

Prenatal Themes in Rock Music

John C. Sonne

Moorestown, NJ, USA

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Abstract: Rock music, although disparaged by many adults, is a definite and vibrant part of the youth culture. If we consider that the artist is sensitive to the culture of his time and express thoughts and feelings that others only dimly perceive or have difficulty articulating, the fact that prenatal themes are prominent in much of this music deserves serious attention. Rock music's appeal to such a large audience of young people throughout the world suggests that it strikes a highly receptive chord having to do with universal primitive concerns about physical and spiritual survival. The songs can be seen as messages from the womb that express despair, wishes to regress, wishes to arrest development at a prenatal level, a dread of being aborted, suicidal and homicidal wishes, and grief at the loss of prenatal life. The careful listener will hear in these songs, scarcely discernable in the midst of the incessant rocking beat, such words as "Before you were born someone kicked in the door. There's no place for you here, stay back where you belong," or "If you could keep me floating just for a while, 'til I get to the end of this tunnel, Mommy," or "There's a place for the baby that died," or "I can feel the fight for life is always real. I can't believe it's no big deal. It's a legal kill."

Zusammenfassung: *Pränatale Themen in der Rockmusik.* Rockmusik ist ein zentraler und lebendiger Teil der Jugendkultur, wenn sie auch von manchen Erwachsenen geringschätzig behandelt wird. Wenn Künstler eine besondere Sensibilität für die Kultur ihrer Zeit haben und Gefühle und Gedanken ausdrücken können, die andere nur schemenhaft wahrnehmen oder kaum ausdrücken können, dann verdient die Tatsache besondere Beachtung, daß pränatale Themen in einem größeren Teil dieser Musik eine hervorragende Rolle spielen. Wenn Rockmusik ein so breites Publikum von jungen Menschen in der ganzen Welt anspricht, läßt sich vermuten, daß sie eine sehr sensible Seite berührt, die mit universellen ertümlischen Bedürfnissen nach körperlichem und psychischem Überleben zu tun hat. Die Lieder können als Botschaften aus dem Mutterleib verstanden werden, die Verzweiflung ausdrücken und ebenso Wünsche nach Regression, Wünsche nach einem Aufhalten der Entwicklung auf einem pränatalen Niveau, Ängste, abgetrieben zu werden, Wünsche, sich oder andere umzubringen, und eine Trauer über den Verlust des vorgeburtlichen Lebens. Der sorgfältige Zuhörer wird in diesen Liedern Worte hören, die kaum durch den

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Correspondence to: John C. Sonne, M.D., 443 Shady Lane, Moorestown NJ 08057, USA, Telephone and Telefax (609) 2353558

unaufhörlichen Rockrhythmus hindurch zu verstehen sind, wie „Bevor wir geboren waren, klopfte jemand an die Tür. Es gibt für Dich keinen Platz hier, bleib wo Du bist“ oder „Wenn Du mich nur noch ein wenig in Bewegung hältst, Mama, bis ich an das Ende dieses Tunnels komme“ oder „Da gibt es einen Platz für das Baby, das starb“ oder „Ich fühle, daß der Kampf ums Überleben immer wirklich ist. Ich kann es nicht glauben, da gibt es nichts zu verhandeln, es ist ein legaler Mord“.

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In the mid-fifties of this century, a new form of popular music began to emerge that was characterized by a fairly rapid, loud, often electrically amplified, uniformly emphasized pounding beat, which was intensified by the use of the guitar, piano and keyboard, the main instruments of melodic and harmonic expression, to hammer out the rhythm in concert with the drums. Unlike earlier jazz and other popular music, it had a minimum of syncopation, simple chord progressions, and little accent to indicate the usual demarcation between measures. This music began to be called Rock Music, and sometimes Rock and Roll. Drawing on roots from Gospel Music, Country Music, and Rhythm and Blues, it has acquired great popularity among young people the world over, spawned a host of small combos devoted to playing it, led to record sales soaring into the millions, and to the fading of the era of the big band and the love song crooner into the background. In recent years it has spawned offshoots such as Punk Rock, Heavy Metal, and Rap Music. Many of the groups have created Rock videos, in which the music is combined with various allied scenes, pantomimes, and segments of the musicians playing, singing, and rocking.

An interesting evolution in Rock is apparent if one studies the music over the past several decades. In its beginnings, despite its commanding rhythmic sense of urgency and its mesmerizing vibratory sensual effect not just on the ears but on the entire body, the themes in the lyrics were still the same themes that were dominant in popular music over many past years, namely of love and romance between a man and a woman, the search for love, the pain of lost love, or descriptions of the false lover. From the mid-sixties on, the themes increasingly began to change to ones of loss of faith in the world, hopelessness about survival, and a regressive preoccupation with the self as the main source of gratification if one survives at all. No longer are the songs of risk-taking in love, or laments about the hurt of unrequited love. The themes are of life and death. They sing of abandonment, destruction, self loathing, the abasement of self and others, murder and suicide. Life is meaningless and no longer sacred. There is no yearning, no longing, no promise, no hope for the future, no sense of purpose, and there are no heroes. The songs are not “Somebody done me wrong,” songs, they are “My parents, or the world, done me wrong,” songs. The word “a” in the song *There’s a Place for Us*, from *West Side Story* has in effect been replaced by the word “no.” The peopled world is seen as not a safe place in which to place one’s trust, and the songs recommend grasping the sensual pleasure of drugs, impersonal sex, or other impulsive acts that stimulate for the moment without consideration of, or regard for, the overall and future welfare of the life of oneself or others. If no one cares for me, I don’t care for myself or for anyone else.

Even the dancing inspired by the music became impersonal, with dancers rocking to the beat but not touching, except in the recent vogue of slam dancing or head banging, in which the dancers aggressively bump into one another, in crowd surfing, in which some of the dancers are passed about over the heads of those below, and in mosh pit diving, in which the musicians plunge into the mass of frenzied fans who often tear off the performers' clothes. The fact that conversation while dancing is impossible when immersed in a sea of sound seems unimportant, and partners may be changed indiscriminately without regard for their personhood or their gender, as long as they rock to the beat.

As I shall demonstrate, the themes in the lyrics, the characteristics of the music, the scenes in the Rock videos, the illustrations on album covers and in disc liners, are replete with intrauterine imagery, and suggest that much of Rock today is a representation of a regression to, or an arrested development at, a prenatal stage of life which is accompanied by feelings of hopelessness, rage, lack of trust, fear of destruction, and the need to grasp pleasures of the moment. The song, Nitro, from the CD, "Smash," by Offspring (1994), expresses these feelings well: "Our generation sees the world not the same as before...We might as well just throw it all...And live like there's no tomorrow...There's no tomorrow...We are the ones...Who are living under the gun every day...You might be gone before you know...So live like there's no tomorrow...Ain't gonna waste this life...There's no tomorrow - you ain't gonna live it for me...Believe it...The official view of the world has changed...In a whole new way...Live fast cause if you don't take it...You'll never make it...So if you understand me...And if you feel the same...Then you will know what nitro means...You'll live like there's no tomorrow - ain't gonna waste this life...There's no tomorrow - you ain't gonna live it for me...There's no tomorrow."

It is a matter of speculation as to how this combination of regression and/or arrested development has come about in Rock Music. A few of the possibilities are the continued reaction to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan in WW II, the fear of nuclear annihilation, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy in 1968, the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision of 1973 legalizing abortion, and the assassination of John Lennon in 1980. All of these events have been commented on by various writers for their demoralizing, regressive, and arresting effect on the youth of America. Neil Young, a guitarist and composer who was originally with Buffalo Springfield, and Crosby, Stills and Nash, gave his explanation of the origin of the dark attitude expressed in Rock: "The pessimistic outlook that bands have today and the angst, this is a part of what we created for our children. They're reflecting it back at us, and now we have to live with it. And they have a right to be pessimistic. It's not as easy to grow up now as it was in the '60's. The world is a much more dangerous place. There are a lot less dreams being realized." The words from Young's 1979 song, Hey, Hey, My, My (Into the Black): "It's better to burn out than to fade away," were used by Kurt Cobain, then leader of the rock group Nirvana, in his suicide note when he took his life in 1994 (Strauss, 1995).

Regression and arrested development are not unique to America, nor is the prominence of their expression in Rock music. They are global. Mayr and Boelderl (1993), in their article, "The Pacifier Craze: Collective Regression in Europe," ob-

served the recent fascination of young people in southern Europe with a hugely popular French song, “Dur Dur d’Etre Bebe,” (It’s hard hard to be a baby), and a vogue among young people of wearing pacifiers around their necks. They speculate that both of these phenomena suggest that the young people have a wish to regress to be cared-for newborn children, and that this wish is the result of the loss of trusted and protecting “mothers” in leadership positions. They also observed young people between the ages of 10 and 20 having a predilection for Trolls, mythical underground creatures, as their favorite toy. Although not citing representative music in this instance, they speculated that this phenomenon represented a collective group fantasy of the wish to regress beyond the perinatal level of development to the prenatal level of being an unborn child. This wish they regard as particularly ominous, akin to a death wish, and they present evidence illustrating how parents communicate a feeling to their children that they are not wanted. Their connection of a feeling of unwantedness to a death wish is similar to that articulated by Ferenczi (1929) in his paper, “The Unwelcome Child and his Death Wish.”

Regression in Rock music, and in its devotees, can also be found in Yugoslavia. In “Zombie,” Belgrade’s most popular night club, the young people escape from everyday life to listen and dance from four a.m. to nine a.m. to “Turbo-Folk,” with their top rock star, Ceca, singing, “There is no hope when the boat is sinking,” or Nada Obric singing, “There is no cure for my wounds...There is no sun for my days.” The “Turbo-folk” say that this music expresses Serbia’s current isolation and troubled mentality (Nelson, 1995). Palmer, (1995), a long time writer for Rolling Stone, in discussing the global popularity of Rock in his book, “Rock & Roll: An Unruly History,” speaks of this phenomenon in the same positive terms of breakthroughs and evolution used in his descriptions of American Rock, and does not focus on its regressive aspects. The bands he mentions, however, include thrash-metal bands in Brazil and Cuba, and death-metal bands in Poland.

To return to America, and before going specifically into some of the lyrics in Rock which contain prenatal themes, I would like to list the names of some of the Rock groups, which suggest how they view themselves, and express the preoccupations articulated in their music: The Beatles, The Doors, Mothers of Invention, The Jefferson Airplane, Buffalo Springfield, The Grateful Dead, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Rolling Stones, The Velvet Underground, U2, The Clash, Live, The Who, The Beastie Boys, The Dolls, Angelfish, Blue Oyster Cult, Don’t Fear the Reaper, The Flesheaters, Hole, Black Flag, The Birthday Party, Megadeth, Anthrax, Twisted Sister, Scorpion, Guns and Roses, The Dead Presidents, Arrested Development, Nirvana, Soul Asylum, Crash Test Dummies, God Lives Under Water, Toad the Wet Sprocket, Soundgarden, Led Zeppelin, Pearl Jam, Sex Pistols, The Black Crowes, Ice-T, The Cranberries, King ’s X, Hootie & the Blowfish, The Mudheads, Bad Religion, Offspring, Kiss, House of Pain, Slayer, Oasis, Angelfish, and Garbage. If one free associates to these names, a thousand thoughts will come to mind. One might ask, for example, why the dead should or would be grateful, and why one would sing of crash tests or call oneself garbage. What is the symbolism of pumpkins and pearl jam? Why oysters, and why the preoccupation with reproduction in terms such as breeders and offspring, and with death in scorpion, anthrax and megadeath? Why pretension and bad re-

ligion? The names chosen by some of the musicians are also interesting. Consider Bob Dylan, who named himself after Dylan Thomas, who raged, raged, against the darkening of the light, Johnny Thunders, Richard Hell, Mick Jagger, Little Richard, Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Speech, Pink Floyd, Iggy Pop, Snoop Doggy Dog, and Madonna.

The pictures on the covers or inserts of many albums and CD's are also informative. They are often expressive of a preoccupation with the unborn, and with uncaring women. For example, on the back of the case for Nirvana's CD, "In Utero," Billboard No. 1 in 1993, there is a picture of a jumbled pile of aborted babies, chopped up body parts, and a fetus in the uterus. The front cover of the accompanying insert has a picture of an ambiguously portrayed winged woman with a penis, who is transparent to the degree that many internal organs, bones and blood vessels are visible. Within this insert is another picture of another woman, this time with female genitals, but hairless, and similarly transparent. An unborn baby is visible in the left side of her abdomen. On the back cover is a photograph of a destroyed concert stage, with smashed instruments, a sledge hammer and Kurt Cobain on the floor. As an example of how Rock, and the public's reaction to it, has changed, an album by the Beatles, "Yesterday and Today," released in 1966, also had an accompanying picture of chopped-up baby dolls similar to that in "In Utero," but at that time, in contrast to today, so much controversy was generated that the album was recalled (DeRogatis, 1993). A picture accompanying the lyrics of a song titled Head Down, from the CD, "Super Unknown," by Soundgarden (1994), shows a fetus head-down, attached to the placenta by his umbilical cord. On the front cover of the insert accompanying the CD, "Smash," by Offspring (1994), is a picture of a skeleton, and on the back is one of a row of trash barrels. A picture accompanying the Nirvana CD, "Nevermind" (1991), is of a baby under water, arms outstretched and mouth open, swimming toward a dollar bill that is attached to a scarcely discernable fish hook. The cover of Nirvana's CD, "Incesticide" (1992), has a picture of a mostly skeletal woman staring into space, her fleshless bones connected by metal hinges, and a horned plastic baby is holding onto her shoulder while leaning and looking away with a downcast expression on its face. There are two black roses by their side, one large and one small, with the small one branching from the larger. Neither rose is being held by either the woman or the baby. Is this picture not a commentary on the usual depictions of a happy mother and child, Madonna and the baby Jesus? A picture on the cover of the insert for the CD, "Throwing Copper," by Live (1994), shows a grotesque giant holding what looks like a bible, standing on the edge of a cliff, pursued by clamoring and grasping women holding boom boxes.

The titles of many songs and the CD's suggest the lyrics to come when one listens to or reads the lyrics. For example, the CD, "Super Unknown," by Soundgarden (1994), in addition to the song Head Down mentioned above, includes Let Me Drown, Fall on Black Days, 4th of July, Super Unknown (with the word "unknown" printed upside down), Like Suicide, The Day I Tried to Live, Fresh Tendrils, Black Hole Sun, Mailman, Kickstand, Spoonman, Half, and My Wave. A song from the CD, "Angelfish" (1993) bears the title, Suffocate Me. Consider also the CD, "Fear," by Toad the Wet Sprocket (1991), "Nevermind" and "Incesticide,"

by Nirvana, (1991,1992), "Smash," by Offspring (1994), and "Definitely Maybe," by Oasis (1994).

In addition to a preoccupation with the unborn and with uncaring women, many of the songs express hostile acts toward women. *Hold Her Down*, from the CD, "Fear," by Toad the Wet Sprocket (1991), describes a rape: "Hold her arms and hold her down...Until she stops kicking...Take her arms and hold her down...Until she stops moving." Nirvana's CD, "In Utero" (1993), includes the song, *Rape Me*, with the lines: "Rape me, my friend...Rape me again...Hate me...Do it and do it again... Waste me....My favorite inside source...I'll kiss your open sores...Appreciate your concern...You'll always stink and burn." Some songs, such as *Heart Shaped Box*, also from "In Utero," by Nirvana (1993), decidedly and resentfully describe being helplessly trapped and emasculated intrauterinely by a heartless woman to whom one nevertheless surrenders: "She eyes me like a pisces when I am weak...I've been locked inside your heart-shaped box for a week...I was drawn into your magnet tar pit trap...I wish I could eat your cancer when you turn black...Hey... Wait...I've got a new complaint...Forever in debt to your priceless advice... Hate...Haight...I've got a new complaint...Forever in debt to you priceless advice...Meat-eating orchids forgive no one just yet...Cut myself on angel's hair and baby's breath...Broken hymen of your highness I'm left black...Throw down your umbilical noose so I can climb right back." The Rock video of this song shows unborn babies suspended from tree branches, the transparent, weird woman mentioned earlier walking about with her insides visible, an old Christ figure on the cross with a Santa Claus hat on his head, and a little child dressed as a Ku Klux Klansman skipping around a crucifix.

Some of the songs describe heartless treatment of the unborn. The words from *Head Down*, from the CD, "Super Unknown," by Soundgarden (1994), accompanied by the photo of an unborn baby mentioned earlier, are: "We see you laugh... We see you dance... We take that away...Everyday.... We see you cry... We turn you head... Then we slap your face...Some things never change... We hear you cry... We hear you wail...We steal that smile from your face." The lines from *Before You Were Born*, from the CD, "Fear," by Toad the Wet Sprocket (1991), are angry about this mistreatment: "Before you were born someone kicked in the door...There's no place for you here stay back where you belong....." "God damn the people who left you in pain...God damn the father without face, without name...and God damn the lovers who never showed up...And God damn the wounds that show how deep a word can cut." The song, *Jimi Thing*, from the CD, "Under the Table and Dreaming," by the Dave Matthews Band (1994), appeals to the mother: "If you could keep me floating just for a while...Til I get to the end of this tunnel... mommy...If you could keep me floating just for a while...I'll get back to you." The *Icicle Melts*, from the CD, "No Need to Argue," by The Cranberries (1994), questions the mother: "How, how, how, how could you hurt a child, hurt a child...Now does this make you satisfied, satisfied, satisfied...I don't know what's happening to people today...When a child, child, child, child he was taken away...There's a place for the baby that died...And there's a time for the mother who cried...And she will hold him in her arms sometime...Cause nine months is too long." *Legal Kill*, by King's X (1990), can't believe the legalized destruction: "...There was peace in here before... But that was yesterday...But I can see the

beauty that is here for me...The chance to live and walk free... From a legal kill... I know your side so very well...It makes no sense that I can tell...The smell of hell is what I smell...And you hand it out with handshakes everyday....But I can feel the fight for life is always real...I can't believe it's no big deal...It's a legal kill." Alive, from the CD, "Ten," by Pearl Jam (1991), has Eddie Vedder uncertain about his right to be alive: "Is something wrong, she said...Of course there is... You're still alive, she said...Do I deserve to be, is that the question...If so, who answers, who answers...Oh, I'm still alive... I, I, I'm still alive...I, I, I'm still alive...I, I, I'm still alive."

These songs make it apparent that the focus on the unborn has brought Rock music full force into the middle of conflict about abortion. The Rock groups take various positions, some of which seem to be paradoxical unless one views them through a lens that includes an understanding of the dynamics and characteristics of abortion survivors, that is, people who have been threatened in one way or another with being aborted. I shall summarize these shortly, and show that they are strikingly evident in much of recent Rock music. Despite the empathic lines for the unborn in the song *Head Down*, which would incline the listener to assume that the musicians of Soundgarden, creators of the most popular MTV presentation of 1994, would be opposed to destructive behavior toward the unborn, they routinely perform at pro-choice rallies (Whitall, 1992). So do the musicians of *Toad the Wet Sprocket* (Lacey, 1994), which on the surface seems puzzling considering the lines quoted above from *Before You Were Born*. Eddie Vedder, who, as noted earlier, sang about being uncertain whether he had a right to be alive, and guest singer Neil Young, who feels that the world is a much more dangerous place than in the past, and that a lot less dreams are being realized, have both performed with Pearl Jam at benefits for Vote for Choice, an abortion-rights group (Freedom du Lac, 1995). Nirvana performed in 1992 at a benefit concert for Rock for Choice (Whitall, 1992). Sex Pistols, by contrast, in 1978, five years after *Roe vs Wade*, put out a song, *Bodies*, which made even the most explicit pro-life brochure look tame (Brown, 1993). In *Warm Sentiments* from the CD, "Zingalamaduni," by Arrested Development (1994), lead singer Speech expresses his hurt to his lover for her having an abortion without involving him in the decision, and many of the group's songs have an anti-abortion message (Collins, 1994). The Cranberries have been consistently pro-life. *Run* (Owen, 1993), from *Run-DMC*, speaks of the new importance God has come to have in his life, and espouses a conservative position on abortion: "I wouldn't go standing in the cold outside an abortion clinic protesting, but I am against abortion on principle."

I would like now to turn to a discussion of the similarity of some of the themes found in Rock music to some of the characteristics and dynamics of abortion survivors, which I have outlined in two papers entitled, "The Relevance of the Dread of Being Aborted to Models of Therapy and Models of the Mind, Part I, Case Examples, and Part II, Mentation and Communication in the Unborn" (1994 a, 1994 b, 1995 a, 1995 b), and in a related paper entitled, "Social Regression and the Global Prevalence of Abortion," (1996). In these papers I demonstrated that, although abortion survivors may have a variety of obvious symptoms such as fear of tunnels, caves, bridges, plane crashes, and other life situations they see as threatening, they also have a variety of more subtle but pervasive symptoms,

without an awareness of their repressed traumatic origins. They have a sense that they are not present, do not feel real, and that life has little meaning for them. Although time passes, they have a sense that nothing is happening over time, and with this have an accompanying sense of timelessness and equilibrium. They make limited use of poetic metaphors and metonyms in their speech, and have little sense of humor. They are half-alive and half-dead. Although many fearfully cling to or remain trapped in situations offering a dubious security, they also may engage in counterphobic, high-risk, sensation-seeking behaviors, or tend to be episodic wanderers. They have extreme difficulty trusting. They are not thankful, grateful or appreciative. They are afraid of, and often experience repeated psychological abortions from their intimates. They not only fear being aborted, or in effect aborted by being interminably confined, they also wish to have been or be aborted or otherwise disposed of. Seeing themselves as loathsome, dirty, waste, defective, incurable, and unworthy, they tend in part to feel that the traumatic abortion threat experienced by them prenatally and the poor treatment they often experienced postnatally, was, and is, justified. They have identified with the aggressor, the abortion-minded mother and/or father, or the indifferent world. They are suicidal, but they are also homicidal. They want what they fear, and they are what they hate. Similar to abused children who later become abusers, they are also inclined to act out by aborting others, including their own children, or to sanction the abortion of others, either psychologically or physically. They feel resentful and hostile toward anyone whom they feel competitively threatens or has threatened their existence, including siblings and the sibling substitutes they see in the world around them.

The hostility and fear present in abortion survivors do not seem to be primarily connected with a desire for gratification, resentment at not receiving it, or resentment toward a competitor who interferes with their gratification, as would be the case when one feels frustration during various vicissitudes of psychosexual development until these feelings are resolved in a healthy Oedipal resolution. Nor do the hostility and fear seem to be very much about the need for affirmation of self or affirmation of one's gender or identity that is operative in the various stages of separation and individuation beginning in early childhood that have been delineated by such researchers as Winnicott (1949), Erikson (1950), Jacobson (1964), Blos (1967, Mahler (1975), Kohut (1977), Bowen (1978), and Stern (1985). The hostility and fear seem to be connected with a very early prenatally originating basic and most primitive fear that one will be destroyed before one even has a chance to struggle with the self and desire vicissitudes of early infancy and beyond. One hasn't a chance to have one's feet on the ground to even start living. One is not connected, and cannot aspire to higher levels of fulfillment and gratification. The most one can hope for is momentary, fleeting, sensual stimulation, that gives some partial sense that one is alive. This is often experienced in impersonal sex, drugs, and masochistic and sadistic acting out. Nothing has been sacred for abortion survivors, so nothing is sacred to them.

Almost all of these characteristics, dynamics and symptoms of abortion survivors can be seen in Rock music. One of the best examples illustrating the need to just be alive, and the fury if someone gets in the way of this, can be seen in Bad Habit, from the CD, "Smash," by Offspring (1994). In this song there is no

woman being sought, no reward, property, or gratification in the offing, and no need for self affirmation, but simply a need to not be cut off from one's flow of life, metaphorically expressed in terms of driving in one's car, and the threat of murder if one is cut off: "Hey man you know I'm really okay...The gun in my hand will tell you the same...But when I'm in my car...Don't give me no crap...Cause the slightest thing and I just might snap...When I go driving I stay in my lane...But getting cut off makes me insane...I open the glove box...Reach inside...I'm gonna wreck this fucker's ride...I guess I got a bad habit...Of blowin' away...Yeah...Well they say the road's a dangerous place...If you flip me off I'm the danger you'll face...You drive on my ass...Your foots on the gas...And your next breath is your last...Drivers are rude...Such attitudes...But when I show my piece...Complaints cease...Something's odd...I feel like I'm God...You stupid dumbshit goddam motherfucker...I open the glove box...Reach inside...I's gonna wreck this fucker's ride." Here one sees the pure hostility against any potential intruder, without the self loathing and the wish to be hated that is seen, for example, in Nirvana's Rape Me, and without the masochistic, rebuking surrender to the hated one upon whom one is dependent for survival, that is heard and seen in their Heart Shaped Box.

The lines from *The Day I Tried to Live*, from the CD, "Super Unknown," by Soundgarden (1993), express well both a sense of hopelessness and an identification with the destructive aggressor: "The lives we make...Never seem to ever get us anywhere...But dead.....The day I tried to live...I wallowed in the blood and mud with...All the other pigs....And I learned that I was a liar ...Just like you..." The half-dead, half-alive state of mind characteristic of abortion survivors can be seen in a personal statement by Chuck Negron (Castro and Gold, 1995), from the group, Three Dog Night, of his feelings when he was shot at while he was talking on the phone to his heroin dealer. He said that the bullets flying about didn't faze him because he was "already dead." The laughing denial of this same state of mind can be seen in the remarks by Kurt Cobain (Handy, 1994), who did in fact commit suicide, about the title of his song, *I Hate Myself and I Want to Die* : " I thought it was a funny title." The preoccupation with death is also contained in the name for the Grateful Dead, which came from a British ballad in which a human helps a ghost find peace (Gates, 1995). The lack of certainty, not feeling alive, present or real, not being able to count on others or be counted on oneself, and the sense that time is passing but nothing is really happening, all characteristic of abortion survivors, are perhaps most briefly summed up in the title of a CD by Oasis, "Definitely Maybe," (1994).

The suicidal and murderous impulses and actions expressed in Rock music, and by some Rock musicians, the self loathing in feeling and behavior, the hopelessness, the half-dead and half-alive expressions in their music and in personal comments, the paucity of poetry in their lyrics, the monotony of their beat, the repetitive lines, all have a similarity, or isomorphism, to what is seen in abortion survivors. The identification with the aggressor, and the splits in the self, and the blurring of boundaries between self and other, are evident in the lack of clarity of whether their depictions of destruction are parodies, mockeries, satires, a "Theater of the Absurd" enactment and commentary on the hated, heartless aggressor, or whether they are expressions of the feelings of the musicians themselves, who,

like abortion survivors, seek what they fear and often seem to have become what they hate. Is it we, or they?

It is my thesis that the similarity to the characteristics of abortion survivors that is evident in the literal and symbolic prenatal content in the words of many Rock songs, in the accompanying insert pictures, in the names of the groups, in the titles of their songs and CD's, and in the personal statements and behavior of many Rock musicians themselves, suggests that an underlying dynamic theme in much of current Rock music is one of a struggle with the dread of being aborted, and that this is the prenatal message in their songs. I would consider the monotonous, non-stop, loud beat, that is felt as much as heard, as a representation of the unborn's heart beat, possibly also of the mother's heartbeat, and that it is a reassuring second-by-second stimulus to the abortion survivor Rock musician that he is indeed alive, and a message to his abortion survivor listeners that they too are indeed alive as well.

It is easy to disdainfully dismiss Rock music because of its loudness and its violent, hostile, and pessimistic content, and to feel revulsion toward the Rock musicians because of their personal appearance, their behavior on stage, and the destructiveness in their personal lives. For example, Kurt Cobain, leader of Nirvana, despite his protestations of love for his child, was on heroin during her prenatal period, and he committed suicide when his daughter was nineteen months old. Although there has been some dispute about the use of heroin by his wife, Courtney Love, leader of the band, Hole, she acknowledged in an extensive interview with DeRogatis (1995) that she was indeed on heroin early in her pregnancy. "I did take heroin when I was pregnant in the very beginning of my pregnancy. I did. Otherwise, I could have sued the hell out of them (Vogue)." She claims to have quit upon finding that she was pregnant (Handy, 1994). Sid Vicious, from Sex Pistols, while on heroin, stabbed his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen in the stomach, at her request, and slept while she bled to death on the bathroom floor in their hotel room (McLeod, 1995). He died of a drug overdose some months later.

However, to stop listening to and watching Rock because of a personal aversion, and to emotionally turn away, is to fail to attempt to understand what is happening in society, and what Rock musicians are saying. The fact that their music is so enormously popular speaks to the significance of this music and its appeal for a large component of society. Several billion dollars a year is being spent on records, tapes and CD's. Hardy (1990) in his article, "One Nation Under a Groove," lists profits in 1989 by the recording industry alone at six and a half billion dollars, the largest part of which comes from Rock and Roll music. Rock concerts are sell-outs. Rock on television, in movies, and in related magazines is ubiquitous, and fans will travel long distances to hear, see, and pay homage to their favorite group. The grave in Paris of Jim Morrison, of the Doors, who died of a drug overdose, is visited almost as if it were a required international pilgrimage, and Elvis Presley's Graceland in Memphis is a shrine. The Rock musicians are idols. Their music is expressing something not only important to them, it is also speaking for the fans in their audience or they would not be so drawn to it.

The fact that many of the musicians compose, or play, while under the influence of drugs should also not be used as a reason to dismiss the significance of their music. Drugs can release, or access the unconscious, and, though their use in psy-

chotherapy is controversial, they have been used under controlled conditions, for example, by Kafkalides (1995), who, in his book, "The Knowledge of the Womb," described his use of psychedelic drugs to access patients' repressed memories of prenatal life, so that, through a process he called "autopsychognosia," reactions to, and the carry over into later life, of repressed prenatal and perinatal traumas could be brought to the surface, and their expression in transferences and acting out could be examined. Grof (1985), in "Beyond the Brain," described similar work, and Lake (Moss, 1987), used drugs as a facilitator in his early work on what he called "the fetal distress syndrome." Rock musicians have used drugs in a similar, but uncontrolled manner, to release repressed pre-natal trace memories, which have come to the surface in such a chaotic and often violent way that they often have not been well processed by the musicians themselves, or by society.

The fact that a large part of the world's population has chosen to express its prenatal concerns through the medium of music is significant. Music is the most alive of all art forms, the most basic, the most primitive, and probably the one most closely linked with prenatal experience. It is perhaps the most universally used, and responded to, of all the art forms through which humans express themselves and has distinct characteristics that make it unique. It transcends language barriers. It is non-visual, but it can stimulate visual imagery and the emotions that go with it. Music cannot be left at rest, or looked away from until one chooses to address it. It commands one's attention. Music is nothing unless it is happening, unless it is being played or sung, and when the music stops, there is nothing tangible still present. All else, all other experience, is subsidiary to, derivative from, or a developmental expression, of music. It is auditory, but not auditory in the adult sense of hearing words, or even in the sense that it can be heard only by our ears, for it can be felt even by the deaf. Music can enhance verbal expression, but words without music, including the music of inflection, intonation, and rhythm, are dry and colorless; and music that expresses deep emotions, passions, and states of mind is often weakened and diluted when we try to add words to it. Music can stand alone. The CD, "Novus Magnificat: Through the Stargate," by Constance Denby (1986), is an example of a wordless musical depiction of conception and birth.

With these considerations in mind, it is not surprising that Rock musicians have expressed their prenatal themes primarily through the medium of music, rather than via other mediums. That the words are often almost indiscernible in the midst of the overwhelming sound and the incessant beat is also significant, for the decibel level of intrauterine sound is equivalent to that of a busy street intersection. The intrauterine sound is also a musical one, with tones coming from the friction of blood rushing through the patent septum ovale and through the umbilical cord, the sound of mother's breathing and borborygmus, and sounds from the outside world. The music of the fetus, Latin for "little one," a fetus whom we can feel and hear, and who feels, hears, and dimly sees, but can't talk, is the music of Rock, which we can feel and hear even when we cannot distinguish the words. It is important also, to consider that, although their music is mesmerizing, it is not tranquil or serene. It is reflective of a disturbed intrauterine experience. The Rock musician has added words to this music, and the verbal content is discernable if one listens carefully. Then one hears the words sending the same message of the

dread of being aborted, and the life and death reactions to this dread, that the music is expressing.

Society, and the psychological and social scientists have an opportunity and an obligation to attempt to hear, see, and understand the messages and dynamics contained within Rock music. In addition to its expression in concerts, tapes and CD's, it is awash all around us on the radio, and on MTV, with accompanying on-line Yack Talk, twenty four hours a day. Behind the manifest stimulating auditory and visual depictions of sex and violence that Rock music presents with such vehemence and vitality, are important themes about pre-natal life, during which the human being is at his most vulnerable. Trust in his environment is essential during this period, and this basic trust is the prototype of trust in later life and in other circumstances. Rock musicians are angrily protesting about a variety of unkindnesses in the world, but at the core of this, I submit, is a protest against, and a reaction to, the betrayal of, or loss of confidence in, basic pre-natal trust, and we need to pay attention to what Lawson (1994) has called the "Rock Artist as Fetus." and to what he is singing and playing, for himself and for us.

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