

as a stone and empty as a jug. Even when she exaggerates the baleful effect of James's example, Miss McCarthy's blade strikes fire, as in this: "He etheralized the novel beyond its wildest dreams and perhaps etherized it as well."

Concerning the extent of James's influence or legacy, Miss McCarthy seems to be of two minds. In saying that he did this or that to "the novel," she implies that he changed the course of the art form, and changed it for the worse; but almost in the same breath she notes various major writers who seem to have been impervious to his example. Salient examples come to mind at once: Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Malraux's *Man's Fate*, Huxley's *Point Counterpoint* (indeed all of Huxley), the fiction of Sartre and Iris Murdoch, the highly didactic novels of Solzhenitsyn, and many others she does not name. In truth, James's influence has been slight. After all, novelists still include in their stories all that James barred as extraneous—including the discussion of ideas. D.H. Lawrence, for instance, ended by writing tracts or sermons, which is paradoxical when you consider that Lawrence abhorred the intellect, or "upper story" as he called it.

Only in recent years, Miss McCarthy argues in her final chapter,

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has the "novel of ideas" been sent to Coventry, although dispensation has been granted to the Jewish novel. Just why the goys are confined to playing with images while the likes of Bellow, Malamud, and Philip Roth are free to juggle ideas Miss McCarthy doesn't say. She simply concludes, rather too hastily and unconvincingly, with the assertion that for the novel to be revitalized it will be necessary "to disarm and disorient reviewers and teachers of literature, who, as always, are the reader's main foe." If reviewers were given better books to review I daresay they would note the fact, and the pedagogues are generally too abstruse (or obtuse) to have much effect on anyone but themselves. Better reasons for the sad state of contemporary fiction can surely be found.

What makes this slender volume worth the price is the simple fact that Miss McCarthy has something important to say about important books and, above all, knows how to say it in a sharp and fresh manner. I had never quite realized the extent to which such writers as Stendhal, Tolstoy, Hugo, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, and Balzac were concerned with ideas, or—in the case of Stendhal and Dostoevsky—with showing the evil effects ideas may have. Miss McCarthy is at her best when she shows how Dostoevsky, in *The Possessed*, was drawn to dangerous ideas "as if to a potent drug," or how Stendhal, in *The Red and the Black*, probably intended Julien Sorel's career as "a wicked analogy with the career of Jesus." She also describes the great

interest novelists of the period had in Napoleon, not just as Emperor, but as Idea. Hegel, at Jena, had called Napoleon "an idea on horseback"; later, in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy sought to cut that Idea down to size.

Ideas and the Novel is a vigorous and forthright little book about a matter of importance to all readers of books. If we are moved more by the

idea of things than by the things themselves, then there would certainly seem to be a place in fiction for ideas. After all, fiction, unlike the visual arts, must feed off mental constructs if it is to have weight in the world or do more than idly entertain. Without ideological content, a novel will invariably leave the withers unprung. □

CRACKERS

Roy Blount, Jr. / Knopf / \$10.95

Theo Lippman, Jr.

Poor Roy Blount. He comes out with this adoring campaign biography of Jimmy Carter and whammo! down goes Carter to the worst defeat any incumbent president has ever suffered. I know just how he feels. I am, as you all know, the man who wrote successive campaign biographies of Edmund Muskie, Spiro Agnew, and Edward Kennedy.

"Adoring" is a word of the art. Book reviewers use it to show that the author likes his subject even though they do not. I think it is overused. Sure, I didn't mention Chappaquiddick in *Senator Ted Kennedy*, but

Theo Lippman, Jr. writes editorials for the Baltimore Sun.

that wasn't because I wanted to show him in an adorable light. You can't get *everything* in. I just thought his speech on the 1966 Public Works Appropriations Bill was more significant.

Roy Blount adores Jimmy Carter because they are both Georgians. I do not because I am a Georgian. He thinks Jimmy Carter's election ennobled what he calls Crackro-Americans. "We ain't trash no more!" his brother-in-law hollered when Jimmy Carter was nominated. That was the right note, says Blount. Actually his brother-in-law is from East Texas, but that's a quibble. All regional sociologists agree that East Texas is quite Georgian—better than South Georgia but worse than North Georgia. Anyway, ennobled may be the wrong word. What Blount says the election of Jimmy Carter was was "vindication" of a people who "have blithely been called rednecks, Crackers, white trash, Snopeses, and peckerwoods" for years. "Our people" had finally produced a presidential persona who in 1980 as in 1976 was superior to Ronald Reagan, John Anderson, and Ted Kennedy and who "still hasn't caused any shooting anywhere," a noble, adorable accomplishment last achieved by Herbert Hoover.

But the way I look at it is that "our people" are now being blamed for Carteresque (and Lance-esque and Jordan-esque and Jody Powell-esque) failures that are the result not of Georgian attributes but of the personal, individual shortcomings of their perpetrators. Let's face it. The Carter administration has given Crackers a bad name. Even in Georgia. The voters of Georgia just

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showed their disgust with Georgia pols by defeating a Talmadge for the first time in 38 years—voting for a Republican to represent them in the U.S. Senate (for the first time since Reconstruction) whose sole qualification is that he was born and raised in Indiana! The last non-native Georgian elected to the Senate down there was born in Ireland in 1840. You think this is a joke? It isn't. I'm told by serious political journalists and academics in Atlanta that Talmadge was winning till he attacked his opponent as "a carpetbagger." "Oh? He's not a Georgian? Let's vote for him," everybody said.

As a rule even good campaign biographies about successful candidates quickly vanish. My *Spiro Agnew's America* is still required reading in the history of Maryland course at the University of Maryland, but that is an exception. I am told the students get quite a chuckle out of the chapter on Ted and Judy's noble struggle to make ends meet on his salary. Which brings me to the real thing about Blount's book. It is *funny*. He is a Cracker Woody Allen, and he is funniest when he digresses from Carter and politics and government. Most of his stories are too long and too scatological to be quoted in context in a review of this length for a family-oriented journal. Here's a clean short one:

I once talked to a man in a Southern truck stop who claimed that his father had "left all his money, and his body, to Sammy Davis Jr. He figured it would p--s everybody off; including Sammy Davis Jr. What was Sammy Davis Jr. going to do with \$1,700 and a shriveled up old white man? Whereas we could have used the money. Course we overthrew it and Sammy Davis Jr. didn't even enter into it. But the lawyers charged \$2,400.

Blount is funny when he doesn't digress, too. I think this explanation of how Carter got elected in the first place makes as much sense as anything Roger Mudd ever said and is a lot more entertaining:

One interpretation is that Satan or Godless Communism or the Trilateral Commission or the Bavarian Illuminati or whatever you want to call it said, "Hey! here's something we could do. Take some poor son of a bitch from Georgia and make him President." . . . So find a Georgia Candidate. A Georgia Candidate with a proudly no-account Georgia brother. A Georgia Candidate whose Georgia press relations man has the same first name as the boy in "The Yearling" and is actually more flip publicly than the press. A Georgia Candidate whose top Georgia lieutenant has the same last name as a holy river and is likely to take a few sips and act childish. A Georgia

Candidate whose key black supporter is a Georgian who wears nice suits and says things like, "When the lights go out, folks will steal." A Georgia Candidate whose Georgia banker friend pulls so-called money out of the big city air (where the Power wants to keep it) and turns it into liberal, actually spendable confederate credit for his neighbors in Calhoun. Take a bunch of Georgians like that and let them "run the country." . . . The time when nobody in the world knows how to administer America would be the

time when Georgians get a chance at it.

Funny, insightful, but sure to be taken as *defensive* by most Americans. And wrong. The last part I mean. Most Americans do *not* believe the answer to the question Why Not the Best? in re 1977-1981 is that "nobody in the world" knows how to do a good job in the White House. Most Americans (or at least a great many, according to all the pollsters)

believe the greatest man ever to come out of Plains, Georgia, and his ilk were just not very competent.

Roy Blount, Jr. is the most talented campaign biographer since Lew Wallace, who celebrated his fellow Indianan Benjamin Harrison with *Life of Ben Harrison by the Author of Ben Hur*, but not even he can overcome what his idol has done to the reputation of Georgians. □

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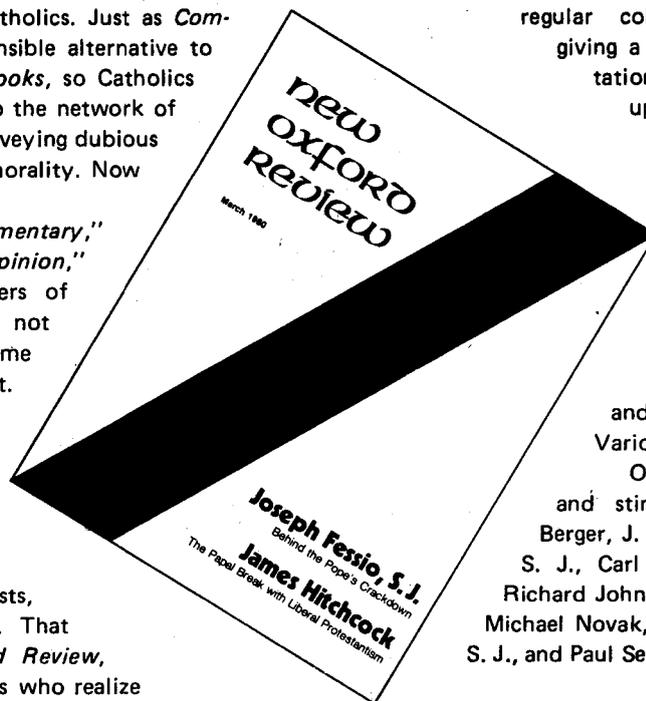
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EDITORIAL

(continued from page 5)

course not, but he had packed his government with the champions of every New Age cause. There were the famous like Dr. Peter Bourne, Andy Young, and Midge Costanza. Then there were the deeply committed like Sam Brown, Joan Claybrook, and in foreign policy every McGovernite not then employable by a rock band.

Today ingrates like Jack Newfield earnestly declare, "We must understand that the main reason Carter was defeated was because he was an incompetent *conservative* president." But the facts put the donkey's tail on Newfield once again. As an Associated Press story in January demonstrated, "Jimmy hired outside agitators and made them inside agitators." In the words of Sam Brown, once the organizer of the Vietnam Moratorium and Eugene McCarthy's 1968 campaign, Jimmy "trained a whole generation, which will be back." More than 50 public interest pests from the Nader camorra were given powerful government positions under the Wonderboy. The regulations, the lawsuits, the general asininity brought to government by them should be a matter of pride with New Age liberals.

Yet the oily Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

is emphatic: "What the voters repudiated in 1980 was not liberalism but the miserable result of the conservative economic policies of the last half-dozen years." Arthur has apparently forgotten the huge growth in regulations, in transfer payments, in infringements upon personal liberty. This was progress! He has also forgotten the glorious birth of the Department of Education and the Department of Energy, the violent struggles to create a Consumer Protection Nanny, and a Department of Natural Resources. There were the threats against the corporations. There were CETA grants, food stamps; onward, ever onward. Arthur gives Jimmy a bum rap.

Perhaps Arthur is angered that Jimmy did not go far enough. After all he never tried wage and price controls. Then too, there is the discomfort of being associated with such an obvious mountebank. Yet he can relax; most New Age liberals are mountebanks. Surely Arthur does not believe in the egalitarian hallucination and all the ancillary fantasies that go with it. Finally, Arthur may be distraught over the great historic fact of the Carter Administration. Under the Wonderboy practically every New Age prescription—certainly every foreign policy prescription—simply blew up.

In foreign policy the New Age liberals' insistence on accomodation,

legalism, negotiations, "openness," disarmament, and so forth was greeted by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian barbarism, the proxy wars in Africa, growing turbulence in Central America, and the fissures in NATO. In the end Cy Vance was heard sniffing over SALT's demise, despite the clear evidence that SALT had not sweetened the Soviet paranoiacs nor halted their vast arms buildup, the most massive peacetime buildup in history. The Iranian barbarism put the lie to all the New Age liberals' guff about restraint, understanding, and Third-World innocence. The ghastly holocaust in Southeast Asia showed what hollow and perverse guff it had always been.

In domestic policy the gigantic costs of the New Age's programs for perfect justice, perfect safety, perfect dreaminess, grew and impoverished the citizenry. The tax burden rose. So did unemployment. So did inflation. Hockey fans might call this the presidential hat trick. No other president had accomplished it in this century. Not even Herbert Hoover.

Here was the age of the little scamp and the great denial. The scamp clawed his way to the White House mouthing bromides he never understood. His New Age coconspirators first denied that anything was

amiss and then denied any responsibility for the crash. It has been one of the greatest acts of denial in the twentieth century. Southeast Asia is not their fault. Our economy is not their fault. Iran is not their fault. Our diminished place in a dangerous world is not their fault. It is all of a piece with the whole thrust of their thought, which in its maundering about a sexless society, a sunny egalitarian utopia, is a colossal and affecting denial of reality.

The Wonderboy, of course, did not believe in reality either. With pluck and bathos he talked his way into Lincoln's House. He talked his way into Christian saintliness. He talked his way into greatness. In time he was a patron of the arts, fluent in Spanish, a jogger and skier. One wonders. When he collapsed during that foot race or when he fell from his skis, did he learn anything about the difficulty of things? I doubt it. During his whole bizarre regime, as the dollar sank and the Russians marched, there emanated from him the sense that nothing really mattered. Nothing beyond himself was real. There was no Iran, no Southeast Asia, no Russian military buildup. As the Wonderboy's now shrunken and anile figure departs 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, it is my judgment that he will remain the same insufferable ass. Creatures like Jimmy never learn. □

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

America on War and Diplomacy

I congratulate Stephen Rosen and Bob Tyrrell on a remarkable—and remarkably important—symposium in the November *American Spectator*. I fully agree that a ruthless reexamination of our foreign-cum-defense policy has been our highest priority for years; that it has been avoided like the plague by people terrorized or traumatized by the word "Vietnam"; and that we must undertake the task now, on a crash basis, or (quite literally) die.

May I raise two points—one small but important, the other large—and also important, I think.

The small point: the use of the words "liberal" and "conservative" in relation to foreign policy. In my view, they have no place in the vocabulary of the subject. "Liberal" and "conservative" have significant denotations in political and social theory (freedom versus order; tradi-

tion versus change, etc.). Those denotations have nothing to do with the use of force or coercion in international affairs. Foreign and defense policy can be prudent or reckless; wise or foolish; realistic or illusionist; aggressive or defensive. But it cannot be liberal or conservative. By every meaningful index, Henry Jackson is a "liberal," as Paul Douglas and Dean Acheson were.

My second point is more fundamental. What I miss in the symposium

is any consideration of what seems to me the central issue: Is there any criterion short of the rule of the Charter of the United Nations which could tell us when we and our Allies have to oppose the international use of force?

—Eugene V. Rostow
Yale University Law School

Stephen Rosen replies:

I have no substantive quarrel with Professor Rostow's rejection of the

words "liberal" and "conservative" in relation to foreign policy. Intellectually, he is right. In practice, however, men like Jesse Helms and Barry Goldwater are tolerably distinguishable from men like George Ball and George McGovern. Both groups represent positions that are flawed. The purpose of the symposium was to go beyond both and develop the ideas of Acheson, Jackson, and others to create operational foreign and defense policies for the 1980s.

Developing a general criterion for the use of American force is much harder. We all have thought a great deal about this but have failed to come up with anything more profound than the conclusion that American intervention should be decided on a case by case basis, with due regard given to the military, ideological, diplomatic, and domestic political costs that will be borne.

