of over four minutes' length. That episode will be discussed in due course; prior to addressing such improvisatory sections, however, it is worthwhile to focus on the ensuing first verse, whose melody and harmonies lie at the heart of the song and help to explain its improvisations.

As the first instrumental episode ends, the Dark Star progression recurs, and it continues as accompaniment to the first two lines of text in the first verse, shown in example 7.4, measures 1–8. The melodic phrase for this pair of lines, sung in the characteristically tremulous voice of Jerry Garcia, traces a descending scale, progressing almost entirely by step.¹⁶ This melody presents the modal octave; but the mode it suggests is arguably E dorian rather than A mixolydian—despite the presence of A as a tonal anchor in the accompaniment—for the melody leads from the E above the tonic to E below it, giving emphasis to B on the way. The phrase also relies on third relationships as a structuring device: in its first half (poetic line 1) it falls from E to C#, and in its second half (poetic line 2) it falls from B to G to E. Based on their rhythmic treatment, we might hear these thirds as forming part of a

broader interlocking complex of third chains in the melody, in which the impression of a focus on A gradually weakens while that on E strengthens:

chain 1: E C# (A) ((F#))
 chain 2: (D) B G E

This impression is reinforced by the presence of sustained appoggiaturas on downbeats in the melody, which challenge the 1 chord in all but its first statement (m. 3: D–C#; m. 5: B–A; m. 7: G–E, forming the third-chain D–A–G). By contrast, the downbeats of measures containing the {5} chord tend to receive a consonant note, but it is most often held over from the preceding measure (m. 2: E; m. 6: G; m. 8: E). The one exception is in measure 4, where Garcia's B sounds (or echoes) against the {5} chord; but this is the sole moment of repose within the two phrases, and Garcia's voice "dies" as the {5} chord sounds. The melody for lines 1–2 of the song, therefore, is relying on A as tonal referent but also playing against it.¹⁷

In the second and third melodic phrases, corresponding to poetic lines 3–6, the suspicion of tonal ambiguity is strengthened considerably. The melody of both of these phrases is the same as that of line 1, which establishes it as an even more crucial feature of the song and makes its properties all the more compelling, even haunting: what kind of song consists of repetitions of the same open-ended tune? The accompaniment, meanwhile, reverses the previous order of chords and introduces a new bass riff to emphasize 5, instead of 1, as a distinct point of tonal orientation, as shown in example 7.4, measures 9–16. Although the cumulative power of A clearly maintains the status of this chord as primary tonal referent, it can also clearly be heard, locally, as 4 in relation to a newly emphasized E. The old melody sits fairly well on this new harmonic orientation, but there is a heightened sticking point in measures 11–12, where Garcia's voice hits D over the E chord, falls to C#, and drops out, leaving a hanging dissonance that seems only partly resolved by the ensuing A chord of measure 12.

In measures 17–22 the chordal identity of A is weakened or eliminated entirely in favor of a prolongation of E. In measure 23, however, the bass suggests an imminent recentering on A instead of E, a recentering that indeed occurs in measure 25. The backup guitar chords of measures 19–24 act as a holding pattern but ultimately lead also back to A as well in measure 25. It is notable, in this respect, that these guitar voicings are so similar to those that originally defined the {5} harmony as secondary (mm. 2, 4, and so forth): they suggest that here, too, the E harmony will not last. In sum, although the second and third phrases of the verse center on E, it is not an entirely comfortable orientation either, and it is progressively blurred.

The two poetic lines following the verse constitute a refrain, which will recur after verse 2. One might expect that the music for these lines will make sense of what has gone before, giving direction to the melody and a satisfying conclusion to the play of harmonies. Neither of these conditions, however, is satisfied, at least at the end of verse 1, if by that is meant a comfortable resolution on A as the tonic. On the contrary the refrain suggests, more than ever, the loss of A as a definitive orientation.

The two lines of the refrain are set to two musical phrases, which trace similar paths but end differently. The first phrase, shown in example 7.4, measures 25–31, begins as a simple melodic and harmonic refocusing on A as 1, with a slowing of

The musical score for "Dark Star" (measures 1-16) is presented in three systems. Each system consists of three staves: voice, guitar(s), and bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked with a box "6:04" and "mp". The second system (measures 5-8) is marked with a box "6:15". The third system (measures 9-16) is marked with a box "6:15". The lyrics are: "Dark star crash - es", "pour - ing its light in - to ash - es", "Rea - - - son tat - ters the", "for - ces tear loose from the ax - is".

Example 7.4. "Dark Star," first verse and refrain, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

17 6:27

Search - - - light cast - ing for

21

faults in the clouds of de - lu - sion

25 6:39

Shall we go - - - you and I while we

29

can

Example 7.4. (continued)

32 6:52

Through - - - the tran - si - tive

36 7:05

night fall of dia monds?

40

44 7:15

Example 7.4. (continued)

rhythm that promises something new (m. 25). The melody here begins solidly on A and rises to E; but it then settles on D in measure 29, while its accompaniment settles, more slowly, on a true 5 chord one measure later (moving to {5} in m. 29, and arriving on 5 in m. 30). The melodic arrival on D is, therefore, opposable to the arrival chord on 5 that follows, both in its goal note and in its timing. Despite its quietness, the arrival in measure 30 is the stronger one, due to the melodic phrasing of the bass and backup guitar, and due also to the metrical rhythm of the phrase as a whole, which gradually slows down from 4/4, to 9/8, to 6/4, to a seemingly complete stop at measure 30. This phrase, then, follows a pattern similar to that of measures 1–15, in passing from an emphasis on 1 to an emphasis on 5, but it does so in a more concise and dramatic fashion, even though it does not achieve melodic closure in the voice part.

Other things about this phrase are worthy of attention. In particular, the pattern of simultaneous thirds, in homorhythmic, equal, and slightly detached dotted rhythms, stated in measures 27–28 (E/C#, F#/D, G/E, F#/D, E/C#), lends an element of precision and deliberateness to the counterpoint that stands out sharply against the more woven, changeable sound of earlier passages. These chords not only emphasize the arrivals in measures 29 and 30 but also give a heightened purpose to the refrain as an "answer" to the verse. Sounded together with a repeated A in the backup-guitar part, the chords prolong the 1 harmony begun in measure 25, so that the phrase as a whole, with the accompanimental flourishes that follow, falls into two halves of almost exactly even length: measures 25–28 (on the 1 harmony) and the slower measures 29–31 (on, or around, 5).

Notable, finally, in measures 25–30 is the broader melodic structure of thirds that emerges when we consider the melodies of voice and bass together. Once again, as in the verse, we can hear a pair of third chains; this time, however, they are not so much interlocking as sequential. The voice traces an upward-moving A triad and then settles, at the change of harmony, on the fourth degree, where it stops. At that point, the bass takes over, sounding B against the voice's D and dropping from there to G and E.

chain 1: A C# E

chain 2: D B G E

The fifth degree, climax of the melody, occurring in the midst of the dotted rhythm pattern (m. 28), stands at the center of the matter. While it "belongs" to the 1 harmony in this measure, the chord is stated there in fragile form, as a seventh chord in second inversion, with E sounding in all three transcribed voices. Melodically and harmonically, the note and its chord do not return to a stable A harmony. Instead the melody pivots to D (the fifth of G) at the point of harmonic shift, as the harmonies move forward toward the E chord of measure 30. The voice's E in measure 28, therefore, looks both forward and backward as a hinge between the harmonic spheres of A and E. Whereas the verse melody simply dropped through the octave from E to E, with passing reference to an A that was more strongly stated in the harmony, this phrase makes a stronger and more dramatic beginning on A, only to end up with a still stronger arrival on E. The bass notes trace an octave descent that recalls the verse melody (E–C#–B–G–E) while introducing a chromatic touch, reinforced by the backup guitar, that also dramatizes the E arrival of measure 30.

After a flourish in the bass suggestive of an E-minor seventh chord (m. 31), the second refrain phrase begins (mm. 32–37). It is similar to the preceding phrase in most ways, but with important differences. It begins with the same idea (mm. 32–35 versus mm. 25–28), although in measure 33 the backup guitar adds no fills, as if to enhance the gravity of the moment. Then, in measures 36–37, the voice adds a new ending to the refrain melody, proceeding beyond D in a descent down to E that follows the second of the third chains (D–B–G–E) and recalls the verse phrase (including, now, a clear F#). The gingerly counterpoint we heard in measures 27–29, restated in measures 34–36, now ends with a strong bass attack (on at least two notes), reinforced by a distinct percussive thump, at the downbeat of measure 37. Here, then, is melodic closure, with an even more complete stop on E, marking the end of the refrain and completing this part of the song.

What, in retrospect, has happened in the verse and refrain? Beginning with the basis of an alternating 1–{5} progression, the music has kept the terms of that progression intact in some respect, pitting 1 against 5; but it has eroded the progression itself, and its tonic emphasis, in favor of a strong final arrival on 5. Given the prominence of the Dark Star progression as a relatively stable beginning, and thus orientation, to the song and to the verse, it is hard to hear the arrival on 5 as definitive for the song as a whole; and yet here it is all the same, posed as a conclusion.

The music finds a way out of this dilemma, and it is a clever one. Following upon the "definitive" arrival on E in measure 37, a reshaping of the earlier bass flourish (m. 31) in measure 38 leads to a tag (bass line, mm. 38–41) that guides us back to the original 1–{5} progression and to stability (mm. 42 and after). This tag is not new: it is a reprise of the tag that began the song (ex. 7.1, mm. 16–19).¹⁸ But there it served to project the music out of nonidentity into identity. Is that its function here? It is indeed, inasmuch as the verse and refrain's movement away from the defining Dark Star progression, and toward 5, does suggest the loss of a certain tonal orientation, and thus, of a certain identity. In this sense, the not-1 of the verse ending is brought into parallel, by means of the tag, with the "not-song" at the very beginning of the recording. An opposition is thus established between two competing tonal identities for the song: on one hand, the instrumental presentation of the 1–{5} chord progression, with its relatively stable 1-centeredness, and on the other, the dissolution of that progression in the sung verse, with its relatively unstable 5-centeredness.¹⁹ Significantly, this opposition is already contained, in embryo, within the Dark Star progression itself: 1–{5}, or 1–not-1; and also within the tag, whose two formulas suggest a reverse progression: not-1–1.

Text of the First Verse and Refrain

It has seemed appropriate to speak of the music of the first verse before discussing the text itself, in order to make clear the suggestiveness of the music on its own. The lyrics are, in fact, so perfectly suited to the music, and so suggestive in their own right, that had I begun with a textual analysis it might have seemed too strongly to dominate or color the musical analysis that followed.

The musical shifting between stability and instability, between identity and oth-

erness, between place and loss of place, finds an eloquent parallel in Robert Hunter's lyrics for this verse and refrain:

- V. Dark star crashes
 Pouring its light into ashes
 Reason tatters
 The forces tear loose from the axis
 Searchlight casting
 For faults in the clouds of delusion.
- R. Shall we go, you and I while we can
 Through the transitive nightfall of diamonds?

The lyrics are couched in psychedelic images, appropriate both to an important part of the Dead's audiences of the period and to the band's own lifestyle in the later sixties. Perched somewhere between science fantasy and what some might call paranoid schizophrenia, they evoke physical and psychological disaster of cosmic proportions, but with a concision that relies on the evocativeness of individual words, in a distinctly playful, even humorous fashion.

No clear distinction is made between hallucination, metaphor, and inner or outer reality. While a star implodes (nearby?) and social and even psychological foundations disintegrate, the speaker proposes a romantic evening. Within their psychedelic context such lyrics beautifully evoke the conflict, or overlap, between a volatile, drug-induced internal reality, on the one hand, and a more stable, mundane outer-world reality, on the other. But there are other messages in the lyrics as well, which serve to organize them thematically and bind them together. Light is opposed to darkness, in the signature image itself (dark star) and in the verse as a whole. Order is opposed to chaos. Meaning, perhaps truth, is opposed to falsehood and non-meaning. Through all of these we sense an implicit opposition of life to death, and the speaker to a hostile world, in which something is, and will be, lost.

The refrain personalizes and reinforces this opposition and sense of impending loss. But, in so doing, it suggests a possible inversion of the sense of the preceding lines. The speaker leaves the image of cosmic catastrophe behind; instead he turns to address a companion, or perhaps even the listener, proposing that they go forth, together, through a world that is not so much threatening as it is exquisite.²⁰ Is this the same world? Perhaps, but perhaps not: to the dark star of the hallucinatory mind, we might oppose the bright-star diamonds of the nighttime sky, transitive, not because of pending cosmic doom, but because day will follow. Just the same, the psychedelic experience, and the intimacy of companionship, will end, as life will end. The moment of shared beauty cannot last.

In this manner the first verse and refrain of Hunter's brief poem brightly and subtly evoke the issue of loss: loss of what we have that makes us what we are, whether it is order, reason, truth, love, experience, or life itself. At the center of the poem, it might seem, is the lapidary theme of a dark star, which as a metaphor for mental experience is both powerful and dangerously paradoxical. But in the end that theme is overlaid by another, even more important one, namely the sweetness and ephemerality of existence.

The music offers a fitting companion to these themes, not least because it, too, dwells on matters of identity and loss and is based on a bittersweet major-minor

progression. Without returning to discuss the music in depth, I would like to take note of three aspects of the text-music relationship. First, in the verse, the descending vocal line seems appropriate to the repeated imagery of loss that is expressed across its three lines. In particular, the broad movement from high to low E corresponds, in the text, to a movement from posited images (dark star, reason, searchlight) to their nemeses (ashes, tearing loose, delusion). Second, in the refrain, the slowed rhythm, the more delicate counterpoint, and the contrasting treatment of closure in measures 29 and 37, followed by moments of near silence, serve quite effectively to highlight the existential cry represented in the lyrics. In particular the high E, reached now in the middle of the melodic phrase rather than at its beginning, is joined to the word "I" in the first line of the refrain and to the word "transitive" in the second line. By contrast, the melodic descent at the end of the refrain leads to "diamonds" and low E, at the other end of the text, melody, and scale from "dark star." Is the dark star itself a protagonist, or antagonist? Is it the cause of the cosmic catastrophe, or one of its symptoms? The ambiguity of relationships remains intact, leaving the mind free to ponder on these matters and on other, more serious ones that they evoke. Finally, the paradox of the "dark star" itself might be reflected in the Dark Star progression, to which these two words are sung (ex. 7.4, mm. 1–2): both are strong points of orientation which, at the same time, harbor an essential ambiguity that is explored in the course of the poetry and music.²¹

Beginnings of Two Instrumental Episodes

The song lasts for over twenty-two minutes, but the first and second verses take up only two minutes of that time. There remain twenty minutes of instrumental jamming, in two instrumental episodes: the first leads from the opening tag to the first verse, and the second leads from the tag following that verse to the second verse. Both begin with the Dark Star progression and then abandon it, to pursue a freer exploration of the tension suggested by that progression, namely the tension of an ambiguous 5, {5}, or not-1 harmony in relation to the point of departure, 1. Following the explorations, both episodes return to the Dark Star progression; but this does not mean that they resolve the issue of not-1. In fact, the climaxes of the two episodes provide different answers to the question of how, ultimately, 1 and not-1 should be heard to relate.

Examples 7.5 and 7.6 show the beginning of the solos in each of the two major episodes, leading away from the Dark Star progression and toward harmonic ambiguity.²² The first solo begins calmly, with Garcia's guitar repeating and varying a rising line over the Dark Star progression (ex. 7.5). For fourteen measures, as Garcia works with the line, the progression is maintained; in measure 15, when he leaves the line behind for another, it is abandoned for a loose play on {5}, which lasts until the end of the climax to this episode, two minutes later. The {5} harmony is realized in the following manner (mm. 15–26): while Garcia and Lesh suggest E, A, G, and other notes as structural pitches, Bob Weir sounds a steady G chord through offbeat comping, thereby insuring that the harmony returns neither to 1 nor to the accompanimental figure of the Dark Star progression.

Example 7.5. "Dark Star," Jerry Garcia's first guitar solo, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

The score shows measures 1 through 13. Measure 1 is marked with a time signature of 1:59. The lead guitar part (treble clef) begins with a melodic line starting on a high E. The backup guitar (treble clef) and bass (bass clef) provide harmonic support. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Example 7.5. "Dark Star," Jerry Garcia's first guitar solo, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

The score continues with measures 17 through 26. Measure 17 is marked with a time signature of 2:39. The lead guitar part continues its melodic exploration, reaching higher and lower registers. The backup guitar and bass maintain the harmonic foundation. The key signature remains two sharps. The tempo is marked *mf*.

Example 7.5. (continued)

Notable in this passage are the pitch structures of Garcia's solo: solidly anchored to the mode's final and fifth, they also rely on third chains as extrapolations around, and means to reach, these pitches. From measures 1 through 14, high E is the goal note. It is approached from a rising scalar line that builds to a local climax on A in measures 10–12 before settling back on E in measure 14. Through rhythmic position, the line also suggests a third chain leading upward past E, ultimately to the climax note (G–B–D–[E]–F#–A). In the remainder of the passage, the solo drops down, via E an octave below (m. 19), to A below that (m. 24). Here, the same chain leads down to E (mm. 15–19: F#–D–B–G–E); then, in a cascade of intensified motion, the chain may be perceived to continue (judging by salient notes) down to A, below it, and back (mm. 19–26: G–E–C–A–F#–D–F#–A). In sum, Garcia has gradually opened up the guitar range, upward to high A and downward to low A and beyond, in a set of related opening gestures.

Example 7.6 shows the beginning of Jerry Garcia's second guitar solo, measures 1 through 16. The score is written for three staves: lead guitar, backup guitar, and bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 1 is marked with a box containing '8:06'. The lead guitar part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a melodic line. The backup guitar and bass provide harmonic support. Measures 5, 9, and 13 are marked with measure numbers. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

Example 7.6. "Dark Star," beginning of Jerry Garcia's second guitar solo, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

Example 7.6 (continued) shows measures 17 through 24. The notation continues for the lead guitar, backup guitar, and bass staves. Measure 17 is marked with a box containing '8:39'. The lead guitar part continues with a melodic line, and the backup guitar and bass provide harmonic support. Measures 21, 22, and 23 are marked with measure numbers. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

Example 7.6. (continued)

The beginning of the second episode, shown in example 7.6, follows a stronger textural buildup and develops, rather than introduces, the playing of Garcia and the others. It is distinctly more restless in rhythm, melody, and counterpoint. At first the harmony follows the model of the sung verse: for about eight measures, it keeps roughly to the Dark Star progression (mm. 1–8), and for about eight measures following (mm. 9–16), it shifts to 5. These measures demonstrate an awareness, on the part of the musicians, of the verse harmonies as a harmonic model (ex. 7.4, mm. 1–16), distinct from the vaguer notion of movement away from 1 exemplified by the earlier episode (ex. 7.5). The strong movement to 5, however, does not prevent the measures that follow (ex. 7.6, mm. 17–24) from settling back on that vaguer harmonic notion. In fact this is to be expected, since 5 is too clearly defined to serve as a vehicle for the wide-ranging contrapuntal working-out that follows. But it demonstrates that the harmonic conclusion of the verse and refrain on 5 cannot contain the improvisations that surround them. The 5 and 1 harmonies, then, appear as poles between which the music flows, 1 as a well-recognized and eventually recurring "home" chord, and 5 as a fleeting, if powerful, distillation of non-1 harmony.

Garcia's solo in example 7.6 adds nuance to the observations made above concerning structural pitches and third chains in example 7.5. Again, A and E are the principal orienting pitches, and the same third chain governs much of the melody (E–G–B–D–F#–A). But around high E appear stronger elements of the other chain (A–C#–E–G), through which E and the A below it can be emphasized. The

combination of third chains and structural E/A orientation helps to give Garcia's solos clarity, directedness, and consistency here and elsewhere in the music. Similarly to the other players, he limits his pitch spectrum to focus strongly on the mixolydian mode; his use of other pitches is limited, with episodic exceptions, to sliding and bent notes, which are particularly common around E and A. Emphasis on these two degrees, set into melodic third chains and supported by a fluid harmonic play on 1 and {5}, explains a significant part of the mixolydian tonal dynamic of the song.

Climaxes of Two Instrumental Episodes

The climaxes of the two major episodes differ from one another in both form and content. Both climaxes are loud, and both occur at the end of the episode, capping an extended improvisatory exploration and preceding a return to calm, to the Dark Star progression, and to the singing of a verse. But the first episode is three minutes long and is strongly unified: its climax appears as a logical conclusion to a sustained musical searching, whose intensity is steadily increased and in which the tonic chord and Dark Star progression do not reappear until the end. The second episode, by contrast, is seventeen minutes long and falls into several loosely opposable passages or subepisodes. What unifies this open-ended jamming into a single broader episode is its containment between the two verses, rather than a gradual, fully sustained intensification. Unlike the first episode, it does contain both a return to 1 and a return to the Dark Star progression before its final climax; and it settles on tonal and textural environments that are, if not fully stable, at least distinct from each other and amply prolonged. Throughout the second episode, therefore, we listen for new ideas and relate them to ideas already heard; but our expectations regarding the resolution of the initial, fundamental tonal issue are sometimes deferred or seemingly ignored.²³ As a result, the climax to the second episode appears as the conclusion to a far broader but far looser musical exploration. As will become clear, the content of this climax reflects its distinct role in the music.

In climax 1, shown in example 7.7, Garcia does two things that are characteristic of his playing during moments of particular expressive intensity. Having, with the other players, gradually increased the level of excitement in the music over the space of three minutes, he focuses increasingly on short repeated riffs as a means to heighten the climactic effect until he reaches and then leans hard on the peak of his range for this song, namely high A and its neighbor B (mm. 20–26). His note choices resemble those of examples 7.5 and particularly 7.6, showing use of both third chains (B–D–F♯–A and C♯–E–G; the beginning phrases in exx. 7.6 and 7.7 are nearly identical). But in his climactic riffing, Garcia's melodic conception in thirds and in stepwise-related thirds becomes particularly exposed (D–B, mm. 9–12; G–E and F♯–D, mm. 12–19). At this point Weir's backup guitar also reaches the top of its range for the song, and he, too, repeats brief musical ideas. However, rather than settle on the tonic chord here, Weir maintains what amounts to a steady 2 chord, based on the third chain B–D–F♯ (mm. 13–30): thanks to this, the passage cannot be heard as suggesting a 1 chord. Lesh's bass, meanwhile, roams over a wide

range of notes, with a certain emphasis on A; he rises to a peak on high D (m. 18), begins a strong descent at the moment of climax (mm. 21 ff.), and plunges down to a very low E toward its end (m. 27). Climax, therefore, in this case, signifies a peak of textural intensity but not resolution of the tonal conflict; different players can and do go in different directions, which combine to create an effect that is, to a certain extent, unpredictable but remains in the domain of not-1. The use of the note A, here and elsewhere, as the melodic peak in Garcia's playing is particularly significant. While it serves, most broadly, as the fundamental tonal grounding of the song and of the Dark Star progression, it also serves as the peak note of melodic, climactic tension. In this manner the combined third chains of "Dark Star"'s mixolydian tonality, hinging on E, are bounded on one end by the low A as tonal ground and on the other by the high A as dissonant peak (A–C♯–E–G–B–D–F♯–A).

It is only in the next phrase (mm. 30–33), when Garcia drops down from his climax to begin a new phrase on a lower A, that Weir falls back on the Dark Star progression, for the first time in three minutes (since m. 13 of ex. 7.5). Garcia and Lesh, however, are not yet entirely ready to calm down: under Garcia's next phrase (mm. 34–43), spinning out his descent from B to E, Lesh also spins out his return to A. Finally, at measure 42, the band settles back onto the progression in something approximating its original form (as heard in ex. 7.1, mm. 20–24). The climax is over, the episode is over, and the first verse (transcribed in ex. 7.4) may now be sung.²⁴ In this episode, then, the Dark Star progression appears as an agent of calm, rather than climax.

What I am calling climax 2, occurring sixteen minutes later, arises in a different manner and leads to another dénouement. Rather than a natural peak after a series of passages of rising intensity, this climax follows a series of lengthy passages that go in various directions, including one that dwells at great length on an E-minor broken triad, played by Garcia (11:15–13:09), and another where he slips, via a growling distortion of tone, into A minor for a few seconds (the minor part lasts from 13:27 to 13:49; Weir drops out here, while Lesh flirts with A ionian). A consideration of other performances of the song would show how common such unpredictable or riff-based passages are; they illustrate the extent to which the Dead, in their improvisations, are open-minded about where they might go, depending upon the inspiration of the moment and the mood of the different players. In this recording the different passages create a feeling of depth, or wandering, or of distance traversed; they leave us floating in a vast modal space, not knowing what will transpire next, and wondering what solutions the players will find.²⁵

Climax 2 begins to take shape at a curious moment in this space. After a buildup of intensity (14:41–17:00) that could have served as a final climax before verse 2 in a manner similar to that of the first climax, the players calm down onto scattered chords. Out of this, Garcia intones on his guitar the first line of the verse, prompting a momentary return of the Dark Star progression (18:18). This leads to a 5 harmony, as in the verse itself, which leads to further exploration until another settling onto the Dark Star progression (19:02). At that point, on top of light, playful chords, Garcia, unsatisfied, begins to drive toward yet another climax. This one proves to be the biggest of all and transforms the experience of the song as a whole. Garcia moves right up to the peak note, high A, and builds a long series of descending riffs from

4:02

1

lead guitar

backup guitar

bass

This system contains the first four measures of the song. The lead guitar part (top staff) begins with a melodic line in the key of D major (two sharps). The backup guitar (middle staff) provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords. The bass (bottom staff) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. A time signature of 4/4 is indicated. A box labeled '4:02' is placed above the first measure.

5

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The lead guitar continues its melodic line, while the backup guitar and bass maintain their respective parts.

9

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The lead guitar part shows some variation in its melodic line.

13

This system contains measures 13 through 16. The lead guitar part continues with its melodic line.

Example 7.7. "Dark Star," climax of the first improvisational episode, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

17

This system contains measures 17 through 20. The lead guitar part continues with its melodic line.

20

This system contains measures 21 through 24. The lead guitar part continues with its melodic line.

25

This system contains measures 25 through 28. The lead guitar part continues with its melodic line.

27

This system contains measures 29 through 32. The lead guitar part continues with its melodic line.

Example 7.7. (continued)

32

36

40

44

5:06

Example 7.7. (continued)

that note to the E below it (incorporating the thirds A–F#–D and G–E) that grow steadily louder and more insistent. Weir's backup guitar, having maintained a semblance of the Dark Star progression for some time, shifts over to the expected {5} chords in a counterrhythm that reinforces Garcia's riffs; Lesh's bass moves restlessly beneath. Then, the intensity of the passage leads to something new, shown in example 7.8. After seconds of heightened expectancy, Garcia breaks into a distinct pattern of climax riffs centered on A and E, solidly backed up by a simultaneous switch by Weir back to the Dark Star progression and also supported by a strong arrival on A by Lesh (m. 5). The significance of this moment, after twenty minutes of musical probing, is great. The progression is at last allied to the climactic tensions of the piece, rather than acting as a meditative foil to them; and Garcia's powerful melodic searching has landed, at long last, on the crowning summit of a chordally rooted A, to which E is clearly subservient. In this manner the tonal enigma of the song is resolved, by force; the progression triumphs over its nemesis of tonal insecurity.

The climactic arrival is not fleeting; on the contrary, it is strengthened by ensuing melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic contributions from all three players. Garcia's riffing picks up speed and intensity in the following manner. He first presents A and E as sequential goal tones in a descending phrase that lasts for two measures, with G and, more weakly, F# as intermediaries (mm. 5–7). He then restates the latter part of that phrase but concludes it by binding the arrival tone of E to the high A in a repeated eighth-note formula (mm. 8–9). This formula serves both to conclude the descending phrase A–G–F#–E and to begin that same phrase. By conflating the function of E and A as arrival and departure tones, he both reaffirms the movement to E that has characterized much of the song and reasserts its dependence on the stronger A. The formula will be restated in identical or slightly varying form eight times in the next fifteen measures, as part of a riff that settles into its most complex and definitive form in mm. 17–18.

Weir's playing in this passage is related to his playing in the verse: he holds to the Dark Star progression for eight measures (mm. 5–12) and then switches over to {5} chords for eight measures (mm. 13–20). Remarkably, though, he then *returns* to evoke the Dark Star progression once again (mm. 20–26), a harmonic move that is unprecedented in the song and that reaffirms the primacy of that progression. Weir's idea is supported by Lesh. In the course of measures 5–20 the bassist settles on a riff related to the Dark Star progression but which works also in the context of Weir's {5} chords. Then, in measure 20, as Weir returns to the progression, Lesh hits A on a downbeat for the first time in fifteen measures.

The conclusion of this climax begins at the downbeat of measure 25. At this point Garcia finally begins to quiet down on a sustained, stable high-A arrival, backed up by its neighbor B. Lesh, having let out a brief soaring line that hit high E—his own moment of climax—drops down to a sustained A at the same point. Weir continues his slowly rising chords to settle, four measures later, on a quiet, repeated, high A-major chord. The music continues its decrescendo, despite a rising line by Lesh, through to measure 33, where Garcia intones the same riff he intoned after the climax to the first episode (ex. 7.7, mm. 44–46). Finally the Dark Star progression picks up again, for the last time, in measure 35, preparatory to the singing of verse 2.

20:05

1

lead guitar

backup guitar

bass

ff

5

9

13

17

21

25

decresc.

decresc.

pp

decresc.

31

20:51

p

(pp)

p

Example 7.8. "Dark Star," climax of the last improvisational episode, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

Example 7.8. (*continued*)

One wonders what the relationship could be between this climax of climaxes and the issues raised in first sung verse (ex. 7.4; we shall take up the second verse in a moment). By comparison with the long, wandering, and tonally searching improvisations, the Dark Star progression seems to represent a kind of order, reason, and containment. In climax 2, then, perhaps the "forces" have indeed been recentered on the "axis," and the "searchlight" has pierced the "clouds of delusion." At the same time, however, joining the progression to climactic musical tension may suggest a connection between it and the hallucinatory night, or dark star, of psychedelia, where resolutions are fleeting in the ongoing turmoil of images. The original presentation of the Dark Star progression, with its gentle, understated manner, seemed to offer a certain perspective on that turmoil, perhaps evoking the beauty of the actual nighttime sky, or a connection to a background of calm reality or stability, even if it could be overwhelmed by the volatile foreground of drug experience. Does this climax, and the romantic identification it suggests, resolve the conflict of reality and unreality, or perpetuate it?

The question could be answered in one way by consulting other recordings of the song. In fact no other recording I have heard presents quite this romantic a reading of a final climax, if indeed there is a climax at all; there is no systematic joining of the progression to a peak moment of intensity. The choice made by the Dead in this case, therefore, represents only one reading or rendering of the song. Accepting this recording as a sufficient text, we have another element to consider before answering the question, namely, the second verse that follows the climax.

Second Verse and End of the Song

The first verse of "Dark Star" projected the listener into tonal doubt, necessitating a rescue by means of the instrumental tag which itself marked a new beginning. After the tonal recentering of the last climax, must there be a return to the haunting ambiguities already experienced? The music of the second verse is almost identical to that of the first, while the text offers a certain change of perspective.

- V. Mirror shatters
In formless reflections of matter
Glass hand dissolving
In ice petal flowers revolving
Lady in velvet
Recedes in the nights of good bye.

The scale of images has diminished greatly, to reach a more intimate, human level (mirror, hand, flowers, velvet); their character is more familiar than epic. But hallucination, distortion, chaos, ephemerality, and loss are still the rule, and another person (lady in velvet) slips away, as if to amplify with loneliness the hint of melancholy or nostalgia in the call for companionship of the first refrain.

Since the particular qualities of the second verse do not change its basic agreement with the underlying themes of the first verse, the music is equally appropriate here. One might say even more so, since the quietness of the music, matched by the more tender intimacy of the words, makes a fitting aftermath to the intensity of the

instrumental climaxes, which have, in effect, drawn off the violence suggested by the first verse's lyrics. However, since the music is the same, the tonal problem of verse 1 is precisely restated: here again the point of departure, A, is opposed to an arrival on E. This repeated harmonic, textural, and melodic framework sounds like a reality check in relation to the shifting, indistinct, or searching qualities of the improvisations; even a grand tonal "victory" such as that of the second climax has little effect on it. It remains, then, for the final refrain to confirm or change the inevitable tonal "loss" in the music. The music for this refrain is shown in example 7.9.

Instead of a simple restatement of the first refrain melody, this time the refrain is amplified by added voices; its second phrase is lengthened also, to permit a more emphatic conclusion that now includes a strong *tonicization* of 1, with raised leading tone on G♯, backed up by a tonicization of 5 as well (through 5 of 5), with raised leading tone on D♯ (mm. 12–16).²⁶ Garcia's lead melody for the second phrase is likewise changed: after the peak note of E (m. 14: "*transitive*"), the important arrival on D—which, in the first refrain, ended the first phrase and preceded the descent down to low E in the second phrase—has been eliminated in favor of a new peak note on F♯ (m. 15: "*nightfall*"). This heightened arrival draws particular attention to the final phrase of the song and its harmonies, which effectively call into question, in a single gesture, the entire preceding mixolydian tonal framework.

The passage, with its precise vocal polyphony and its cadential functionality, is curiously reminiscent of eighteenth-century vocal counterpoint. The fact that it does not seem entirely out of place reflects the playful and contrapuntal nature of the Dead's style, in which many different musical influences may be sensed. But it is, at the same time, a bit jarring, due both to its unexpected vocalizing and its unexpected tonal shift: the players are dwelling on and leaning on the final line of the refrain, as if to celebrate or amplify its meaning. We have heard the words before; partly for this reason, and partly because of their new setting, they make an even stronger statement about companionship, ephemerality, beauty, and loss. This time, however, it is the song itself that is ending. The reference to classical music adds an element of rhetorical formality to this closure, which resonates with the somewhat heightened, obscure language of these lines.

Shall we go, you and I while we can
Through the *transitive nightfall of diamonds?*

The refrain is followed by a new, even quieter, precomposed transitional passage (mm. 18–22 and beyond), leading out of "Dark Star" and into another song that often follows it, namely "St. Stephen." The tag we heard at the beginning of the song, the regenerator of the Dark Star progression, is notably absent, and the "song," therefore, no longer recurs: its tonal and expressive topic has evaporated, like a fleeting vision or dream.

The group has effectively resolved any harmonic ambiguity between 1 and 5 at the end of the song by establishing a clearly hierarchical dominant-tonic relationship; but, by the same token, the mixolydian scale basis of the song has been removed. Now we may return to the question posed by the climax of example 7.8. Does it resolve the issues of identity or, rather, compound them? The answer depends on one's point of view; but I tend to the latter conclusion, for it better reflects the floating, transitory

22:02

1

lead voice *mp* Shall we go ——— you and I while we

backup voice(s) *p* Shall we go ——— you and I while we

guitars *p*

bass *p*

5

can Through ———

can Through ———

lead gtr.: *pp*

backup gtr.: *pp*

10

the tran - si - tive night - fall of dia - monds

the tran - si - tive night - - - fall of

pp

Example 7.9. "Dark Star," second (and final) refrain, from the performance of 27 Feb. 1969 (released on *Live/Dead*).

14

dia - - - monds

p *mp*

18

mp *decresc.*

mp *decresc.*

mp *decresc.*

21

22:40

pp

pp

pp

Example 7.9. (continued)

qualities of the music that most broadly define it and that are reaffirmed in verse 2. Ultimately, there is no clear distinction between the elements of musical intensification and the volatile psychedelic foreground suggested by the lyrics; the struggle for meaning may as well plunge us further into that foreground as gain us any perspective on it. In fact this climax, perhaps even more than the others, seems *opposed* to the Dark Star progression in its tranquil, quiet form, which begins and anchors the song: it is that calm state that orients us and suggests peace of mind. By the same token, Garcia's climactic high A's lie at the opposite end of the song's expressive range from the low A's that underpin the Dark Star progression.

In the end, the listener does float away from that progression definitively, but its calmness still remains, as if to suggest that, in letting go of attachment to fixed identity, one can find greater stability in the movement itself.

Conclusion

In the foregoing analysis I have tried to show some of the ways in which the Dead's music functions, based on close listening to one recording, and I have proposed some interpretations of its meaning. In conclusion I shall comment briefly on the implications of this analysis for an appreciation of the Grateful Dead as a band, and of the social phenomenon that surrounds it.

First of all, this recording of "Dark Star" illustrates the Dead's combination of concentrated, organized musical thought and loose, unpredictable interaction. These qualities affect various aspects of the music, ranging from the smallest moment to the broadest sequence of events. The fluidity of harmony, counterpoint, and musical episode encourages the listener to hear the music itself as a fluid, changeable object, embracing various kinds of musical convergence and divergence to arrive at a broad, open-ended sense of what is possible. The Dead enthusiast is therefore likely to be a tolerant listener, prepared to accept many different kinds of sounds and prepared also to listen for clues to form and direction in a long-winded, somewhat unpredictable musical flow.²⁷

Dead fans must also be tolerant of the vagaries of the music in its effect. The recording I have discussed is a strong performance, but it is also common for fans and band members too to speak of high and low points in concerts and entire seasons. As one fan said to me, "I'll wait for a whole concert, a whole *series* of concerts, just to get that one special moment," that moment where the music comes together and transcends ordinary experience.²⁸ As the foregoing analysis of "Dark Star" shows, the Dead's music can have many such meaningful moments, framed by the constant, flowing qualities of their style. While such moments are, to some extent, normal for any music, the emphasis of the Dead on open-mindedness and spontaneous freedom and on the constant, shifting possibilities of meaning arising from ambiguity gives this factor of imminent transcendence a particular importance.

The searching quality, the quality of being on the edge of a special, unpredictable, and highly meaningful experience in the moment, might be called *virtuality*. This word is not to be confused with "virtual reality," which, as commonly used, is nearly opposite to the virtuality of which I speak, even if the latter could, in its broadest sense, be said to embrace the former. Virtual reality tends to emphasize the approximation of an implicitly stable, external, "actual" reality through novel intermediaries, usually mechanized. Virtuality, as I am using it, emphasizes the far more open-ended approximation of an internal, intuitive reality, distinct from the externally tangible and the mundanely real. Virtual reality directs us to a fixed, replicable end, based on connection to known or concrete things. Virtuality invites us to an inward leap of faith, imagination, or experience that is inherently unpredictable and unique unto itself. Virtual reality objectifies; virtuality subjectifies. Virtual reality manipulates; virtuality suggests.

Jerry Garcia has evoked something of this quality at various times when describing the Dead's music, as, for example, in the following excerpt from an interview of 1972:

I think of the Grateful Dead as being a crossroads or a pointer sign, and what we're pointing to is that there's a lot of universe available, that there's a lot of experience available over here. We're kinda like a signpost and we're also pointing to danger, to difficulty, to bummers. We're pointing to whatever there is, when we're on—whatever's happening. . . . We play rock and roll music, and it's part of our form—our vehicle, so to speak—but it's not who we are totally. Like Moondog in New York City, who walks around, he's a sign post to otherness, a sign post to something that's not concrete. It's the same thing. . . . Formlessness and chaos lead to new forms and new order. Closer to, probably, what the real order is. When you break down the old orders and the old forms and leave them broken and shattered, you suddenly find yourself a new space with new form and new order which are more like the way it is. More like the flow. And we just *found* ourselves in that place.²⁹

Of course, all experience involves a component of virtuality, inasmuch as consciousness is distinguishable from experience and must project meaning on it. All experience involves a component of actuality as well. There are many experiences of the Dead's music that have served to actualize the hopes and dreams of Deadheads or prompted the Deadheads to actualize them; the "special moment" referred to above is a good example. But in the Dead's psychedelic, intuitive world, the margin between real and unreal, the suggestive connections and barriers between them, and the fleeting, intimate nature of experience are particularly at issue and make the precise, edgelike quality of virtuality particularly relevant. For the Dead, music is a doorway to a different, heightened reality—what its detractors would surely call an *unreality*, opposed to everyday reality. Through the vernacular spirituality of the group and its fans, that other reality can be a positive, uplifting thing, and the doorway to it becomes an essential, permanent Sign.³⁰

"Dark Star" provides an excellent illustration of these qualities, both in its lyrics, which evoke a subtle, complex relation between the inner and outer worlds, and in its music, which balances identity against an open-ended searching for meaning on different levels.³¹ It is in that improvised balancing act, constantly subject to question, that a good part of the genius of the music lies.

Qualities such as these have been explained as the result of drug influence, on band members and audience alike. It would be wrong to minimize the importance of drugs in the history of the Dead and of the Deadhead movement; the Dead are considered by many to be the ultimate psychedelic band, and the qualities of virtuality and of transcendence seem appropriate in that context. Still more important, however, is the music itself, and the particular sense of community that it, and the band, have generated. Simon Frith once suggested that "[t]he question we should be asking is not what does popular music *reveal* about 'the people' but how does it *construct* them."³² Such construction is readily visible in the Deadhead phenomenon. The Dead is a band whose creative ideology not only helped to define an era but resulted in a unique listening and concertgoing public whose chief bonds are those same qualities we have heard in the music. For those who dislike them, Deadheads may represent aimless, drug-crazed hedonism; but for those who believe in them,

they represent a rare acceptance and appreciation of diversity and faith in the power of transcendence.

At the present time, following Jerry Garcia's death, the sprawling Deadhead movement faces a moment of truth. It will organize itself in some new way or else find various new points of focus; but in the process, some of the qualities that previously defined it will come into question. One of these is its quality of floating on such a grand scale, of being simultaneously formed and formless, of suggesting profound social changes without tending to realize them in clear political terms or impose them on the broader society—in other words, its own virtuality, which is, of course, in perfect relation to the Dead's music. For now, the element of balance in motion appears to be missing; at least, the constant state of becoming, as specifically embodied in the Dead's musical performances, is no more. What the Deadheads have left is a stark choice, or diluted combination of choices, between two alternatives: to look back for meaning into the grand tape loop of recorded shows or to look forward into a future devoid of the original, guiding manifestation of the Sign. The foregoing analysis of "Dark Star," the recording, takes the former course; but "Dark Star," the performance, argues at least as eloquently for the latter.

When Garcia was alive it was easier to say, of an analysis such as this, that the next performance of the song made it irrelevant. His death is one more reminder that, when caught in the frame of art or human life, even paradox and transitoriness have their limits; even the Dead die. Regarded in this light, the words to "Dark Star" take on additional meaning. We have gone through the nightfall of diamonds and beyond it to a new day. The forces have indeed torn loose from the axis. The mirror is shattered, the message of "Dark Star" scattered. Again, one might ask: better scattered to the winds, or to an endless mechanized redundancy? Perhaps the answer lies in neither of these but, instead, in a slight change of consciousness, involving heightened vernacular faith, openmindedness, and perhaps even thoughtfulness about our intimate and collective memories. In an age of obsessive mechanical reproduction and transient fame, history becomes depthless and flat; perhaps the Deadheads could make a dent in the past as well as the future.

By contrast, however, consider Garcia's own thoughts about dying. His answer is consistent with his approach to music and to life; it is consistent with the expressive message of "Dark Star." But it is glaringly inconsistent with the mythic world the Dead have engendered, inasmuch as that world seeks to survive and to maintain its past identity as its inhabitants come and go. To the extent that the Deadheads fade away or move on to other things, Jerry's words will have been appropriate and prophetic.

I'm hoping to leave a clean field—nothing, not a thing. I'm hoping they bury it all with me. I don't feel that there's this body of work that must exist. I'd just as soon take it all with me. There's enough stuff—who needs the clutter, you know? I'd rather have my immortality while I'm alive.³³

Appendix: Reactions of members of the Grateful Dead

Partly through the good efforts of Thomas Vennum, senior ethnomusicologist at the Folklife Program of the Smithsonian Institution, and Dennis McNally, manager of the Grateful Dead, I obtained a number of reactions from members of the band to a copy of, or arguments in, the original, shorter version of this chapter. As presented here, the statements are paraphrases.

JERRY GARCIA: *The song is tonally ambiguous. If pressed, I would say it is not in A mixolydian but rather E dorian.* [Garcia later said it could be in A.]

PHIL LESH AND BOB WEIR: *The song is in A.*

TOM CONSTANTEN: *The paper sounds like a weather report in French, delivered perfectly by someone who doesn't speak a word of the language. While the points made are all true, the spirit of the paper has nothing to do with the spirit in which the music was made.*

To these might be compared the following comment by Frederic Lieberman, ethnomusicologist and longtime associate of the band: *This is the most "etic" analysis I've ever heard. If you ask the band members, they'll say the song is just two chords.*

Notes

1. Concerning the Dead's earnings in 1995, see "1995 Top Tours," *Pollstar*, 31 Dec. 1995: 7. Concerning their earnings in 1991, see "Year of the Dead" and "1991 Top 50 Tours," *Pollstar*, 31 Dec. 1991: 5 and 7, respectively. Also reported in Sandy Troy, *Captain Trips: A Biography of Jerry Garcia* (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1994), 245. In recent years, a Deadhead-related following has also been attaching itself increasingly to other, younger bands, including Phish, Blues Traveler, and Rusted Root. According to *Pollstar's* "Concert Pulse" of 22 Jan. 1996, Phish, Blues Traveler, and Rusted Root ranked seventh, seventeenth, and twenty-third, respectively, in overall concert earnings for the preceding three months; see *Pollstar*, 22 Jan. 1996: 2. Phish was ranked fifteenth in overall earnings for 1995; Blues Traveler was ranked forty-seventh ("1995 Top Tours," *Pollstar*, 31 Dec. 1995: 7).

2. *The Rolling Stone Album Guide*, ed. Anthony DeCurtis and James Henke (New York: Random House, 1992), s.v. "Grateful Dead," by Paul Evans, 288.

3. Lester Bangs, "The Clash," *New Musical Express*, 10 Dec. 1977; reprinted in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, ed. Greil Marcus (New York: Knopf, 1987), 233. Seven years earlier, his views were essentially the same: "the Dead seemed more like a group of ex-folkies just dabbling in distortion (as their albums eventually bore out)" ("Of Pop and Pies and Fun," *Creem* [Nov. and Dec. 1970]; reprinted in *Psychotic Reactions*, 42). In 1983, Bob Weir, in a facetious moment, put it somewhat differently: "Let's face it: we're a jazz band." Quoted in David Gans, *Conversations with the Dead: The Grateful Dead Interview Book* (New York: Citadel, 1992), 182.

4. *Live/Dead*, Warner Brothers 2WS-1830 (1969); recently rereleased on compact disc (Warner Brothers 1830-2). The date of recording is provided in *Deadbase 4: The Complete Guide to Grateful Dead Song Lists*, ed. John W. Scott, Mike Dolgushkin, and Stu Nixon (Hanover, N.H.: Deadbase, 1990), 485. Concerning the composition and performance history of this song, see Rob Bowman's important liner notes to John Oswald's compact disc, *Grayfolded*, Swell/Artifact 1969 (1996), partially reprinted as "Dark Star: The Legend Continues," *Dupree's Diamond News* 32 (Fall 1995): 32-35.

5. As Robert Hunter, who wrote the lyrics for "Dark Star," said recently, "What the Dead

do on 'Dark Star' is what the Dead are, that's what they do best. What defines the Dead is 'Dark Star'" (quoted in Bowman's liner notes to *Grayfolded*, [2]; reprinted in "Dark Star: The Legend Continues," 32). Jerry Garcia called the performance released on *Live/Dead*, "a real good version." See Jann S. Wenner and Charles Reich, "The Rolling Stone Interview with Jerry Garcia and Mountain Girl," *Rolling Stone*, 20 Jan. 1972; reprinted in *Garcia: By the Editors of Rolling Stone*, ed. Holly George-Warren (New York: Rolling Stone/Little, Brown, 1995), 92. Garcia has also praised the continuous medley of songs released on the album ("Dark Star," followed by "St. Stephen," "The Eleven," and "Turn On Your Lovelight"), considered as a single musical unit: "In the sense of being a serious long composition, musically, and then a recording of it, it's our music at one of its really good moments" (quoted in Troy, *Captain Trips*, 125).

6. There is a studio version, appearing on an early single, which is not well liked by the band ("Dark Star," b/w "Born Cross-Eyed," Warner Bros. 7186 [1968]). For a discussion of the single, including comments about it by Jerry Garcia, see Bowman, liner notes to *Grayfolded*, [4].

7. Judging by the data presented in *DeadBase* 4, p. 225, there were 153 performances of "Dark Star" through 31 Dec. 1989 (the chronological endpoint of that edition of the database). Among these, the song opens a set 7 percent of the time (eleven performances) and opens a song list within a set 10 percent of the time (sixteen performances). It closes an encore once and closes a list 5% of the time (eight performances).

8. John Oswald's recent composition *Grayfolded* was made electronically by splicing, overlaying, and manipulating parts of one hundred recorded performances of the song. Reaction from the Deadhead public has been enthusiastic but also mixed; some find it to be the "ultimate" or "best" "Dark Star," while others think the opposite, repelled by the thought that the Dead's music could be improved by outside tinkering.

9. As Bob Weir once remarked, "The tapes always lie." Quoted in Gans, *Conversations with the Dead*, 182.

10. While my analysis of this recording will be tempered (at times implicitly, at other times explicitly) by acquaintance with other recordings, I shall nonetheless consider it to be adequate unto itself. Such an approach does impose a certain fixity or finality on this particular performance, and some might reasonably argue that the spirit of the band runs counter to such a stance. This is a point that merits serious consideration, and I shall return to it at the end of this essay. Nonetheless, recordings of the Dead's performances exist and are listened to, even studied, to the point of memorization by many fans. It is, to say the least, reasonable to examine these recordings for the structures and meanings that they suggest to the listener, all the more so in the case of highly regarded "classic" instances such as this one. By analyzing this recording in depth, however, I do not mean to suggest that it is more than one rendering of the song. In another essay, forthcoming as an article, I examine sixteen early recordings of "Dark Star" in order to categorize the style, content, and interrelationships of its various episodes across different performances ("Dark Star: What's the Score?" read at the conference in Honor of Rulan Chao Pian, Harvard University, April 1992).

11. For transcription in this article, I used a Panasonic SL-PS352 CD player with an Edcor HA 400 headphone amplifier and Koss Pro 4 AAA Plus headphones. Other equipment may cause the music to sound different as to relative loudness of instruments at different moments and even, more frequently than one might think, as to precise notes and rhythms played. Beyond equalization and other matters of high-fidelity sound reproduction, this is due partly to the conditions of the original live recording, including saturation caused by the bass and other instruments, which occasionally clouds the sound. The dynamic indications are simple and are intended only to give some sense of the relative apparent loudness of different passages. In fact, the dynamics depend more on the band as a whole (including percus-

sion and organ) than on the instrumental lines transcribed. In addition, I have not systematically indicated the slides, pulls, and other subtle features of guitar and bass playing that occur from time to time; I have resolved occasional rhythmic ambiguities; I have resolved the often gently swinging rhythm to straight eighth notes; and, as is explained later, I have not transcribed the playing of every musician in the band.

12. Other performances confirm that this tag marks the beginning of "Dark Star." In instances I have heard where the song has been located at the beginning of a set and has, therefore, lacked a preceding jam, the tag is still present.

13. Three other musicians in the band, Tom Constanten on electric organ and Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann on percussion, contribute significantly to the texture, rhythm, dynamics, and mood of the song (another band member, Pigpen [a.k.a. Ron McKernan], may also be playing percussion). The percussion has an important role in establishing an introspective atmosphere: unlike much rock drumming of the time, it is muted and even reticent, relying for much of the time on Latin hand instruments and gently swinging cymbal work and adding stronger accents during climactic or otherwise salient passages. In this respect, it recalls certain styles of jazz playing; together with the repetitive modal chords and the swinging rhythm that often obtains in the music, it is particularly evocative of the style of *Kind of Blue* by the Miles Davis Quintet (Columbia PC 8163 [1959]). Constanten's sinuous organ lines, based largely on right-hand pentatonic arpeggios, weave lightly and episodically through the texture, at certain times rising to the surface of the music and at others receding or disappearing altogether. Since I am primarily concerned with tonal sensibility in the analysis that follows, I shall not dwell on the percussion; and since the organ part is so much more episodic and less audible than the guitar trio of Garcia, Weir, and Lesh in the recording, I shall not dwell on it either.

14. For the sake of clarity, and in order to avoid improper parallels with chordal functionality in common-practice music, I am naming chords in this essay by either upper-case letters (A, E, and so forth) or simple arabic numerals (1, 5, and so forth). Pitches are named by upper-case letters only, never numbers. Roman numerals and caret-topped arabic numerals are not used.

15. Garcia recently described the Dark Star progression as follows: "[It's] like a two-bar honk. That's like the fundamental rhythmic piece . . . You can think of that as figured bass. It's early counterpoint in the same sense that 'Cold Rain and Snow' is." Lesh made a related observation: "Some reviewer described the way I play as being 'Like a sandworm in heat wrapped around Garcia's guitar line.' I love that line and it does describe that really because it's like we're playing chasing the train which is a lot of fun. I try to do that all the time but 'Dark Star' is *supposed to do that*." Both quotes from Bowman, liner notes to *Grayfolded*, [3]; reprinted in "Dark Star: The Legend Continues," 33, emphasis is Bowman's.

16. There is one minor-third leap, from G to E; but the voice evokes the intervening F# without clearly singing it, by means of a slight dip from G. Not transcribed in example 7.4 (or in ex. 7.9) are the many nuances of Garcia's singing; also untranscribed is Garcia's guitar part here, which plays, very quietly, the same melody he sings.

17. Garcia has said of this melody, apparently in reference to the possibilities it suggests for improvisation: "Something about the structure of it meant that you could open up any part of it. You could take [the first half of the melody] and stop and then you could play for 5000 bars and then come back with [the second half of the melody] for example. You could open it almost after every note and come back and it'll be fairly graceful. . . . It's so simple, it doesn't have any rules. It's really simple and also as complicated as you could possibly get. It's both things at the same time." Quoted in Bowman, liner notes to *Grayfolded*, [5]. The two half-lines of melody are transcribed there; but they were either mistranscribed or rendered in two different keys by Garcia.

18. The juxtaposition of the tag and the preceding bass line here reveals or at least casts the first tag formula (marked "i" in ex. 7.1, bass line, mm. 15ff.) as part of the third chain rising up from E (E-G-B-D). That, in turn, reinforces the impression of harmonic movement in the tag from {5} to 1.

19. In discussing his ideas for the early, single version of the song, which he later decided was flawed, Garcia has expressed explicit awareness of the opposition of 1 and 5 harmonies in the verse and drawn an implicit connection between that opposition and the character of the song as a whole. His comment also shows that the opposition is less explicit and focused, and more open-ended, in the mature versions of the song than it could have been: "I wanted the bass figure to be more powerful. Then when it drops down to the E-minor part, that would have been much stronger and much darker and it would have had an E-minor ninth feel, almost like E-minor as a dominant chord . . . As always with Grateful Dead stuff, my version usually just dies somewhere and the Grateful Dead version takes over . . . At the time I was panicked a little because I thought, 'What happened to my song . . . ?' But, as it opened and we got really risky, when we started to drop the rhythm and just went all over the place, by then I realized that the Grateful Dead version, the x version, was way more interesting both to me as a player and to me as an audience." Quoted in Bowman, liner notes to *Grayfolded*, [4].

20. The text for the first refrain line paraphrases the opening line of T. S. Eliot's poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915; *The Wasteland and Other Poems* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934; reprint, 1988]). The second line of the refrain is also related, in its "nighttime" theme, to the second line of Eliot's poem, albeit distantly.

21. When asked whether the lyrics' exploratory imagery had influenced the music, Garcia recently said: "No question. The reason the music is the way it is, is because those lyrics did suggest that to me. That's what happened. They are saying 'this universe is truly far out.' That's about it. You could take whatever you will from that suggestion. For me, that suggestion always means, 'Great, let's look around; let's see how weird it really gets.'" Lesh agreed that the lyrics might have had a "subliminal" effect but placed more emphasis on the chord structure: "My feeling is the reason that that song became the archetypal Grateful Dead jamming song is because of the chord changes to it. It was a kind of a drone song. It didn't have a lot of chord changes in it. Generally speaking, those kind of songs are easier to really stretch out on because there's so little to adhere to." Both quotes from Bowman, liner notes to *Grayfolded*, [4].

22. In both cases, due to space constraints, I am leaving out the passage that occurs prior to the entry of Garcia's guitar as melodic lead. In the first episode (ex. 7.5) that preceding passage is tranquil and based firmly on the Dark Star progression. In the second episode (ex. 7.6), by contrast, it involves a strong buildup that leaves the progression behind, while still remaining anticipatory of Garcia's solo. In this episode, then, his entry (m. 1) coincides with a momentary return to the progression, before further harmonic exploration.

23. Regarding the open conception of these episodes in performances of "Dark Star," organist Tom Constanten has characterized it in the following terms: "[It's an] exploratory venture—possibly you could use the word *experimental* for that—it's not so much a set piece, that you know where you are in it and know where you're gonna go, as you're out on an ocean in a boat and you can choose your landmarks and response to things and move in certain directions as you wish—of course, always interacting." Quoted in Troy, *Captain Trips*, 123.

24. Garcia's riff of mm. 44–46 (repeated and varied several times thereafter) is, in fact, a signal, following the settling down of the musical texture, for movement toward the singing of the verse. It recurs at the end of the second instrumental episode, before the second verse (see ex. 7.8, mm. 33–35), and can be heard in other performances of the song in analogous places.

25. In performances where the band goes into an atonal "space jam" in this second episode, the improvisations leave modality behind as well, in order to explore feedback, free percussion, and other open-ended possibilities. In this performance, there is no space jam.

26. The 5 of 5 tonicization may be the result of a fortuitous slip of the voice: the bass below plays a note (quietly) that may be D natural, and on other recordings of the song I have heard, the voice sings D natural rather than D♯.

27. It has often been said that Dead shows have, over time, become relatively formulaic and predictable, with a tendency to relegate certain categories of music to specific points in the sets (notably the exploratory sections that have come to be called "Drums" and "Space"). While that is true, it also remains true that the range of music and of sheer sound played by the band is extraordinary; and they have often invited other musicians to play with them, such as Bob Dylan, jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis, percussionist Kitaro, and many others, further broadening their stylistic horizons.

28. The phenomenon of the special moment has been noted many times as an essential aspect of Dead concerts, by band members as well as fans. In 1981, Garcia remarked: "People have reported to us so many times that experience: 'You looked at me and I knew what you were going to play,' or 'I knew what you were going to play before you played it,' or 'I was making you play'—all those variations. It's like flying saucer reports. Thousands of 'em, so much so that I can't pretend it doesn't happen." Quoted in Gans, *Conversations with the Dead*, 73. In the same year, Lesh remarked: "After all these years, man, there's nothing awesome about it all, except the moments. Those moments, when you're not even human anymore—you're not a musician, you're not even a person—you're just there." Quoted in Gans, *Conversations with the Dead*, 110.

29. Wenner and Reich, "The Rolling Stone Interview with Jerry Garcia and Mountain Girl"; reprinted in George-Warren, *Garcia*, 95.

30. As Garcia put it, in 1983: "it's a religion to me, too, on a certain level . . . I don't like the word *religion*. It's a bad word. I'd like to not have that concept . . . I don't want to assign any word to it. Why limit it? I want it to surprise me. I don't want to know anything about it." In the same interview, Lesh was more succinct: "For us, myself, it's faith . . . I have faith in this thing, whatever the fuck it is." Gans, *Conversations with the Dead*, 214.

31. A Deadhead view of the matter, not untypical in my experience, is provided by Steve Silberman, coauthor of a book on the Deadheads. Explaining why "Dark Star" is his favorite music by the group, Silberman comments: "Hearing *Live/Dead* when I was in high school was like a can opener to worlds of spirituality, introspection, philosophy, and improvisation for me. So when I specifically hear the 'Dark Star' on *Live/Dead*, I hear the sound of the door to the universe opening for me" ("30 Years upon Our Heads: Roundtable Discussion with John Dwork, David Gans, Blair Jackson, and Steve Silberman," *Dupree's Diamond News* 32 [Fall 1995]: 46).

32. Simon Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 137.

33. From Anthony DeCurtis, "The Music Never Stops: The Rolling Stone Interview with Jerry Garcia," *Rolling Stone*, 2 Sept. 1993; reprinted in George-Warren *Garcia*, 197. The centrality and distinctiveness of Garcia's vision and personality within the band, opposable in some sense to those of the other band members, is illustrated in a recent article by David Gans, which describes projects of the remaining members after Garcia's death. These include the accelerated release of archival recordings and videos, a "Deadapalooza" tour, and the founding of a permanent gathering place in San Francisco where Deadheads can "recapture as much of that spirit as possible." Such plans are understandable, given that the rest of the band is alive, committed to making music, and central to such a large phenomenon (with its com-

mercial, as well as musical and spiritual, forces). The Grateful Dead, Mickey Hart noted, "has been our home for our whole adult lives," and Weir comments that "I'm doing what I believe he [Garcia] would have me doing: bringing music to people" (David Gans, "Dead End," *Rolling Stone*, 25 Jan. 1996: 23–24). But they also leave behind many of the qualities that this essay has attempted to evoke. It seems that, like the death of John Lennon in relationship to the Beatles, Garcia's passing unequivocally signals the end of the Dead.

Outside of the band, the recent comments of a leading Deadhead figure, John Dwork, reflect the combination of open-ended spirituality and hope that characterizes an optimistic Deadhead view of life after the Dead: "the Grateful Dead Experience has become, for so many of us, the closest we may ever get to having a spiritual path. . . . How do we keep our scene alive and continue along our path without Jerry? . . . we must accept the reality that we'll never see Jerry up there on stage again. We must, therefore, learn every day how to summon the love, joy, and sense of adventure we felt at Dead shows. We must learn how to spread this energy out into the rest of the world. . . . Now that the Grateful Dead as we've known it has ended, we, the Deadhead community at large, need to be our own source of light" (John Dwork, "Dedication," *Dupree's Diamond News* 32 [Fall 1995]: 2–3).