

[Ed. Note: *Rock Tao* was all but published by Robert & Dorothy Hawley's Oyez press in 1966. This selection is taken from galleys they had set. Publication was held up due to at-the-time exorbitant publication rights for the numerous rock lyrics quoted throughout.

A popular culture fanatic, Meltzer gobbled up the sights and sounds of his environment. Encompassing rock n roll, sociological study, advertisement culture, personal/family affairs, and various phenomenological detritus of the period, *Rock Tao* is an encyclopedic cultural whirlwind composed when Meltzer was but in his late twenties. Notably, his own dip into psychedelic rock performance with The Serpent Power was a couple years away.

An extraction from the opening pages of the galleys appeared in *Ameraracana: A Bird & Beckett Review* #7 "*Shuffle Boil Special Issue*". Selected by Meltzer, he appears to have made some minor changes and also skipped over certain entries as he went along making his selection.

After the opening invocation "Rock Tao Rocks On" (a typescript sheet found appended to the front of the galleys) this current excerpt picks up from where Meltzer left off and does not skip over any entries.]

from **ROCK TAO** (1965)

ROCK TAO ROCKS ON

in its billboard cashbox heart, a record, the Product, is best
ONLY when its duplicatable & primarily REPLACABLE
What is permanent, what becomes History, almost invariably
requires Death
It is (I shd emphasize IS) a Business whose secondary product
is art, a popular (meaning saleable) commodity which pretends
to be Art but never is unless it turns platinum

--

Components: Alternatives

Collective worship destroys the man it worships. Worship degrades. It makes the singular plural.
It diminishes a man into a fragment.

Worship is a bondage the hero willingly submits to.

Heroes who submit to worship are failures.

We also worship failure.

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“I LOVE RINGO!”

TEEN DREAM SCARF

Your choice of a lovely, high-quality head scarf. 2 feet square, made of heavy hand-rolled blended silk. PERMANENTLY HANDPAINTED with the name of . .

*YOUR FAVORITE SINGER

*YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE STAR

*YOUR FAVORITE TV STAR

*YOUR OWN BOYFRIEND

. . or even

YOUR OWN NAME! Mailed GIFT-WRAPPED in a clear plastic envelope.

Youth's smooth face assumes the face of the Invincible One. His body swaddled in the moment's correct drapery, he assumes he is what fame instructs him to be;

walks down Market Street, a strange dance, masculine fantasia: spread leg cowboy hero, motorcycle speed king, killer commandos talk, brute stomp, heavy-foot clomp, champ dance, a stiff stride not belonging to the legs attempting it. Heroic snapshot. Catches the sight of his body in windows: bulging, bending, on a car fender;

his face in the enemy's eyes before him; his face in Her eyes passing him by; he is passed & he passes

— *It's not unusual to be loved by anyone*
It's not unusual to have fun with anyone
But when I see you hangin around with anyone
It's not unusual to see me cry
I wanna die.

#30/ IT'S NOT UNUSUAL: Tom Jones

snorts. Lights a cigarette. Sucks death in. Gushes the smoke out, lets the stuff stream out of his nostrils; — cascades over his mouth which bites at it, sucks it in again, puffs out a new snake & tries to form a smoke-ring;

looking at me, yet not looking, he looks away & wants to be seen as much as he also wants to be invisible. So he can watch himself being seen &, if possible, see what you see & be sure that what you see is the hero he is miming

— The first three months under contract were pretty hectic... (you're sent) out on a round of parties . . . every night . . . parties . . . and before long you notice all the faces you see at all the parties are the same. Three months of that and I was sick of the whole thing. It's not bad now, though.

Karen Jensen / Starlet

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A leader is always standing before you with an army standing behind him.

The hero stands alone. That is why he leads the young.

— Bullfighting fascinated him (James Dean) for a while and he practised cape movements at home to the accompaniment of appropriate Spanish music.

FRUG THAT FAT AWAY — DEATH OF THE DIET

Our government right now is slowly being undermined by the Communists. No one hears about it because bigshots make sure it doesn't leak out. Crying in their soup, not hardly.

If Bob Dylan or Joan Baez or P. F. Sloan or Phil Ochs don't bring these things out to the younger generation, who will?

from a letter: HIT PARADER / April 1966

Today is a time of all time & of no time. I speed thru it holding a thread of history. Or I sit in the middle of it & it sounds like the earth turning. All that preceded me is before me. Evidence everywhere. We assemble our histories continuously.

Centuries of Eastern & Western art & wisdom available in all forms — books, photos, records, tools, weapons. Time & technics translate the evidence left by all civilizations. We can return to a place that is perfect & complete centuries after its ruin.

What is famous?

Anonymous painters, bards & craftsmen once served God & directed their best to the best they believed possible within man & beyond him. The anonymous marks on time.

It is more than nostalgia that leads us to, or back to, great works.

LA SHEER

Bares your shoulders — see the barely safe effect!
This sensational Cotton wonder has that true
Frederick's fit that snuggles your curves

▪

Keeps you trim . . . made entirely of RUBBER,
works like a portable steam bath. While you wear
it, pounds melt away . . . holds you with fantastic
control. Invisible under a dress or leotard

I attempt to re-discover. To seek & to see the order of things.

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To look & re-see what has been seen often enough yet never recognized by my eyes, my heart.
To find my face, my form, to bridge the dark & face the light, take my chances & continue the learning.

— *Throw away the lights, the definitions,
And say of what you see in the dark
That it is this or that it is that,
But do not use the rotted names*

from THE MAN WITH A BLUE GUITAR: Wallace Stevens

“the secrecy surrounding the boys' wearing of the *upi*, a tall, awkward and probably uncomfortable hat made of palm leaves, which conceals the hair. The *upi* is put on while the boy's hair is short, and he wears it until initiation, never taking it off in the presence of women until it is ceremonially removed. On its removal, the women suddenly discover the mysterious secret of men: they have long hair. The main purpose of the ceremony is to surprise the women with the length of the hair.” from SYMBOLIC WOUNDS: Bruno Bettelheim

A hero lives his life in the memory of his heroic act. A single heroic act can alter a man's life. If he survives he will speak of it until he dies, collecting souvenirs & documents to wallpaper his archives.

If by accident a man is made a hero, he will attempt to create a myth from that error.

(—Do you remember X who used to be in the movies? You must remember him, well anyway, I know X. He's a personal friend.)

By contact with a hero, a man can have a meaningful secondary fame.

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Thru all of this, an instinct to aid the intelligence to survive even its own heroes.

—*He didn't fly down from heaven with white
(wings on his back
He blew in from Kansas City in a big red Cadillac
Yeah, he said he made his bread playin' rock 'n' roll
I ain't no angel, angel
But I don't want anybody but you
...
You know he sleeps til sundown and he keeps me
(up all night*

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*And when it comes to lovin
That boy is out-a-sight
Yeah, you know he makes me lose my self-control
He ain't no angel
But that's alright.*

#19 / HE AIN'T NO ANGEL: The Ad-Libs

Many of the great gods of American letters were also gods who failed: Jack London (suicide), Vachel Lindsay (swallowed a bottle of Lysol), F. Scott Fitzgerald (an alcoholic), Hemingway (shotgun), Hart Crane (jumped into the sea), Bodenheim (shot to death in a Skid Row flat);

(Lew Welch said:

—Say, Dave, did I ever tell you my definition of fame? It's when people know you that you don't know.

— *All of us failed to match our dream of perfection.*

William Faulkner

The impossible hero (Superman, Capt Marvel, Batman) accomplishes impossible feats & enters the realm of god-symbols that inspire an early sense of man's tragic bent towards failure.

My childhood comrade & enemy was Jordan Cohen who worshipped Superman & Al Jolson (as played by Larry Parks). Jordan lived in the corner apartment with his mother, a loud, husbandless, nervous shrew-bitch whose shrieks kept the block awake at displaced intervals day & night.

I knew Jordan wasn't Superman (having pounded his head on cement when we fought) but Jordan had deep doubts. He wore glasses & Clark Kent wore glasses.

I first saw him reading the latest Superman comic book, crossing Linden Blvd, a two-lane boulevard in Brooklyn. He was crossing against the light. Cars zipping by slammed on brakes, horns honked, but Jordan paid them no mind (up!up! & awaa-yyy) & continued at his own pace to cross the thoroughfare, turning to the next page

— Hey Y'DUMB JERK! dumb-ass! 4-eyed schmuck! whaddaya doin! ! asshole! ! ! screamed a shocked-white motorist whose car stalled.

His day of winged disgrace: poised, like Esther Williams, Jordan stood on the lip of the apartment roof in a home-made Superman suit: a pillow case cape with S written on it in lipstick, jockey-shorts & an undershirt with S in lipstick in its center

— UP! UP! & AW—

— JORDAN! JORDAN COHEN! You dumb bastard! what in God's name'r' you doing up there!! his mother hollered at him.

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— Aw, ma, for God's sake, lemme be, I'm Superman

People gathered below to watch.

— Y'get the hell off a that roof or I'll kill you, you jerk, you dumb bastard! stupid, stupid! she screamed, veins in her neck pulsing against flesh, her distended in anguish, terror & rage (her sometime lover out the back-way; his afternoon ruined)

—Oh God, Jordan, please, PLEASE, get down, she moaned, — y'stupid stupid dumb jerk bastard

& Jordan perched there like a ballet dancer, wind furling his pillowcase cape, turned around & left the roof, walked downstairs. His mother beat him senseless.

— Yeah?

— Yeah!!

& we'd pick at each other's nerves. I'd grab his dirty shirt & try murdering him again.

His lips were wet; his glasses glared; his curly hair was heavy with dirt & grease; he smelled of rancid butter, unwashed underwear. Later on, we'd play Al Jolson.

— Awww, MAA-mmy! he'd sing on bent knee — I'd walk a mill-yun miles for one a your smiyuls, mah ma-ha-ha-mee
& we'd laugh.

A BIZARRE TWIN PEAKS "TORCH" David Schmuck 19, proclaimed himself a Buddhist monk last night, doused himself with gasoline and lit a match. Doctors at Mission Emergency Hospital said 95% of his body was covered by third-degree burns. They do not expect the boy to survive.

FRED: Honestly, John, are you happier now than in the early days in the little clubs in Liverpool?

JOHN: I'm probably happier. In those days we had peace and quiet but we were broke — and I wasn't married. There are lots of things that aren't so good and lots that are better. It all balances out. Being rich is no worry for me. I don't believe it ever is — that's just what the rich people say. I like being rich and I think other people do, too. My son will be second generation rich which is a problem I haven't worked out yet — where to send him to school and so on, you know.

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A few years later, reading National Geographics instead of comic books, Jordan began knocking over baby buggies. After I had moved away, I heard that he'd been committed to an institution for trying to rape a girl much younger than he. Jordan was, at that time, 15.

"You smell of gasoline," she told him.

"I've been helping Jim work on his car," he replied.

That's Odd, Miss Schmuck thought, because Jim (a family friend) doesn't have a car.

SCRIBBLED

He left the house again, returning after a few moments. and asked for pencil and paper. He scribbled quietly at the kitchen table. the sister said, and then read aloud what he had written.

"Buddhist Monk. Inquire at 410-Ä Fair Oaks. I die for all mysterious things."

"What does that mean?" Miss Schmuck asked. but David only smiled enigmatically and went out the door.

From source to source. The round dance done

—40 yr old mother of 3 held off police until they tossed teargas bombs thru the window where she surrendered & they discovered the body of her husband shot thru the heart. She has been placed in a psychiatric ward for observation.

—5 shots from a speeding auto

—Minotaur seizes maiden & escapes police-barrier due to distraction caused by a 4-alarm fire two blocks away

— Star fullback, halfback & quarterback for the Hollywood Bisons confesses morphine addiction at closed-meeting of the Big Brother Club local chapter of which he has been a member for over 4 years

—Of 1500 dead only 150 were estimated to be the enemy in recent battle-campaign in Viet Nam

— Tomorrow's announcers are out there in the audience today. They're working in Greyhounds in offices and they're frustrated they want to get into broadcasting they really do they want to do something with their lives * Call collect to XYZ School of Radio Broadcasting and you too can be a dj

— Authorities seized the white man responsible for the shooting of the Negro Army captain in Bogalosa

— Headless, clutching at his vanished parts, Orpheus crashed thru the picturewindow & fell bleeding from numerous wounds upon the rug overturning a tv tray & the halfeaten dinner upon it.

— *Woo, it's growing*
Every day it grows
A little more than it was the day before My love for you just grows and grows
Oh Oh Oh Oh how it grows and grows
And where it's gonna stop
I'm sure nobody knows

#24 / IT'S GROWING: The Temptations

Whatever it is, it is not what it seems to be.

Change is a burning. A triumph above flame like the Phoenix reborn.

Fire¹: the burning Buddhist monks of Vietnam; Giacometti, the sculptor — “But the thing, the suicide, that really fascinates me, is burning oneself alive. That would be something.” Fire renews what it destroys. The burning man alive with fire (David Schmuck) races over a hill to escape his pain & embrace his spirit. D. H. Lawrence, the emblem of the fever of his tuberculosis. Fire turns the meat of flesh to fragile ash, lightening the ponderous massiveness of the body into particles taken up by the wind, or slowly eaten by the earth.

Fire suicides are becoming more frequent in America. Yesterday a Marine immolated himself because he was deeply unhappy about Marine doctrine & training. A few months ago an elderly lady in Detroit ignited herself because she was outraged by the American war effort in Vietnam.

Speech as fire; art as fire. Flame's heat as a cleansing power. Fire as a baptismal rite.

The pyromaniac; the ecstatic.

Puberty is a blaze of birth. The body is ablaze with growing. The spirit is flaming & its fire illuminates the edges of night. The inner-heat creates a raw-nerved screaming torment boiling the heart. The loins plunge into lake water to cool. A plume of steam shoots from the phallus into the water that holds it up in watery gravity.

—*Ye wavering forms draw near again as ever*
when ye long since moved past my clouded eyes.
To hold you fast, shall this time endeavour?

¹ *Fire, the 3rd element. Triangle. pyramid, obelisk: point up to symbolic fire. Basis of worship's primal source. (Tableaux: lightning strikes dry hunk of wood. Ignites it. The caveman. symbol of unconscious origin, bends to the wonder & terror of flame.) God speaks {0 man with thunder & lightening. The sun's little brother. Agni. Ptath. Vulcan. Bast, the cat-headed goddess; Sekmet; the lion goddess. Sacred fire of the Greeks guarded by the Vestal Virgins. Gabriel. prince of fire. Fire of martyrdom, saintly fervor. St. Anthony Abbot; St. Agnes. Fire of sex. the flame of life. Fire-sticks. Mastery of fire is one of the shammanic goals: swallowing live coals, walking on fire (cf. Shammanism by M Eliade. NY, 1964; M “Ihs, Dreams & Mysteries by Eliade. NY, 1960). Glum-mo. Tibetan psychic heat: a naked monk sits in lotus-pose on the ice of a Tibetan mountainside, melting the area wherein he sits. Kundalini. the inner energy & fire of spirit described in Yogic writings, which when released uncoils shoots up thru the chakras of the spine, central nervous system's web, the rings of being, to burst thru the head's dome as a flaming lotus. Sakti.*

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*Dance like you never danced
Get down on your knees now
Say, do the sweet pea now
Step to the left now
Step to the right now
Do the boomerang and, girl,
Do all a-them things now.*

#29 / DO THE BOOMERANG: Jr. Walker & the All Stars

This is a time when a person could say that what is immoral is now moral. What order? Whose laws?

. . . said Richard Burton when he heard of his ex-wife's marriage to 24 year old Jordan Christopher, singer & leader for the rock 'n' roll group called the Wild Ones: "Oh, my God!"

Said Jordan Christopher about his new wife who is 12 years his senior: "As far as I am concerned. it was love at first sight."

Said Jordan's father. a Macedonian bartender in Akron, Ohio: "I don't see what she can possibly see in him."

"—Christian people will vanish. Teen-agers will be running through the halls in schools looking for their Christian friends but they will be gone. The radio and TV sets will be buzzing about the mysterious disappearance of people from every nation."

from CHICKEN! by Dave Wilkerson

"— Natural man is not a 'self— he is the mass and particle in the mass, collective to such a degree that he is not even sure of his own ego. That is why since time immemorial he has needed the transformation mysteries to turn him into something, and to rescue him from the animal collective psyche, which is nothing but hodgepodge."

from PSYCHOLOGY & ALCHEMY: C. G. Jung

Hierophany of periodicals, of cigarette butt particles (girls grabbing them off the stage after a Rolling Stone concert), of jellybeans (thrown in votive tribute "hurt you," said Ringo Starr) (full-page photo in LIFE of a teenage girl on her knees looking upward, face contorted in an ecstasy of pain & devotion, holding a jellybean stepped on by a Beatle); particled bedsheets off beds Beatles slept on auctioned off 10 highest bidders (lavender sheets Kim Novak slept on cut into ties & sold at high prices) — not absurd. Abides with the sexual spiritual indirectness of these times. Deliberate misdirection: a magician's device to distract.

A pessimistic radio-engineer I know came up with the following plan:

Instead of mustard-seed amulets why not spermatozoa of movie stars — or smears of menstrual blood from movie queens — sealed in glass, worn around the neck or, why not, minute extracts of turds dropped by great stars. — We'd call the amulets: Uncommon Scents or . . .

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Allowances are based on parental income. One can assume how parents compete, between themselves, in affording their children the highest allowance on the block — and how their children's allowance would become a status-symbol for the parents as well as the children. “The record business is a worldwide enterprise with sales in the U.S. alone reaching some \$600 million to \$700 million last year and growing at a rate of 10 per cent a year. It is also a business that depends more and more on the teens and the sub-teens, who dig \$250 million out of their piggybanks and their allowances every year for records. Altogether they buy 40 per cent of all albums sold and a staggering 80 per cent of all singles.” NEWSWEEK: October 11, 1965

“The current estimate is \$13,000,000,000 a year in freely disposable cash — cash not required for the teenager's own maintenance and those statisticians who count the youth market — the age range of thirteen to twenty-two rather than fifteen to nineteen — say that it has already reached about \$25,000,000,000. Teen-agers now are estimated to own nine percent of all new cars and an uncounted number of used ones . . . (teen-agers) accounts for more than half of the attendance at all motion pictures, buys much more than forty percent of all records and cameras and more than one-fourth of all cosmetics.”

from IN THE TIME IT TAKES YOU TO READ THESE LINES THE AMERICAN TEEN-AGER WILL HAVE SPENT \$2,378.22: Grace and Fred M. Hechinger / ESQUIRE, July 1965

. . . rising allowances and swelling incomes from part-time and summer jobs this year will put a whopping \$12 billion into the jean pockets of the nation's high-school boys and girls. This about equals the total output of South Africa and adds up to an income of \$670 per teen year.

NEWSWEEK: March 2-1, 1966

To consume is to also be consumed. (Again, fire.)

Great Pharaohs gathered their loot together to die with it. The gold, the fine cloths, the carvings, trinkets, cutlery, etc., held sacred powers & were essential for the journey toward Isis.

But the children with their abundance of stuff & goods glide into unreal adulthood. The consuming mania is a reflection of the adult world they live within. Seeking understanding, a connection with their elders, the adolescent attempts to emulate them. But what doctrine their peers offer do not fill the void. Suddenly the youth is a young adult, married, no plans for children, living in a recent low-budget tract home, new car bought on time as well as the essential TV & other home appliances. They both work. Meet in the morning, meet again at night. The purpose of their cooperative venture is vaguely satisfied on weekends when they can go shopping for new objects for their home (whose ceiling is beginning to welt & termites can be heard at night boring thru the cheap wood beams). The river runs into the sea & the sea stretches out as far as the eye can see.

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