



Tom Wolfe: Reactionary Chic

“From that moment, man, there’s no question: this is a real *writer*. . . . For decades now the English Lit. establishment

has been extolling the virtues of Vivid Writing. Show, don’t tell. Use the *active* voice, not *passive*. Be *lively*. Deny it if you want to! Tom Wolfe is exemplary, and we asked for it.”

AT ABOUT 2 OR 3 OR 4 A.M., somewhere along in there, on March 2, 1970, his 39th birthday or so, Tom Wolfe had a vision. He saw himself in a dim hall, so large and dim that he couldn’t see the walls or ceiling—why he could be outside for all he knew! but he knew he wasn’t. He was dressed . . . of course! in his lambent floppy-white suit, his patented Tom Wolfe vanilla icecream suit, his Tom Wolfe magic blanched-out glowcoat, glowing in the dim hall like a rotting mackerel, like a luminous alarm-clock dial in a bedroom at 3 or 4 in the morning. He was seated at a table, and in front of him was . . . yes! his alumicron-sided, electromesh triple-spring action Fethertuch control . . . no ordinary everyday *typewriter*, dig, but the real baby itself, the real little Wurlitzer-Corona wonder, humming and clunking and *shtunking and ding-*ing away . . . I mean, *his* typewriter! Does one comprehend? And all around the edges of this . . . typewriter . . . ran these crazy bands of glowing pearly-white neon, just pulsing and glowing and flowing around and around like mercury through one of those weird quadruple-noded clear-plastic Magick-straws that Scarsdale mothers buy for their children to suck their Ovaltine through . . . and out the back of the . . . typewriter . . . stretching away straight in front of him, ran this, just, *mile-long shimmering bright-white endless lumescant fluorescent extension cord* stretching like a white-hot wire till it just disappeared in the shadows, literally getting swallowed up by infinity. Plugged into infinity! Bright white lite typewriter Wolfe suit Wur-

litzer-Corona floppy long blanch-blonde Day-Glo hair, all sheeny-shiny glowing white-bright shiny shoes cord infinity all luminous-noumenous pale-pure blank-light-*white!* *Tom Wolfe!* And it came to him, all at once: *He was the light source!* Except for him, and his icecream suit, and his luminous-noumenous Wurlitzer-Corona, all else was like wrapped and lapped in the shades of darkness, eyeless in Gaza, no-sun nothingness . . . I mean, *dark*, savvy? Except for him.

Well, right. I mean if you’re Tom Wolfe, and you’re a writer, not just any two-room walk-up scrounging moonlighting highschool English teacher reviewing friends’ books for \$25 a throw in the Sunday newspaper Woman’s Page plus Arts and Entertainment Section, with a “novel” in “progress” in a shoe-box full of transcriptions of pretentious interior-exterior monologues and loopy marijuana musings and descriptive passages of wheels passing over the rain-wet streets with the sound of tearing silk, but if you’re a writer named *Tom Wolfe*, that is to say a real *cachet* writer, puffed by *Esquire*, caricatured by David Levine, attacked by Dwight MacDonald—so that when people say *the* Tom Wolfe they just might mean you and not that other T.W. (1900–1938), one of the great American writers of all time, why then, well, I just have no idea of how to finish this wonderful Tom Wolfe sentence I’ve been writing.

I WONDER HOW WOLFE WOULD finish it. He has trouble finishing sentences sometimes, Tom Wolfe does. Not that it’s his fault, really. English is just *so* chock-full of *such* wonderful rhetorical constructs that let you puff up and up *so* far and then suddenly leave you hanging with *no* place to go that . . . that . . . well, you see what I mean? And if you’re a writer like Wolfe, whose whole work is really in the realm of hyperbole, then you must spend about half your time at the typewriter trying to think up some new tag-end for one of those big blowy top-heavy rococo sentences that won’t sound like too obvious a variant on “. . . that I ever saw.” Diagram a Wolfe sentence the way you used to do on the blackboard in Grammar class, on the “subject” side you’ll get a weird

jungle of sproutings and joinings and modified modifiers linking together in thrice removed subordinate clauses, but on the "predicate" side—nothing. A lame state-of-being verb and some nebbishy tail-off. ". . . that I ever saw in my life."

Admirers like to credit Wolfe with being prophetically non-linear, post-Gutenberg and all that, and of course he has trouble with the dumb warmed-over Ciceronian syntactic forms we're taught to accept as discourse, with their weird 18th century assumptions about little ideas building logically into bigger ideas. Here goes the opening sentence from an article in Wolfe's first book:

*Bangs manes bouffants beehives
Beatle caps butter faces brush-on
lashes decal eyes puffy sweaters
French thrust bras flailing leather
blue jeans stretch pants stretch
jeans honeydew bottoms . . .*

This is pretty pure Wolfe, very thin on the old linear cement—all those hoary connectives and transitions and splicings from the end of one paragraph or chapter to the start of the next and all that "In view of the above observations we may safely conclude that" fudge—but very strong on images, flashes, quick cuts of reality. No doubt about it: he has a good ear and a very good eye, in fact his whole neuro-sensory apparatus is like one of those very impressive synesthetic metaphor-mongering *Des Esseintes* palettes that Thurber captures perfectly in his cartoon of the wine snob holding up a glass and saying, "It's a mere domestic burgundy of no birth or breeding, but I think you'll be amused by its presumption." Why, even *Radical Chic*, even Wolfe's latest, greatest, super-sock 'em put-the-mothers-in-their-place put-down, starts out with the most febrile, delicate little palette-tingling passage:

*Little Roquefort cheese morsels
rolled in crushed nuts . . . It's
the way the dry sackiness of the
nuts tiptoes up against the dour
savor of the cheese that is so nice,
so subtle.*

And from that moment, man, there's no question: this is a real *writer* we've got here. Deny it if you want to! For decades now the English Lit. establishment, from Freshman Comp. on up, partly as a reaction against the bureau-

cratic Newspeak that George Orwell was anatomizing in the '40s, has been extolling the virtues of Vivid Writing. *Show, don't tell. Use the active voice, not passive. Be lively.* The whole push has been towards the immediate, the vividly visualized, the sharp one-stroke knife-twist of wit, the striking *mot juste*, the well-turned one-liner. And away from: the ruminative, the understated, the patient building-up into some kind of meaningful synthesis that says more than the sum of its parts. Deny it if you want to! Tom Wolfe is exemplary, and we asked for it. Just the last word in *liveliness*, a master of the witty *mot juste* (e.g., the use of the words "sackiness" and "dour" in the passage just quoted) and with it the kind of corruscating *shock* of recognition on metaphor-mongering which really amounts to a facility at overlaying disparate frames of reference and which, for the last ten years or so, has become increasingly the signature of fashionable conversational wit, as well as of the strings of prickly haiku that pass for classy prose.

AROUND THE TURN OF THE century many leaders of the literary avant-garde were taken up with rendering in words those instants of intense intuitive apprehension of reality which constituted, for them, the quintessential artistic moment. Joyce's "epiphany" is maybe the best-known term for a conviction which was very deep and general, with many schools and offshoots. One group, Ezra Pound's Imagists, sought to capture moments of shared experience, to bracket them in a quasi-phenomenological sense, for reader and writer alike, with the juxtaposition of sparse, concrete images.

Now, it seems to me that by some long and devious route a promiscuous version of this particular literary philosophy has become the stock-in-trade of modern pop-writers. It may have to do with the influence of John Updike, whose early stuff is pretty much a continuous Imagist prose-poem (that business about the dry sackiness of the crushed nuts tiptoeing up and so forth could have been straight from *Rabbit, Run*). More important have been the soft drugs of the '60s with their property of breaking down mental

membranes, turning reality into a Sargasso Sea of easy metaphor, of a moiling, tumbling, going-through-changes yeastiness where everything inheres in everything else. Anyway, never has "creative" writing been so easy. Its staple is a certain species of distilled, witty metaphor that I'll call the mini-epiphany. The mini-epiphany is everywhere; a certain facility with it is responsible, for instance, for the raves by most slick-magazines for the otherwise pretty vapid pop writer Albert Goldman. Goldman can't do much else, but he can knock off the drug-drenched mini-epiphany like nobody's business:

Some of his [Jimi Hendrix's] pieces remind you of totems of scabrous rusty iron; some move like farm machines run amok; some suggest shiny brass columns and spheres breached to reveal an interior textured like a toadstool.

Now, the mini-epiphany is like any other literary device—useful in moderation, treacherous when leaned on too heavily. Tom Wolfe uses it about twelve times too much—I mean, he's *addicted* to it. And the reason, I think, has to do with the whole psychological gestalt of the mini-epiphany—what it conveys, what it suggests—and its meshing with Tom Wolfe's rather impoverished notion of his craft. The real function of the mini-epiphany is to resurrect, from the wide field of metaphor, some facet of a particular experience which, though part of everyone's common unvoiced memory of that experience, has no place in the received, conventional verbal corona of associations it carries with it. Like a musical note, which conventionally we can define only as high or low, quarter-note or grace note, but which simultaneously suggests all kind of unverb-alized things . . . it can be green, or hot, or silky-soft, or like cold Wheatena on a frosty morning . . . almost any conceivable synesthetic analogue or plug-in from some *recherche* frame of reference will strike *some* chord, will make us sit up and say, "Hey! That's right!" and marvel at the author who managed to fish out just *that* little tidbit from our semiconscious that somehow no-one else had ever found. So the mini-epiphany becomes the signature of originality, of someone who

What should the U.S. do about Third-World revolutions?

Revolutionary war is an increasingly significant phenomenon in the Third World, and there is some evidence that conventional, counter-revolutionary intervention is built into the American political system. A new book by five internationally recognized authorities on revolution (one of them, in fact, under indictment in an alleged plot to kidnap Henry Kissinger) examines this ominous problem.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR: WESTERN RESPONSE analyzes the revolutionary political climate of the third world and the entrenched official attitudes of Washington that make more Vietnams likely. It then suggests what can be done both to alleviate the root causes of revolution and to soften Washington's hard line.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR: WESTERN RESPONSE

David S. Sullivan and
Martin J. Sattler, editors
cloth \$8.00, paper \$2.25



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can break through the verbal dead-wood and rediscover reality's raw nub. Describe a note as "C sharp" and you're a drudge. Describe it as "blue" and you're a poet. If you're Albert Goldman and fond of dropping blockbuster mini-epiphanies like "the bend in a blue note" why, man, you're a genius, man.

The main dividend of the mini-epiphany is this illusion of real, intimate contact with the surfaces and textures of reality, unrutted by verbal trudging or bullshit in general. Romantic revivals always have people scrambling around trying to rend the veil, to break through this or that and get right into the real down-to-down pith of things, and the mini-epiphany is the perfect ticket for a writer to catch a ride on the latest New Romanticism. Tom Wolfe's versatility with it is the reason *Newsweek*, for instance, waxed ecstatic about *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*:

Among journalists, Wolfe is a genuine poet; what makes him so good is his ability to get inside . . . to get under the skin of a phenomenon and transmit its metabolic rhythm.

To which: Bullshit. What Wolfe is good at is conveying the *illusion* of being inside and under the skin and metabolically rhythmic. Whether writing about something with which he has virtually no contact and so has to make up the details—as in his notorious *New Yorker* pieces—or something which he has personally experienced—as in *Radical Chic*—his technique is identical: the incessant mini-epiphany larded with a barrage of name-dropping and needlepoint peripheral detail (the kind people in creative writing classes are taught to stick in to give their scenes and characters "life") all overarched by the hypertrophied irony that people mistake for objectivity.

That illusion of objectivity is very important. Wolfe's stance is necessarily that of the rarified, omniscient observer, bathing all figures in luminous lucidity, grinding no axes or, at most, grinding them all to the exact same edge. He has to take his stance because his whole gift is in the painting of word pictures, in the framing and sketching and fleshing-out of credible frauds and facsimiles, of fiction truer than fact.

His talent as any kind of handler of ideas, picking up an idea and moving it from point *a* to point *b*, is close to zero. The section in the middle of *Radical Chic* where he drops out of the Bernstein's party for a minute to go into a pop sociology riff on Radical Chic Through the Ages is pretty thin—the kind of thing a sympathetic professor might give a C+ to with a comment like "A promising idea here, Tom, but needs more thought." And it becomes thinner when you realize that the subject of that section is the exact same old dead horse that Wolfe has been whacking away at ever since he appeared in print. Viz: *Nostalgie de la boue*. Dr. Johnson once remarked about a young man that he'd had "only one idea in his life, and that was a wrong one." Wolfe's one idea is *nostalgie de la boue*, a phenomenon which was old hat in the days when Marie Antoinette and her retinue liked to dress up as milkmaids.

"NOSTALGIA FOR THE MUD" is the snotty French term used to account for the fact that the aping of upper-class life-styles by people in the lower levels of the social scale is often reciprocated by their opposites in the upper levels. Of course this is easy enough to understand—any extreme is a kind of imprisonment, generating an idea of freedom which amounts to a yearning for its own opposite. The paradoxes are familiar enough, surely, as well as the infinite number of humiliations and put-downs they have occasioned. When Jack Kerouac got a little over-effusive about how great it must feel to be a Negro walking barefoot along a dusty road, James Baldwin quietly suggested that he try reading that aloud from the stage of the Apollo Theatre some Saturday night. Generations of satirists have gotten their jollies out of the petty-bourgeois and their pretensions to gentility. And of course ole Rastus is always getting ludicrously above himself in the coon-show humor that lasted into the '50's; remember the Lodge of the Mystic Knights of the Sea in *Amos 'n Andy*? *Radical Chic in verso*. Wolfe's whole point about those little Roquefort cheese morsels is to wonder out loud if the Panthers really . . . like . . . them, if they, as it were,

know what . . . to . . . do with them. Surely by now we can call this what it is—a cheap shot.

And it isn't the last one. When, by Wolfe's elemental Radical Chic formula, innocence itself is the ultimate affectation, then every gesture or act, every choice, becomes a transparent calculation, and all lambent, luminous, lucid white-on-white Wolfe is doing, see, is illuminating it for us. The Bernstein's guests can have their address at Sutton Place, or Queens, or Harlem, or any place in between—it doesn't matter, all is vanity, all the result of the agonized calculus of *x* amount of guilt versus *y* amount of greed. . . . And clothes: they are never just clothes, they always have to be *statements*, manifestos in fact: Raging Funk, Seedy-Tweedy . . . Wolfe cares more about clothes than anyone except the woman's fashion page writers whose style he emulates. (He is well-sconced in *New York Magazine's* coven of high-gloss New York bitchiness.) Felicia Bernstein, for instance, tries to stay out of the whole scene—but of course that just shows how . . . *adept* she is at it:

Felicia Bernstein seems to understand the whole thing better. Look at Felicia. She is wearing the simplest little black frock imaginable, with absolutely no ornamentation save for a plain gold necklace. It is perfect.

Felicia dear what a *perfect* little dress how *cunning* of you to think of it you must have spent *hours*. . . .

Nor is Wolfe's cattiness as all-embracing as he affects. Personal friends of his who were at the Bernsteins' (like Gloria Steinem) go largely unscored, while old enemies are dragged in incongruously from the wings to be *nostalgic de la boue-ed*. Like *The New York Review of Books*, the magazine that a few years before had published one of the really devastating articles of the decade, Dwight MacDonald's review of Wolfe's *New Yorker* pieces, revealing that, throughout, Wolfe had just lied, and lied, and lied, and gotten away with it—which is his real talent, you see. Hokay, *New York Review*, here's to you, buddy:

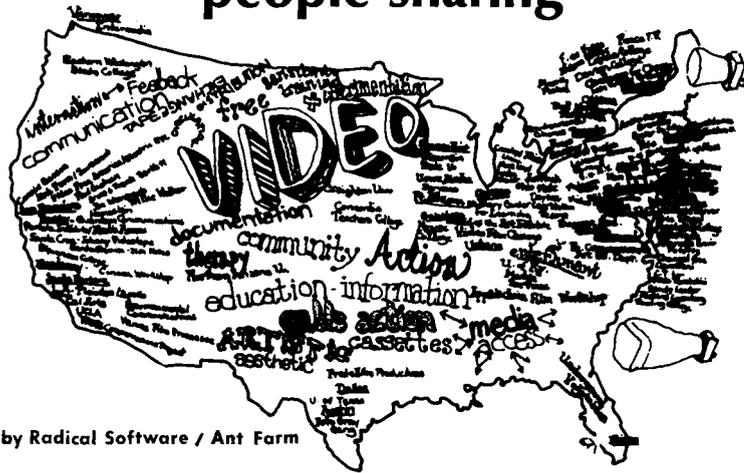
In fact, the journal was sometimes referred to good-naturedly as The Parlour Panther, with the -our spell-

ing of Parlour being an allusion to its concurrent motif of anglophilia. Now obviously folks: Try to imagine some New York culturati on the phone to another New York culturati saying: "In the latest *Parlour Panther*, which, you know, is what we're all calling the *New York Review of Books* these days. . . ." Obviously no self-respecting New York culturati was walking around saying "*The Parlour Panther* I mean *New York Review*," like awful old George Jessel on television pretending to get the *New York Times*

mixed up with *Pravda*. And that's not even considering the problem of how do you convey that clever -our anglophilia bit when you're talking, not writing an essay like Wolfe is. Obviously, now, Wolfe cooked the whole business up out of his own sweet bean. Most writers, wanting to insert this little snookum, would have done something like: "*The New York Review*, or, as I oft have thought it should be properly designated, *The Parlour Panther*. . . ." But Wolfe is a reporter, see, and reporters can't do that kind of thing. . . .

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Sure. *Radical Chic* is a piece of reporting the way that *Gulliver's Travels* is a travelogue. Like most novels, it is based on fact; like many novels, it is written through a *persona*. Mark Twain finds it useful for his purposes to pretend that he's a kid on a raft; Tom Wolfe finds it useful for his purposes to pretend he's a reporter, a smooth-polished reflector of things as they are. His *persona* is that of the keenly perceptive observer who is further gifted with the poet's knack of getting under the skin of things, just like *Newsweek* says he does. The fact is that he is essentially a fictionalist with a not very imaginative world-view onto which he grafts the effluvia of whatever event he is "analyzing"—as evidenced by the simple fact that for six years he has been seeing the same thing everywhere—from Baby Jane Holzer in 1964 with her "pet primitives," the Rolling Stones, to Leonard Bernstein in 1970 and his "pet primitives," the Panthers (the repetition is Wolfe's; he has a tendency to plagiarize himself).

As a footnote in the history of fiction, Wolfe is interesting mainly as a kind of full-circle return to Defoe, for whom "fiction" and "fraud" were the same. In some of his techniques, such as the reportorial stance and pointillist accretion of detail, he closely resembles Defoe; in addition he has the advantage of the mini-epiphany, which performs a number of useful functions: 1) It induces a kind of awed acquiescence, so that the question of credibility or accuracy seems almost an afterthought: This guy knows what he's writing about—why, can't you just *taste* those cheese-balls? 2) It charges phrase and line with such frantic energy that we're really numbed to

considerations of contour or argument—a good thing for Wolfe. There's so much *movement* that we haven't got time to notice the lack of direction, and any kind of, well, *thought* is likely to seem a bonus . . . Wow! All this and *ideas* too! 3) The line of continuous mini-epiphanies, with its sense of endlessly digging, opening-up, turning over, getting-to-the-core-of, perfectly matches the relentless reductivism of Wolfe's own blanched-out nihilism. Other satirists have been bombshells; Wolfe is just a string of firecrackers; he sees life as a series of silly pretenses and tiny embarrassments against the backdrop of dat ole bottomless void.

HAS ANYONE REMARKED THAT the most flaming case of *nostalgie de la boue* in town is Tom Wolfe himself? But what else can you be when your writing won't go anywhere, when all you can do is just sit there and run the old ray-gun, melting down all comers to the same identical plastic nub? The introduction to his first book tries to strike a sort of Lincolnesque attitude about how he's just revealing to us the hitherto ignored wonders of American subculture, of what he elsewhere calls *esthetique du shlock*—but what follows doesn't . . . follow that. What follows reveals a real socked-in, root-canal disgust:

. . . *Las Vegas is a resort for old people. In those last years, before the tissue deteriorates and the wires of the cerebral cortex hang in the skull like a clump of dried seaweed, they are seeking liberation.*

Which lovely image is one of the dominant motifs of Wolfe's work—he even

slides it into *Radical Chic*.

Yup, this is the real thing, mud love all right; no wonder he sees it everywhere. And just how is anything supposed to look good through all that vinyl-shiny prose, amidst that hairiness of weary High Camp so-bad-it's-good paradoxes that frayed down from the early '60s? And that famous *detail*—how can anything not mean whatever Wolfe wants it to mean when to read him is to accept a world where just *everything* signifies *something*. For that is Wolfe's world—a hyper-hyped derivation from all those bad post-Joyce short story writers fanatically sifting their narrative sands for significance, writing things like.

Madeline caught herself short and swallowed hard. Unstrung by the ensuing silence, she mechanically smoothed out her plaid skirt with fluting fingers, then dug down, with quiet mania, for the last cigarette wedged in the corner of her crushed pack, like a blind kitten burrowing into its mother's belly. Fowler watched her, running one hand through the wisps on his pulsing temples, with the other palpating the mottled concavities of the tortoiseshell ash-tray. The lenses of his glasses reflected blank disks. "Oh," he said.

Everything means something! The *raison d'etre* of the mini-epiphany. But some things mean more than other things, and most things mean different things from other things . . . does anyone really believe, for instance, that Leonard Bernstein spends his life running around that razor-edged squirrel cage of *Radical Chic*, shifting here and shunting there, feeling his way over the blades, every move maniacally calculated not to offend or gaffe? Are these people really so different from you and me? Even in New York, is content really so subsumed in form, *life* so collapsed into *life-style*? For one man, yes. One man has spent his career in print running his subjects around that little cage, plotting every fidget along the if-not-x-then-y coordinates of his *Radical Chic Nostalgie de la boue* graph, in a style that bleeds crimson plastic from every crack. Like all of his books, *Radical Chic* is mainly about Tom Wolfe.

—JOHN GORDON

Announcing the release of Ben Sidran's first album which marks the publication of his first book.

Ben has been largely a background personality for most of his career. He's worked with a lot of fine artists like the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Jesse Davis. And he's made significant contributions as a songwriter and piano player to several Steve Miller albums.

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Ben Sidran/singer-songwriter, piano player-book writer.



Sports

AS ANY AMERICAN MALE who has participated in sports knows, athletic competition is our culture's masculinity rite. It is on the playing fields of America, so the unspoken theory goes, where boys are made into men. Last year it was brought home to me how this phenomenon even pervades the counter-culture when, on a visit to the Fillmore East, I saw the long-haired, macho-tripping male ushers decked out in football jerseys. Apparently considering themselves too hip for regular cop uniforms, they chose the next best thing.

Unlike most primitive rituals where, after certain specific acts, a boy becomes a man forever after, athletic competition in this country requires males continually to prove their masculinity. Not surprisingly, most coaches quickly learn that the chief reward they can dispense is manhood.

The most complimentary remark a coach can make about a male athlete is to call him a "real stud" or "animal," and the most derogatory thing he can do is to intimate the athlete may be effeminate. It is for this reason that coaches themselves are so obsessed with being "real" men—straight from the square-jawed, John Wayne mold.

No coach was better at this form of athlete manipulation than the late Vince Lombardi. Himself the perfect "he-man" stereotype, Lombardi had the players on the Green Bay Packers convinced that to lose a football game was to lose their manhood. Willie Davis, a perennial All-Pro defensive end during his playing days and captain of Lombardi's world championship Green Bay teams, is an example of just how effective Lombardi was at keeping his players on the edge of doubt about their identity. Although the average football fan who watched the huge Davis terrorize NFL quarterbacks may find it difficult to believe, Davis' feelings about himself were in constant jeopardy. In an interview conducted by his former teammate Jerry Kramer, for *Lombardi: Winning is the Only Thing*, Davis talked of the motivation that led him and his

teammates to one NFL championship: "We went out and we whipped them good and preserved our manhood." And since on any given football weekend approximately half of the players are going to have been the victims of defeat, they feel compelled to look for other ways to prove their masculinity. This has given rise to the all too frequent spectacle of football players—those athletes already engaged in the most macho of all popular American sports—cruising the streets in search of homosexuals or hippies to beat up.

IGNORING THE OBVIOUS DANGERS involved in making manhood or maturity synonymous with violent, aggressive behavior, making athletics a masculinity rite also works to attenuate, if not totally negate, the intrinsic value of participation. As Timothy Leary so brilliantly pointed out during a philosophical discussion of handball in *Jail Notes*, "It's the play off not the pay off" which is the real value of athletics. But when males are participating in sports as a masculinity rite, or for any extrinsic purpose, they are usually so tense and anxious that athletic participation eventually comes to be seen primarily for its utilitarian rather than its inherent value.

One need only look at the physical condition of typical high school, college, or professional athletes within a year or two after they are through competing to see how little they enjoy physical activity for its own sake. And even those few former athletes who do keep physically active are usually doing so for some health-related reason rather than running for the simple joy to be gained from an exhilarating but exhausting run.

Given the reality of athletic participation being a proving ground, one can only wonder what happens to those females in our society who decide to participate seriously in competitive athletics. Next time I'll discuss why there is probably no area of American life where women's oppression is greater than it is in sports. As Marie Hart, a woman physical educator, recently told me, "Our society cuts the penis off the male who decides to be a dancer and puts it on the female who participates in competitive athletics."

—JACK SCOTT

Records



CAT MOTHER

LOST IN THE OZONE, *Commander Cody & His Lost Planet* [Paramount]
CAT MOTHER [Polydor]

NEW ALBUMS BY TWO OF THE "next generation" bands continue to show the direction of pop-rock music, and, happily, there remains a course of positive vitality, avoiding the divergent pitfalls of nihilism (Grand Funk, Black Sabbath), bucolic retreat (many of the country and folk artists), and juvenile vapidness (Jackson Five, Osmonds).

Cat Mother is the third and best album to date by Cat Mother and the All-Night Newsboys, a group whose history both personally and musically reflects much of the turmoil of the past few years.

Starting on the East Village-Woodstock circuit in New York, the band was "discovered" by Jimi Hendrix and invited to tour with him. Their music was solid and creative. They were one of the first bands to merge such instruments as organ and electric violin with the standard guitar-bass-drum configuration of most leading groups.

They played the concert-and-festival circuit, brought out an excellent album of mostly hard rock (*The Street Giveth and the Street Taketh Away*), and involved themselves in movement activities. They played at anti-war benefits, for example, and expressed the revulsion we all felt at the Chicago Democratic convention in their song