

﴿ 2013 ﴾

# IMPACT STATEMENT



**“A compendium  
of literary  
curveballs.”**

*—New York Times*

MARK S. FISHER

# *The* BÄFFLER

**“Beautifully discontented prose.”**

*—The Guardian*

# The BÄFFLER

*the journal that blunts the cutting edge*

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**MANAGING EDITOR**

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Rhian Sasseen

**LITERARY EDITOR**

Anna Summers

**POETRY EDITOR**

Thomas Sayers Ellis

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Neda Semnani

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Susan Faludi

David Graeber

George Scialabba

Aaron Swartz (1986-2013)

Catherine Tumber

Eugenia Williamson

**CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS**

Steve Brodner

Mark Dancey

Mark S. Fisher

Brad Holland

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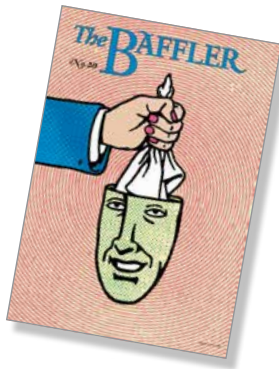
No interns are used in the making of *The Baffler*.



MARK S. FISHER

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## Boom, Crash... *The Baffler*

Now here's a story to buoy you through our time of sinking expectations. *The Baffler*, long in the habit of appearing every once in a while, is printing on its most regular and voluminous schedule since the magazine stirred to life in 1988, just before the end of history. Each new issue features our signature salvos in cheerfully independent cultural criticism, plus poems, stories, and illustrations agile and vivid enough to call adverse attention to the illusions propping up the leadership class. Last summer we even copublished a book, James Agee's *Cotton Tenants*, a once-forgotten manuscript about long-forgotten farmers living through the country's last Great Depression.

Yes, the time has finally come for the magazine that's been filing advance memoranda on the American comedy for twenty-five years, laughing at the occult ways that business talks us into profitable stagnation and culture-free innovation. The satires and entertainments sampled in this pamphlet have gone into French, German, Greek, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, and Spanish, in order to annoy thought leaders in those languages. Even in the upper reaches of U.S. media, the most censored in the de-developing world, certain of these tales have been singled out for praise, as has the generally high quality of our discontent.

Back in the 1990s, after all, we said bubbles in housing and finance arose from an extremist New Economy movement that was doomed to fail us all, though generally deemed too smart to do so. We sounded the death knell of the traditional music industry a decade or so before it occurred, anticipated the dustups over unpaid labor in Information Age media, analyzed the right-wing backlash before it spun out its unmissable perversities, and pioneered the cyber-skepticism that suddenly seems urgent and necessary. Those were the days when the advertising industry and the hipster were supposed to be locked in a war for the soul of youth. We said they made a happy synergy of like-minded suburbanites.

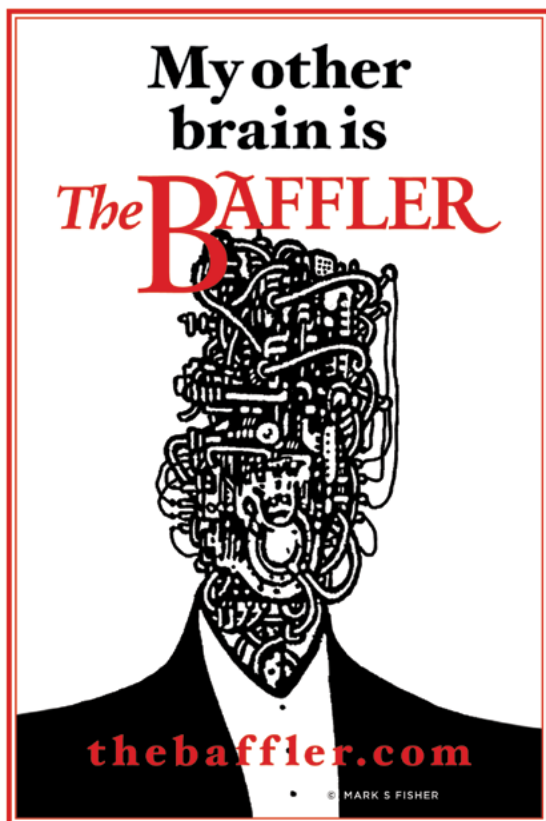
The long crisis of our time steadily erodes the market consensus that's brought the country a quarter century of folly. Yet our thought leaders scratch after the same celebrated combination of concessions to the

richest and sacrifices by the rest to unlock the heavenly door of prosperity once again.

We were present at prosperity's uncreative destruction. And we want a new alternative—not a return, even in the best of the cases now put to us by our leadership, to staffing factories; puffing trends in fashion and gadgetry; chasing success via trampling, tricking, and elbowing; or consuming fake culture. No, thank you. We have seen that future, and it doesn't work.

Opposed to all that and more, our writers and artists offer a camaraderie of truth, humor, and irony—an asylum from crackpot economics and cultural hokum, yours to mourn and enjoy. Read around in this pamphlet, then, and if you like what you see and hear, please consider supporting us.

—JOHN SUMMERS,  
*Editor in chief, The Baffler*  
*President, the Baffler Foundation*



*Baffler advertisement, 2013.*

From: [xoxoxox]

Sent: Sunday, December 2, 2012 2:25pm

To: info@thebaffler.com

Subject: Subscription

**So you guys actually expect to be paid for this?  
Why don't you pay for it the way all the other rags  
do—by selling lies and bribery???**

**A**nd did you know that *The Baffler* is back from the dead? A journal edited by John Summers, and most notably with help from Thomas Frank and Chris Lehmann, it is a compendium of literary curveballs.”

—David Carr, *New York Times*

**T**he original ethos seems largely intact: beautifully discontented prose written by people who'd rather be out scrapping. Quite right, too.”

—*Guardian*

**L**ike *The Baffler* of old, the sharpest pieces are readable and show a caustic, playful ability to zero in on a pie-eyed media hypnotized by the zeitgeist.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

**A** perfect moment for *The Baffler*'s kind of cultural criticism to be revived.”

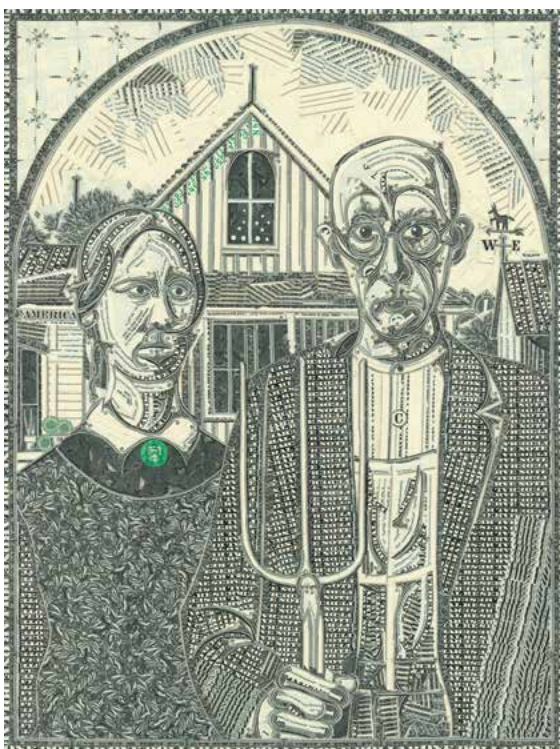
—*The New Yorker*

**M**ore beautiful, more timely, and more relevant than ever.”

—*Columbia Journalism Review*

**“A** hyper-intellectual, sometimes satirical, left-wing publication. . . . In its drive to fall ‘outside the debate,’ it generates some brilliant counter-intuitive analysis.”

—*Atlantic Wire*



**“B**oston’s best people and ideas.”

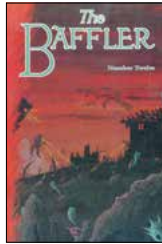
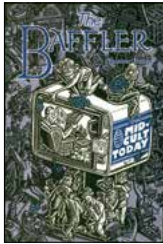
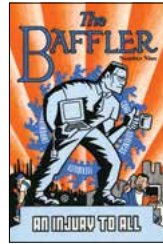
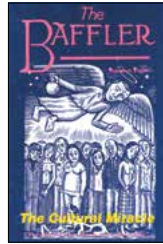
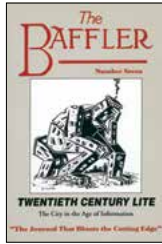
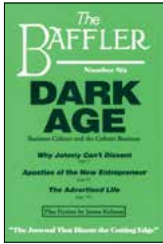
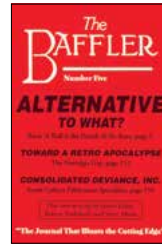
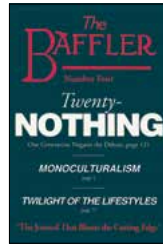
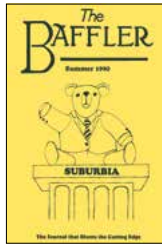
—*Boston Globe Magazine*

**“T**his journal has no peer in American opinion. Because it provides unfamiliar dissonances, stretched out over 163 glossy pages in a laconic, graphic retro aesthetic, decorated with sassy, funny, ironic, enigmatic and mercilessly revealing illustrations and poems.”

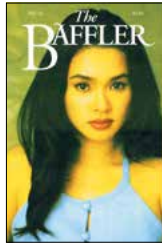
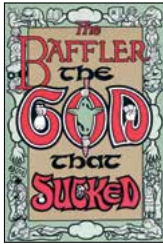
—*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

**“V**iva la Baffler!” —*Jonathan Franzen*





23 issues • 400 contributors  
 251 salvos • 337 illustrations  
 160 poems • 70 stories  
 3,013 pages • 1,188,272 words  
**25 years**





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## The Issues

- No. 1** [Debut issue]—Summer 1988
- No. 2** *Suburbia*—Summer 1990
- No. 3** *Let's Deviance!*—Winter/Spring 1992
- No. 4** *Twenty-Nothing*—Winter/Spring 1993
- No. 5** *Alternative to What?*—November 1993
- No. 6** *Dark Age*—November/December 1994
- No. 7** *The City in the Age of Information*—June 1995
- No. 8** *The Cultural Miracle*—February 1996
- No. 9** *An Injury to All*—1997
- No. 10** *The Folklore of Capitalism*—1997
- No. 11** *Mid-Cult Today*—Summer 1998
- No. 12** *Then Came Nylon*—March 1999
- No. 13** *Vox Populoid*—Winter 1999
- No. 14** *The God That Sucked*—Spring 2001
- No. 15** *Civilization with a Krag*—November 2002
- No. 16** *Nascar, How Proud a Sound!*—June 2003
- No. 17** *Superslayer Storybook*—June 2006
- No. 18** *Margin Call*—January 2010
- No. 19** [Revival issue]—March 2012
- No. 20** *The High, the Low, the Vibrant!*—July 2012
- No. 21** *Your Money and Your Life*—November 2012
- No. 22** *Modem & Taboo*—March 2013
- No. 23** *A Carnival of Buncombe*—July 2013

## The Revival Issue

We found ourselves at the bloodless crossroads of culture and technology, with salvos by Thomas Frank, Chris Lehmann, Barbara Ehrenreich, Rick Perlstein, David Graeber, Jim Newell, Will Boisvert, Dubravka Ugrešić, and Maureen Tkacik; a dazzling array of stories, poems, and graphic art; and a first look at a never-before-published essay we discovered by James Agee, “Cotton Tenants.” The issue was produced in Cambridge, New York, and Washington, D.C., and released in March 2012. Here’s a sample.

### ☞ [ **THOMAS FRANK** ] ☞

“A résumé filled with grievous errors in the period 1996–2006 is not only a non-problem for further advances in the world of consensus; it is something of a prerequisite. Our intellectual powers that be not only forgive the mistakes; they require them. You *must* have been wrong back then in order to have a chance to be taken seriously today; only by having gotten things wrong can you demonstrate that you are trustworthy, a member of the team.”

—THOMAS FRANK, “TOO SMART TO FAIL: NOTES ON AN AGE OF FOLLY,”  
*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 19)



BILL LEWIS

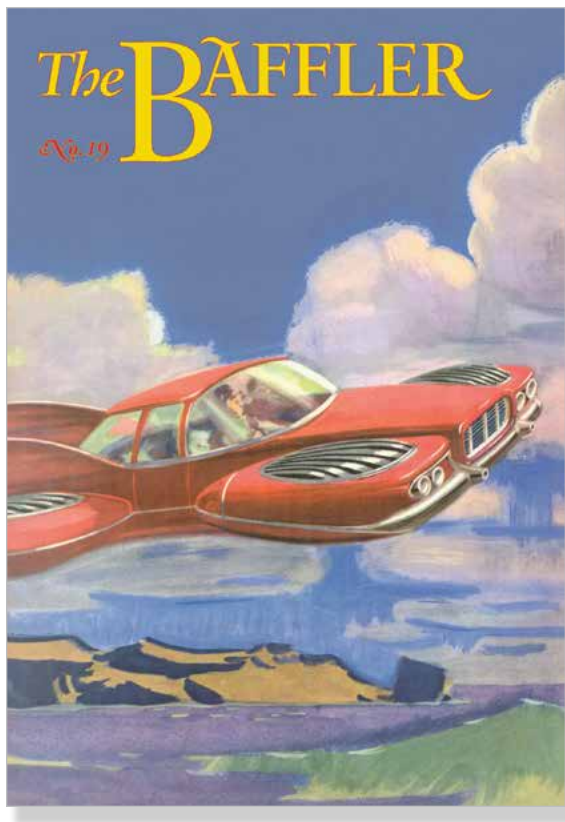
### ☞ [ **MAUREEN TKACIK** ] ☞

“*The Atlantic*’s definition of talent seems to correlate to: an ability to channel one’s talent into the mastery of meritless and preposterous (“counterintuitive”) arguments, deliberately obtuse rebuttals, and **miscellaneous pseudointellectual equivocation/noise** on topical issues; and proven senior-level mastery of aforementioned mastery as demonstrated either by radical shamelessness or the pious and deeply felt earnestness of a motivational speaker.”

—MAUREEN TKACIK, “OMNISCIENT GENTLEMEN OF *THE ATLANTIC*,”  
*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 19)



MICHAEL DUFFEY



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**“Beloved anti-establishment journal *The Baffler* is back!”**

—*New York Observer*

**“In its first issue after a two-year hiatus, *The Baffler* comes out punching.”**

—*Boston Globe*

❧ **DAVID GRAEBER** ❧

**“W**here, in short, are the flying cars? Where are the force fields, tractor beams, teleportation pods, antigravity sleds, tricorders, immortality drugs, colonies on Mars, and all the other technological wonders any child growing up in the mid-to-late twentieth century assumed would exist by now? As someone who was eight years old at the time of the Apollo moon landing, I remember calculating that I would be thirty-nine in the magic year 2000 and wondering what the world would be like. Did I expect I would be living in such a world of wonders? Of course. Everyone did. Do I feel cheated now? It seemed unlikely that I’d live to see *all* the things I was reading about in science fiction, but it never occurred to me that I wouldn’t see *any* of them.”

—DAVID GRAEBER, “OF FLYING CARS AND THE DECLINING RATE OF PROFIT,”

*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 19)

**“Must-read of 2012.”** —*Columbia Journalism Review*

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4 = The Baffler

Philosophical Intelligence Office—novel idea! But how did you come to dream that I wanted anything in your absurd line, eh?

Oh, respected sir, from long experience, one glance tells me the gentleman who is in need of our humble services. Our office, founded on principles wholly new—

To the devil with your principles! Bad sign when a man begins to talk of his principles. As for Intelligence Offices, I've lived in the East, and know 'em. Swindling concerns kept by low-born cynics, under a fawning exterior wreaking their cynic malice upon mankind. You are a fair specimen of 'em.

Oh dear, dear, dear!

Machines for me. My cider mill—does that ever steal my cider? My mowing-machine—does that ever lay a-bed mornings? My corn-busker—does that ever give me insolence? No, cider-mill, mowing-machine, corn-busker—all faithfully attend to their business. Disinterested, too; no board, no wages; yet doing good all their lives long; shining examples that virtue is its own reward—the only practical Christians I know.

Oh dear, dear, dear, dear!

—Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man*



JOSEPH CARROLL  
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**BARBARA EHRENREICH**

“There is an unseemly coziness to much of this enlightened discourse, an assumption that animals are not only like humans, but that they like us, or at least bear no active grudges. The problem is not that animals are different from humans in some generalizable way... but that it makes very little sense to say what animals are like or not like. There are so many species of animals that any analysis based on the human-animal division is as eccentric, in its own way, as a **hypothetical biology based on the jellyfish-nonjellyfish distinction** would be. Within species, too, animals differ as individuals, just as humans differ, hence the difficulty in prescribing the best way to avoid a bear attack.”

—BARBARA EHRENREICH, “THE ANIMAL CURE,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 19)



MARK S. FISHER



ADAM MARTIN | 3,184 Views | APR 3, 2012

Last night *The Baffler* held a meeting at Housing Works in New York City. The Atlantic Wire has obtained, through colleagues sources at the CIA, a report on what transpired.

UNCLASSIFIED

TO RUWAAAA/FBIS RESTON VA  
RUEAIIS/STORAGE CENTER FBIS RESTON VA  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC  
RUWYNOK/HQ USSPACECOM PETERSON AFB

THE BAFFLER'S ENGAGEMENT: PERSPECTIVES, OUTLOOK, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction / Background

The Baffler, a hyper-intellectual, sometimes satirical, left-wing publication, launched its latest issue, no. 19, on 2 April, 2012 after approximately 18 months on hiatus. The publication has been through multiple cycles of activity from its founding in Chicago in 1988. It currently operates from Cambridge, Massachusetts, with operatives primarily along the Eastern seaboard. Present for its meeting held at the Housing Works Book Store in Manhattan were four key members of the organization's leadership as well as approximately 50 to 60 rank-and-file members, ranging in age from early 20s to mid-60s, identifiable by an abundance of sweaters, spectacles, and fashionable scarves. Senior leaders on hand were: recently installed editor-in-chief John Summers, senior editor Christopher Lehmann (see prior reports), and contributors David Graeber and Barbara Ehrenreich.

Threat Assessment

Discussions at the meeting outlined three major threats perceived by The Baffler:

1) THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY: An intelligence report within The Baffler's latest number, authored by Baffler operative Maureen Tkacik, posited that The Atlantic is probably a CIA front operation. She writes: "Of course The Atlantic is a turgid mouthpiece for the plutocracy, a repository of shallow, lazy spin, and regular host of discussion forums during which nothing is discussed. It is, in every formal trait, a CIA front." Tkacik, a Washington, D.C.-based operative, was not in attendance at the 2 April meeting. However, Lehmann, a senior editor, referred to Tkacik's report as an example of The Baffler's mission to "dull the cutting edge" of culture. He also praised the publication for falling "outside the debate," making clear his hostile intent toward media and culture in general. While The Atlantic styles itself as a "thought leader," Lehmann concluded, "I think we want to be either a thought provoker or, better yet, a thought destroyer."

Recommended action: Continue close monitoring of this organization's inquiries into this sensitive program for possible impacts on operational security.

2) ANIMALS: Ehrenreich summarized her report in the latest issue concerning the latent threat animals pose to humanity after millenia of mistreatment. As their jobs morph from the work of pulling plows and sleds to more white-collar work such as therapy dogs, she concluded that they may be like us, but they do not like us. "When humans rest too much on the goodwill of animals,

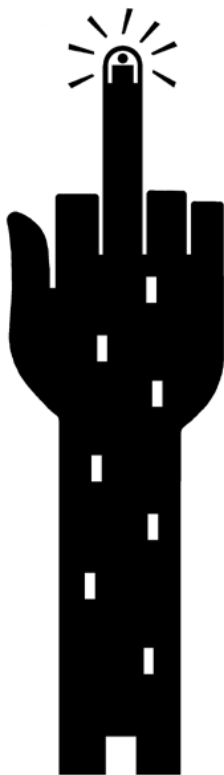
**"Infiltrating *The Baffler*: A Field Report" from the *Atlantic Wire*.**

**“I got my copy of  
*The Baffler* no. 19  
at my local  
Barnes & Noble  
—go get yours!”**

—*Daily Kos*

**“Pick of U.S.  
magazines.”**

—*New Statesman*



DAVID MCLIMANS

☛ **LUDMILLA PETRUSHEVSKAYA**

**“D**on’t, don’t stab me!’ she screamed in her stage voice.

‘Calm down, it’s the baby, not us. The baby’s pulling you apart. There, I can see the crown!’

She heard a low sound like a train whistle.

‘Mom, look up! It’s a girl! A real beauty!’

Somebody, give her salts. What’s your last name?’

‘Karpenko. Nadezhda Alexandrovna  
Karpenko.’

‘Finally! Now take a good look: it’s a girl,  
see for yourself, we don’t want any complaints  
afterward!’

Eyes over white gauze masks. Laughing.

One of them was holding a little baby doll,  
tiny, unwashed. All crinkled up, crying. She’s  
cold! Never before had Karpenko felt such heart-  
wrenching pity.

‘Rejoice, mom! Such a big beautiful gal! A  
Happy New Year!’

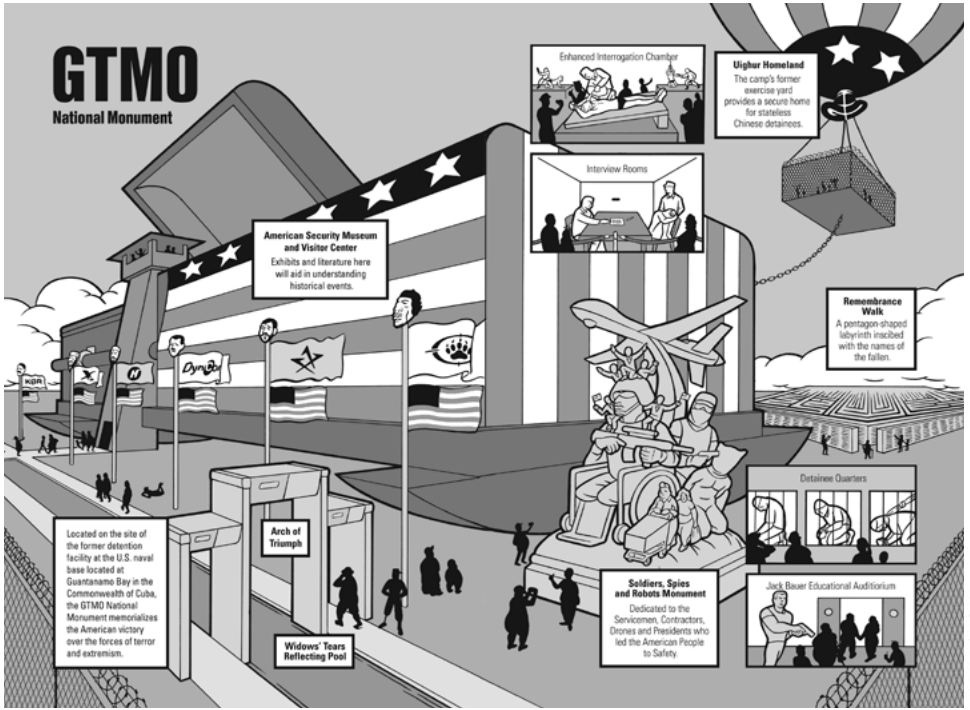
‘Just give her to me . . . Give her to me, please  
. . . Just give her to me . . .’

—LUDMILLA PETRUSHEVSKAYA,

FROM THE SHORT STORY

“GIVE HER TO ME,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 19)





 **GEOFFREY HILL**

Boreal light-loaded incorrigible  
 Plutocratic anarchy breaks the archons  
 Little praised here more adamantine than those  
     Clapped into durance  
 Herod rants | pageants on their wooden tractions  
 Cannot hold him · Now he is in the shambles  
 Butchers Row · Come back you old wakeman | watch us  
     Cartwheel to ruin

—GEOFFREY HILL, FROM THE POEM *ODI BARBARE*,  
*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 19)

## *The High, the Low, the Vibrant!*

In our summer culture issue, Thomas Frank and Jed Perl made fun of cities that tremble with “vibrancy” and art museums where “cash-and-carry aesthetics” governs taste. And because nothing makes us quite so proud as our occasional foray into the world of grifters, slicksters, frauds, and mountebanks, Jim Newell investigated the case of Adam Wheeler and Harvard University. The issue offered poems, stories, graphic art, and, just for kicks, the first-ever publication of the satire “Green Gallows for the Wall Street Bankers,” by the Homeless Economist.

### ☞ *THOMAS FRANK* ☞

**I**n the thirties, the federal government launched a number of programs directly subsidizing artists. Painters got jobs making murals for the walls of post offices and public buildings; theater troupes staged plays; writers collected folklore; photographers combed the South documenting the lives of sharecroppers. But no one expected those artists to **pull us out of the Depression by some occult process** of entrepreneurship-kindling. Instead, government supported them mainly because they were unemployed. In other words, government then did precisely the opposite of what government does today: in the thirties, we protected artists from the market while today we expose them to it, imagining them as the stokers on the hurtling job-creation locomotive.”

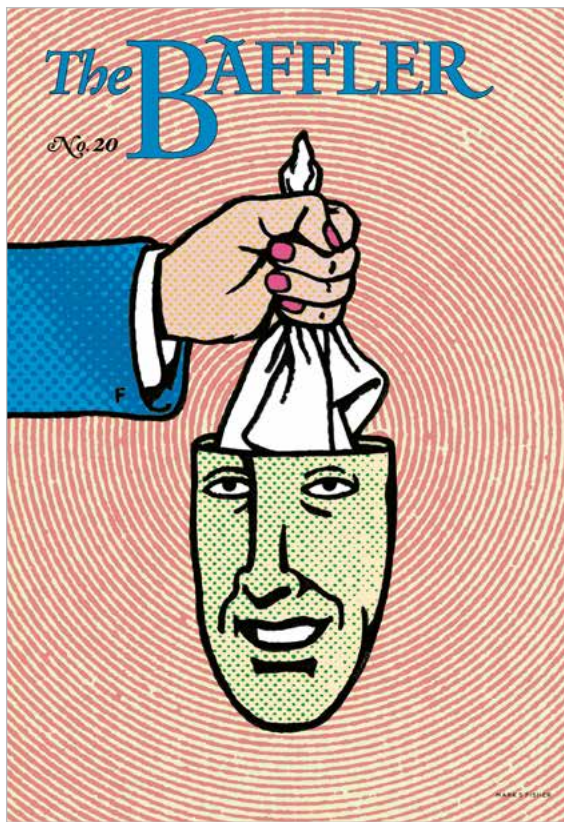
—THOMAS FRANK, “DEAD END ON SHAKIN’ STREET,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)

### ☞ *JED PERL* ☞

**T**he way art is understood will of necessity change over time. But what is now in doubt is much bigger than modernity. It is nothing less than the freestanding power of artistic experience, which we discover in works of every time and place, from the Tanagra figurines and the Romanesque manuscripts to the paintings of Rembrandt, Poussin, Corot, and Mondrian.



DAVID MCLIMANS

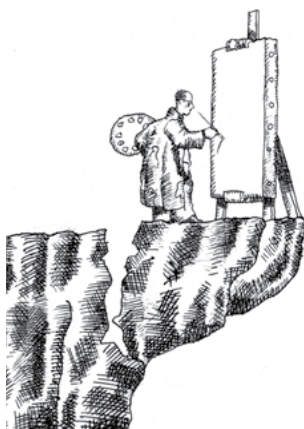


**“Obsessive, heady dissections.”**

—*Time Out New York*







There is nothing *laissez-faire* about any of these masterworks. When we contemplate them in all of their particularity—in the insistent singularity of their poetry and in the almost delusional extremism of their endlessly various visions—we see that they are anything but easygoing, that they are, each in its own way, relentlessly, triumphantly intolerant. An artist’s vision is always a solitary kingdom.”

—JED PERL, “CASH-AND-CARRY AESTHETICS,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)



BRAD HOLLAND

**“A sublime essay.”** —*Harper’s Magazine*

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🍷 JIM NEWELL 🍷

“Examples of Adam Wheeler’s fraud, fakery, and amateurish self-parody abound, but the simplest way to put the episode in perspective is to imagine that someone was running across Harvard Yard in an unmissable neon suit screaming ‘I’M A FRAUD WHO HAS LIED ABOUT EVERYTHING,’ around the clock, for two years, until one professor finally suspected that something was *most decidedly off* about this young man whose Rhodes scholarship he’d been reviewing and intending to accept.”

—JIM NEWELL, “ADAM WHEELER WENT TO HARVARD,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)

“Highly amusing.” —*Wall Street Journal*

“Lunchtime Longread.” —*Chicago Tribune*

“Must-read of 2012.” —*Columbia Journalism Review*



DAVID GOTHARD

❧ **CHRIS BRAY** ❧

“Surveying the body of self-congratulatory, pragmatically centrist literature celebrating this self-congratulatory, pragmatically centrist administration, it’s at last possible to understand the true character and scale of our plight: the nation is locked in an elite-made crisis—caused by regulatory capture, not by mythical deregulation—that has been extended and deepened by elite intervention constructed around further regulatory capture. The solution to that problem has been to batter at **the chimera of deregulation**. A failed elite class that finds itself unable to put its knowledge into effective operation instead speaks of that knowledge in a louder voice. It tells us, of course, that Barack Obama is a rare and magnificent genius, that he is a pragmatic centrist who correctly performs the only inevitable policy options, that he is one of us.”

—CHRIS BRAY, “PARTY OF NONE,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)

“An outstanding essay.” —*The Nation*



RANDALL ENOS

**daymare** • Nightmares are conventionally attended by witches and devils and occur in darkness. Not so daymares, which take place in the light and can even be morning events. (“After his orange juice, he had a daymare.” Or, “The daymare pranced gaily through the sunlit window and soared over him.”)

Yet these playful associations belie the daymare’s chilling terror. Daymares are more blatant and invasive than nightmares, their gaiety at once shameless and gruesome.

—DANIEL AARON, *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)



VICTOR KERLOW



❧ **WILL BOISVERT** ❧

“**F**irst, let’s get something straight: our apartment does not have bedbugs. Which is strange, since it’s hosted every other kind of vermin. Cockroaches, of course. One of the string of transient roommates who troop through our living room once left a pot of cooked vegetables sitting out for a week, and fruit flies swarmed. For a while there were mice in the shindeep trash piled up on the kitchen floor, dumped there by Max, the thirtysomething Ukrainian philosophy grad student who holds the lease. But we did not have bedbugs. No

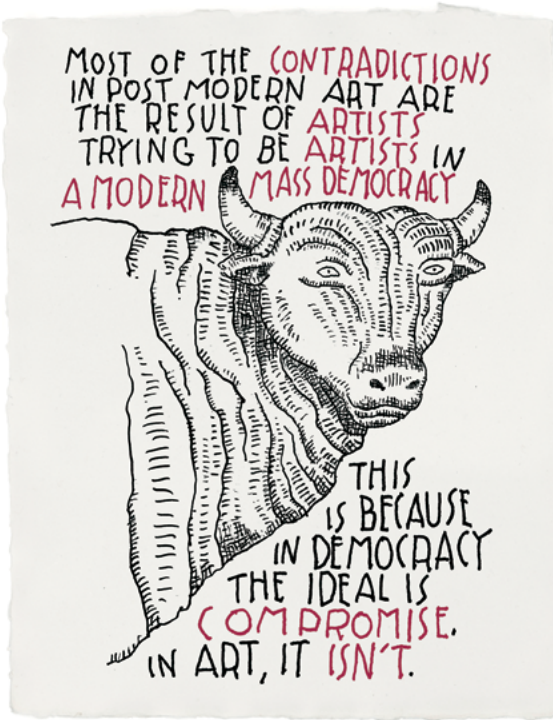


one in the apartment was ever bitten. There were no live bugs or nymphs on the bed or in the crevices of furniture and walls, no cast-off exoskeletal husks, no blood smears on the sheets to mark the path from host to hiding place, no black ink-spot fecal stains between mattress and box spring, no cloying odor of strawberries and coriander. When our landlord announced a building-wide inspection by a bedbug-sniffing canine, I felt confident.”

—WILL BOISVERT, “DELUSIONAL PARASITOSIS AND ME,”

*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)





BRAD HOLLAND

**“If *The Baffler* vanished with a whimper, it’s back with a bang now, having just released 200 pages of coruscating opinion about the American mindscape and the world of art, and ‘art,’ in particular.”**

—*Brooklyn Rail*

**ALAN GILBERT**

I’m from the rare generation that didn’t go to war,  
but it’s still the inheritance.  
Air raid sirens wail throughout the mall.  
I think about you less on sunny days,  
though I’m just as full of the clichés  
we start with instead of an empty page.  
But if this shelter collapses,  
we’ll move on to another one  
with free coffee and donuts for the meetings,  
wondering how does it feel to wake up  
in the house in which you’ll die?

—ALAN GILBERT, FROM THE POEM “FAULTY LOGIC,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 20)

## Your Money and Your Life

In the third and last issue of our revival year, Thomas Frank told a story of how theory met practice in Occupy Wall Street (and drove it out of its mind), Rick Perlstein explained how Mitt Romney lied to be loved, and David Graeber asked whether it's possible to think that you believe something when, in fact, you don't, or to think that you don't believe something when, in fact, you do. (Yes.) The issue featured Ana Marie Cox, Barbara Ehrenreich, Chris Lehmann, Jason Linkins, Josh MacPhee, Jim Newell, Alex Pareene, and Dubravka Ugrešić—and a previously unpublished waking dream by C. Wright Mills, “If I Were President.” Well, what would you do if *you* were president?

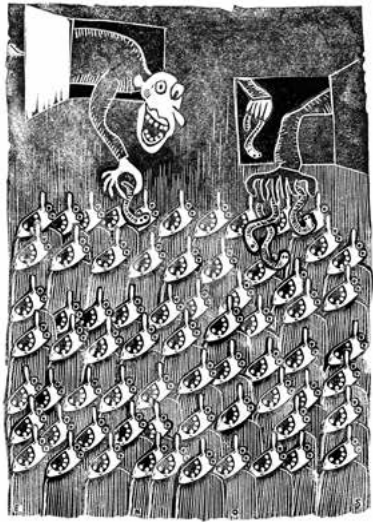
☛ **ALEX PAREENE** ☛

“To call this craven performance a study in access journalism is an insult to the storied sycophantic practitioners of that low craft. Sure, echt-insiders like legendary *New York Times* columnist James Reston might lease out their bylines to war criminals like Henry Kissinger—but such ceremonial deference at least took place under some vague aura of a quid pro quo. *Politico*, by contrast, was in this instance publicly whoring itself out for no purpose beyond its all-too-palpable craving for a slightly more incremental **monopoly on meaningless bits of information** that even paid campaign flacks are apt to forget the day after they race through the overstimulated nervous system of the D.C. media.”

—ALEX PAREENE, “COME ON, FEEL THE BUZZ,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 21)

“**Best Longread of 2012.**” —*Daily Beast*

“**Top 10 Longread of 2012.**” —*Longreads*



RANDALL ENOS



***“The Baffler loves to poke holes in over-inflated egos; if some member of the media declares you (or your TED talk) The Next Big Thing, you’re likely The Baffler’s next target.”***

*—Capital New York*

⌈ **RICK PERLSTEIN** ⌋

**“I**f the 2012 GOP nominee lied louder than most—and even more astoundingly than he has during his prior campaigns—it’s just because he felt like he had more to prove to his core following. Lying is an initiation into the conservative elite. In this respect, as in so many others, it’s like multilayer marketing: the ones at the top reap the reward—and then they preen, pleased with themselves for mastering the game. Closing the sale, after all, is mainly a question of riding out the lie: showing that you have the skill and the stones to just brazen it



MARK DANCEY



FLYINSTITUTE

***The Baffler* (no. 21), free-market televangelism.**

out, and the savvy to ratchet up the stakes higher and higher. Sneering at, or ignoring, your earnest high-minded mandarin gatekeepers—‘we’re not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact-checkers,’ as one Romney aide put it—is another part of closing the deal.”

—RICK PERLSTEIN, “THE LONG CON: MAIL-ORDER CONSERVATISM,”

*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 21)

**“A great piece!”** —*Rachel Maddow, MSNBC*

**“A fascinating essay. Go read.”** —*Paul Krugman, New York Times*

**“Best Business and Finance Longread.”** —*Daily Beast*



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## “JOSH MACPHEE”

“Running a Kickstarter campaign is work, so what do you get for your labor? The money you raise, of course. You do keep it, right? Well, say you run a campaign for \$10,000—somewhere between a third to two-thirds of what a struggling artist might make in a year. You send out thousands of emails about your campaign, post it on dozens of friends’ Facebook pages, send out lots of tweets, talk it up with everyone you meet, and try to get as many people as possible to do the same. You’re a popular person living in a major city, with an active social network and a compelling project, so you hit your mark—\$10,000 is pledged. **Kickstarter and Amazon take 10 percent right off the top**, so now you are down to \$9,000. If the money is coming



MICHAEL DUFFY

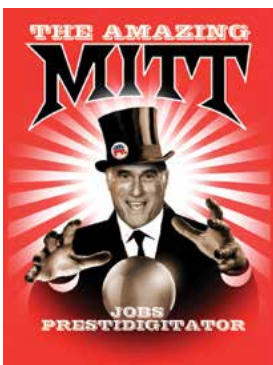
in to you as an individual, Kickstarter treats you like a self-employed contractor, so it's on you to figure out your tax burden and pay it, likely at least another 15 percent, so now you're at \$7,650. For a \$10,000 campaign, you will have around 200 donors, of whom 150 will want rewards. If your rewards are physical objects, and you were generous in your offerings (a good idea when raising money), you're going to have to wrap 150 packages, all of which need shipping supplies and postage to get to their destinations. On average, you're likely spending \$8 per package, so that's another \$1,200 off your total; so now you're at \$6,450. Within a few weeks a third of the money you raised is gone, and you haven't begun to spend it on the project you were raising it for."

—JOSH MACPHEE, "WHO'S THE SHOP STEWARD ON YOUR KICKSTARTER?"

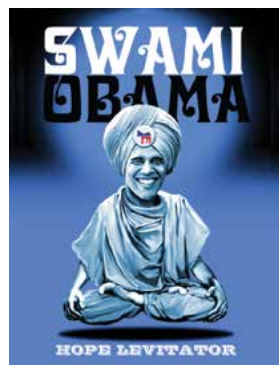
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MICHAEL DUFFY



*The Baffler* (no. 21).



MICHAEL DUFFY



 **HARRYETTE MULLEN**

Meandering through hill-top neighborhood  
of splendid old mansions, I loiter at wrought-iron gates  
picketing the senator's home.

\*

"Where does California's produce go?"  
shoppers ask in supermarkets stocked  
with Mexican avocados and Chinese garlic.

\*

Parking in front of the apartment block,  
the produce truck driver whose horn announces  
his arrival with "La Cucaracha."

\*

Visiting with us in Los Angeles, our friend  
went out for a sunny walk; returned with  
wrists bound, misapprehended by cops.

\*

At night our tidy clean green park is locked  
to keep out rough sleepers who bed down on sidewalks  
next to shopping carts full of rubbish.

—HARRYETTE MULLEN, FROM THE POEM *CALIFORNIA TANKA DIARY*,  
*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 21)

**Bombay duck** is not an avian species indigenous to Mumbai. It is long and thin, a favorite food consumed along the coastal regions of India, either dried and salted or freshly cooked. This common variety of fish is less commonly known as *bummalo*. The word is derived from *bombil* in Marathi."

—MANOHAR SHETTY, "THREE ODD WORDS," *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 21)



## Modem & Taboo

In our spring revelry, Thomas Frank took us on a tour of the businessman's republic, while David Graeber led us into the hearts and minds of the opposition. Chris Bray tracked down General David Petraeus and his wandering PhD. Evgeny Morozov took apart the influential "crazy talk" of Silicon Valley publisher Tim O'Reilly. Anne Elizabeth Moore explored the hidden assumptions behind Nicholas Kristof's bid to rescue the women of the world. All this, plus Heather Havrilesky on the banality of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Hussein Ibish on the Marquis de Sade, and Christian Lorentzen on the British pop-star-cum-pedophile Jimmy Savile. Oh yes, and Slavoj Žižek told us why hard-core pornography is the most censored of all film genres.

### ☞ *EVGENY MOROZOV* ☞

"Silicon Valley has always had a thing for priests; Steve Jobs was the cranky pope it deserved. Today, having mastered the art of four-hour workweeks and gluten-free lunches in outdoor cafeterias, our digital ministers are beginning to preach on subjects far beyond the funky world of drones, 3-D printers, and smart toothbrushes. The enduring emptiness of our technology debates has one main cause, and his name is Tim O'Reilly."

—EVGENY MOROZOV, "THE MEME HUSTLER:  
TIM O'REILLY'S CRAZY TALK,"

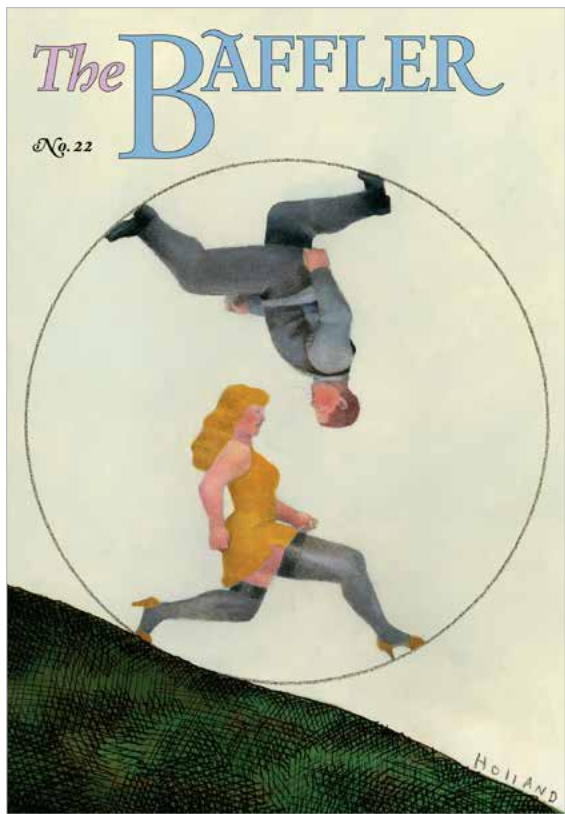
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PHILIP BURKE

**"The essay equivalent of *The Social Network*. . . . This is the kind of article that made *The Baffler* famous back in the 1990s."** —*iog.com*

**"I read Evgeny Morozov's profile of me with a kind of bemused fascination."** —*Tim O'Reilly*



***“The Baffler no. 22 is the first full color issue in its history. That’s pretty monumental. It now looks like The New Yorker on steroids.”***

*—Steven Heller,  
Print magazine*

⌈ **HEATHER HAVRILESKY** ⌋

**“Give or take a blindfold here or a butt plug there, the same hands explore the same places in the same ways with the same results. After the fifteenth or sixteenth time Anastasia and Christian ‘find [their] release together,’ they start to resemble tourists with no short-term memory, repeating the same docented visit to Graceland over and over again.”**

—HEATHER HAVRILESKY, “FIFTY SHADES OF LATE CAPITALISM,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 22)



VICTOR KERLOW

**“A hilarious take-down.”** —*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

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☞ **DAVID GRAEBER** ☞

“It’s only when we reject the idea that labor is virtuous in itself that we can start to ask what is virtuous about labor. To which the answer is obvious. Labor is virtuous if it helps others. A renegotiated definition of productivity should make it easier to reimagine the very nature of what work is, since, among other things, it will mean that technological development



RANDALL ENOS

With enough of us, around the world,  
we'll not just send a strong message  
opposing the privatization of knowledge.  
we'll make it  
a thing of  
the past

**Aaron Swartz**  
**[1986-2013],**  
**contributing**  
**editor of**  
***The Baffler*.**



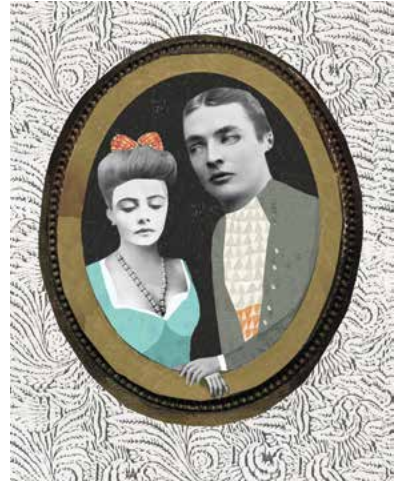
JOSEPH CIARDIELLO

will be redirected less toward creating ever more consumer products and disciplined labor, and more toward eliminating those forms of labor entirely. And what would happen if we stopped acting as if the primordial form of work is laboring at a production line, or wheat field, or iron foundry, or even in an office cubicle, and instead started from a mother, a teacher, or a caregiver? We might conclude that the real business of human life is not contributing toward something called ‘the economy’, but that we are all, and have always been, projects of mutual creation.”

—DAVID GRAEBER “A PRACTICAL UTOPIAN’S GUIDE  
TO THE COMING COLLAPSE,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 22)

☞ **MONICA HILEMAN**

“From the Club Med getaways to the renovated Catskill resorts, everyone in the hospitality industry was eager to get in on End of Life Havens. Fred imagined the marketing must have been a challenge for the industry which had grown quickly after statutes passed, first in Florida, and then across the country, that amended the laws allowing assisted suicide for those with terminal illnesses to include people with severe financial hardship. But a startling number of elderly couples who could no longer pay their property taxes and other bills were turning on the gas. Legislators decided there had to be more humane, less hazardous options made available that put no



KATHERINE STREETER

burden on already strapped cities and towns. Like casino gambling, End of Life Havens had made it into the general comfort zone and now received tax breaks and ads on state websites. ‘Come to the Land of Lakes, where each of those last days can be magical.’ ‘In Vermont, naturally.’ ‘Montana, Your Last Best Place.’ Fred might have considered investing if he hadn’t lost his pension.”

—MONICA HILEMAN,  
FROM THE SHORT STORY  
“UP IN BIRDLAND,”  
*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 22)

**Invitation to a *Baffler* fundraiser  
in San Francisco.**



 **KYLE DARGAN**

O, it won't be pretty, America.  
What land would you trade  
for our lives? A treaty inked  
in advance of metal's footfall.  
Give them Detroit. Give them Gary,  
Pittsburgh, Braddock—those forgotten  
nurseries of girders and axels.  
Tell the machines we honor their dead,  
distant cousins. Tell them we left  
those cities to repose of respect  
for the bygone era of molten metal.  
Tell them Carnegie and Ford  
were giant men, that war glazed  
their palms with gold. Tell them  
we humans mourn the ecosystem  
of manufacture all the same.

—KYLE DARGAN, FROM THE POEM “THE ROBOTS  
ARE COMING,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 22)



ELEANOR DAVIS

*The Baffler* (no. 22), “Inter Course.”

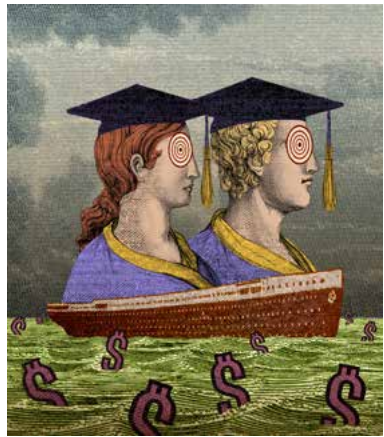
## A Carnival of Buncombe

We may say our colleges are the best in the world while secretly believing they're an overpriced rip-off, but leave it to Thomas Frank in *The Baffler* no. 23 to ask whether they're the best in the world at committing the rip-off. Welcome to America five years after the financial crisis. It's a place "made possible by buncombe," as David Graeber explains. And it's a time of magical thinking, as Susan Faludi says in her critique of the narrow brand of feminism on offer from Sheryl Sandberg's positive-thinking tract *Lean In*. Luckily, we have Jacob Silverman to burst the techno-bubble that is South by Southwest; Ann Friedman to explain why we're "All LinkedIn with Nowhere to Go"; and Quinn Slobodian and Michelle Sterling to report from Berlin "How Hipsters, Expats, Yummies, and Smartphones Ruined a City." *The Baffler* gives you the latest trends in cultural news and retail opinion. Step right up!

☛ **THOMAS FRANK** ☛

"The coming of 'academic capitalism' has been anticipated and praised for years; today it is here. Colleges and universities clamor greedily these days for pharmaceutical patents and ownership chunks of high-tech startups; they boast of being 'entrepreneurial'; they have rationalized and outsourced countless aspects of their operations in the search for cash; they fight their workers nearly as ferociously as a nineteenth-century railroad baron; and the richest among them have turned their endowments into in-house hedge funds. . . . Virtually every aspect of the higher-ed dream has been colonized by monopolies, cartels, and other unrestrained predators. The charmingly naive American student is in fact a cash cow, and everyone has got a scheme for slicing off a porterhouse or two."

—THOMAS FRANK, "ACADEMY FIGHT SONG," *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 23)



SPENCER WALTERS



*The Baffler* no. 23 was an Amazon.com “Hot New Release.”

## Don't Think

Don't think.

If you think, then don't speak.

If you think and speak, then don't write.

If you think, speak, and write, then don't sign.

If you think, speak, write, and sign, then don't send.

If you think, speak, write, sign, and send, then don't be surprised.

“Alphabetically there is no such thing as unspoiled territory, which is why the black chalkboard became white and why the white chalkboard became green. Yes a squirrel might run through a long intestinal tunnel, but only in Vermont is it possible for two people to walk and share the same slice of face-bread.”

—THOMAS SAYERS  
ELLIS, “ONCE  
UPON A TOWN,”

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DAVID MCLIMANS

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The Baffler Local 45

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☞ **SUSAN FALUDI** ☞

“Sheryl Sandberg’s admirers would say that Lean In is using free-market beliefs to advance the cause of women’s equality. Her detractors would say (and have) that her organization is using the desire for women’s equality to advance the cause of the free market. And they would both be right. In embodying the contradiction, Sheryl Sandberg would not be alone and isn’t so new.... In the postindustrial economy, feminism has been retooled as a vehicle for expression of the self, a ‘self’ as marketable consumer object, valued by how many times it’s been bought—or, in our electronic age, how many times it’s been clicked on.”

—SUSAN FALUDI, “FACEBOOK FEMINISM, LIKE IT OR NOT,” *THE BAFFLER*, (NO. 23)



ELEANOR DAVIS





☞ **QUINN SLOBODIAN AND MICHELLE STERLING** ☞

“Berlin has embraced an economic model that makes poverty pay. The idea is to cash in on Berlin’s cachet by branding it as a “Creative City”—but it is also, to judge by what has happened, to gut public services, to sell off public housing, and to strategize about new ways of turning taste into profit. . . . The public places where Berliners hang out are not really spaces for leisure or culture, but lucrative targets on a map. The sense of liberation that draws so many to Berlin only comes in the shadow of a new Wall. That sense of liberation must be made to pay, must shed its traces of political activism. Toytown must be monetized.”

—QUINN SLOBODIAN AND MICHELLE STERLING, “SACKING BERLIN,”

*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 23)



JAKOB HINRICHS

☞ **ADAM HASLETT**

“As he’s unpacking in his room, the boy hears a knock at the door and looks up to see his dad. There’s something I meant to say, he says, his arms crossed over his barrel chest. Before I head off. I’m not leaning on you to study one thing or another, you can do whatever draws you, you’ll be fine at it. It doesn’t matter if I don’t understand it. But one thing. Whatever this place gives you, he said, indicating with a slow nod of the head the room, the view out the window, the campus beyond, wherever you end up, don’t work for the ballbusters.”

—ADAM HASLETT, FROM THE SHORT STORY “THE ACT,” *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 23)



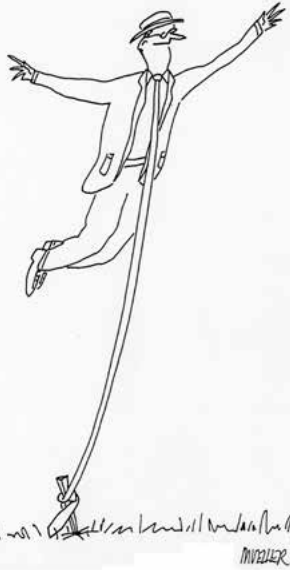
LEWIS KOCH

 **SHARON OLDS**

The heart of my life was spent on it—  
that was my life! And where is it, now,  
as this train goes down the mountain for an hour,  
six years after divorce,  
all that sex, it must be somewhere,  
maybe among these wild grasses near the  
tracks, or near plants in the sea which drink  
salt like milk, as if the scenes of  
impermanent love could be stored in tidepools’  
gardens, where a mountain steps down into  
the sea, then down into the ocean trench, until it  
touches the spherical mountain which is  
the mantle of the globe.

—  
I feel it is all nearby, in the hair of the  
woods this train now passes, and it lines  
roadsides, I can hear the insects singing  
in the nerves of the meadow, the made love of a  
life is the inner logic of a life,  
the home fragrance.

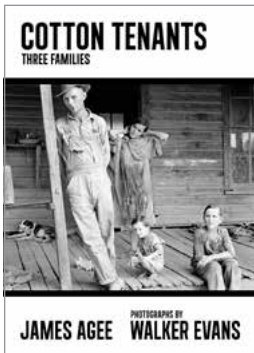
—SHARON OLDS,  
FROM THE POEM “WHERE IS IT NOW,”  
*THE BAFFLER* (NO. 23)



**“Only seemingly cheerful: *The Baffler*.”**

—*Berliner Zeitung*

P.S. MUELLER



*Cotton Tenants:  
Three Families.*

By James Agee.

Photographs by

Walker Evans. Edited  
by John Summers.

Introduction by Adam  
Haslett

(*The Baffler*/Melville

House, 224 pages,

hardcover, \$24.95)

## A New Classic

James Agee's *Cotton Tenants*, copublished this summer by *The Baffler* and Melville House, marked Agee's first attempt to tell the story of his road trip to the tenant farms of Alabama in the summer and fall of 1936, having been sent there by *Fortune* magazine. The masterpiece Agee produced with photographer Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, was published in 1941. But what happened to the original report?

Shelved by *Fortune*, the unwanted typescript wasted away in Agee's Greenwich Village home for nearly twenty years after his death, a piercing fragment lodged within a pile of unread manuscripts. Eventually, the James Agee Trust transferred the collection to the University of Tennessee Special Collections Library; there all of the papers were catalogued, and the report was discovered among the remains.

About one-third of *Cotton Tenants* first appeared for the first time anywhere in issue number 19 of *The Baffler*, which was released in March 2012. A partnership then was struck up between *The Baffler* and Melville House to bring out the remainder as a short book. The result appeared in June to brisk sales and widespread acclaim. *Cotton Tenants*, our first book editing project, was hailed as a major cultural event.

**“In *Cotton Tenants*, we get the rare chance to examine a masterpiece’s source material. Agee writes with clinical, angry precision.”**

—*Boston Globe*

“Highbrow . . . brilliant.”

—*New York magazine*

“*Cotton Tenants* displays all the qualities that characterize great magazine journalism. It presents, wholesale, a world. It is straightforward and brutally concise. It does not elide its subject’s moral or cultural complexities. Agee refuses to let the reader sit passively in the posture of armchair poverty tourist; he manages to show us real human lives, then implicates the reader, and himself, in real human pain.”

—*The Atlantic*

“Agee’s gaze is compassionate, keen. What we see is not merely a poet looking at poverty, but one learning to navigate his gifts, who merges into everything he sees.”

—*NPR*

“A masterpiece of the magazine reporter’s art. It is lucid, evocative, empathetic, deeply reported, consistently surprising, plainly argued, and illuminated, page after page, with poetic leaps of transcendent clarity.”

—*Fortune*



A Paean to Forbearance (the Rough Draft)

“Agee squabbled with his editors. . . . What readers are about to discover now is what all the fighting was about.”

—*New York Times*,  
June 3, 2013

MARK S. FISHER



***The Baffler* found its voice assailing the souvenirs of the pop culture industry and ridiculing the rebel consumers who lapped them up. MTV, Madonna, Quentin Tarantino, Generation X, “alternative music,” and *Wired Magazine* turned up in these pages not as hip, cool, avant-garde cultural productions, but as triumphs of demographic marketing.**

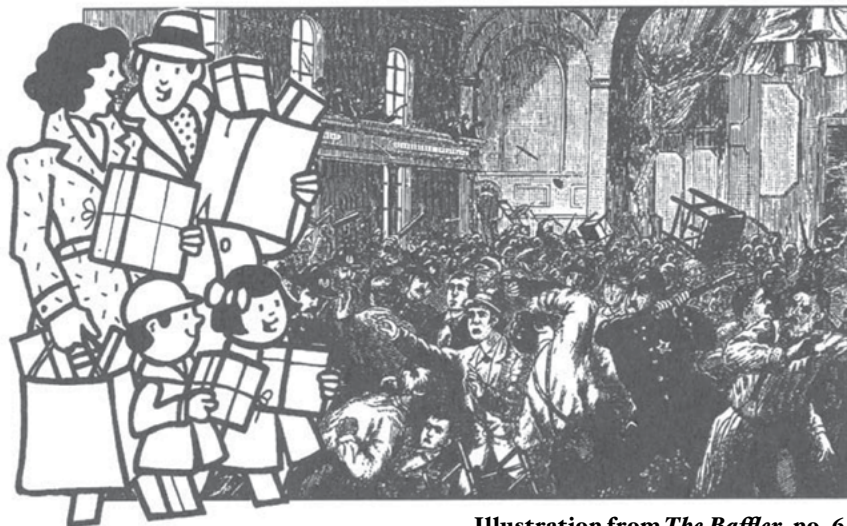
## ***The Baffler* Archive**

**T***he Baffler* always was a bona fide cultural success, so the big money never touched it. “Our review will be neither the tool of a University ‘creative writing’ program nor the slick product of a great publishing house,” the first editorial statement declared in 1988. A third possibility—that its independence should hardly disqualify it from receiving support from a philanthropic foundation—was fanciful.

Midway through the Spring 2001 production of issue number 14, “The God that Sucked,” the operation and most all its inventory went up in smoke. “Years of incendiary cultural criticism finally achieved ignition,” the editors gamely explained. “A pre-dawn fire swept through our office, awakening residents of Chicago’s South Side to the unmistakable smell of burning *Bafflers*.” Regular publication never resumed.

At a Labor Day caucus in 2011, the magazine’s founding crew decided to turn over the keys to the operation neither to a university creative writing program nor to a great publishing house, but to a smaller, poorer, and less experienced crew in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And as the printed magazine continues on, we’ve made the entire archive—all 400 contributors, 251 salvos, 337 illustrations, 160 poems, 70 stories, 23 issues, 3,013 pages, and 1,188,272 words (and counting)—available at **thebaffler.com**. Thank the wonders of cutting edge technology and the dubious science of outsourcing magazine digitization to small Asian countries.

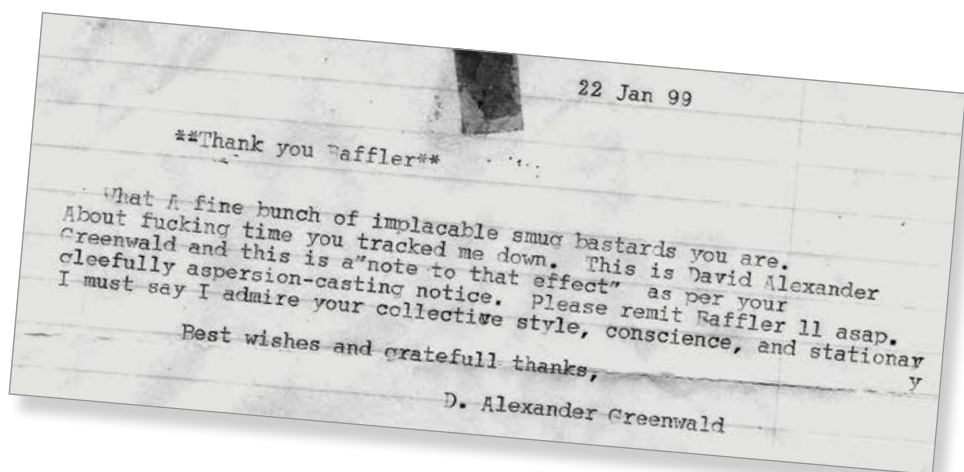




MATT ROTH

Illustration from *The Baffler*, no. 6.

“Thanks for your publication,” one early reader chimed in. “Instead of people not understanding me, I can give them a *Baffler* and have them not understand you.”



Letter from a patient and loyal *Baffler* subscriber.

## Unlikely Titles

- I'm Ok Eeyore Ok
- One Thing About a Goat
- Crazy Times Call for Repressive Organizations
- Sweet Portable Lifestyle
- Remember We're in the Duck Lot
- Screw Capital of the World
- Give the Millionaire a Drink
- Is It Solipsistic In Here, Or Is It Just Me?

## Dictionary

**Chicago Mercantile Exchange:** “Like a sports bar. Throngs of grown-up frat-boy traders stare at numbers flashing on a gigantic screen. *Animal House* lookalikes pump their fists.”

—Kim Phillips-Fein, “Chapters of Eleven,”  
*Baffler* no. 11

**Culture Wars:** “A paint-by-numbers ritual in which the warring parties trade accusations of depravity, repression, and historical obsolescence, with the state usually conscripted as referee.”

—Chris Lehmann, “Boom Crash Opera: Shadowboxing in the Culture Bubble,” *Baffler* no. 10

**entrepreneur:** “Part shaman, part huckster. Possesses the gift of oracular communion with the murky forces of market trends, and stands ready to exploit it with the most shameless opportunism.”

—Bill Boisvert, “Apostles of the New Entrepreneur: Business Books and the Management Crisis,”  
*Baffler* no. 6

**interns:** “Walking, talking demographic surveys who tell executives what is cool and what sucks. In exchange, they get free MTV stuff!”

—Jim Frederick, “Internment Camp: The Intern Economy and the Culture Trust,” *Baffler* no. 9

**pop music:** “I love love, I’m sad sometimes, I like cars, I’m my own person, I’m something of a rebel, I’m a cowboy on a steel horse I ride.”

—Thomas Frank, “Alternative to What?”  
*Baffler* no. 5



## The Great Grunge Hoax of 1992

When the *New York Times* Style section unknowingly printed a phony glossary of “grunge speak” in 1992, having been fooled by a member of that particular subculture, it was *The Baffler* that first reported the prank: “When the Newspaper of Record goes searching for the Next Big Thing, and the Next Big Thing piddles on its leg, we think that’s funny.”

### GRUNGE SPEAK

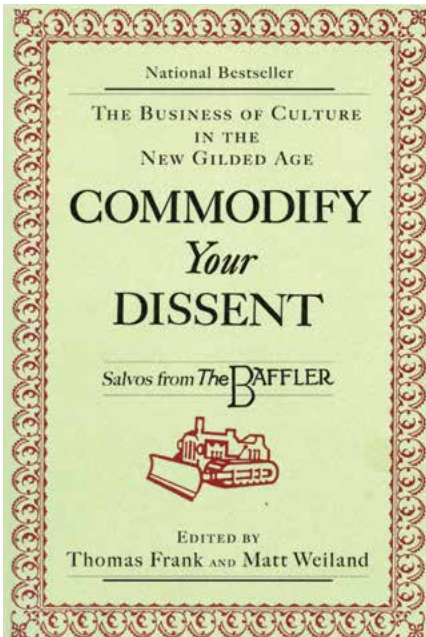
- WACK SLACKS: Old ripped jeans
- FUZZ: Heavy wool sweaters
- PLATS: Platform shoes
- KICKERS: Heavy boots
- SWINGIN’ ON THE FLIPPITY-FLOP: Hanging out
- BOUND-AND-HAGGED: Staying home on Friday or Saturday night
- SCORE: Great
- HARSH REALM: Bummer
- COB NOBBLER: Loser
- DISH: Desirable guy
- BLOATED, BIG BAG OF BLOATATION: Drunk
- LAMESTAIN: Uncool person
- ROCK ON: A happy goodbye

**“I’ve already started calling my torn jeans ‘wack slacks.’ I’d like to be a little ahead of the curve for a change.”**

—Calvin Trillin,  
“You Don’t Have to Wear ‘Wack Slacks’ To Be Hip,”  
*Newsweek*, Feb. 17, 1993

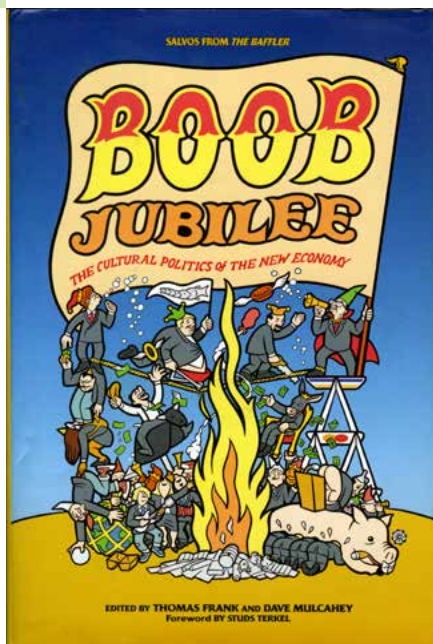
**“How annoying!”**

—Penelope Green,  
*New York Times* Style section editor



*Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler* (Norton, 1997), edited by Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, with a preface by Lewis Lapham

*Boob Jubilee: The Cultural Politics of the New Economy* (Norton, 2003), edited by Thomas Frank and Dave Mulcahey, with a preface by Studs Terkel





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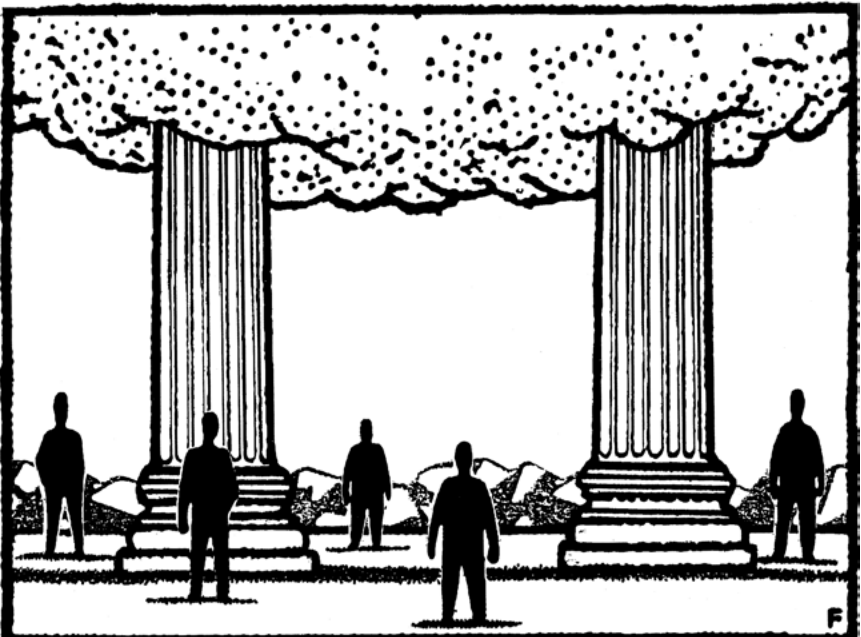


BRAD HOLLAND

# The BÄFFLER

[www.thebaffler.com](http://www.thebaffler.com)

MADE IN THE USA



MARK S. FISHER

P.O. Box 390049  
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