

appeal of Communism? I doubt it. The same motives that led certain people to look to Communism to improve the situation of the masses in the Soviet Union and China still generate support for Communist-led movements in various less-developed countries. Utopian socialism remains a live force in the Third World, if not

in the West. But once in power, the utopians, as Marx anticipated, turn into oppressive authoritarian rulers of impoverished societies. The people continue to suffer as much as, or often more than, in the past. Their rulers, who purport to believe they are serving the people's interests, are more inclined to use terror to foster

these interests than are those who are only concerned with maintaining power. The regimes of Salazar, Franco, and the Greek colonels could give way to democratic ones because they were reactionary and self-interested rather than revolutionary. Communists may not yield power, because they believe they represent

historic truth and virtue, much like the Nazis.

The best we can do is to try to make society better; it will never be perfect. Those who seek Utopias are the true villains, and this is as true for leftists as it is for rightists. The bad can be made much worse. The ideal is the enemy of the good. □



CLOSING TIME

If you have never lived in New York, only visited it, there is still a good chance you ate at Lüchow's, and a good chance you didn't much like it, at least as far as food is concerned.

For Lüchow's—founded in 1882, and moving uptown to new quarters this year—had become, in its old age, something perilously close to a tourist trap: one of those New York restaurants like Mama Leone's, or Joe's Pier 52, which specialize in high prices, indifferent food, and hectic service, and which manage year after year to pay the rent because of their famous names and the unwariness of visiting bumpkins.

To that state had Lüchow's almost come—almost, not quite. For even in its nonagenarian decadence, it offered a handful of splendid dishes, unobtainable elsewhere—saddle of venison, which melted in the mouth from the consistency of filet mignon to the consistency of zabaglione, with lingonberries, sour cream, and chestnut purée on the side; goose, served in chunks that seemed all bone, but what wasn't was worth the work; and of course beer—chiefly draft beer, in liter *Seidels*, though my favorite was *Berlinerweisser*, a kind of beer cocktail which started with a puddle of raspberry syrup in a fat, round glass, to which was added a bottle of pale, almost tasteless ale. It sounds like toothpaste and Seven Up, looked nauseating, and tasted wonderful.

So, even at the end, it was possible to go to Lüchow's without feeling swindled or sickened. And yet finally you didn't go to eat; you went to go.

Whittaker Chambers went there as

a teenager, taken by an older woman, a neighbor and mentor, "from [whom] I got my German, in fact, all my languages, my Europe, and much else."

... a sense of history between the World Wars [Chambers wrote years later]. ... the soldiered platform at Duren, the train running for miles with the smiling Senegalese holding their machine guns on it from the overheads, Nazis, Communists, the fall of nations, a wedge of wall standing above what had been St. Mihiel. I didn't start out to write this. But Lüchow's made me think of it.

But Chambers's associations were idiosyncratic. For the decades which gave Lüchow's the ambiance it so jealously preserved were not the tumultuous twenties and thirties, but the spacious *fin-de-siècle*. H.L. Mencken, another patron, remembered a meal with the music critic James Huneker:

We sat down to luncheon at one o'clock; I think it must have been at Lüchow's, his favorite refuge and rostrum to the end. At six, when I had to go, the waiter was hauling in his tenth (or was it twentieth?) *Seidel* of Pilsner, and he was bringing to a close *prestissimo* the most amazing monologue. ... Berlioz and the question

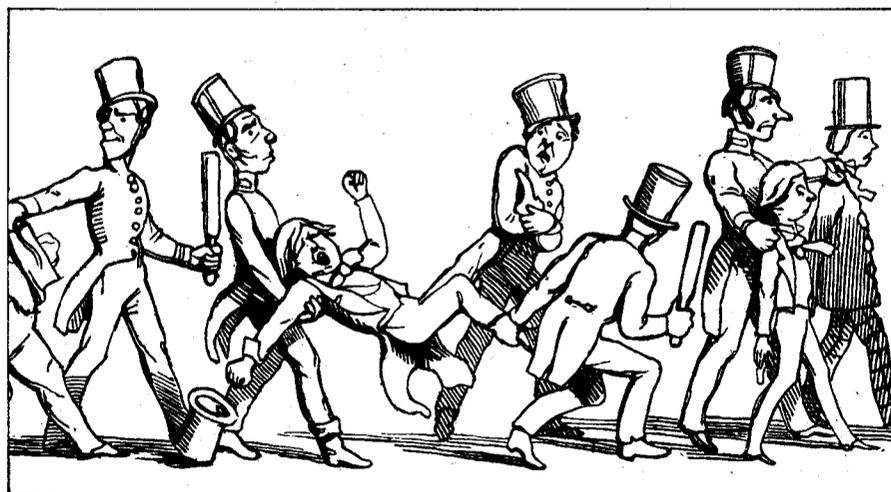
of the clang tint of the viola ... why Nietzsche had to leave Sils Maria between days in 1887 ... the precise topography of the warts of Liszt ... what to drink when playing Chopin ... whether a girl educated at Vassar could ever really learn to love ... what George Moore said about German bathrooms ... the genuine last words of Walt Whitman ...

Lüchow's stood at the intersection of 14th Street and Irving Place, in a pair of red brick townhouses, with balconied windows and trim—scallops and other doodads—painted to look gilded. Just inside the door, a thoughtful management placed a warning to the fainthearted in the form of Diamond Jim Brady's scales. Brady, a robber baron and philanthropist (he endowed the James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute at Johns Hopkins) would be considered bulimic by today's standards, but in fact he followed a regimen, which the scales helped enforce. Seating himself to a Lüchow's dinner, he would position his stomach four inches from the table top, and stop when they touched; as he left, he would weigh himself to make sure he

had not exceeded 350 pounds. A typical Brady repast is said to have consisted of several dozen oysters, half a dozen broiled crabs, double turtle soup, six or seven lobsters, two orders of terrapin, two ducks, steak, vegetables, pastries, a two-pound box of candy, and a gallon of orange juice. Nor was he unique: August Lüchow, the founder, required four waiters to hoist him upstairs to his room by meal's end.

Next came an anteroom, a living room, really, having no discernible purpose except the display of paintings—all in ornate frames, and all in execrable taste, though that, and the profusion in which they were hung, was their charm. Last, the main dining room, with room for five hundred if there was room for one; nooks and cul-de-sacs scattered here and there; mirrored walls and dark wood paneling; a thirty-foot ceiling and skylight; in Christmas season, the largest indoor tree you'd ever seen, artificial (which was a minus), but made in Oberammergau (which made it plus again); and live music, a battle of the bands, no less, a string trio in white tie switching off with an oompah band in Alpine caps and *Lederhosen*, stumping from table to table and blaring brassily. A night at Lüchow's was like dining in a time capsule—the nineteenth century in the overripe, overstuffed, underexercised flesh.

Demographics is supposed to have done Lüchow's in. When it was founded, the east side of 14th Street was the double heart of the theater district, and the German community. The Germans left decades ago, without a trace; worse, so did the theaters. The immediate neighborhood slowly became nondescript,



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seedy. Con Edison's headquarters, kitty corner from the lonely restaurant, gives the block stability, but no life past five o'clock, and what life there is is mostly low. Union Square, where the nearest subways debark, teems with entrepreneurs in controlled substances. Every weekend young voids with dayglo hair and leather wardrobes flock to the Palladium to have their eardrums punctured. Every night, alcoholics without the excuse of youth stumble in and out of Glancy's bar. One door down, you can have your palm read. One door further down, you can dine at Burger King—or could, till it closed (the current franchise-lessor is Arby's).

Yet ultimately the demographic explanation does not satisfy. Like all but the worst spots in Manhattan, Lüchow's beleaguered home was only a few streets away from wholesomeness, even elegance. Four blocks north, Pete's Tavern, which O. Henry patronized—the booth where he wrote "The Gift of the Magi" being carefully marked—has made the transition from a workingman's watering hole to a resort of the chi-chi. Two blocks north of that lies Gramercy Park, fenced, private, as sleek as Union Square is grim (one of the surrounding townhouses is reportedly being offered for a cool \$2 million). Beyond this urban oasis, life stirs. Slowly but surely the loft-buying middle class is creeping down Park Avenue South, and every Saturday during the warm months, the pushers cede the northern fringe of Union Square to a farmer's market. Even 14th Street at its worst is only unsightly, not seriously unsafe. New Yorkers put up with a lot of heterogeneity in pursuit of what they want.

No, the real reason for Lüchow's demise (and to leave its old premises was to seal its demise, whatever uptown reincarnation it seeks) was that New Yorkers had ceased to want it. It succumbed to the inexorable grinding of fashion. We no longer lunch from one to six, or start meals with twenty-four oysters and end them with a gallon of orange juice; and we have lost interest in even such ghosts of old habits as Lüchow's offered. (Jimmy Carter, it is true, inveighed against the three-martini lunch, and the electorate repudiated him; but if he had attacked the twenty-Seidel lunch, who would have said him nay?) We are still gluttons, but our arteries have replaced our gullets as objects of concern; we pamper our bodies with exercise. When we eat out (and that means you, *hypocrite lecteur*), we go Chinese, or Indian, or something equally

refined and parsimonious; and if an expense account meal ticket in the Big Apple comes our way, we load up on Bloody Marys and head for proto-nouvelle cuisine at the Four Seasons. Afterwards, we jog.

The owners have said they will take Diamond Jim Brady's scales uptown

with them. They might as well donate them to the Museum of Natural History. Meanwhile, the Landmarks Commission is making a move to preserve the Lüchow's interior. Who else could possibly make use of it, I cannot imagine; but capitalism is ingenious, and I shall hope. Perhaps new owners will hang ferns and serve quiche. Perhaps they will install

video games (PAC-MAN would be appropriate). Before that happens, I want to go one last time—indeed, this eulogy has been nothing but an elaborate pretext. Unfortunately, the venison will not be in season; but I will have *Berlinerweisser*, perhaps three, in honor of the former President. On the way out, if no one's looking, I'll weigh myself. □

In earlier epochs, a critic tormented only the writers...



Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world—though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst—the cant of criticism is the most tormenting.

Laurence Sterne

In ours, he torments everybody.

Recently a middle-aged father published a book about his sordid adventures in massage parlors, wife-swapping communes and the worlds of easy sex and prostitution. The critics were grateful to Gay Talese. *Newsweek* said that "Talese's research has an awesome solidity about it." *Vogue* was proud of "... Gay's triumph over the puritanical strictures of Ocean City, strictures that so inhibited him that he didn't even masturbate until his second year in college." And the *Chicago Tribune*—a newspaper respectable primarily in its own eyes—turned its enthusiasm into promotion by running excerpts of *Thy Neighbor's Wife* for Chicagoland families to read.

The state of literary criticism today strongly confirms Laurence Sterne's warning: the cant of criticism is the most tormenting. To make things worse, the modern media have transformed the critic into a midwife of mass consciousness. Regardless of what we wish to know or ignore, we live with cultural events and their consequences—as interpreted by the modern critic. Sadly, what passes for "cultural criticism" in *Time*, *Esquire*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Ladies Home Journal*, et al., amounts to an elitist, moral shoddiness.

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In *Chronicles of Culture*, we feel there is a need for a counterpoise to those

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The first section of *The Kennedy Imprisonment* is called "Sex," and it establishes the psychological viewpoint on which the whole book is based.

Joseph P. Kennedy, the founding father, was a tireless womanizer. He always had a beautiful secretary ready at hand. At Kennedy's invitation, his Hollywood bedmate, Gloria Swanson, accompanied him and his wife on an ocean liner to Europe. He took his sons' girlfriends out to dinner, quizzed them closely about their personal lives, invariably demanded and got a goodnight kiss, and sometimes tried to become more familiar. Openly proud of his skirt chasing, he dared his sons to try and outscore him. "The Kennedy boys," writes Garry Wills, "were expected by their father to undertake a competitive discipline of lust."

John F. Kennedy pursued more movie queens than his father did. And whereas old Joe had not hesitated to entertain his mistresses at the family home at Hyannis Port, Jack trumped that piece of audacity by making love to Judith Campbell Exner in the White House. The father was sexually bold, but his second son was bolder, while his fourth son simply threw caution to the wind. In the words of one of Senator Edward M. Kennedy's congressional friends, "I have told him ten times, 'Ted, you're acting like a fool. Everybody knows wherever you go. . . . Jack could smuggle girls up the back way of the Carlyle Hotel. But you're not nearly as discreet as you should be.' He looks down with a faint smile and says, 'Yeah, I guess you're right.' But he never listens." Although by comparison with his brothers Robert F. Kennedy was a Puritan, Wills believes that Bobby's daring river trips and mountaineering exploits were a substitute means of showing his father that he, too, was a chip off the old block.

"An Adlai Stevenson with balls," Joseph Alsop is reputed to have said of President Kennedy. In any event, such language characterized the obsessive masculinity of the New Frontier. Courage was "ballsiness"

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THE KENNEDY IMPRISONMENT:
A MEDITATION ON POWER
Garry Wills / Atlantic-Little, Brown and Co. / \$14.95

Kenneth S. Lynn

and tight situations such as the Cuban missile crisis were "nut-grabbing time." The ruthlessness that had characterized Old Joe's wheeling and dealing as a financier was translated by Jack and Bobby, says Wills, into a fascination with the macho toughness of guerrilla warriors and the disdainful coolness of Ian Fleming's 007. Enemies in the Kennedy scheme of things were never forgiven, while old friends who made the mistake of thinking for themselves were cut off without a qualm. Arthur Krock, for instance, had served Joe Kennedy for decades, and as the boys grew to manhood he took a special interest in Jack. He catered to Jack's sexual needs by introducing him to a toothsome Scandinavian blonde named Inga Arvad; he supplied Jack's first book, *Why England Slept*, with what little

style it possesses; and he successfully campaigned, against very considerable odds, for the awarding of a Pulitzer Prize to *Profiles in Courage*. But because Krock was bitterly opposed to the 1960 Democratic platform statement on civil rights, he refused to endorse Jack for President. Once in office, Jack was not too busy to arrange for attacks on Krock to run in *Newsweek*. "Tuck it to Krock," he urged one of the magazine's editors, Ben Bradlee. "Bust it off in old Arthur. He can't take it, and when you go after him he folds."

For the most part, though, JFK was not nearly as hard-nosed a President as Wills makes him out to have been. Despite the fact that the rhetoric of his Inaugural had proclaimed America's willingness to pay any price to enhance the cause of freedom, Kennedy withheld air cover

at the Bay of Pigs, thereby dooming the effort to overthrow Castro. He spoke of his ability to put an end to ancient forms of racial discrimination with the stroke of a pen, but once again he found it easier to speak than to act. He took us into Vietnam "slow and small," rather than "fast and big," which some of his advisers told him was the only means of achieving victory. And in spite of Wills's insistence that the United States, not the Soviet Union, was the aggressor in the Cuban missile crisis (those missiles, Wills erroneously states, were meant only for defense), Kennedy was in fact offering an irrelevant response to a dire threat to American security. For by ruling out an air strike in favor of a blockade, Kennedy failed to come to grips with the problem of the missiles already in the ground in Cuba. As Dean Acheson later observed, the Cuban missile crisis was happily resolved because Khrushchev lost his cool, not because Kennedy's strategy was well conceived.

There are many ways in which analysts of the Kennedy presidency might attempt to account for the timidity that was woven like a yellow thread through the ostentatious aggressiveness of the New Frontier. A psychological explanation is one such possibility, but if that route is followed, then the analyst must be prepared to tell us why Kennedy's brand of leadership struck a responsive chord in the psyches of his followers. Were they, too, caught between self-confidence and self-doubt? And, if so, why? Wills does not even acknowledge the existence of such questions. All he is interested in is the psychology of the Kennedy family. Yet even within this narrow area, *The Kennedy Imprisonment* does not offer us anything like an adequate assessment.

Old Joe Kennedy did not simply dare his sons to be like him. He urged them to fight their own battles—and then helped them to do so. His debilitating interventions in Jack's life alone ranged from rescuing his wartime career in the Navy after it was virtually ruined by the FBI's discovery of his entanglement with Inga Arvad, who had Nazi connections, to arranging for the rewriting and publication of *Why England Slept*, to the mobilization of endless amounts of money and influence in the senatorial contest with the popular Henry Cabot Lodge in 1952. At

