

May 26, 2018 – CONTINETTI

Matthew Continetti gets his own day today. First his send off for Tom Wolfe.

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That was not what the crowd wanted to hear. A "tidal wave of rude sounds" drowned out Wolfe. But he found an unexpected ally in Grass, who spoke up once more. "For the past hour I have had my eyes fixed on the doors here," he said. "You talk about fascism and police repression. In Germany when I was a student, they came through those doors long ago. Here they must be very slow."

How little our intellectual climate has changed between that evening in the sixties and Wolfe's death on May 14. America's writers, artists, and thinkers, and their media manqué, continue to argue that our civilization is decadent, sexist, racist, torn asunder, on the verge of succumbing to authoritarianism or fascism, the population impoverished, the environment despoiled, the world made worse by our presence. ...

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... The job of counter-intellectuals like Tom Wolfe is to stop intellectuals from ruining things for the rest of us. And turn our eyes toward the Happiness Explosion.

Then Continetti makes fun of our country's europhiliac intellectuals as the search continues for a TrumpSlayer.

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... The list of potential saviors is long. It is also subject to revision. For example, on February 3, 2017, Politico magazine asked, "Will this man take down Donald Trump?" The man in question was then—New York state attorney general Eric Schneiderman, the "slender, slightly built former corporate lawyer, the only son of a New York philanthropist whose last name adorns several city cultural institutions," who also "has a record of going not only after Trump, but going after people now in Trumpworld." And going after women he is dating, according to the New Yorker, whose account of Schneiderman's verbal and physical abuse of girlfriends led to his resignation on the evening of May 7, 2018.

The ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election has dogged the Trump presidency since the beginning and provided multiple opportunities for Trump's critics to speculate, loudly and without any evidence, that he won't survive its outcome. "If true, this CNN report about Russia could destroy Trump's presidency," wrote Alex Shepard of the New Republic in the spring of 2017. The CNN report, published on March 23, 2017, said, "The FBI has information that indicates associates of President Donald Trump communicated with suspected Russian operatives to possibly coordinate the release of information damaging to Hillary Clinton's campaign." It was a bombshell—one that, at this writing, has not been substantiated. ...

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What caught my eye was the place where this article appeared. So desperate are they to overturn the results of the 2016 election, it would seem, that the editors of the Nation are willing—if only grudgingly—to embrace bean counters.

Free Beacon

Jonathan Swift in a White Suit

Tom Wolfe's campaign against intellectual idiocy

by Matthew Continetti



In 1965 Tom Wolfe visited Princeton University for a panel discussion of "the style of the Sixties." The author of *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, published that year, was scheduled to appear alongside Günter Grass, Allen Ginsberg, and Paul Krassner. Grass spoke first. The German novelist's remarks, Wolfe wrote later, "were grave and passionate. They were about the responsibility of the artist in a time of struggle and crisis." And they were crudely dismissed by Krassner. "The next thing I knew," Wolfe wrote, "the discussion was onto the subject of fascism in America."

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How little our intellectual climate has changed between that evening in the sixties and Wolfe's death on May 14. America's writers, artists, and thinkers, and their media *manqué*, continue to argue that our civilization is decadent, sexist, racist, torn asunder, on the verge of succumbing to authoritarianism or fascism, the population impoverished, the environment despoiled, the world made worse by our presence. The chorus of doom and gloom includes the latest issues of both *The Atlantic*, which chastises "[the new American aristocracy](#)" of the "9.9 percent" (the one percent being too exclusive!), and *Time*, which laments "[How Baby Boomers Broke America](#)." And yet, as I write, the unemployment rate is 3.9 percent, per capita disposable income is [at a](#)

[high](#), and according to Gallup more people are satisfied with the direction of the country than at any time [in 13 years](#).

Tom Wolfe has been celebrated for his literary innovations and output, his sartorial panache, his gimlet eye, his unfailing gentility. But his reputation as a Grand Old Man of Letters should not obscure one of his most important themes: the inability of American intellectuals to understand and appreciate their country.

Educated at Washington and Lee University and Yale, Wolfe held a doctorate in American studies and could reference Weber, Veblen, Durkheim, Nietzsche, and Darwin with the best of them. But he resisted membership in the "herd of independent minds," choosing instead to join the ranks of counter-intellectuals who problematized not middle-class society but its critics on campus, in media, and along the radical frontier of the Democratic Party. Wolfe is often overlooked as a counter-intellectual because his method was not polemic but devastating, irresistible satire. He was Jonathan Swift in a white suit.

Wolfe brought low those figures, institutions, and movements intellectuals hold in esteem, while elevating the factors in society that intellectuals typically condescend to or denigrate outright. Radical chic, the Community Action Plan, modern art and architecture, the *New Yorker*, literary fiction, the Victorian Gents of the press, well-meaning politicians, the modern university, and Noam Chomsky were his targets. The Good Old Boys, stock-car racers, naval aviators, astronauts, and Cuban-American cops with machismo were his heroes.



If left-wing intellectuals celebrated a trans-valuation of values that privileged the absurd, the surreal, the deviant, the deranged, and the marginal over bourgeois propriety, steadfastness, patriotism, tradition, hierarchy, and manliness, Wolfe did the opposite. His immersive reporting and wicked pen exposed the pretense and self-delusion of intellectuals as he revealed the heroism and nobility of workers, soldiers, parents, cops, and America herself.

How had American intellectuals lost sight of their native ground? How had they turned into a bunch of anti-Panglosses, forever reminding their readers, viewers, and acolytes that America is the worst of all possible worlds? Wolfe traced this phenomenon back to the aftermath of the First World War. As a result of education, travel, and cultural exchange, our scholars, writers, and thinkers became enamored of European modes of thought and expression over American ones. They drank the anisette—and never looked back.

Wolfe put it this way in the introduction to *Hooking Up* (2000):

American architecture had never recovered from the deadening influence of the German Bauhaus movement of the twenties. American painting and sculpture had never recovered from the deadening influence of various theory-driven French movements, beginning with Cubism early in the twentieth century. In music, the early twentieth-century innovations of George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Duke Ellington, and Ferde Grofé had been swept away by the abstract, mathematical formulas of the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg's influence had faded in the 1990s, but the damage had been done. The American theater had never recovered from the Absurdism of Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, and Luigi Pirandello.

But, above all, there was the curious case of American philosophy—which no longer existed. It was as if Emerson, Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey had never lived. The reigning doctrine was deconstruction, whose hierophants were two Frenchmen, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. They began with a hyperdilation of a pronouncement of Nietzsche's to the effect that there can be no absolute truth, merely many 'truths,' which are the tools of various groups, classes, or forces. From this, the deconstructionists proceeded to the doctrine that language is the most insidious tool of all. The philosopher's duty was to deconstruct the language, expose its hidden agendas, and help save the victims of the American 'Establishment': women, the poor, nonwhites, homosexuals, and hardwood trees.

This displacement of American literature, art, architecture, music, and philosophy by European imports was complete by the end of the Second World War. But U.S. victory over fascism and imperialism did not lead to a renewed appreciation for or interest in American life. On the contrary: The intellectuals attacked America's conformism, its lonely crowds, its organization men in boring winter clothes, its politicians rooting out Communist Party members from government posts. Moreover, the postwar economic boom had expanded the ranks of intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals. No longer was creative output required for highbrow posturing. And the market for societal self-flagellation was immense.

The intellectual had become not so much an occupational type as a status type. He was like the medieval cleric, most of whose energies were devoted to separating himself from the mob—which in modern times, in Revel's phrase, goes under the name of the middle class. ... Moral indignation was the main thing; that, and a certain pattern of consumption. In fact, by the 1960s it was no longer necessary to produce literature, scholarship, or art—or even to be involved in such matters, except as a consumer—in order to qualify as an intellectual. It was only necessary to live *la vie intellectuelle*. A little brown bread in a bread box, a lapsed pledge card to CORE, a stereo and a record rack full of Coltrane and all the Beatles albums from *Revolver* on, white walls, a huge *Dracaena marginata* plant, which is there because all the furniture is so clean-lined and spare that without this piece of frondose tropical Victoriana the room looks empty, a stack of unread *New York Review of Books* rising up in a surly mound of subscription guilt, the conviction that America is materialistic, repressive, bloated, and deadened by its Silent Majority, which resides in the heartland, three grocery boxes full of pop bottles wedged in behind the refrigerator and destined (one of these days) for the Recycling Center, a small, uncomfortable European car—that pretty well got the job done.

Replace the brown bread with gluten-free bran muffins, the CORE pledge with a Bernie bumper sticker, the Beatles albums with Spotify, the *Dracaena marginata* with a rescue beagle mix, and the *New York Review* with *Jacobin*, *n+1*, and *We Were Eight Years in Power* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and you too can qualify as an intellectual today.

Intellectuals emphasize the disparity between the ideal and the actual. What Wolfe did was highlight the difference between what intellectuals say and how intellectuals behave. "Maude Gloves & Madmen, Clutter & Vine" is about the materialism of a writer who makes a living

denouncing materialism. One of Wolfe's cartoons, "The Famous Writer on the College Lecture Circuit," features a turtle-necked beatnik holding forth at the lectern as he contemplates whether to sleep with the blond co-ed or the redhead one. In "Radical Chic" the *nostalgie de la boue* of Leonard Bernstein's houseguests begins to wear thin as the Black Panthers discuss what their revolution might entail.

In lampooning the intellectuals, Wolfe was drawing attention to the fact that they, for all their self-flattery and huffiness, are no less human than the rest of us. And to be human means to be flawed, ignorant, obsessed with status, convinced of a "fiction-absolute" that prioritizes your group above all others, weak, easily swayed by the surrounding culture, and captive to the functions and desires of our bodies. What makes intellectuals special and dangerous is that their capacity for self-delusion, shared by us all, can easily be put in the service of terrible ideologies and destructive politics.

A prophet, I presume, enjoys seeing his prophecies come true, but I have the feeling Nietzsche would have become bored by a hundred years of ... 'the intellectual' ... I can almost hear that hortatory and apostrophic voice of his: How could you writers and academics have settled for such an easy, indolent role—for so long! How could you have chosen a facile snobbery over the hard work, the endless work, the Herculean work of gaining knowledge? I think he would have shaken his head over their ponderous, amateurish theories of cognition and sexuality. I think he would have grown weary of their dogged skepticism, cynicism, irony, and contempt and would have said, Why don't you admit it to me (no one need know—after all, I'm dead): if you must rate nations, at this moment in history your 'accursed' America is the very micrometer by which all others must be measured.

And he would have been right.

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Contentions

[Desperately Seeking Trumpslayer](#)

by Matthew Continetti

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Online activists loved the idea. The #NationalStrike hashtag began to trend on Twitter. David Simon, the television writer, garnered additional publicity when he tweeted, "If you believe in America, show it by refusing to work on the Friday before President's Day, Feb. 17. Let them know." His post was re-tweeted thousands of times.

When the day arrived, protesters gathered in several major cities. They carried signs, chanted slogans. But the strike was a flop. If anyone did refuse to work, no one paid attention. Life went on. Trump, as you may have noticed, remains president.

Yet plenty of Trump's opponents, and the media in which they appear, continue to believe that his resignation is imminent, that some looming insinuation, accusation, revelation, or betrayal is about to drive him from the White House. For these people, Trump is forever on the verge of being delegitimized, laid low, brought down.

Indeed, the phrase "bring down Trump" appears in the headlines again and again, as if the words themselves hold the power to end his reign. Since Trump took office, reporters, editors, and commentators—not to mention the readers who gobble this up—have been searching for a messiah who will herald the end of the 45th presidency, who will save America from itself.

The list of potential saviors is long. It is also subject to revision. For example, on February 3, 2017, Politico magazine asked, "Will this man take down Donald Trump?" The man in question was then—New York state attorney general Eric Schneiderman, the "slender, slightly built former corporate lawyer, the only son of a New York philanthropist whose last name adorns several city cultural institutions," who also "has a record of going not only after Trump, but going after people now in Trumpworld." And going after women he is dating, according to the New Yorker, whose account of Schneiderman's verbal and physical abuse of girlfriends led to his resignation on the evening of May 7, 2018.

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On May 2, 2017, GQ published an interview with Michael Moore headlined, "Michael Moore's Master Plan to Bring Down Donald Trump." Describing Moore's stage show, Scott Meslow wrote, "The Terms of My Surrender is built around a single, provocative question: Can a Broadway show bring down a sitting president?" Yes, singular. Provocative. And absurd. The Terms of my Surrender closed in October 2017.

On June 5, 2017, Lawrence O'Donnell said that, by allowing former FBI director James Comey to testify to Congress, Donald Trump "destroyed his presidency." O'Donnell went on: "The video you're about to see might be the video that we're showing you years from now when we're pinpointing the beginning of the end of the Trump presidency."

The video was of White House press secretary Sarah Sanders telling the public that Trump would not claim executive privilege in relation to Comey. In subsequent months, the former FBI director testified, wrote a book, and embarked on a major publicity tour. Among the things Comey may have "destroyed" in the process was his own reputation.

Plenty of Trump associates have been swept up in the Russia investigation, to be sure. And every time one of them cops a plea or submits to questioning, Trump's adversaries declare that the jig is up, that the paddy wagon is on its way to 1600 Pennsylvania. On December 1, 2017, when Michael Flynn pleaded guilty to misleading investigators, Chris Matthews said, "Michael Flynn is going to be the most important American besides Donald Trump in the next several months because he may well bring down Donald Trump."

Flynn has a lot of competition for the role. "The end of his presidency': John Dean says Rick Gates's testimony could bring down Trump for good," tweeted RawStory.com when the former campaign official turned state's evidence. "Prediction: I'm calling it now," tweeted MSNBC contributor Scott Dworkin. "Roger Stone will bring down Donald Trump." Former Obama aide Jesse Lee tweeted, "What Manafort knows might be able to bring down Trump and his whole family." Defense attorney Joey Jackson said on CNN, "If the end game is to squeeze [Michael] Cohen, who knows so much about Trump, boy, that could bring down the Trump presidency."

Note the frequent use of "might" and "could," the way these pundits hedge their bets, titillating their audience with the possibility of Trump's collapse while maintaining (in their view) credibility. In this way, the departure of a Trump staffer from the White House becomes the occasion for hypothetical pieces about presidential betrayal and arrest.

On January 19, 2018, for example, Stephen A. Crockett Jr. wrote on TheRoot.com, "If the rumors [prove true] that former White House worker (or President Donald Trump's personal Diet Coke getter) Omarosa Manigault Newman secretly recorded private conversations she had during her short White House stay, then I hate to say this—it actually pains me to say this—but Omarosa might be our only hope to bring down the White House." The headline for Tina Nguyen's February 1, 2018, piece on VanityFair.com read, "Could Hope Hicks be the one to bring down Trump?"

Life lesson: If all you've got is Omarosa, you might want to rethink things.

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On March 16, Donny Deutsch agreed: If Stormy Daniels really had been threatened with violence for telling her story, then "that in and of itself could bring down this presidency." On May 3, Stephen Colbert opened the Late Show by saying: "My next guest has helped turn a civil dispute with a porn star into an existential threat to the Trump presidency. Please welcome Michael Avenatti!"

And so the Resistance has descended the winding staircase from People Power to porn stars, from Robert Mueller to Michael Avenatti. Who will be next to join the ranks of false media messiahs? No doubt the answer will surprise us. "Could an Army of Accountants Bring Down Trump?" asked a recent headline.

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I TRIED TO RIG AN ELECTION,
I SPIED ON MY OPPONENT,
I GAVE RUSSIA U.S. URANIUM,
I BOUGHT FAKE INTEL FROM THEM,
AND ALL I GOT WAS
THIS LOUSY HAT



Democrat Dictionary:

- 1) Illegal Immigrants - Dreamers
- 2) Trump Supporters - Deplorables
- 3) MS-13 Killers - Human Beings
- 4) Human Beings in the Womb - Not Human Beings
- 5) Hamas Terrorists - Protestors
- 6) Law Abiding NRA Members - Terrorists





When you're plotting a car crash, but remember you already used that idea once before. 😏



"WE WERE FEEDING AND I FELT HIM RUB AGAINST MY FIN "

A GROUPE ACCUSATION #METUNA