

measures. It costs just \$25,000 a year to build a prison cell and keep a prisoner in it—a \$405,000 “profit” for society per prisoner per year. “Communities are paying far more by releasing repeat offenders than by expanding prison capacity,” concluded the Justice Department’s analysis.

Another Justice Department program begun in 1983 indicates we can identify criminal psychopaths as young as their thirteenth birthday, and suggests the number of these hardcore predators may be surprisingly low. Justice persuaded twenty cities to install a “Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program” (SHOCAP) in which police, schools, welfare and probation workers, and prosecutors pool their information and find and focus on “the baddest of the bad” youngsters. While criteria vary, generally three or more arrests before the eighteenth birthday will cause authorities to look hard, and then based on how serious and how early the young-

ster’s offenses are, he may be tagged a SHO. Then he gets priority attention from probation authorities, and if he is arrested anew, police and prosecutors give him special attention. The object is to stop the juvenile-delinquency revolving door and make the system do what it is theoretically supposed to do, but never has—as Rita Kramer’s book so infuriatingly demonstrates. The window of opportunity for dealing with the serious delinquent is only five years, from his thirteenth to his eighteenth birthday. Juvenile criminal records alone rarely permit identification until he is well into his crime career, but if his school performance and home situation are included, the age at which chronics are identified can be moved up several years, and possibly to the thirteenth birthday, RAND Corporation research indicates. And after their third offense, the system ought to put them behind bars for a while—a significant while.

Robert Heck, who monitors

SHOCAP for the Office of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control, reports the numbers consistently run about 1.6 to 1.9 percent of all juveniles arrested, or eighteen to twenty-five youngsters per 100,000 population. (The largest of the twenty cities is Jacksonville, with 658,000.) At twenty-five per 100,000, out of 245 million Americans we would have 61,250 SHOs between their fourteenth and eighteenth birthdays. Putting them all behind bars permanently after the third offense would be an easily affordable and quite cheap way to cut a huge chunk out of our atrocious crime rates. Oxnard, California, for example, found that after a concentrated effort to get its SHOs off the street, violent crimes dropped 38 percent in 1987, more than double the drop in the next best California city, while most other cities experienced increases.

Yes and no. That’s about all we can do, given present knowledge. But some leading criminologists and psychologists suggest we may be close to developing methods for identifying potential psychopaths as early as their third year, and for diverting them from lives of predatory violence. A promising research program by Ohio State criminologist Simon Dinitz and others at the Ohio penitentiary was scrubbed as a result of civil libertarian hysterics in the early 1970s. Ditto another research plan in 1984 by USC’s Mednick to administer a battery of psychological and neurological tests to Los Angeles delinquents at the time of their first contact with police; bureaucrats in the Reagan Justice Department inspired a couple of vicious Jack Anderson columns that portrayed Mednick’s proposal as a lunatic “Cuckoo’s Nest” mind control plot.

So the time couldn’t be riper for bold leadership in Washington to launch high priority research on the perplexing problem of early identification and treatment of the criminal psychopathic personality. □

Are we, then, at a hopeless dead end where we can only “lock ‘em up and throw the key away?”



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THE BODY POLITIC
Victor Gold & Lynne Cheney/St. Martin's Press/\$15.95

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Heretofore my favorite satire of the American democratic zoo has been Henry Adams’s *Democracy*. However, when the lively mind of Lynne Cheney, the duly appointed head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, combined with the mind of the incomparable Vic Gold, Adams’s spot atop my chart was bound to be threatened. In *Democracy* Adams brings us the squalor of the political process. In *The Body Politic* Cheney & Gold bring us the laughter. *The Body Politic* is an absorbing satirical roman à clef whose action takes place somewhere in the immediate future, allowing its authors to comment mordantly on the present and to hoot down all the pomposity and imbecility that they see around them. Thus *The Body Politic* can be read for entertainment and for instruction into the foolishness not only of Washington politics but also of contemporary society.

Our narrator is Frank Lee, press secretary to Stewart Bullock Vanderclive, Vice President of the United States, the richest politician in America, a charm-

ing rogue whose death during an adulterous exercise with a media cutie will put many of us in mind of another rich Vice President who also died volupt in the saddle. Lee is a Washington type. Essentially he is a P.R. flack, and in recent times such creatures have made more history than generals, statesmen, or even socialites. As the paradigmatic flack, Lee is immensely clever. He is astoundingly energetic. What is more, however, he is somewhat the milksop.

Now his hour is at hand. This is the tale of how chaotic events have rendezvoused behind mere Frank Lee, summoning him to join with Regis Strong, the President’s chief of staff, to delude the press corps, the political establishment, the entire nation, the world! It was the Washington flack’s greatest moment. Vice President Bully Vanderclive has suddenly and unexpectedly assumed room temperature and Lee sees his opportunity: “It was simply this: blind flackery. Strong had it right. Dealing with the media—manipulation, smoke and mirrors—that’s my specialty, my mission in life. Even an alter ego has an ego of his own. So I couldn’t, never in a million election quadrennials, have resisted the supreme

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gambit. To shape Bully Vandercleve's image and cosmetize his foibles while he was alive had been a challenge. But to cover up his nonexistence for two entire weeks . . . *that* would be an exploit."

The vast undertaking was essential to the President's re-election hopes. But it presented problems. "For a Vice President of the United States, the trick to being alive—so far as the public and news media are concerned—is either to make a gaffe or stir a controversy." Lee was equal to the challenges. So harrowing are the gaffes and so inflamed the controversies confected by Lee that eventually Bully becomes a more popular presence on the ticket than the President. By now the President, who has not seen Bully in weeks, is convinced that his running mate is crazy. He has not been informed of Bully's death. But running with an insane Vice President does not daunt him. As he puts it in the Washington can-do style, "We'll just have to live with it."

Cheney & Gold have heaved up a riotous tale peopled with many of Washington's real people. One of the pleasures of the book is deciding who is who. Who in real life, for instance, is the thug Deutsch, special assistant to White House Chief of Staff Regis Strong, and who is Strong? Who is the sententious columnist Jeremiah Sage, and is there a "Houlihan Show" squalling from the idiot box today? Political connoisseurs will have a feast identifying the targets of Cheney & Gold's ridicule.

They will also savor such lines as the

P.R. flack's apothegm for felons, "Confession is good for the image," or the attorney general's exculpatory description of the ruse to cover up the Vice President's death as an "exigency of state." And forget not this memorable piece of campaign oratory: "They talk drivel, while values shrivel. They obfuscate, while problems percolate. They dither, while young dreams wither." What pol in real life spills forth that kind of bosh?

Then there are the immensities that Cheney & Gold force us to meditate upon; for instance, who is more important to the governance of this great country today—the statesmen, so-called, or their press hacks? And who presents the civilizing hand of the hack with a more arduous job—the political candidate who is robust and alert or the candidate who is at peace in the clutch of rigor mortis? After reading *The Body Politic*, you will have a firmer sense of the condition of the Republic and you will have had a few hundred laughs.

But some of you are going to protest that I am gilding the lily for the National Correspondent of this very journal. Well, have you ever been dissatisfied with one of Gold's pieces for us? Truly he is one of the most amusing writers under the American sun, and he is possessed of a vast breadth of knowledge, an original wit, and an elegant style. With Cheney along for counsel on the natural instincts of the fairer sex in politics, he and his colleague have written a rollicking and instructive political satire that will satisfy the taste of every *American Spectator* spectator. □

THE FACTS: A NOVELIST'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Philip Roth/Farrar Straus Giroux/\$17.95

David Gurevich

It is unrealistic to expect Philip Roth to entitle his book The Facts and then to open it with "I was born . . ." Roth's notion of "Just the facts, ma'am" consists in preambing the book with a letter to the hero of his last four novels, Nathan Zuckerman, in which he asks Zuckerman's opinion on the manuscript of The Facts. This reviewer could not resist the temptation to follow Roth's format . . .

(Caveat Emptor: those who expect

David Gurevich, a New York writer, is the author of Travels with Dubinsky and Clive (Viking).

this book to be filled with celebrity poop will be disappointed. Although it was excerpted in Vanity Fair, it's not that kind of book.)

Dear Roth, I never shared the skepticism of the "enough already" variety that many felt toward your coming autobiography. I just never saw any reason for you to divulge *the facts*. There's plenty of young Zuckermans around to deconstruct your texts for their theses, and you'll get your own Peter Manso [that's the guy who compiled 600—or was it 6,000?—pages on Norman

Mailer] before long, too. As for me, your fictions have always been good enough. Who needs *facts*?

You open with a long-winded ten-page letter to Zuckerman, ostensibly to ask his opinion on whether this should be published (as if you didn't know the answer! Since when does a character want his author to write anything but a sequel?), but mostly to reason this book into being. I can't tell you how sorry I am about the physical ordeal and subsequent "crack-up" you went through last year, as well as about your mother's death, but this pre-prologue [there's a "Prologue," too] is so full of banalities and rhetorical questions and insecurity-generated explications that, had it been written by someone else, I would have stopped reading it then and there, illness or no illness. Therapy may be claimed a (weak) reason for one's first book—not the seventeenth.

The book itself, then, is an even 150 pages long: five chapters covering your life from nice Jewish boyhood in Newark to the bestsellerdom of *Portnoy*. Thematically, it would have been unrealistic to expect anything else. And why should you write about slavery or Vietnam, if you feel you still have important things to say about yourself? Your sorties to the world outside never worked quite as well as your internal excavations: Who is remembered better, Lucy Nelson or David Kepesh? Which is quoted more often, *Our Gang* or *Portnoy's Complaint*?

So there is nothing wrong with reliving your charmed kosher childhood. There is heartfelt love and tenderness in the way you describe your father's striving for success in the gentile-dominated world of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, or your mother's innate sense of decorum—or even the loving care that they never failed to give you. By now you've calmed down enough to describe it without the exclamation marks of *Portnoy's Complaint*.

The glow of Newark *gemütlichkeit*, of baseball and bagels, follows you to Bucknell College, where you get the first inkling of your Big Themes: Jew vs. Gentile in modern America, and, of course, Women—*shiksas*, actually. When it comes to nice Jewish girls, all you do is bemoan having ignored Gayle Milman. Now, there was a true free spirit—yet how do you know it would have turned out differently from the way it did with Polly, your first *shiksa*?

By '56, you're on the fast track, your prayers answered one by one: your stories are acclaimed, you teach at the University of Chicago, and you sport "a Brooks Brothers University Shop suit." You've come a long way from the sealskin coat that your Mom used to wrap you in. To be your own man, just

one thing is missing: a woman who would not merely be Aryan to her toes, but who would be a "victim, a dispossessed refugee from a sociobiological background to which my own was deemed . . . subservient." So, parity with *goyim* was not enough; you needed to be superior, too—and you got it in spades. Josie the waitress, the battered divorcee, the mother of two (taken from her by force, she maintains)—were you listening to the heartbeat of America or to the voice of your own liberal guilt?

The entanglement—brief happiness, miserable marriage, and a bitter battle for divorce—lasted twelve long years. There is little about it that students of yours have not read before, in *My Life as a Man* and elsewhere. (You seem generous to your exegesis by supplying copious margin notes: the episode of you and Polly discovered in bed by the landlady was used in *When She Was Good*, you say; the one with the faked pregnancy test, in *My Life as a Man*; but it's all a game on your part, as they'll learn at the end.)

Both in volume and in intensity, Josie bullies her way into the limelight, and eventually there comes a dreaded moment when even the most devoted fan of yours will join the skeptics and cry out, "Enough already!" Don't you find poetic justice in the fact that, long before her lawyers bled you to death, you yourself helped her in hounding her first husband? And no matter how evil she was (the combination of redundant evidence and the stridency of your tone does not serve you well, any judge

FOR ALL THE WIT, GRACE, AND WISDOM LACKING IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTION...

Turn to the newly collected writings of Eugene McCarthy, "the poetic Isaiah whose plain literacy puts many other politicians to shame" (N.Y. Times).

Brilliant, shrewd, witty, his latest book is just what its title intimates—and just what the campaign needs.

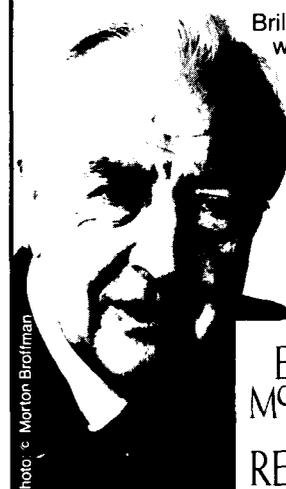


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