

raise the
ungrateful
dead

Whose got the skeleton key?

Dead lyricist Robert Hunter said, "I'd really prefer not to get into tearing apart the symbology of my songs." Here are five examples of vagueness David Dodd gives in "ambiguity as a philosophical stance in the lyrics of the Grateful Dead" (see the website article in its entirety at <http://arts.ucsc.edu/GDead/AGDL/ambig.htm>).

- "and it's just a box of rain, I don't know who put it there..." (Box of Rain)
- "life may be sweeter for this, I don't know" (Crazy Fingers)
- "Goes to show, you don't ever know..." (Deal)
- "I ain't preachin', cause I don't know..." (Walk in the Sunshine)
- "I don't know now, I just don't know/If I'm goin' back again" (Cumberland Blues)

"I don't know" don't work too well when dead is dead...

Dylan knows this for sure: there ain't no goin' back when your foot of pride come down.

There's a retired businessman named Red,
cast down from heaven and he's out of his head...
He feeds off of everyone that he can touch...
He's not somebody you play around with much.
Miss Delilah is his, a Philistine is what she is.
She'll do wondrous works with your fate
Feed you coconut bread and spice buns in your bed—
If you don't mind sleepin' with your head face down in a grave.

Nah, there ain't no goin' back when your foot of pride come down.

Death is not a period
Bringing the sentence of life to a close
Like the spilling of a moment
Or the dissolution of an hour.

Death is a useful comma
which punctuates, and labors
To convince
Of much to follow (John Donne).

A dead atheist is someone who is all dressed up with no place to go (James Duffeacey).

There is nothing hazy or unintelligible about these words:

“A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead” (Proverbs 21:16); “the path of life leads upward for the wise, to keep him and to keep her from going down to the grave (Proverbs 15:24). Death and destruction lie open before the Lord—how much more the deceitful human heart.

You can be truckin’ through life like the do-dah man, and the next thing you know: *Kawoommm!* Death is the shadow that darkens every human joy, the specter that lurks at every human feast. A light that can lift that shadow would be the greatest of all gifts. Jesus unlocks the doors of our thick skulls and speaks plainly to the ungrateful living, to the quick and the dead: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me, and will never perish.” No need for a skeleton key when the door beyond this world stands open. Imagine dying and then being gratefully alive!

for all deadheads?