The Rock Music Imagination

ROBERT McPARLAND

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Introduction

Themes in Classic Rock Music—Rebellion, Utopia, and Liberation

Imagination is the source and spark of rock music. Rock music imagination expresses creativity and utopian dreams of transcendence amid hard realities and a quest for freedom. Some rock music listeners have remarked on rock's waning cultural influence but, in the words of Neil Young, rock can never die if it retains the imagination in which it was born. *The Rock Music Imagination* is about rock music dreams and rock music themes. It is an exploration of rock artists in their social and artistic contexts, particularly between 1964 and 1980, and of rock music in relation to literature: journalistic expression, fantastic imagination, and contemporary fiction about rock. As emotion, spectacle, sound, and imaginative expression, rock music brings us songs, stories, music journalism, and recordings. Loud, brash, extreme, rock welcomes a verbal medium that matches its colorful life and energy. So, this book considers the literature of rock. With flights of imagination and analysis of rock's cultural impact, rock music writing has quested after those "unities of imagination" that Greil Marcus sought in America. It seeks to discover how rock music touches our imaginative lives.[1]

Here we will look at themes that appear often in classic rock music: freedom and liberation, utopia/dystopia, community, rebellion, the outsider, the quest for transcendence, monstrosity, erotic/spiritual love, imaginative vision, and mystery. The "sixties" has a centrality in many discussions of rock music. *The Rock Music Imagination* embraces that pivotal point in rock music history, recognizing the imagination and creativity of blues and jazz artists, folk-rock and hard-rock musicians, female rock musicians, and progressive rock creators. It focuses on blues imagination, countercultural

dreams of utopia, rock's critiques of society and images of dystopia, rock's inheritance from romanticism, science fiction and mythic imagination in progressive rock, and rock's global reach and potential to provide hope and humanitarian assistance. This study of rock music imagination recognizes that what we hear, the song-text, is mediated by how we imagine rock, or where rock takes our imagination. We encounter rock music in connection with images and writings about rock—journalistic, academic, fictional, or biographical. What we read about rock and how we talk about it affects our reception of it.

Expressions and descriptions of rock music tug us toward asking a central question: What is rock? The broadest definition of rock will embrace a multiplicity of styles and thousands of songs. Deep Purple pushes up the volume and crunches out the chords for "Smoke on the Water." Led Zeppelin plays "Kashmir" and it sounds rich with exoticism and incense. What is rock? Is it Metallica or Simon and Garfunkel? The Velvet Underground or Imagine Dragons? The Beatles ring out a sixth chord to end "She Loves You."[2] The Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash" rides on a blues riff. The Doors choose to have "Light My Fire" not resolve on the I (tonic) chord and conclude their song on V (the dominant). They give us two different stereo mixes of "Touch Me": so, listeners have the option to choose which version they like better. Bob Dylan's seemingly endless stanzas of "Desolation Row" go on for more than 11 minutes. The song proceeds in strophic structure, drawing us into this lengthy but powerful folk song. "For What It's Worth" by Stephen Stills is focused tightly into parts. There is no verse-chorus structure. There is no bridge. The contrast in this song is only within the effects and the vocals. Repetition drives the point home. Pete Townshend shifts textures, rhythm and meter, keys, and instruments all within the overture to *Tommy*, which emerges much like a symphonic piece. The Moody Blues employ an orchestral introduction and an orchestral ending on "Nights in White Satin," "Tuesday Afternoon," "Another Morning," and "The Sun Set/Twilight Time."[3] David Crosby's song "Déjà vu" seems to move across alternate states of consciousness as time shifts. The song is played in an alternate turning on guitar. And all of this is "rock"—at least in the broadest sense.

The term "rock" may be vague, encompassing a diversity of sounds, forms, and styles. It's the song that you play in your car. It is the thunderous blast that crackles across the stage lights at a concert. This study takes rock to be something meaningful, not mere distraction or only entertainment. Rock is a culture, a series of discourses. While rock is a mass marketed commodity there is in it also a sense of individuality, rebellion, and opposition. This text focuses on rock from 1964 to about 1980. That is, the "classic rock" referred to here is post-1950s and early 1960s rock and roll and pre-metal, alternative, grunge, hip-hop. It is in this music that romantic and blues traditions intersect and are the pivot on which rock swings.

Rock is anchored in the blues. It is an amalgam of Mississippi Delta blues and Chicago blues, country swing and Appalachian folk song, black spirituals and jazz, rhythm and blues and attitude. From traditional folk music it drew the strophic ballad form and verse-chorus pattern that repeats in so many songs. Rock inherited from the Tin Pan Alley pop song the AABA structure of two similar sections, a bridge that breaks away into new territory, and a final part that returns in some way to the original statement. Often the chorus of a pop song is introduced by a climb and may come to us with thickened harmonies. However, the bridge will take off in a different direction, or as alternative to the melody and harmony, or rhythmic patterns, of the verse and chorus. Rock draws upon these song forms and bends them in new patterns.

From the 1920s the Great American Songbook emerged with commercial, well-crafted songs by Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Harry Warren, Johnny Mercer, Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein. West 28th Street at Broadway and 6th Avenue became Tin Pan Alley. Later professional songwriting came from offices in the Brill Building on Broadway at Forty-Ninth Street. The songs of Tin Pan Alley and Broadway became a foundation for the pop music industry and record business, as well as for radio, musical theatre, movies, and dancing and social gatherings throughout America. This songwriting was not the root of rock. The ballads and blues of southern blacks and whites was its source.[4] Rock and roll brought something new: the rhythm and blues and rockabilly that challenged the professional writers of musical theatre and popular songs. Rock employed polyrhythms, power chords, diatonic and pentatonic scales. Most obviously, it embraced new sound technologies and electrified the texture, tone, and presentation of songs.

Rock and roll expanded with the rise of radio and its call for three-minute songs. By the mid-1960s, some rock songs started to get longer. They were too long for AM radio airplay in their time. Brian Wilson's masterful production of "Good Vibrations" at 3:35 starts to get a bit long for radio airplay. However, it stays engaging through layered vocals, changing sections, and a variety of instrument choices that contribute to the song's texture. Crosby, Stills, and Nash's "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" is a four-part song that goes on for seven minutes and twenty-two seconds. The song became a favorite on FM radio and as an album cut. The Grateful Dead's "Feedback" runs 8:52 and suggests an acid jam. (It is 7:49 on the CD remix.) Cream, Iron Butterfly, Santana, Led Zeppelin were also jam bands. Alvin Lee would take off on a guitar solo with Ten Years After and the song might end ten minutes after. Albums became increasingly important and songs incorporated effects. The Zombies "Time of the Season," for example, is enhanced by a studio mix, including breaths, harmonies, and rhythmic stops.[5] Frank Zappa made use of splicing techniques on *Plastic People*, joining together sections. The joining

of parts or sections by The Beatles on *Sergeant Pepper, The White Album,* and *Abbey Road* involves sound on sound and the use of cross-fades. Attention turned from those 45s with the plastic adapter on the turntable to the LP with its cover-art and liner notes. Songs weaved together in concept albums. Rock became more complex and increasingly economically profitable.

Yet, there was also a desire for the straightforward, "authentic," determined little gem. Critic, collector, and musician Lenny Kaye documented grass-roots garage bands of the 1960s with the compilation *Nuggets* (1964–1968). These sounds were a precursor to later new wave/punk rock. That is, they were fairly raw and direct. These performances emerged before rock's complexifying prog-rock album era and before the near-total emphasis by record companies on unit sales. Rock, as a mass-cultural phenomena, moved into arenas in the 1970s with music acts like Elton John, Peter Frampton, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, and Fleetwood Mac. Bands like Boston, Foreigner, Bad Company, Van Halen, REO Speedwagon, and Bon Jovi landed on the charts: a pop-rock that prompted further punk rebellion. Billy Joel's *52nd Street* was the top album in 1979 for AOR radio. Rush criticized commercial radio playlists in "Spirit of the Radio" in 1980. In the mid-1980s another wave of independent punk-rock bands emerged, like Husker-Du, The Replacements, and Black Flag. With the rise of heavy metal and its increasing fan base in the 1980s, listeners tuned in to Iron Maiden, Scorpions, Judas Priest, AC/DC, Dio, Whitesnake, Ratt, Twisted Sister, and other bands.

There has long been the cliché of rock as music for the rebel. Rock and roll awakened disapproval. We might follow rock history as a dialectical movement of statement and response (thesis-antithesis). From the blues came the music of the British invasion bands. Some writers suggest that from a golden age of sincerity and authenticity rock music devolved into corporate cooptation that was recognized early on by Frank Zappa in "We're Only in It for the Money" (1968). It went from utopian dreams to dystopian perspectives. New wave/punk responded by rejecting cultural norms and embracing alienation and difference with defiance and irony. To be basic, dissonant, and even unpleasant was to be rebellious and engaged in a new language game.

IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY

With imagination, rock music begins. The creative leap of the mind has been reported again and again in art and in science. Psychologist Frank Barron wrote: "The creative individual not only respects the irrational in himself but courts the most promising source of novelty in his own thought."[6] A lifelong researcher of creativity, Barron believed that artists are engaged in a search for ultimate meaning. Art historian James Elkins (2008) has offered the claim that "the border between intuition and calculation cannot be clearly de-

fined."[7] Yet, one might say that creative rock musicians straddle along the borderline of the intuitive and the rational skills for making art. Some of this poetic confluence of the intuitive and rational may count as "literature."

Perhaps our rapid-paced and distraction-filled society keeps us from the dreamwork, affirmation, relaxation, and focus necessary for creative work. Songwriting musicians like David Crosby have spoken of how ideas may come when the mind is taken offline before sleep, in drowsiness or altered states. "I hear melodies in my head," Bono of U2 told an interviewer in 2005, "I have no idea where they come from."[8] Musicians interviewed by Jenny Boyd for her book *Musicians in Tune* (1995) spoke of a feeling that sometimes comes while creating music. They recognized that if one is open the song is "given" or may be "coming through" them. The experience has been one realized by composers. For example, what are we to make of composer Richard Wagner's comments that one dreary and desolate day in Spezia in Northern Italy he lay down to rest and began to hear music? Was it because he was well-studied and musically experienced and had spent much long effort in composition? Wagner reports that he heard a "rushing noise" like water and then an E flat major chord followed by a melody. This became the prelude to *Das Rheingold*. Considering inspiration and the musical talent of Mozart, the German literary genius Goethe reportedly said: "How can one say Mozart has *composed Don Juan*? Composition! As if it were a piece of cake or a biscuit. . . . It is a spiritual creation, in which the details, as well as the whole, are pervaded by one spirit, and by the breath of one life."[9] Creativity like this emerges from a state of readiness, one cultivated through many years of practice and involvement with music. The philosopher Henri Bergson once observed that, in his view, human knowledge involves, on the one hand, reason and empiricism and intuition on the other.[10] Psychologist William James writes: "Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from the filmiest of screens, there lies potential forms of consciousness entirely different."[11] Charles Tart describes normal consciousness is a "tool" for everyday purposes in the social and physical environment.[12] To speak of altered consciousness is to assume that this steady and stable state of our everyday consciousness is the norm, our "consensus state." Music stirs and lifts the listener to broader consciousness. The rock musician's creativity extends imagination to the listener for whom not only amusement, but a sense of wonder is a necessity.[13]

LITERARY IMAGINATION AND ROCK MUSIC

Literary imagination intersects with rock. Edgar Allan Poe is getting kicked in John Lennon's "I Am the Walrus," and he may also be found in songs by

Blondie, Lou Reed, or the Alan Parsons Project. In Bob Dylan's "Desolation Row," Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot are in the captain's tower. Paul Simon refers to Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost in "The Dangling Conversation" and sets to music E.A. Robinson's story about a disconsolate man of wealth in "Richard Cory." David Bowie makes use of George Orwell's *1984* in *Diamond Dogs*. Rush recalls Coleridge's "Kublai Kahn" in their song "Xanadu" and Iron Maiden turns to his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" on their *Powerslave* (1984) album. In "Re Joyce," Jefferson Airplane gestures toward Joyce's *Ulysses* and Molly Bloom's affair. Bruce Springsteen recalls John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* in "The Ghost of Tom Joad." Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights" (1978) is covered by Pat Benatar (1980). The title of Sting's second solo album *Nothing Like the Sun* is drawn from Shakespeare's sonnet. On "Don't Stand So Close to Me" (1980) The Police reference "that book by Nabokov." Kansas draws from Hermann Hesse's *Narcissus and Goldmund* and vaguely tells of two personalities that are of different orientations. Hesse's story points to the Apollonian-Dionysian dialectic that philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche saw in all art. Queen's Roger Taylor responds to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* on power and powerlessness. Led Zeppelin's "Battle of Evermore" draws from Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings* and one of the final battles for Middle Earth. "Layla" was written when Eric Clapton connected his infatuation with Patti Boyd with Ganjavi Nizami's poem "The Story of Layla and Manjun." Manjun falls for Layla and sings to her. Layla's father declares that he will not marry her to a crazy man and Marjun goes off into the wilderness.

These are examples of what critic Stephen Paul Scher once called "literature *in* music." He distinguished this from "literature *and* music," in which a writer attempts to make use of musical figures and structures in poetry or in fiction. We can see this use of music in the fiction of James Joyce, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, Aldous Huxley, and Anthony Burgess, as well as the jazz writing and "spontaneous prose" of Jack Kerouac. Poetry has long made use of musical devices. Indeed, music and poetry were once closely bound together in the ancient world and sounded in the epics of Homer. The troubadour traditions of medieval times are recalled in singer-songwriters, as well as in the poetry of Ezra Pound, or in John Keats's attention to vowel sounds, which he inscribed in his notebooks. The art song has set to music the poetry of dozens of poets, from Goethe and Heine to moderns like Wallace Stevens. (Franz Schubert created 650 lieder and Robert Schumann composed four song cycles and about 160 songs.) In American poetry, the verse of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson are each richly connected with music. T.S. Eliot's essay "Music and Poetry" investigates the connection, as does poet-pianist John Hollander in *The Untuning of the Sky* (1961), musicologist Lawrence Kramer in *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After* (1986), and other critics.[14] Rock music lyricists make the

same connection and rock songwriters like Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Joni Mitchell, or Leonard Cohen are increasingly entering textbooks and poetry anthologies.

Of course, a songwriter like Bob Dylan recognizes that while poetry and lyrics may share several qualities, they are also different. Poetry has its own internal logic. It may be condensed, pensive, oblique. It may be visual or typographical. Song lyrics must move in an intimate association with music. Yet, both song lyrics and poetry share in an oral tradition and express the poetic imagination. When you listen to a lyric or read a poem, you may ask who the speaker is and who is being addressed, where the setting and context is, and what the genre and presentation has to do with the way that song or poem makes a connection with you. When you listen to a rock song, which lines draw your attention? What moves you?[15]

The Rock Music Imagination proceeds in the following pattern:

THEMES IN CLASSIC ROCK MUSIC: REBELLION, UTOPIA, AND LIBERATION

This introduction sets forth themes that are present in rock music lyrics, music, and performance that will be explored in this book. These include rebellion, the search for community and utopia, and a quest for freedom or liberation from all constraints. With its roots in the blues, folk balladry, and country/rockabilly, rock and roll announced rebellion against convention in the 1950s and became associated with youth and counterculture during the tumultuous period of "the sixties." The communal dream of the mid to late 1960s and early to mid-1970s is reflected in rock music. This attention to freedom, community, pleasure, peace amidst war, social justice and reform, and a quest for transcendence was embodied in rock songs.

LISTENING TO THE BLUES

Rebellion and a quest for liberation from restraints is at the center of rock music. In one sense this could be related to the yearning for freedom of the blues singers. British Invasion bands (The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Kinks, The Yardbirds, The Animals, and others) drew heavily upon the work of blues players from Chicago, or the Mississippi Delta, who played with spirit and imagination. Their songs of hardship, struggle, aspiration, and Eros provided an inspiration and basis for the rock posture, musical structures, and sounds which followed. (And note that they were gutsy, imaginative artists in their own right, contributing sound and style.) The folk revival intersected with this, bringing with it an examination of social issues (Guthrie, Seeger, Dylan, Baez). When rock writers deal with the notion of

"authenticity" in rock music, they tend to give attention to the roots of rock in blues, or to simple chord structures, like those of folk, which get transformed into power chords and underscore the assertion of straightforward messages. Rock's power is diluted when it becomes mere entertainment, a commercial symbol to sell product. It is strengthened, commercially and within the heart of the audience, when it asserts commitment and authenticity. Rock can both declare "Have a Good Time" and the goal of changing minds, perhaps even transforming culture. The creative sensibility and symbolic communication of rock are engaged against forms of repression. Rock seems to take on new life and relevance in times of stress and trouble.

THE IMAGINATIVE LEGACY OF THE BEATS: COUNTERCULTURAL UTOPIA

The imagination of the Beat Generation is a precursor to 1960s counterculture. We begin this chapter with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and begin to see a path that leads to a communal dream that appears in Woodstock. We may hear this dream of unity in the Youngbloods' anthem about everybody getting together to attempt to love one another. We see it in Jefferson Airplane's movement toward sci-fi dreams of community and the Grateful Dead's entourage and devoted fans. One may ask about the endurance of these ideals in Western culture. Then we will look at rock's engagement with themes of utopia and dystopia.

This chapter focuses upon the Woodstock generation and rock music of 1967–1974. There are a variety of works that illuminate this period, including Charles Reich's *The Greening of America,* Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counterculture* and *Where the Wasteland Ends,* and Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties*. The discussion here includes the San Francisco scene (with the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and other bands) and the Woodstock festival. The 1960s brought movements for social justice, women's rights, and ecological concern that coincided with this energetic phase of rock music. Utopian vision appears in the rock *zeitgeist* of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

SCIENCE FICTION IMAGINATION AND FANTASY IN PROGRESSIVE ROCK

Progressive rock, while derided by some rock critics, opened imaginatively up into fantastic concepts, spacey guitar and synthesizer soundscapes, and colorful album cover art and stage imagery. In this chapter we find bands that incorporated dazzling science fiction imagery and story lines into their musical creations. Whatever pretentiousness or bombast there was, progressive

rock also explored musical complexity and creativity. This chapter overviews some of the imaginative creations from key bands from the late 1960s and early 1970s, like Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Yes, Genesis, and Jethro Tull. We then look on to the work of Rush and their interactions with the libertarian perspective of Ayn Rand and with science fiction.

THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT: ROCK MUSIC DYSTOPIA

Imagination twists toward an investigation of themes of dystopia in rock. This includes reference to elements of science fiction in rock. This section considers David Bowie, Rush, Iron Maiden, and others who have utilized science fiction motifs in their work, with reference to texts like George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and stories by Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Ursula Le Guin, Robert Heinlein, Rod Serling (*Twilight Zone*), and others. Among the persistent cultural narratives is that the belief that there was a decline, a period of disillusionment of the countercultural utopian dream in the early to mid-1970s. Such a story line points to the loss of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, to Altamont, to Kent State, or to Watergate. Whether or not this perspective portrays public consciousness or not, it is clear that rock music was moving through a variety of trends and changes.

In the chapter on Dystopia reference to a wide variety of rock songs is used to explore dreams of social transformation and assertions of resistance to dehumanizing structures or factors of contemporary life. (We can, for example, hear Rush protest totalitarian forms on their album *2112*.) The chapter concerns rock and the utopian vision. It explores utopian themes expressed in rock songs and in utopian literature. This includes recognition of science fiction motifs we find in rock songs and performance and in science fiction texts such as: *Brave New World* (Iron Maiden, *Brave New World*), *1984* (David Bowie, *Diamond Dogs*), and *Animal Farm* (Pink Floyd, *Animals*) and other texts like Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Zamyatin's *We*. Rock confronts the modern world: its technology, its forms of anonymity or depersonalization, its need for harmony, creativity, and renewal.

ROCK ROMANTICISM: POWER CHORDS AND THE VISIONARY COMPANY

Impulses in rock music parallel several themes that we find in Romanticism: nostalgia and memory, rebellion and protest, innovation and the search for new forms, the Romantic ego, aspiration toward transcendence, the heroic journey and wandering, a malady of spirit, the outsider and alienation, mon-

strosity, and the quest for re-integration, a recognition of human emotion rather than overemphasis on Enlightenment reason, an opposition to instrumental reason, valuing imagination and mythopoeic thinking, experimentation with form, a concern with nature and earthiness, the natural, and authenticity, the songs of the people and "lyrical ballads," supernaturalism. These elements will be discussed with reference to rock songs and imagery, albums, and performance.

This exploration of rock imagination follows Perry Meisel's observations about what links rock romanticism and the blues tradition. Meisel sets up the image of the cowboy and the dandy in a synchronic model of crossing, the exploration of a chiasmus. We look across country and city, North and South, race and identities. One may add that rock romanticism and blues tradition each reformulated suffering and aspired to freedom. The black community developed an ironic voice in their search for a belated freedom. Romanticism seeks a higher, better world and compensates for its encounter with hard realities with dream and imagination. Black urbanity is a mode of "compensatory imagination" like Romanticism also is, observes Meisel. The crossings that are pursued here are country to city, South to North, black to white, British rock to America, and literature to music. Imagination is interiority that is externalized in artistic expression. This creative expression of rock imagination comes to us through intermediality (recordings, rock reviews and criticism, fiction, album art, magazines, blogs, performances). These various forms affect how we perceive and respond to rock music.

PAPERBACK WRITERS: ROCK MUSIC AND FICTION

Rock music writing is a form of cultural analysis that asserts that rock is a serious art form and a reflection of cultural values. The intersection of words, images, and music affects how we approach and respond to rock music. "Rock criticism recapitulates literary criticism's modes of reading," Perry Meisel observes.[16] It makes use of the close reading of New Criticism. It employs methods of new historicism, viewing texts within context. It recognizes that rock is passionate, mercurial, and obstinate.

This chapter looks at how fiction writers have approached this playful polyvalent discourse that upends expectations of social order. Rock music appeals across classes and boundaries and at times exercises the social disruptions that have been referred to as "carnival."[17] We may reflect on rock as a popular, non-elite, and participatory art, which we see in The Beatles' songs like "Sergeant Pepper" and "For the Benefit of Mr. Kite." The Beatles engage in parodic play, upending notions of high or low art and cutting across class and culture. John Lennon's "I Am the Walrus" breaks apart language, engaging in a free play of syntax and wordplay, like in Lewis

Carroll's "Jabberwocky." We may hear in Bob Dylan the wry wordplay of the jester, or we may see in Mick Jagger the flippant strut of the pugnacious dandy.

Rock music has exerted an influence on literary imagination and popular fiction. There are writers who listen to rock or jazz to jumpstart their creative process. (For example, Stephen King has said he listens to Metallica to get his writing going.) There are rock musicians who draw upon literature and film for ideas. (For example, David Bowie was an avid reader. Steve Harris of Iron Maiden watches films or reads horror and mystery fiction.) Obviously, novelists who have engaged rock music have listened closely to it as they have tried to fashion words to describe it and to tell stories about it.

Rock music journalism connected with the New Journalism of the 1960s. Subjectivity was a central quality of this creative commentary. In spirited style, these writers revived nonfiction writing. Writers like Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Gay Talese, and Hunter S. Thompson carved out a path that was related to fiction writing. Rock journalism grew with *Crawdaddy* and *Rolling Stone* and with writers like Robert Christgau, the provocative and bratty insights of Lester Bangs, and Greil Marcus's search for "the unities of the American imagination." Alternatively, there has been academic analysis from baby-boom and Gen-X academics whose life-experiences have been touched by rock music and the postmodern context. In addition, there are many stories in which rock is central to the unfolding fictional plot. We will look at a sample of these novels. The various ways in which rock has been written about affects our perception and our experience of rock. The insights of journalist-rock critics, academics, musicologists, biographers, and fiction writers affect how rock's audience listens. Film, MTV, photography, and advertising have contributed considerably to our perceptions of rock. However, the written word continues to contribute to our encounter and participates in shaping reception.

HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNITY, AND GLOBAL ROCK

The concluding chapter looks at rock's place globally and at the role that the voice of women and men concerned with social justice play. This chapter argues that the dream of community, peace, civil rights, women's rights, and ecological concern, which emerged in "the sixties" are all related. Each has received expression in rock music. The efforts of Live Aid and other benefit concerts for famine relief and debt relief are highlighted. We hear the voice of Bruce Springsteen which came through in *The Rising*, following the 9/11 attack on New York's World Trade Center. Next discussed is the vision of U2 and how they have embraced a commitment to global concerns. U2's lyrics may be listened to from a secular angle as well as from a spiritually

oriented one. Along with the expansion of rock across the globe, we see the rise of the female rock writer and performer since the 1980s. As we consider women in rock, we may reflect on possibilities for rock's future: ecofeminism, an ethics of care, and a *l'ecriture feminine* of creativity. Rock has not always fully embraced the significant voice of its female performers (most often in the role of singers, less frequently as instrumentalists). The voice of female rock performers should continue to join their male counterparts in the future. Finally, the chapter is also concerned with rock and human rights and causes like ecology/the environment. (There are more than 100 songs, across a wide variety of artists, that refer to ecological concerns.) Now in the first decades of the twenty-first century, rock and pop music have appeared in a wide variety of forms. Indeed, rock has become a highly commercialized medium. Rock can look squarely at the realities of the modern world and not lapse into nihilism. The voice of rock can register hope and can continue to express these ideals and "dream on."

While rock music has clearly become a highly commercialized popular art form, it continues to carry the themes of rebellion, desire for freedom, and hope for connection. It continues to sing out with social criticism and social aspirations. In addressing rock music themes and dreams, the intention of this book is to underscore the suggestion made in Steven Tyler's lyric for Aerosmith: that even when lines may come to our faces, or we recognize that we live among fools and sages, we can still hold to high ideals and dream on. Imagination—musical, lyrical, and visual—is central to this enterprise. *The Rock Music Imagination* focuses on themes, ideals, social criticism, and aspirations in rock music and affirms imagination and the lasting power of the human spirit.

NOTES

1. Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n Roll Music*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1975, p. xii. It appears that there have been no book-length investigations of classic rock music's themes since James Franklin Harris's *Philosophy at 33 1/3 RPM* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993). While Harris's book does a fine job of introducing us to some of the overarching themes of the "sixties" generation with reference to rock music, it also leaves much out—and much that has occurred since then.

2. The vocals parallel the parts of the chord: McCartney on top at 8, John Lennon on 5, and George Harrison on 6. (Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock from Blue Suede Shoes to Suite: Judy Blue Eyes*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 343) Everett points out that throughout the song that 6 had been the root of a minor vi chord. Listen to "that can't be bad" (at 0:29 to 0.31).

3. See Everett, *The Foundations of Rock from Blue Suede Shoes to Suite: Judy Blue Eyes*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, note p. 766.

4. Ben Yagoda, *The B Side: The Death of Tin Pan Alley and the Rebirth of the Great American Song*. New York: Penguin, 2015.

5. See Everett's brief comment in *The Foundations of Rock*, p. 614.

6. Frank Barron was cited by Willis Harman and Howard Rheingold in *Higher Creativity*. New York: Tarcher Perigree, 1984. See Frank Barron, *Creative Person, Creative Process*. New