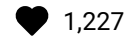


**The Death of Culture: How Lies Killed Books**

A Visit to Hipster Brooklyn

**Dr Naomi Wolf** ✓

Mar 17



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I recently came home from a visit to Hipster Brooklyn.

I had found that Brooklyn — alongside literary Manhattan — was oddly frozen in an amber of denial and silence.

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First, there is that restored state of freedom, that no one will discuss.

I'd wandered the cute little boîtes and trendy underground hand-pulled-noodle postmodern food courts, with mixed emotions.

There were the chic young moms with babies in strollers, both of them breathing freely in the chill just-before-Spring air. There were slouching Millennials, with every demographic likelihood of having been mask-y and COVID-culty, now enjoying their freedom to assemble at will, to flirt and to window-shop, to stroll and to chat and to try on new sweaters in person at Uniqlo.

Many of these folks, no doubt, would have been repelled from 2020 to the present, by people like my brothers and sisters in arms, and by me; as we struggled in the trenches of the liberty movement.

Some of them may have called us anti-vaxxers, extremists, insurrectionists; selfish, “Trumpers,” or whatever other nonsense was the epithet of the day.

Some of them may have wanted to lock down *harder*, and lock us down harder.

My brothers and sisters in the freedom movement, though we lost employment, savings, status and affiliations, fought every day — for these very folks; we fought for everyone; we fought so that some day, these young moms could indeed stroll with their babies, breathing fresh air; so that these slouching Millennials could one day indeed wander at will, not “locked down” still, not “mandated” any longer, and not living in fear of an internment camp.

It was bittersweet, seeing this demographic so chill, so relaxed, so back to “normal” — many of whom had been once so oblivious of, or so actively disrespectful of, the sacrifices we on the outside of society had waged *for* their very freedom.

Who knows where they would be now, if it were not for our combat on their behalf?

Still without their rights regained, like Canada? Still “mandated”, like Canada? Still scared to speak, scared of having bank accounts frozen, scared of losing licenses, scared of being beaten in protests, forbidden to travel without dangerous injections — like Canada?

We are not entirely free again in the US, but we regained many of our freedoms. Not because the evildoers wanted to give them back; but because my brothers and sisters fought hard, strategically, bitterly and furiously, for all of this liberty that I witnessed in front of me, on that almost-spring day on the crowded, tumultuous Fulton Avenue.

It was bittersweet to know that these people would never witness us, or acknowledge what we did for them and their children; let alone thank us; let alone apologize to people like me for the years in which they were just fine with folks such as us banished to the outer edges of society, to eat in the cold streets of New York like animals, or made jobless, or ostracized.

In addition to the dissonance of seeing people who had been perfectly okay with discriminating against the very people who had fought to return to them the liberties they now enjoyed, I suffered a sense of disorientation at realizing that there was a giant cognitive hole in the middle of contemporary culture.

The staffers at the Brooklyn branch of Jackson McNally Bookstore, an independent bookstore which had for years been a stalwart outpost of free-thinking publishing, were still masked, against all reason. I walked in with some trepidation.

Peacefully, faces covered, three years on, they stacked books on the shelves.

I was astonished, as I wandered the well-stocked aisles. Independent bookstores usually reflect the burning issues in a culture at that given time.

But — now — nothing.

It takes about two years to write a book, and about six months to publish one. It was surely time for the new important books from public intellectuals, about the world-historical years through which we had just lived, to appear.

But — no.

In the center of an altar to literate culture, it was as if the years 2020-2023 simply did not exist and had never existed.

This can't be possible, I thought. This all — the “pandemic”, lockdowns, denial of education for children, forced masking, forced vaccinations, “mandates” — a crashed economy — globally — this all, as an aggregate, was of course the most important thing ever to have happened to us as a generation of intellectuals.

I kept on searching the stacks. Nothing.

I checked the Top Ten Nonfiction Books in *Time*.

*None* had to do with the pandemic policies or the “lockdowns” or the mandated mRNA injections into billions of humans. [<https://time.com/6238717/best-nonfiction-books-2022/>]

I surveyed the lanes lined with books, perplexed and saddened.

Surely the wonderful novelists of my generation, astute observers of the contemporary scene — Jennifer Egan, Rebecca Miller — would have written their Great American Novels about the mania that swept over the globe from 2020-2023 — one which provided once-in-a-century fodder for fiction writers?

No — or at least, not yet.

Surely Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, the distinguished nonfiction observer of group dynamics, would have tracked how a psychotic delusion intoxicated nations? [<https://www.amazon.com/Tipping-Point-Little-Things-Difference/dp/0316346624>]?

No, nothing.

Wouldn't Samantha Power, author of *A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide* [<https://www.amazon.com/Problem-Hell-America-Age-Genocide/dp/1455879991>] have exposed the pandemic policies that sent millions of children into starvation unto death?

Nothing.

Of course Michael Eric Dyson, brilliant and brave commentator on race in America, author most recently of *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, would have written an excoriating expose of how pandemic policies in the US drove brown and black children into even greater learning deficits, and drained millions from small business owners of color?

No, nothing at all.

How about Susan Faludi, respected feminist author of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* [<https://www.amazon.com/Backlash-Undeclared-Against-American-Women/dp/0307345424>]? She would have addressed how decades of women's professional advancement were overturned by "lockdown" policies that drove women out of the workforce because someone had to watch the kids stranded at home?

No.

Undoubtedly Robert Reich, longtime champion of working people, author of *The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It* [[https://www.amazon.com/System-Who-Rigged-How-Fix/dp/0593082001/ref=asc\\_df\\_0593082001/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=508977995883&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=1572133417123620107&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9004853&hvtargid=pla-1228214686525&pssc=1](https://www.amazon.com/System-Who-Rigged-How-Fix/dp/0593082001/ref=asc_df_0593082001/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=508977995883&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=1572133417123620107&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9004853&hvtargid=pla-1228214686525&pssc=1)] would have analyzed the greatest wealth transfer in modern history?

Nothing there.

Certainly Michael Moore, author of *Downsize This! Random Threats from an Unarmed American* [<https://www.amazon.com/Downsize-Random-Threats-Unarmed-American/dp/0060977337>], who for decades amplified the voices of working men and women left behind in rustbelt America, would have likewise assailed the flow of wealth in the "pandemic" era from the locked-down, "distanced", forbidden-to-work working class, to tech CEOs and Pharma shills and their oligarch friends?

Nothing to see.

I could go on and on.

From some of the other important public intellectuals whom I know or whom I have followed for decades — and I do not mean to shame anyone needlessly, so I won't name them — there were indeed some new books.

There were books on walks through the city.

There were books on “difficult conversations.”

There were books on growing up with unusual parents.

There were books on how meaningful animals are, and how wondrous is their world.

Public intellectuals produced a lot of new books on eating more vegetables.

The bizarre thing about this moment in culture, is that the really important journalism, and the really important nonfiction books about the history, the racial and gender injustice, the economics, the public policy, of the “pandemic” years — are being written by — non-writers; by people who are trained as doctors, medical researchers, lawyers, politicians, and activists.

And their books are not displayed *or even stocked* in bookstores such as Jackson McNally.

So there is a massive hole in the central thought process of our culture.

The courageous non-writers have stepped in to tell the truth, because the famous writers, for the most part, can't.

Or won't. Or, for whatever reason, didn't.

This is because the public intellectuals are by necessity, for the most part, AWOL to the truth-telling demands of this time.

You cannot be a public intellectual whose work is alive, if you have participated in manufacturing, or even accepting quietly, state-run lies.

The work of the cultural elite of every tyranny, from Nazi Germany to Stalin's Russia, reveals this fact. Participation in lies by the artist, makes the creation of a vibrant cultural text, impossible.

Nazi art is bad art. Socialist-realist Soviet fiction is bad fiction.

Journalism in a tyranny, that is written by state-approved scribes, is always going to be a mess of cliches and obsequiousness that no one wants to read, and that cannot stand the test of time. It vanishes like snow into the cauldron of the future — even as works by the hated, forbidden dissidents who *can and do* tell the truth — the Solzhenitzyns of the time, the Anne Franks — are like diamonds, that cannot be crushed or lost to time.

It is only these that survive.

Because lies embraced our whole culture since 2020, and because public intellectuals for the most part did not stand up to the lies at the time, and because many even participated in the lies (hello, Sam Harris); since horrible things happened to those of us who *did* stand up to the lies — most public intellectuals at this moment *cannot* address the really important events of the recent past.

And from conversations I had with people in liberal-elite publishing, media, education, and the arts — these public intellectuals are being enabled in their silence or distraction or collusion, by a cultural nexus that wants them silent.

The consensus in media-elite land is that no one wants to talk about these issues at all.

“People just want to *move on*,” I keep hearing, in my former haunts in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Don’t *talk* about it.

So this all leads to a weird situation, culturally, now, indeed.

In the world of alt-media independent exiled dissidents, where I live most of the time, we are having the most riveting, important conversations of our lives. This is because we all know civilization itself, and liberty itself, and maybe even the fate of the human race itself, are at stake every day.

In the polite elite-media circles of Brooklyn and New York, to which I returned briefly to dip a toe in the water, people are — *not talking about any of it*.

They are not talking about the enslavement of humanity. They are not talking about young adults dropping dead.

They are talking about fermentation. They are talking about pets. They are talking, endlessly, like stalkers who cannot let it go, about how bad Donald Trump is, down to what he has for dinner in Mar a Lago. [<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/17/style/palm-beach-private-clubs.html>]

*The New York Times* these days has the most boring headlines I have read in my life, and it is for this reason: the truth of our time is toxic to the editors of that newspaper, because they *bathed* in the money of the lies.

“Adam Brody Feels All the Feels

With Surfing, ‘Avatar’ and Cate Le Bon

The “Shazam!” star revives himself with sprinkle doughnuts, Frank Black’s “Teenager of the Year” and daily naps.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/12/movies/adam-brody-shazam.html>

“How Many Friends Do You Really Need?”

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/07/well/live/adult-friendships-number.html>]

“With a Pocket of Shamrocks, Biden Celebrates St Patrick’s Day”

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/17/us/politics/biden-st-patricks-day.html>]

In addition to these cruelly soporific headlines, *The New York Times* is down to running fully imaginary stories that the editors must believe someone somewhere will accept without howling skepticism: “New Data Links Pandemic’s Origins to Raccoon Dogs at Wuhan Market”

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/16/science/covid-wuhan-market-raccoon-dogs-lab-leak.html>].

Then, of course, having committed that journalistic crime, the editors need to run this tragically hilarious sub-headline:

**“What Are Raccoon Dogs?”**

The monogamous, hibernating canids, which are related to foxes, are sold for meat and fur.”

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/17/health/coronavirus-raccoon-dogs.html>].

A formerly great newspaper has run its way through through bats and civet cats, burning its credibility wholesale in a gigantic bonfire of flat-out state-mouthpiece deception and uncorrected assertions for three full years, and is now digging up the specter of raccoon dogs. It is explaining their mating habits to its readers — stop the presses! — even as elsewhere in untouchable-reality-land, Dr Fauci furiously backpedals, trying to avoid charges of crimes against humanity.

A formerly great city of public intellectuals is unable to address current reality and is taking walks. It is as if New York City and all its thought leaders are enchanted, ensorcelled, staring at one another, mouths open, unspeaking, inside of a conceptual snow globe, while all the rest of us ostracized dissidents are carrying on around this frozen spectacle, fighting a hand-to-hand-combat revolution. I sighed, as I left the bookstore, and made my way through the freely moving hipster crowds.

We don't fight for freedom so that we can get credit.

We don't fight for truth because we want a byline.

We do both just because we can't help it.

We do both because our Founders fought to the death so that we ourselves would be free one day.

And we fight so that little children whom we will never live to see, will grow up free.

But it is painful to witness the beating heart of what had been a great culture, stunned and muted in denial, and unable to function intellectually.

I guess we just need to leave the sadly rotting carcass of the establishment culture of lies and denial behind.

I say that with sorrow. I will miss the bookstores, universities, newspapers that I once revered.

I guess we have to follow the voices of the truth-tellers of the moment, to other, surprising, beleaguered campfires.

I guess we need to pitch our tents in new fields, outside the walls of the crumbling, breached, and decadent city.

I guess we need to learn new songs and tell new stories, as we find ourselves alongside other — surprising — fierce, and unbowed, and determined, new comrades in arms.