

Rock Tao

A Review by Genny Lim

Like the Pied Piper of NCOC Poetics, David always had a loyal stream of adoring grad students tagging along up and down the two flights of stairs, which he hobbled with Sisyphian effort on his cane, to his office. No telling why they couldn't reassign him to a street level hole, but academia, like all governments works in strange ways. Like David's poetry, the mysteries of the cosmos and men swirled about in David's fertile, untamed intellectual universe. *Rock Tao* is a collage or rather hologram of interlocking mirrors that reflect and dissect the Zeitgeist and quest of rock culture and its insatiable addiction to fame. Meltzer's incisive insights about the ritualistic aspects of rock stardom penetrate to the core of its market-driven machinery with its *"books, pornography, movies. . . all ornamental of the quest. To fill the void left by God's death we demand the quick and abundant life and death of other gods and heroes . . . The orphic equations are unavoidable."* Like a modern day, 'motley scholar' cum de Toqueville, Meltzer's descriptions of rock culture as "a revolt that seeks order through disorder" is precisely the *Tao* of anarchy and youth that ignite the burning flame of fame and its exacting Faustian extinction in its bargain. *"The Revolution is over as soon as your face is printed on a sweatshirt and worn by the young."* The artist as god and fan as initiate is the ancient ritual reenactment of what Mircea Eliade described as *"The Myth of the Eternal Return."*

Of Motown, Meltzer says, *"The white man's over-arranged background music to hold the black man's song, to submerge it, baptize it, scrub it clean. The black man's willingness to advocate the white romantic delusional idealism,"* will likely draw controversy, but such point-blank frankness coming from a white man, albeit a musician himself, is surprisingly rare. As well, David's apt admiration for Chuck Berry as the man who started it all. He points to how Berry's lyrics reflect real, nitty-gritty Black life, unlike the adolescent puppy love pablum, typical of pop-rock lyrics. There are too many terse, funny, ironic and profound observations in Meltzer's survey of rock to detail. You just have to read it yourself to appreciate the depth and clarity of Meltzer's far-ranging gaze. *Rock Tao* is a must for anyone who has lived, loved, dreamed, Got high, fucked or danced to rock, America's gift to the world.