

The Baffler

IMPACT STATEMENT 2016



**“Oh, Christ! I’m sure you’d like
some uplifting remarks of some kind.”**

*—Doris Lessing,
upon winning the Nobel Prize for Literature*

The Baffler

IMPACT
STATEMENT
~ 2016 ~



THE BAFFLER FOUNDATION, INC.

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The Baffler Foundation Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated in January 2011 “to promote art, science, and education by publishing a literary magazine.”

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A Year in Baffling

Welp, at the end of 2014, we promised we would squirm free of our university press overlords and hazard *The Baffler's* new fortunes in the wilds of independent publishing. Why in the world? In truth, the decision was a mark of confidence *and* a leap of faith, a nod to the “as-if” attitude handed down by our rebel ancestors—act “as if” today’s America is a time and place where an independent magazine can reach through the fog and change minds, and you help make it so. The as-if attitude, granted, requires you to discern hope from fantasy. But it’s more fun than pessimism, and more responsible than passivity.

And it works. Let 2015 mark the year we took back the means of baffling. We opened a new business office in New York to work in concert with our editorial HQ in Harvard Square. With our staff doubled and our capacities uncorked, we produced the largest three issues in *The Baffler's* history—on the rule of fashion (**Venus in Furs**), the dance of violence and empathy (**Battle Hymns**), and the family unit as a fulcrum for furthering economic inequality (**The Family That Preys Together**). That’s 624 handsomely appointed printed pages, evidence of art and criticism with a spine, in support of which we organized public events in Chicago, Baltimore, and elsewhere.

Meanwhile, we tore down the paywall on our website and fine-tuned our frequency in the vast digital multiverse, ringing up blog posts and daily bafflements. Alongside the complete contents of the print issues, we published 160 web-only essays, including an especially popular one about the crossbreeding of Labrador retrievers and poodles (called, yes, “The Labradoodle Racket”). Over the course of the year, our social media following grew by thirty percent. Thirty!

What are we learning? That the twenty-first century merger of elite business, politics, and entertainment has left a popular yen for unbought opinion, reporting, and literary scribbling? Yes. That artists, writers, and readers feel their aspirations are wasted by a society interested only in marketable skills, yet find refuge in essays, poems, and short stories that refuse to talk down to them? You bet.

The Baffler is a personal cliché-decoder, a counter-example to the supposedly inevitable structural forces in media and

MARK S. FISHER



The Baffler

The Baffler

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The Baffler



scholarship that have dismantled publications like ours and bottomed out expectations of quality.

Born at the dawn of the New Economy and then reborn amid the recent global recession, this magazine has been calling out the market-worshipping consensus for more than a quarter-century. 2015 proved once more that *The Baffler's* value is evergreen, as fresh and as durable as pecuniary explanations of reality are distorted.

As the year wore on and the bugles of Trumpism blared, new subscriptions came in from grateful readers. We saw boomlets not only in East Coast cities like Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, but also in Houston and Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. In 2016, we are upping the ante, moving the magazine to a quarterly publication schedule for the first time in *The Baffler's* history and adding a new slate of web columnists.

This Impact Statement is a running scorecard of our start-up years. Flip though for a general survey of our programs from 2012 through 2015, and for a loving look at our history from the beginning, when Ronald Reagan started the mess we're in. Don't listen to the nincompoops who maintain the forces of reaction have triumphed and the country's soul has wandered. We are living in a great age of magazines, on the lip of a renaissance in critical thinking. Ignore the naysayers' insistence that nobody reads any longer. They do. They read *The Baffler*.

—John Summers, December 31, 2015



The Baffler

the journal that blunts the cutting edge

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 and Taboo*—March 2013

No. 23 *A Carnival of Buncombe*—July 2013

No. 24 *The Fig Is Up!*—January 2014

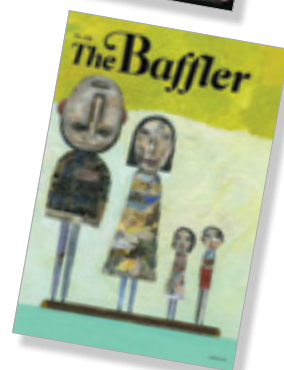
No. 25 *The None and the Many*—June 2014

No. 26 *Sickness and Pelf*—October 2014

No. 27 *Venus in Furs*—February 2015

No. 28 *Battle Hymns*—July 2015

No. 29 *The Family That Preys Together*—October 2015

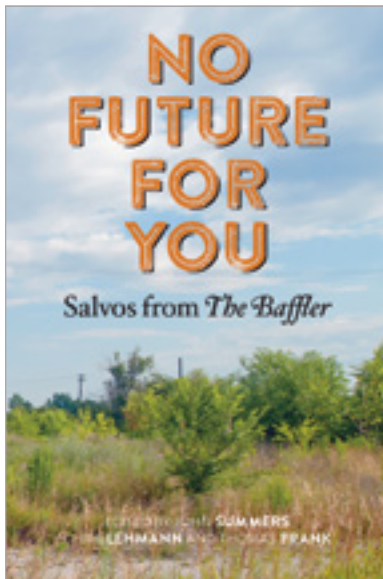
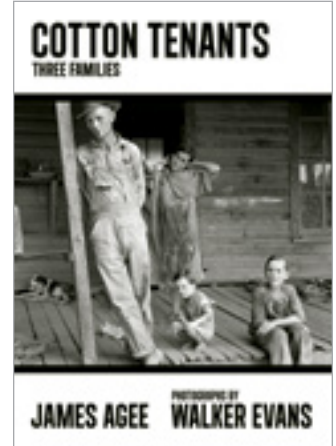




BOOKS!

Cotton Tenants: Three Families. By James Agee. Photographs by Walker Evans. Edited by John Summers. Introduction by Adam Haslett. (*The Baffler*/Melville House, 2013; 224 pages, hardcover, \$24.95.) Also published in foreign editions as *Une saison de coton: Trois familles de métayers* (France: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 2014) and *Algodoneros: Tres familias de arrendatarios* (Spain: Capitán Swing Libros, 2014).

No Future for You: Salvos from The Baffler. Edited by John Summers, Chris Lehmann, and Thomas Frank. (*The Baffler*/MIT Press, 2014; 392 pages, hardcover, \$27.95.) Published in French as *Le Pire des Mondes Possibles* (Editions Agone, 2015.)



EVENTS!

BAFFLER EVENTS [2015]

January 22

The Tsarnaev Trial and the Rest of Us
w/ Noam Chomsky and Kade Crockford
Lilypad, Cambridge, MA

March 18

Venus in Furs: Issue 27 Release Party
w/ Lucy Ellmann, Ann Friedman, Anna Holmes,
and Eugenia Williamson
(Le) Poisson Rouge, New York, NY

April 23

Baffler Happy Hour
w/ *The Baffler* staff and friends
The Ninth Ward, New York, NY

April 27

Baffler Happy Hour
w/ George Scialabba, John Summers,
Catherine Tumber, and Eugenia Williamson
Lilypad, Cambridge, MA

May 31

Man Is Not a Rock
w/ the Odnazhdi Theater Company
The Secret Speakeasy, New York, NY

July 31

The Baffler in Baltimore: Issue 28 Release Party
w/ John Summers and Alex Pareene
Red Emma's, Baltimore, MD


FROM *The Baffler* No. 27

Man Is Not a Rock




Joseph Brodsky
with Elizabeth
Markstein

PRODUCED BY
ANYA
KHALAMAYZER
AND THE
ODNAZHDI
THEATER
COMPANY

*The Secret
Speakeasy*
Sunday, May 31
5:00 p.m.
The Lofts
177 Prince Street
New York City
\$25
Tickets available
at
thebaffler.com/events



© 2015, 2016P4 (04/06/15) 27

This project is part of COJECO BluePrint Fellowship funded by the USA Federation of New York and Genesis Philanthropy Group.

September 10

Three Cheers for George Scialabba!
w/ Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich,
Thomas Frank, Rick Perlstein, Nikil Saval,
and John Summers
The Brattle Theatre, Cambridge, MA

October 17

**Chicago—Their City and Ours:
A Forum on Developmental Disorder**
w/ Jitu Brown, Tom Geoghegan, Chris Lehmann,
and Rick Perlstein
International House, Chicago, IL

November 9

**The Family That Preys Together:
Issue 29 Release Party**
w/ *The Baffler* staff and friends
The Plough and Stars, Cambridge, MA

December 15

***The Baffler's* Holiday Party**
w/ *The Baffler* staff and friends
Happy Ending Lounge, New York, NY

BAFFLER EVENTS [2014]

March 26

James Agee's *Cotton Tenants*
w/ John Summers
Arlington Community Education Center,
Arlington, MA

June 10

Issue 25 Release Party
w/ *The Baffler* staff
Mobius Gallery, Cambridge, MA

September 13

No Future for Journalism
w/ Thomas Frank, Chris Lehmann, and Jim Newell
Politics & Prose Book Store, Washington, DC

September 13

**Feminism for What?
Equality in the Workplace After Lean In**
w/ Susan Faludi
John Jay College, New York, NY

September 19

Where Did the Future Go?
w/ David Graeber, Peter Thiel, and John Summers
General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen,
New York, NY

October 13

No Future for Chicago
w/ Rick Perlstein, Lindsey Gilbert,
and Anne Elizabeth Moore
Seminary Coop, Chicago, IL

October 20

No Future for Seattle
w/ Thomas Frank, Rick Perlstein, and John Summers
Town Hall Seattle, Seattle, WA

THE BAFFLER IMPACT STATEMENT

October 21

No Future for Portland

w/ Thomas Frank, Rick Perlstein, and John Summers
Powell's City of Books, Portland, OR

October 22

No Future for San Francisco

w/ Thomas Frank and John Summers
City Lights Bookstore, San Francisco, CA

October 24

No Future for Santa Barbara

w/ John Summers
University of California, Santa Barbara, CA

October 30

Sickness and Pelf: Issue 26 Release Party

w/ George Scialabba and Gary Greenberg
Lilypad, Cambridge, MA

December 18

The Baffler Anti-Holiday Party

w/ Astra Taylor and Joanne McNeil
Lilypad, Cambridge, MA

BAFFLER EVENTS [2013]

April 6

Issue 22 Release Party

w/ David Graeber and John Summers
Causes, San Francisco, CA

[THE BAFFLER HAPPY HOUR]


bLab

Venus in Furs

CELEBRATING *THE BAFFLER* (NO. 27)

Monday, April 27, 2015
at the *Lilypad*
1353 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts
6 pm - 8 pm
Beer, wine, vibrancy soda,
drowned-tear cupcakes
(Not another networking event)

RSVP at thebaffler.com/events



BRAD HOLLAND

September 18

**The Baffler and Melville House
Celebrate James Agee**
w/ John Summers and Chris Lehmann
Melville House Books, Brooklyn, NY

October 10

**Academy Fight Song:
Issue 23 Release Party**
w/ Thomas Frank and John Summers
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

October 30

**Why Higher Education Sucks:
Issue 23 Release Party**
w/ Thomas Frank and John Summers
University of Texas, Austin, TX

BAFFLER EVENTS [2012]

April 2

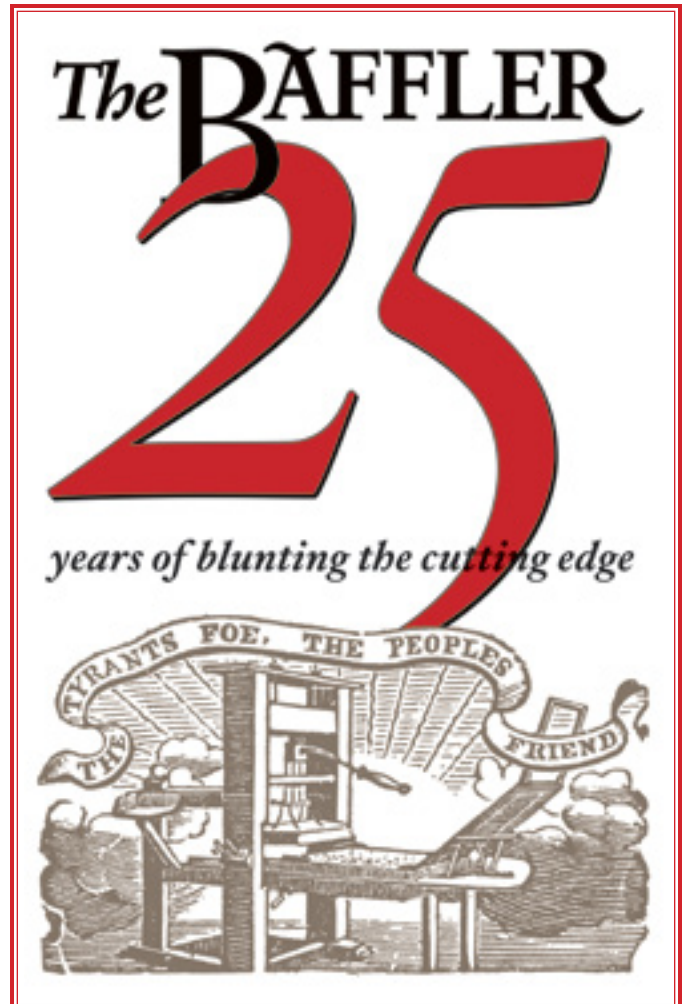
BIFx: The Baffler Innovation Forum
w/ John Summers, Chris Lehmann,
Barbara Ehrenreich, and David Graeber
Housing Works Bookstore, New York, NY

April 9

Issue 19 Release Party
w/ John Summers and Thomas Frank
Harvard Book Store, Cambridge, MA

November 27

Ayn Rand Game Show: Issue 21 Release Party
w/ Thomas Frank and Julie Klausner
Housing Works Bookstore, New York, NY



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who are you, anyway?

A: We are a loose collective of disaffiliated critics, freelance knowledge workers, overeducated poets, illustrators, closet utopians and disenfranchised philosophers. We produce *The Baffler* as a quarterly literary magazine in print and digital editions, speak up online every day, and throw raucous parties around the country.

Q: Hmm. Where are you typically?

A: The basement of Old Cambridge Baptist Church in Harvard Square serves as our editorial headquarters. Our new publishing office sprang into action last year on West 21st Street in New York. Contributors, supporters, and subscribers hail from across the United States and many other countries where Uncle Sam is present and unaccounted for.

Q: Do you have a mission statement or something?

A: Nah, nothing so fancy or restrictive as a mission statement. Our motto has always been “the journal that blunts the cutting edge”—which leads us to jab at the zeitgeist of brands, icons, and pet ideologies that keep contemporary America so confused. In addition to landing productively unproductive jabs, we enjoy kicking back, limbering up, and mulling over eternal issues like sex, play, friendship, fashion, health, family, and war.

Q: Can't you just self-medicate, like everyone else?

A: Oh, we try. But we live on tight budgets, and our prescription drug plans aren't exactly up to snuff.

Q: That's enough about you. Where can I tell you what I think about *The Baffler*?

A: We will be happy to receive evidence of your brain on *Baffler*. We'll file your missive under hate mail or love letters, depending.

By the Numbers

29 issues

460 contributors

334 salvos

189 poems

83 stories

4,131 pages

1,666,644 words

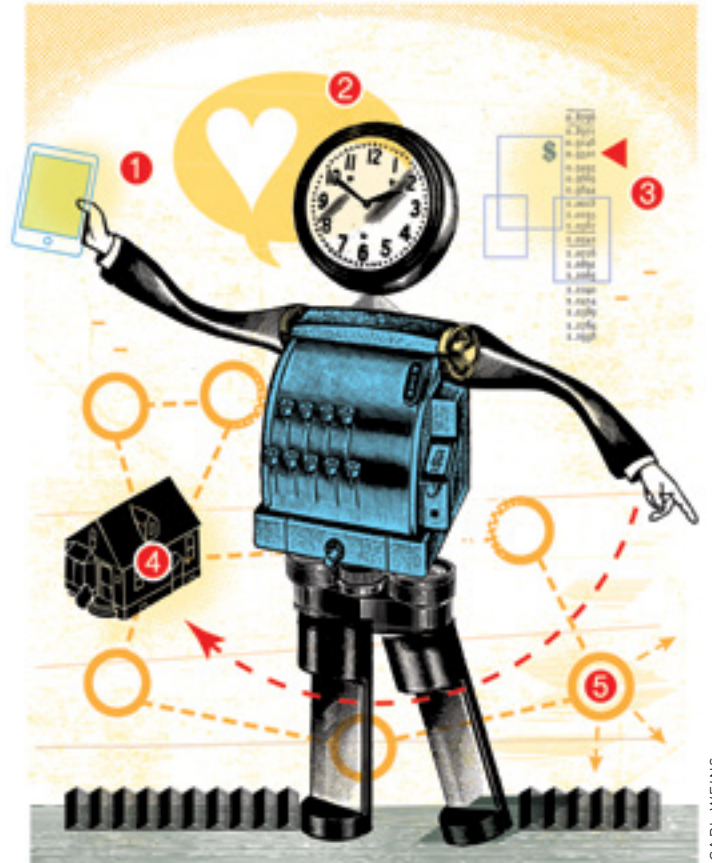
1988-2015

Q: Now that I'm feeling a little more appreciated, I might like to consider volunteering for you—or maybe sending my nephew Spencer over for an internship. Spencer just graduated from Brown, and he's looking for something to do.

A: With a dozen full-time members of our staff, we continue to expand and invest in our employees. On occasion, we hire for special projects. Tell Spencer to follow us on social media to receive announcements of that kind.

Q: But I asked about your internship program.

A: We don't have one. No interns are used in the making of *The Baffler*. Back in 1997 we published Jim Frederick's "Internment Camp: The Intern Economy and the Culture Trust," which lodged a protest against unpaid labor as a symptom of the collapse of the cultural economy. Sorry, all staff and contributors are paid.



CARL WEINS

Other People's Opinions

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 compendium of literary curveballs.”

—*New York Times*

“The original ethos seems largely intact: beautifully discontented prose written by people who'd rather be out scrapping. Quite right, too.”

—*The Guardian*

“Arguably the standard-bearer for the latest generation of non-mainstream publications. The writers possess a contagious enthusiasm for showing how today's profiteers have caked so much lipstick on the pig that you can hardly see its face.”

—*Washington Post*

“Like *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*

“If you have a critical bone left in your aching post-millennial body, you owe it to yourself to seek out this avatar of a new level of intelligent polemic.”

—*Santa Barbara Independent*

“More beautiful, more timely, and more relevant than ever.”

—*Columbia Journalism Review*

“Bracingly witty.”

—*SF Weekly*

“A murderer’s row of lefty thinkers.” —*Boston Globe*

“If arch anticapitalist rhetoric and scatological takedowns of corporate media aren’t your cuppa, *The Baffler* publishes a nice variety of fiction and poetry, too. Have at it.” —*The Paris 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*

“The art is stunning. This is truly one of the outstanding venues for editorial illustration.”

—*Illustration Age*

“A perfect moment for *The Baffler*’s kind of cultural criticism to be revived.” —*The New Yorker*



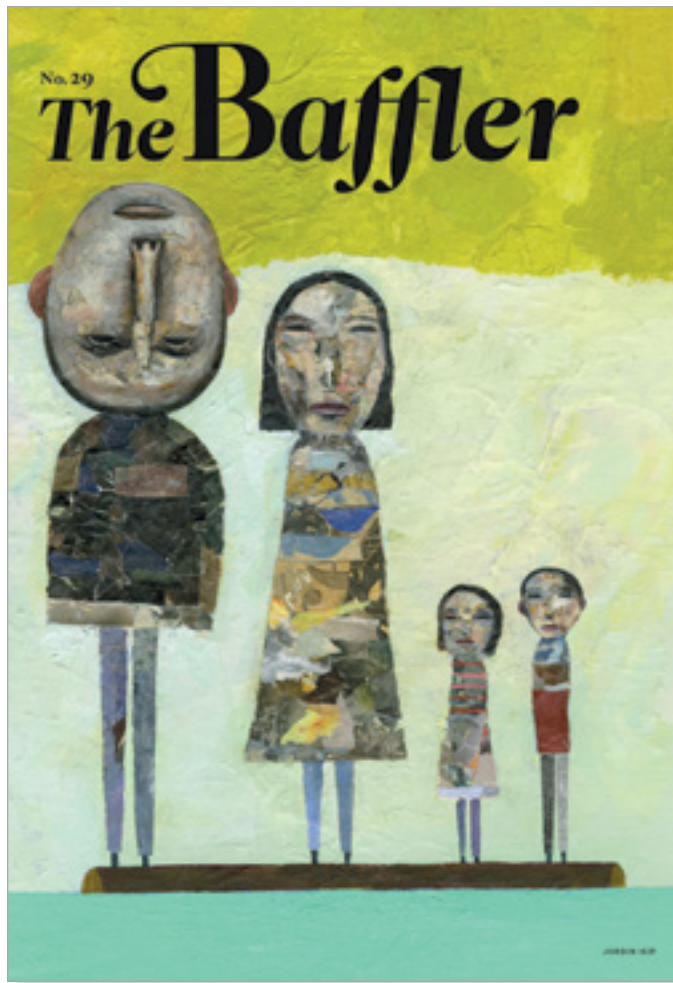
ART YOUNG

MELINDA BECK



2015





The Baffler no. 29 with cover art by Jordin Isip.

The Family That Preys Together

Tolstoy’s chestnut on families and unhappiness is nowhere quoted in *The Baffler* no. 29, our unsentimental family issue. True, toddlers in Los Angeles routinely die from abuse, unsaved by California’s squadrons of “family preservation workers,” while dysfunctional families living in the hull of the American dream have to put up with pious social scientists from Harvard telling them to get their houses in order. But some families seem pretty darn happy in their very own special ways! Two of the candidates for 2016’s presidential coronation are members of the same exceptional dynasties that, between them, have occupied the White House for twenty of the last twenty-seven years.

Spend some time with our family issue, and it will guide you along the contemporary fault lines of this most sanctified institution, with commentary on overaccumulating fortunes, the ugly fallout from the Ashley Madison hack, teenage vloggers, and family sitcoms.

🔴 TOM CARSON

“*The Addams Family* and its rip-off epigone, *The Munsters*, made a seductive case for family life as a secret funhouse of untrammled self-expression and joyous eccentricity. But they could only do so by announcing up front that they were absurd. Elsewhere on the dial, all sorts of fraught domestic hurly-burly was getting itself sublimated in the most underrated of all sixties TV genres. The vogue for surreal sitcoms featuring witches, genies, Martians, and talking horses—and the men desperate to keep the secret—is as eloquent as can be about the pressure-cooker stresses undermining middle-class America’s postwar facade.”

—Tom Carson, “Clans of the Cathode,”
The Baffler (no. 29)

“In a beauty of a *Baffler* piece, Tom Carson, great stylist of the Magazine Era, thinks the bejeezus out of the history of families depicted on American TV sitcoms.” —*Afflictor.com*

🔴 NATASHA VARGAS-COOPER

“Over the decades, child welfare policy has become entrenched in a middle ground, the site of flimsy—and often fatal—compromises between child safety and the rights of parents. There are a number of important, incremental reforms that could help. But all these measures stop well short of what would likely be the best shot at improving the life chances of children and parents alike: making families less poor.”

—Natasha Vargas-Cooper, “Cradle to Grave,”
The Baffler (no. 29)



STEPHEN KRONINGER



KEITH NEGELY

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A mother brings her son to see a psychotherapist. After the session, the doctor comes out of the office looking grave.

"Well doctor," she asks him, "what's wrong with him?"

"Madam," replies the Doctor, "I'm sorry to inform you that your son is suffering from the Oedipus complex."

"Oh Doctor, I'm so, so relieved," she says. "Oedipus Shmoedipus—as long as he loves his mother."

The Baffler no. 29 table of contents.

🌹 NEDA SEMNANI

“When the revolution happened, the shah went into exile, and Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran, my parents raced back to Iran joyfully. Planes out of California, New York, and Europe were filled with Iranian students, activists, and revolutionaries, leftists and Islamists both, singing revolutionary anthems. They were euphoric and full of hope for the country’s future. When they landed on Iranian soil, my mother said that the leftists fell to their knees and kissed the tarmac, while the Islamists hailed both Allah and Khomeini. But as quickly as the moment came, it passed.”

—Neda Semnani, “Memoirs of a Revolutionary’s Daughter,” *The Baffler* (no. 29)

“Beautiful, heart-wrenching piece.” —*John Stanton*

🌹 JACOB SILVERMAN

“The leak of thirty-plus gigabytes of data from Ashley Madison, the pro-infidelity dating site, brought the cultural logic of the moment to some kind of perverse perfection. With all of the florid maximalism of a Michael Bay film, the hack proved that information about ourselves we might hold private and dear shall be, in due course—inescapably, you bet—spilled faster than a two-pump chump six beers into Saturday night. On cue, the usual doleful cultural assessments arrived alongside the tidal wave of hacked data to scold a site promoting covert infidelity. As moral failings go, hypocrisy appeals to the easily shocked, the naive, or the deeply cynical.”

—Jacob Silverman, “Paterfamilias, Kaput,” *The Baffler* (no. 29)



SCOTT BAKAL



AMANDA KONISHI



VICTOR KERLOW

❧ KAREN OLSSON

“McFarlane would return from a meeting and lament, The president has been misinformed! It’s bad policy! All right, Tim says. Let’s put together some information for him. But his boss bristles at that, ever loath to contradict his commander. Instead he contradicts himself: It’s not a matter of information, he says. And then, just as quickly as this upset emerged, it is suppressed. Redacted. A thick black line is drawn over his covert turmoil. McFarlane places the studious mask back over his face and asks Tim to pull up an unrelated document. Then he asks whether Poindexter is in, nodding at the closed door to his deputy’s office.”

—Karen Olsson, from the novel *All the Houses*,
The Baffler (no. 29)

❧ CARTER RATCLIFF

Whatever happened to that sexy knack you had,
the knack of coming to life on cue?

Through this day’s din
and the haze that amplifies the din,
and reduces it to online rumination,
I can hear your voice, almost, warm
and empty in the way that tells us

you were just this regular person
with this marvelous talent.
What we saw was what we got.
And it was never, in its moment,
not precisely enough.

—Carter Ratcliff, from the poem “Tomb of
the Unknown Celebrity,” *The Baffler* (no. 29)

George Scialabba Day

Seizing a chance to celebrate the uncelebrated, to invert the values of office hierarchy, to exalt the uncredentialed emanations of a monkish book reviewer on Harvard's clerical staff over the blare of the tenured pipsqueaks that make up its vaunted academic establishment, we decided to throw our George Scialabba a star-spangled retirement party—as if he were a big shot. We produced a tribute film, recruited a brass band and a slate of speakers, and formed, through the miracle of stationery, a facetious lobbying group, the Committee to Preserve George Scialabba and Others Like Him (If Any), that successfully importuned the Cambridge City Council to proclaim September 10, 2015, the day of our event, “George Scialabba Day.”

Long after the art galleries, poetry corners, used bookshops, jazz clubs, and book review sections went the way of glassblowers and typewriter repairmen, we rocked the house.

“A campy retirement party . . . a cackling jab at the pomp and officiousness Scialabba himself so utterly lacks . . . Scialabba’s retirement party was quaint but also extravagant; at the end, two brass bands took the stage and charged down the aisles, a conga line snaking behind them as chants and cheers mingled with the honk of instruments. Chomsky gave a long speech, and Thomas Frank poured malt liquor into his champagne flute, which he then thrust upward in an irreverent toast.”

—*The New Yorker*

“If you’re a reader willing to challenge your tenderly cultivated prejudices, or a writer who appreciates a literary high-wire act executed with compelling understatement, or an academic with the wit to recognize the smelly little orthodoxies of your trade for what they are, then place a honking large flag on your calendar for Three Cheers for George Scialabba.

—*WGBH News*

“Three Cheers for George Scialabba” is a paradox of sorts: a gala send-off not for a literary lion or public luminary, but for a largely unheralded clerical worker and scribe.”

—*Boston Globe*



JOSEPH BLOUGH

“The first sign that this was no ordinary literary event was the lady wandering around with a sousaphone.”

—*The Nation*

The Baffler No. 28 | July 2015



The Baffler no. 28 with cover art by Mohammed Sami.

Battle Hymns

Long before the triumph of Stand Your Ground gun legislation, the overlapping Grand Guignols of the Iraq invasion and ISIS's rise, or the release of the latest cinematic blood orgy at the multiplex, America's political id was drenched in blood. Call it the uncivil society—especially since we typically wreak the most destructive sort of violence under the agreeable enabling conceit of the millennial civilizing mission.

In “Battle Hymns,” we scope out the war of all against all: the social compact that turns war-resisters into cowards; the consumerist fantasias of the *Zombie Apocalypse*; the theology of arms-bearing; and the disingenuous reveries of social peace plied by our best-known vendors of American mayhem, the producers of cable news.

❧ ALEX PAREENE

“If we lay the cable coverage of the Baltimore riots side by side with the same networks’ ISIS fixation, something very close to a photographic negative emerges. In the case of ISIS, the inescapable brutality of videotaped murder seems to make the case for a violent response. But in diametric contrast to the ISIS coverage, newscasters urge Americans outraged by the extrajudicial assassination of citizens by police officers to remain calm and peaceful, and to attempt to address their grievances through diplomacy, persuasion, and (eventually) the voting booths.”

—Alex Pareene, “Cable News Charnel,” *The Baffler* (no. 28)

“Cable news ‘reinforces the status quo,’ and it has always been *The Baffler’s* goal to upend that same status quo.”

—*Baltimore City Paper*

❧ DAVID GRAEBER

“Our first instinct when we observe unprovoked aggression is either to pretend it isn’t happening or, if that becomes impossible, to equate attacker and victim, placing both under a kind of contagion. This may help us understand why we find it so difficult to extend our sympathies to, among others, fleeing Iraqi conscripts gunned down in ‘turkey shoots’ by U.S. warriors. We apply the same logic we did when passively watching some childhood bully terrorizing his flailing victim: we insist that everyone is equally guilty.”

—David Graeber, “The Bully’s Pulpit,” *The Baffler* (no. 28)

“A novel take on bullying and the Iraq war.”

—*Wikileaks*



DAVID SUTER



RANDALL ENOS

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		American soul is	
		hard, isolate, stoic,	
		and a killer.”	
		—D. H. LAWRENCE	
			
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❧ NIELA ORR

“On this street corner in Silver Lake, each advertisement is dealing the idea of the freedom to get high, in one way or another, bundled in a comfortable cocoon of class exclusivity. The American Apparel model’s legs open out only toward you, and the warring Mandela and MLK mini-billboards, rented on the occasion of Dr. King’s holiday, speak to your liberal conscience. The atmospheric marijuana cloud that engulfs Los Angeles could be the marijuana strain Blue Dream—a linguistic riff on the myth of the American Dream, itself a kind of hallucinogen.”

—Niela Orr, “Weed, Whitewashed,”
The Baffler (no. 28)

❧ CHASE MADAR

“European thought on violence and government doesn’t survive transatlantic shipping very well. In the American setting, the story of Hobbes’s state, which seizes for itself the exclusive right to force while providing domestic peace in return, has the reassuring and quaint cadence of a sanitized fairy tale. That’s because in North America, the war of all against all has long been seen less as a problem and more as a solution. Let loose in the New World, Leviathan goes feral.”

—Chase Madar, “Have Guns, Will Liberate,”
The Baffler (no. 28)

❧ KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

“So there they were: in the ship, in orbit around Aurora, which was in orbit around Planet E, which orbited



HAZEL LEE SANTINO



VICTOR KERLOW

Tau Ceti, 11.88 light years away from Sol and Earth. Now there were 1,997 people on board, ranging in age from one month to eighty-two years. One hundred twenty-three people had perished, either on Aurora, or in the ferry in the ship's stern dock. Seventy-seven had died in the dock decompression."

—Kim Stanley Robinson, from the novel *Aurora*, *The Baffler* (no. 28)

 **LEV OZEROV**

Glory, after all, is glorious;
he lapped up “bravos”;
the glitter of concert halls
held him in thrall.
Glad of each chance
to further his own fame
he paid his respects
to the Pope and von Karajan,
Stravinsky and Britten,
the Dalai Lama, the Queen.
He was photographed with them,
or rather—they with him:
some PR, others more personal.
He liked snapshots
of the handshake—
inclined heads, coupled hands.

—Lev Ozerov, from the poem “Aram Ilyich Khachaturian,”
The Baffler (no. 28)

Town Hall on Terror

❧ NOAM CHOMSKY AND KADE CROCKFORD

In *Baffler* no. 28, we happily provided a lightly abridged transcript of our neighborhood forum at the Lilypad in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 22, on the subject of the rule of law and the war on terror—or was that the *rule of terror* and the *war on law*?

We invited Kade Crockford of the Massachusetts ACLU and author and MIT professor Noam Chomsky to talk with us about certain overlooked facts and circumstances pertaining to the federal terror trial of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the surviving accused bomber of the 2013 Boston Marathon. With jury selection under way, the people of Boston were said by their media representatives to be not in the mood for unlicensed discussion of larger issues surrounding the judicial proceedings. “*Baffler* sponsors terrorist talk with Noam Chomsky” ran the passive-aggressive headline in the *Boston Globe*.

Thanks a lot for nudging NSA algorithms in our direction, *Globe*, but for the record, our forum was to be a conversation *about* terrorism, one that took nothing for granted—newspaper monopolies least of all.

On April 8, the jury found Tsarnaev guilty on thirty counts in less time than it takes to binge watch the first two seasons of *Orange Is the New Black*, and ultimately sentenced him to death. Tsarnaev himself never testified, and the proceedings—closed to television cameras and media more generally, with only three seats allotted to media—remained opaque.

The nervous silence that greeted the jury selection back in January quickly soured with news that the federal death sentence would be imposed on behalf of the people of Massachusetts, who have made it illegal in the state. That didn’t stop the Boston Police Commissioner from glinting before the television cameras amassed outside the courtroom in order to sum up the triumph of law-and-order over the bad guys. “We send a strong message that we’re not going to tolerate terrorism.”

Yeah, death to martyrs. That’ll teach ‘em.



BRAD HOLLAND

“What can we do about terrorism? One easy suggestion comes to mind: we can stop participating in it.”

—Noam Chomsky

“The FBI now has access to information about all people that J. Edgar Hoover would have salivated over, died for perhaps, certainly killed for.”

—Kade Crockford

—JOHN SUMMERS



The Baffler no. 27 with cover art by Chris Ferrantello.

Venus in Furs

The writing amassed in our first-ever fashion issue amounts to nothing like the cosmetics kits of upmarket, style-addled journalism. We're mindful, instead, that the fashion industry's main proposition—confusing clothing with personal worth—has been a longstanding affront to women, not to mention a handy insignia for encoding and regulating the rules of social class.

The general drabness of American attire is also something to consider. We strap into the uniforms that come with our corporate cubicles, and on weekends don our baseball caps, flannels, sneakers, and mom jeans—the studied, casual look that hipsters have ironically lifted from the working class and that fashion pundits are wont to call “Normcore.”

Well, like the boy said (more or less): the empire has nothing to wear.

🍷 EUGENIA WILLIAMSON

“Woe betide any actual mother, her lower abdomen distended in pregnancy’s aftermath, who tries to pull off mom jeans. On all but the sveltest frames, they look frumpy, unflattering, and hopelessly out of touch. It takes a lithe physique and other signifiers of privilege to put quotation marks around apparel that, under most circumstances, reads as clueless or careless.”

—Eugenia Williamson, “The Revolution Will Probably Wear Mom Jeans,” *The Baffler* (no. 27)

“There are some who argue the return of mom jeans marks the death of alt youth culture. Okay, only *The Baffler* argues that.”

—*The New Republic*

🍷 BEN SCHWARTZ

“We’re used to comedians speaking truth to power. But in 2014, comedy was stolen from the professional jokesters by their traditional targets and became, unexpectedly, the new language of power, policy, and politics. Now we have a smirking CIA, a healthcare overhaul that was sold via vaudeville sketch, and a president whose signature moment is the night he cracked jokes at a White House Correspondents’ Dinner while a U.S. Navy SEAL team invaded Pakistan to assassinate Osama bin Laden. Increasingly, the established culture seeks to inoculate itself from the complaints of the satirist by appropriating the satirist’s voice.”

—Ben Schwartz, “Satirized for Your Consumption,” *The Baffler* (no. 27)

“Required reading.” —*Patton Oswalt*



HOLLIE CHASTAIN



RANDY ENOS

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EVGENY MOROZOV

“Today, it’s obvious to me that technology criticism, uncoupled from any radical project of social transformation, simply doesn’t have the goods. By slicing the world into two distinct spheres—the technological and the non-technological—it quickly regresses into the worst kind of solipsistic idealism, paying far more attention to drummed-up, theoretical ideas about technology than to real struggles in the here and now.”

—Evgeny Morozov, “The Taming of Tech Criticism,” *The Baffler* (no. 27)

“Morozov points out the essential conservatism at the heart of most technology criticism.”

—MIT Technology Review

“Morozov’s intellect is admirably fierce and hungry.”

—Nicholas Carr

CHRIS LEHMANN

“One of the first pieces I reported for Yahoo News concerned the tactic, favored among some militia groups, of committing crimes in order to ambush law enforcement personnel. Before the post went live, I fielded an anxious phone call from a senior manager in Santa Monica. He was alarmed that we were reporting on this practice for a simple reason: ‘I haven’t heard of this before.’ I struggled to find a diplomatic way to explain that publishing things that readers hadn’t heard before was, in fact, the definition of ‘news.’ But news and its safekeeping were concepts that the Yahoo management corps would find difficult to digest throughout my tenure. To lovingly ‘curate’ (as the IT



VICTOR JUHASZ



MICHAEL DUFFY

term of art goes) a version of current events to mirror readers' hobbies, taste preferences, and browsing histories is to downgrade journalism into the stuff of Pinterest posting—strangely pleasing in many cases, like a warm bath for an infant, but serving no larger civic good.”

—Chris Lehmann, “Purple Reign,” *The Baffler* (no. 27)

“A clarifying critique that should be required reading for anyone interested in the ills of journalism in the Internet age.” —*Washington Post*



HAZEL LEE SANTINO

❧ MONICA BYRNE

“Merely holding the wafer on her tongue was no longer enough. She took to stealing the consecrated wafer from Mass altogether. She found a way to tuck the wafer into a fold of her wimple. After Mass, then, she did not have to rush. She merely found a quiet moment to slip away to her room. Sitting on her bed, she withdrew the wafer and stared at it in her hands. *This is God Himself.* And then she would reach under her bed to select a jar.”

—Monica Byrne, from the story “Gustus Dei,” *The Baffler* (no. 27)

❧ WILLIAM CORBETT

He came into the Grolier
carrying his head,
hungover like death.
He told of the time
he'd come into a class
and to introduce himself
written his name, hand
shaking, on the blackboard.
He turned and saw rows
of puzzled faces then turned
back to the board then back
to the class, "They didn't hire
me," ash shook from his hand,
"for my penmanship."



LOU BEACH

—William Corbett, from the poem "Berryman Anecdote," *The Baffler* (no. 27)



DAVID MCLIMANS

2014





The Baffler no. 26 with cover art by Ruth Marten.

Sickness and Pelf

We are happy/sad to present an issue on the culture of medicine and certain undiagnosed psychopathologies of everyday life in America.

To get into the diagnostic frame of mind, just call up a few gauzy scenes from your last visit to a U.S. hospital. Or consider that, next to prisons, barracks, and churches, hospitals are the institutions most prone to enforce our submission to absolute authority. All those masks, Latinate insignia, and robes—they front a veritable epidemic of errors, unnecessary surgeries, addictive medications, failing devices, and, oh yes, infections. Falling mentally ill is itself virtually a crime now, judging from the condition of our country's incarcerated persons.

These are the perspectives of those stuck in the waiting-forever room of medical culture, dogged by symptoms unassimilable to diagnostic manuals or public policy prescriptions. Well, how are *you* feeling?

❧ SUZY HANSEN

“Narcissism, formerly a potent means of reckoning with a dangerous national character, has become another deft U-turn on the American road to self-love. Every American has been immersed since birth in the propagandistic reassurance that he or she is the most superior citizen on earth, simply by virtue of coming of age in this model capitalist democracy, the endpoint, in our eyes, of national and human evolution. This propaganda has produced a kind of nationalism so pervasive and misguided that most Americans wouldn’t even know to call it nationalism—it is, for us, simply the proper order of things. So, as is the case with other undiagnosed neurotic disorders, we lie to ourselves to sustain it. Americans never really know how to make connections between our imperial selves and the carefully tended ruins kicked up in their wake. It’s what makes us, as they say, special.”

—Suzy Hansen, “America’s Long Holiday,”
The Baffler (no. 26)

“Beautifully argued, a tremendous piece of think-journalism.”

—*Slate’s Culture Gabfest*



MICHAEL DUFFY

❧ GEORGE SCIALABBA

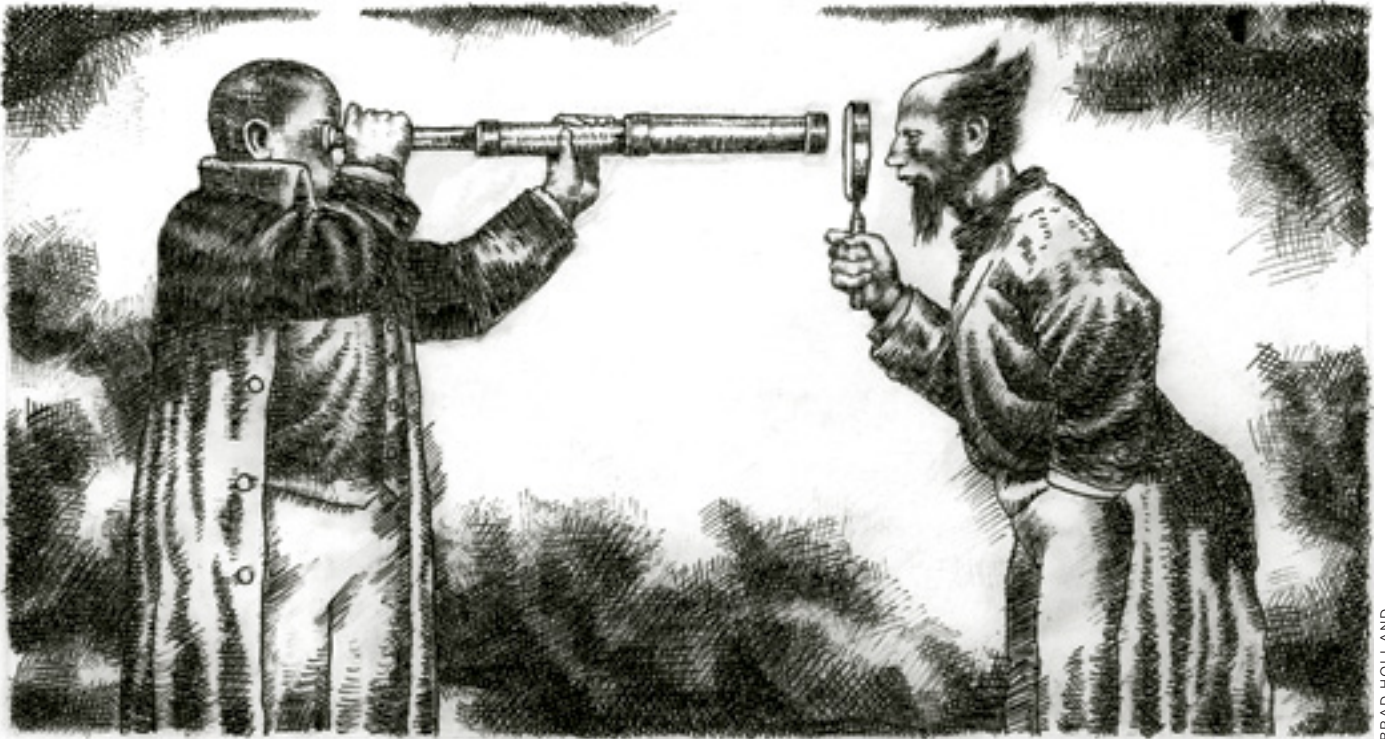
“I am as puzzled and frustrated by my psychiatric file as any casual reader could be. So much earnest effort, so much expert knowledge, so little success. The world’s most common disease is still this opaque. Why publish extracts from my file now? Certainly not

STUART GOLDENBERG



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BRAD HOLLAND

because I think they display any special literary facility or reveal an exceptionally interesting psyche. Our distractible human intelligence needs as many ways of talking about depression as can be provided—that’s all. Plus, given the longevity of this particular demon, it seems important to try to squeeze some insight from the mass of words and array of prescription drugs applied against its havoc. Even the most comprehensively bureaucratized medical knowledge can be made to speak, if only we are willing to listen closely to the blank spaces, the paraphrases. Even acronyms have feelings.”

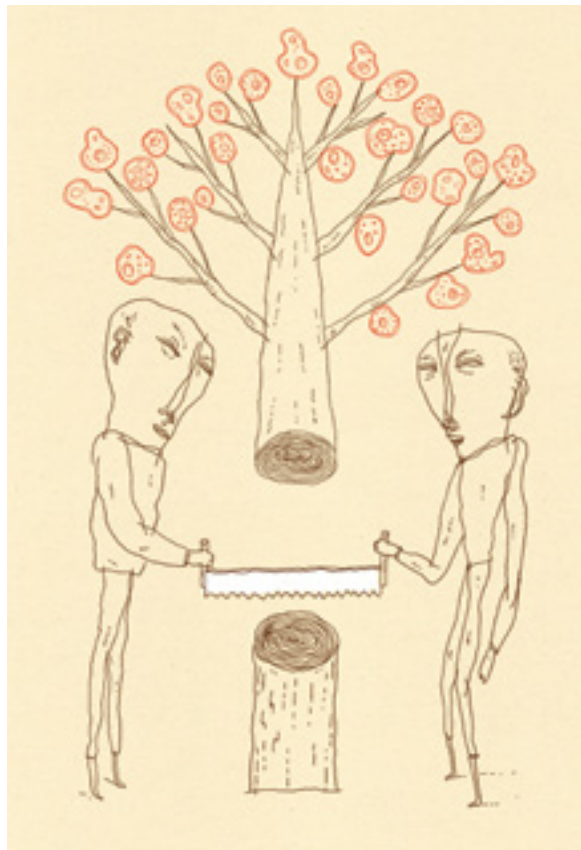
—George Scialabba, “The Endlessly Examined Life,” *The Baffler* (no. 26)

“The empathetic reader cannot help but be moved by the ordeal Scialabba endures just by living.”

—*The Week*

“The monumentally sad story in the latest issue of *The Baffler* is unlike anything you’ve ever read.”

—*Boston Globe*



JORDYN ISIP

❧ **BARBARA EHRENREICH**

“It took science until 2012 to officially acknowledge that nonhuman animals possess feelings and consciousness. It may take a bit longer for biology to admit that the cells in our bodies are not simply automata, that they possess, if not consciousness, at least some sort of agency. The ‘wisdom of the body,’ which supposedly keeps the body unified as a single sustainable organism, does not always apply at the microscopic level, where an individual cell can sabotage the entire operation.”

—Barbara Ehrenreich, “Terror Cells,” *The Baffler* (no. 26)

❧ **ASTRA TAYLOR AND JOANNE MCNEIL**

“‘It’s so easy even your Mom can use it!’ goes the common tech-marketing refrain. Dad’s masculinity, the messaging implies, automatically ensures his grasp of all new products and services out of the gate. While women are belittled for not knowing how to use new tools, men are allowed to remain ignorant about the social context in which those tools are put to use and the fact that some people, and not only women, are prevented from using them. The result is *an Internet*

so simple even your Dad can understand it, and it is this vision of the Internet that dominates today. Complicated power dynamics do not fit neatly into an Internet simple enough for Dad to understand. Instead, these unsubtle patriarchs believe the Internet is a ‘neutral’ device, ‘open’ to any and all.”

—Astra Taylor and Joanne McNeil, “The Dads of Tech,” *The Baffler* (no. 26)



LILY PADULA

❧ MIKHAIL ZOSHCHENKO

“To tell you the truth, I much prefer to be sick at home. At a hospital, no question, the light bulbs are stronger and things are more scientific in general. But at home, as they say, even straw tastes better. Judge for yourselves. My family brings me to the hospital with typhoid fever, in hopes of easing my suffering, and immediately my eyes fall on a poster: ‘Corpses for pick up between three and four.’ I don’t know about other patients, but my knees frankly buckle. ‘Look, Comrade,’ I address the orderly who’s writing me up, ‘why did you have to post such a vulgar poster? People here feel weakened as it is.’ Boy, is he scandalized. ‘Just look at him, ready to croak, yet he too must criticize! First get better, dear Comrade, though that’s highly unlikely. Or else *you’ll* be picked up between three and four!’”

—Mikhail Zoshchenko, from “Story of an Illness,”
The Baffler (no. 26)



PAULA SEARING

Events!

October 30, 2014

Sickness and Pelf: Issue 26 Release Party
w/ George Scialabba and Gary Greenberg
Lilypad, Cambridge, MA

December 18, 2014

The Baffler Anti-Holiday Party
w/ Astra Taylor and Joanne McNeil
Lilypad, Cambridge, MA



MARK S. FISHER

 **DEBORA KUAN**

Who is there?

This is your Iranian plastic surgeon.

What have you done with my nose?

Stopped up the offending holes.

What have done with the holes?

Applied them to your eyes. Look how wide they are now!

—

What is inside this magnificent fruit cup?

The white swan song of Hollywood.

Can you still see my father in my cheekbones?

Yes, in certain dark alleys, definitely.

Can you still see my mother in my jawline?

N/A

How long will it take for love to find me?

An instant.

How long will love last?

About 18–24 months.

What else can your people do for me?

We can rub this cold lambchop against you all day long.

—Debora Kuan, from the poem “American Mammal,” *The Baffler* (no. 26)

✿ JOHN SUMMERS

“How we wish we could pull a prescription pad from our back pocket to help our country come out of its coma, but our therapy license has been revoked for demonstrating persistent negativity. Apart from recommending a course of self-medicating, we can offer some nonexpert advice: don’t get sick, if you can help it.”

—John Summers, from
“All In Yer Head,”
The Baffler (no. 26)



HENRIK DRESCHER



Cover of *The Baffler* no. 25, with art by Katherine Streeter.

The None and the Many

Our previous issue examined the freedom of play and dared science to disassociate from the grim rationality of neo-Gilded Age economics. Here, through the lens of friendship, we've tried to imagine another set of terms for the recovery of the person in contemporary thought—another counterpoint to the market fundamentalism that relentlessly grinds social relations into dust and makes isolatoes of us, one and all.

America seems less like a country bound by elective affinities and dignified by our famously gregarious spirit, and more like a collection of debtors and creditors uneasily awaiting the next wreck of dogma. Consider this issue an interim accounting.

CHRIS LEHMANN

“Fraternity has become a hushed and forlorn echo of American politics past. Our social media has converted ‘friend’ into a verb, transacted in the space of a keystroke, while also somehow contriving to make ‘following’ and ‘unfollowing’ badges of fraternity. Surely there must be some more coherent way to summon the battered spirit of American fraternity than to continue miniaturizing it into nothingness—or worse, perhaps, the melancholy, pixelated vapor trail of a retweet or a ‘Like’ button.”

—Chris Lehmann, “Brothers from Another Planet,” *The Baffler* (no. 25)



DAVID SUTER

NICHOLSON BAKER

“The president, the motorcade he rode in, the whole country, had been, to use a postmortem word, ‘avulsed’—blasted inside out. Who or what brought this appalling crime into being? We are in debt to the CIA-blamers for their five decades of work, often in the face of choreographed media smears. They have brought us closer to the truth. But, having now read less than one-tenth of one percent of the available books on the subject, I believe, with full consciousness that I’m only a newcomer, that they’re barking up the wrong conspiracy. I think it was basically a Mafia hit: Kennedy’s death wouldn’t have happened without Carlos Marcello.”

—Nicholson Baker, “Dallas Killers Club: How JFK Got Shot,” *The Baffler* (no. 25)

Selected as one of “Roughly 100 Fantastic Pieces of Journalism.”

—*The Atlantic*



MICHAEL DUFFY

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The Baffler [no. 25]

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❧ TOM GOGOLA

“Throughout the South, rich municipalities have begun to raise the specter of secession—despite the associations that carry over from the last big push by a privileged white Southern elite to carve out a brave new civic destiny for itself, during the years 1861 to 1865. But the effort in St. George, Louisiana, is different. For starters, it furnishes a detailed case study in how the unvarnished rhetoric of white reaction has been repackaged as a sunny faith in the mystical healing powers of school choice.”

—Tom Gogola, “The Jim Crow Soft-Shoe Segregationists of St. George,” *The Baffler* (no. 25)



❧ LUDMILLA
PETRUSHEVSKAYA

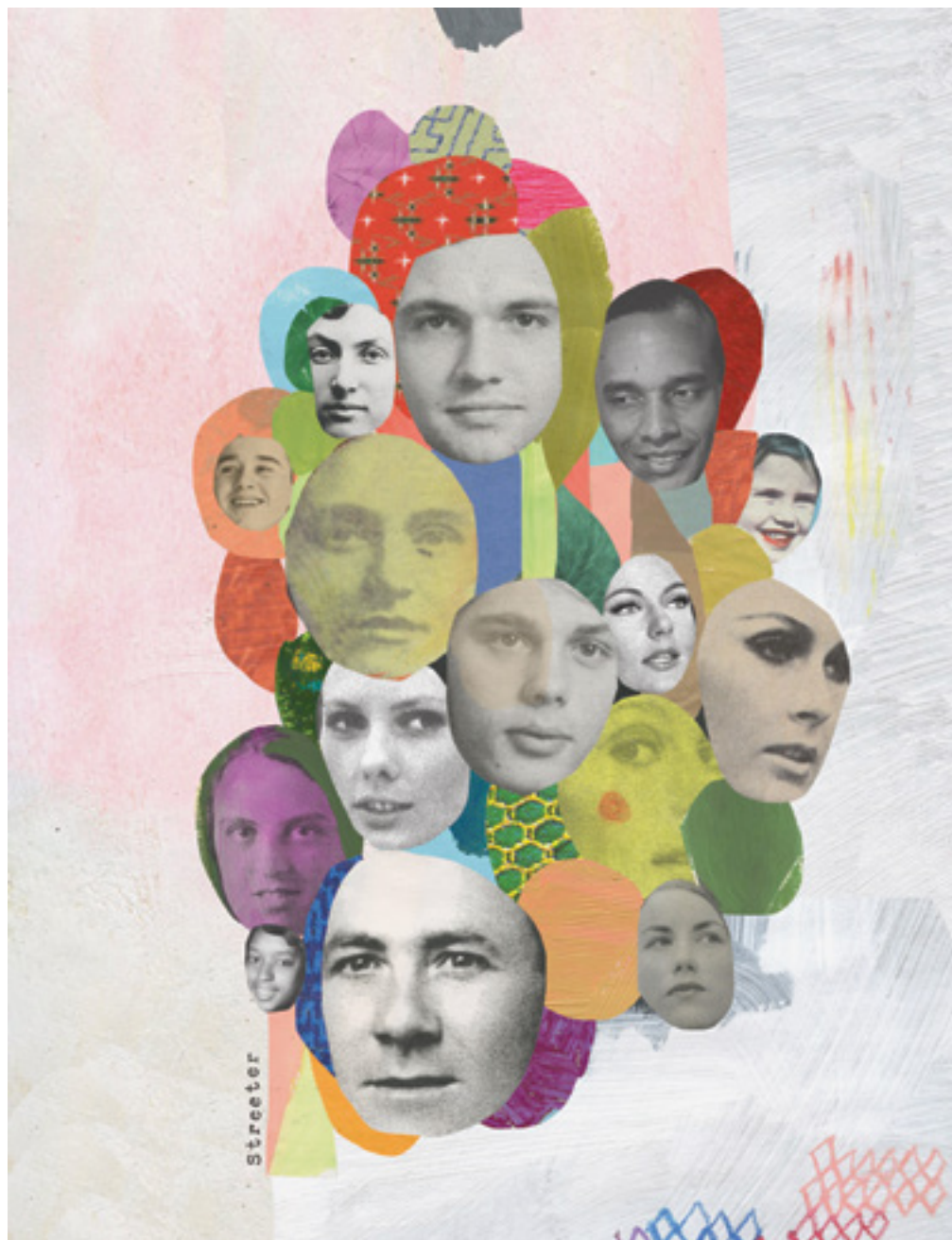
“We tried to subject Valera to the same mocking interrogation we inflicted on all our guests, but either he was very clever or we were too passive. He deftly avoided our hesitant questioning and revealed nothing of himself or of his work duties and instead went on and on about Stalin, and we were too afraid of his provocations to reveal our own political opinions. Who reveals them anyway? It was considered childish and rude. We all felt put on the rack. Only I wouldn’t shut up.”

—Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, from the story “Among Friends,” *The Baffler* (no. 25)

“Highbrow...
brilliant.”

—*New York magazine*
Approval Matrix





Art by Katherine Streeter
for *The Baffler* no. 25.

❧ MELISSA MONROE

For this curse, you need a liter of good grain liquor
and a heartfelt of unquenchable hate.

Keep the bottle corked, and spend a long, dry night
thinking of everything your rival has
that ought to be yours.

At dawn, roll up your trousers
and set off barefoot down an unmaintained
side road that dissolves into sand, then dead-ends
at the river. Walk upstream until you see
the swift skein of the water tangle and fray,
marking the snag

where the river dumps its garbage.

An almost spokeless bicycle wheel, an oil drum,
two traffic cones and the aluminum
bones of a beach chair have fetched up on this altar
of wet rock and weed. Wade in as close
as you can to make your own ugly offering.

—Melissa Monroe, from the poem “To Be Rid of a Rival,”
The Baffler (no. 25)

Event!

June 10, 2014

Issue 25 Release Party

w/ *The Baffler* crew

Mobius Gallery, Cambridge, MA



Baffler art director Patrick JB Flynn and
associate editor Dave Denison attended.

ZACHARY DAVIS

Feminism for What?

Equality in the Workplace After Lean In, a one-day symposium by The Baffler

Sheryl Sandberg's blockbuster of feminist self-help, *Lean In*, has been setting the agenda for discussions about women, men, and work, and this gospel of empowerment doesn't seem finished with us yet. As Susan Faludi wrote in *The Baffler*, the book asks you to lean into your job, but "if you were waiting for someone to lean in for child care legislation, keep holding your breath." Sandberg's heavily bank-rolled movement is trapped into the perspective of a white, Ivy League educated billionaire. Is this enough to help all women?

We organized a daylong symposium on these topics at John Jay College on September 13, 2014, exploring the merits and demerits of the self-help genre, the role of class divisions in feminist advancement, and how the compounding roles played by race, gender, and sexual identities complicate the Lean In vision. As we examined Lean In feminism, which promises eternal upward mobility in a society that's badly fractured by inequality, we surveyed the real-world options faced by minimum-wage employees at McDonald's, part-time mothers working for midsize companies, and other unclassifiable domestic workers hanging onto the edges of income. We discussed the totems and taboos of such women as they are marked, stamped, and classified as a bureaucratic subject: race, immigration status, LGBTQ identity.

We know there's no magic pill for what ails women workers in America. But this conference cleared the air and began the discussion from a more robust and honest perspective. Dream of being a billionaire, but don't forget about the sick days.



PANELS

I. Self-Help: Does the World's Best-Selling Nonfiction Genre Work at Work?

Moderator:

E. J. Graff, journalist and collaborator on *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men—and What to Do About It*

Panelists:

Maureen Boyd, senior organizer for community partnerships with Service Employees International Union

Micki McGee, associate professor of sociology at Fordham University and author of *Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life*

Linda Hirshman, journalist and author of *Get to Work: A Manifesto for Women of the World*

II. Compounding the Problems: The Impact of Race, Immigration Status, and LGBTQ Identity on the Job

Moderator:

Zerlina Maxwell, political analyst and contributing writer for EBONY.com, Feministing.com, theGrio.com, and RHRealitycheck.org

Panelists:

Imani Gandy, senior legal analyst for RHRealitycheck.org and cohost of *This Week in Blackness Prime*

Hayden Mora, director of strategic relations for the Human Rights Campaign

Andrea Cristina Mercado, campaign director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance



From left to right: Hayden Mora, Andrea Cristina Mercado, Imani Gandy, and Zerlina Maxwell.



Linda Hirshman on Lean In: “I’m like Sheryl Sandberg, except old and poor.”

Mass movements aren't crucial to political action, says Tressie McMillan Cottom. Left: Liza Featherstone. Right: Heather Boushey.



Self-help doesn't have to be the enemy of mutual aid, says Micki McGee. Right: Maureen Boyd.

III. Keynote Address: “From the Lowell ‘Mill Girls’ to Lean In: The Long Dance of Feminism and Capitalism”

Susan Faludi, Pulitzer Prize winner, author of *Backlash*, and *Baffler* contributing editor

IV. Is Class Out? Gender Solidarity and the Class Divide in an Age of Economic Inequality

Moderator:

Sarah Leonard, senior editor of *The Nation* and contributing editor of *Dissent* and *The New Inquiry*

Panelists:

Heather Boushey, executive director and chief economist for the Washington Center for Equitable Growth

Tressie McMillan Cottom, sociology PhD candidate at Emory University, stratification scholar, and writer (*Slate*, *Dissent*, the *New York Times*)



From left to right:
Kathi Weeks,
Rhacel Parrenas,
Sarita Gupta,
Nancy Folbre, and
Irin Carmon.

Liza Featherstone, journalist (*The Nation*, *Dissent*), journalism professor at Brooklyn College, and author of *Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers' Rights at Wal-Mart*

**V. Visions of the Future, Lessons from the Past:
How to Achieve Economic Justice**

Moderator:

Irin Carmon, national reporter for MSNBC.com

Panelists:

Nancy Folbre, professor of economics at University of Massachusetts at Amherst and author of *For Love and Money: Care Provision in the United States*

Sarita Gupta, executive director of Jobs with Justice

Rhacel Parrenas, professor of sociology at USC and author of *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*

Kathi Weeks, associate professor of women's studies at Duke University and author of *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*



SUSIE CAGLE



No Future for You: Salvos from The Baffler. Edited by John Summers, Chris Lehmann, and Thomas Frank. (*The Baffler*/MIT Press, 392 pages, hardcover, \$27.95)

“Did our system ever work? Will it ever? The fact that it is not working right now is rendered sadder by our knowledge of the U.S. Constitution. If you want to feel sadder still, read *The Baffler*.”

—William T. Vollmann

No Future for You

A new collection on carnival hokum and magical thinking in post-apocalypse America—brought to you by *The Baffler*.

There’s never been a better time to be outside the consensus—and if you don’t believe it, then open these productively unconstructive essays from recent issues of the magazine that’s been blunting the cutting edge for twenty-five years. From *Lean In* to *LinkedIn*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* to *Prometheus*, Barack Obama to Mitt Romney, the *Washington Post* to Vice Media, this collection has all the icons and pet utopias of the age covered. Packed with hilarious, scabrous, up-to-the-minute analysis of the vanishing American future, *No Future for You* is the counternarrative you’ve been missing, proof that dissent is alive and pissed off.

“*The Baffler* embodies, with its internationalist outlook, the most vital tradition of American dissent. In an age marked by avid intellectual logrolling, it has never seemed more imperative.”

—Pankaj Mishra

“Every age has a magazine that matters. For our age, it’s *The Baffler*. Feeling left behind? Here’s your chance to catch up.”

—Andrew J. Bacevich

“We owe its contributors a debt of gratitude for their lively prose, ready wit, intellectual seriousness, and undiminished outrage. This anthology is an indispensable source of hope for anyone who still cares about the future of American democracy.”

—Jackson Lears

CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Bray, Mark Dancey, Barbara Ehrenreich, Susan Faludi, Thomas Frank, Ann Friedman, James Griffioen, David Graeber, A. S. Hamrah, Heather Havrilesky, Chris Lehmann, Rhonda Lieberman, Anne Elizabeth Moore, Evgeny Morozov, Jim Newell, Rick Perlstein, John Summers, and Maureen Tkacik

Events!

NO FUTURE ON TOUR

September 13, 2014

No Future for Journalism

w/ Thomas Frank, Chris Lehmann,
and Jim Newell

Politics & Prose Book Store,
Washington, DC

September 19, 2014

Where Did the Future Go?

w/ David Graeber and Peter Thiel
hosted by John Summers

General Society of Mechanics
and Tradesmen,
New York, NY

October 13, 2014

No Future for Chicago

w/ Rick Perlstein, Lindsey Gilbert,
and Anne Elizabeth Moore

Seminary Coop,
Chicago, IL

October 20, 2014

No Future for Seattle

w/ Thomas Frank, Rick Perlstein,
and John Summers

Town Hall Seattle,
Seattle, WA



JOSEPH BLOUGH

October 21, 2014

No Future for Portland

w/ Thomas Frank, Rick Perlstein,
and John Summers

Powell's City of Books,
Portland, OR

October 22, 2014

No Future for San Francisco

w/ Thomas Frank and John Summers
City Lights Bookstore,
San Francisco, CA

**Peter Thiel and David
Graeber debate in
New York at the General
Society of Mechanics
and Tradesmen.**



Cover of *The Baffler* no. 24, with art by David McLimans.

The Jig Is Up!

Five years after the computer games concocted by Wall Street's corporate players went haywire and plunged the country into a prolonged economic crisis, the system of power has no obvious justification. Yet the competitive ethos that's long been its signature product in the field of human relations has gone positively berserk. Global corporations, not small businesses, write the rules of the market game by which we all play. Nonproductive, uncreative rent-seeking accounts for a larger-than-ever share of wealth. Meanwhile, the mythos of the self-made man has never appealed so broadly.

And that's where *The Baffler* no. 24 cuts in. Read here of a whole city turned into a talent contest for entrepreneurs, look through the trophy rooms of hedge-fund-managing art collectors. Consider how the competitive ethos determines the design of online videogames, produces self-defeating economic doctrines, infiltrates evolutionary biology, and warps science fiction novels.

Not to win or lose, but to be free of the system of winners and losers—that's the jackpot in this issue.

JOHN SUMMERS

“The Innovation Economy’s futurist model of urban development is propaganda for the present system of power—class interest presenting itself in the guise of prosperity, and it appears to be the best that these most liberal of liberal Democrats have to offer to the nation.”

—John Summers, “The People’s Republic of Zuckerstan,” *The Baffler* (no. 24)

“An epic analysis of the so-called innovation economy that is rapidly taking hold in Greater Boston.” —*Boston Globe*

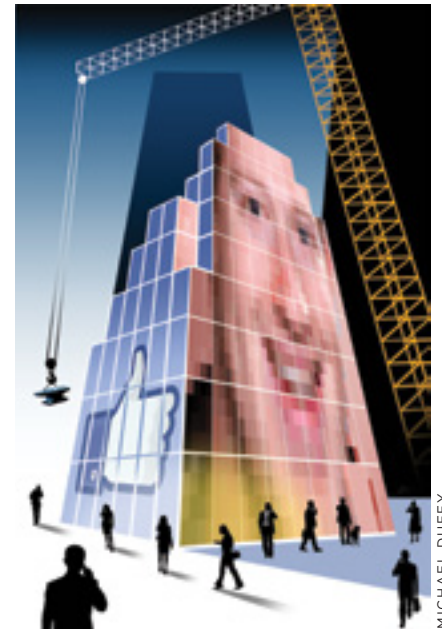
DAVID GRAEBER

“Play does exist across the animal universe. And exists not just among such notoriously frivolous creatures as monkeys, dolphins, or puppies, but among such unlikely species as frogs, minnows, salamanders, fiddler crabs, and yes, even ants—which arrange mock-wars, apparently just for the fun of it. Why do animals play? Well, why shouldn’t they?”

—David Graeber, “What’s the Point If We Can’t Have Fun?” *The Baffler* (no. 24)

“Whether you like Graeber’s idea, the problem he faces—framing a conception of nature that doesn’t make life and mind mysterious afterthoughts—is a real one.”

—*NPR’s Cosmos & Culture*



MICHAEL DUFFY

“The piece is deadly serious and seriously alive.” —*New Yorker*



HENRIK DRESCHER

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GENE SEYMOUR

“Expect pop culture to define your politics, and you’ll probably get the politics you deserve. Hip-hop music may give you an outlet to vent joy and rage, but it’s not going to improve public schools. *Fifty Shades of Grey* may magnify your bedroom repertoire, but it won’t enable sexual equality in the workplace. And science fiction is no program for governing. It’s there to give you dreams, ideas, nightmares.”

—Gene Seymour, “The Billionaire’s Fantasia,” *The Baffler* (no. 24)

“A fascinating essay.”

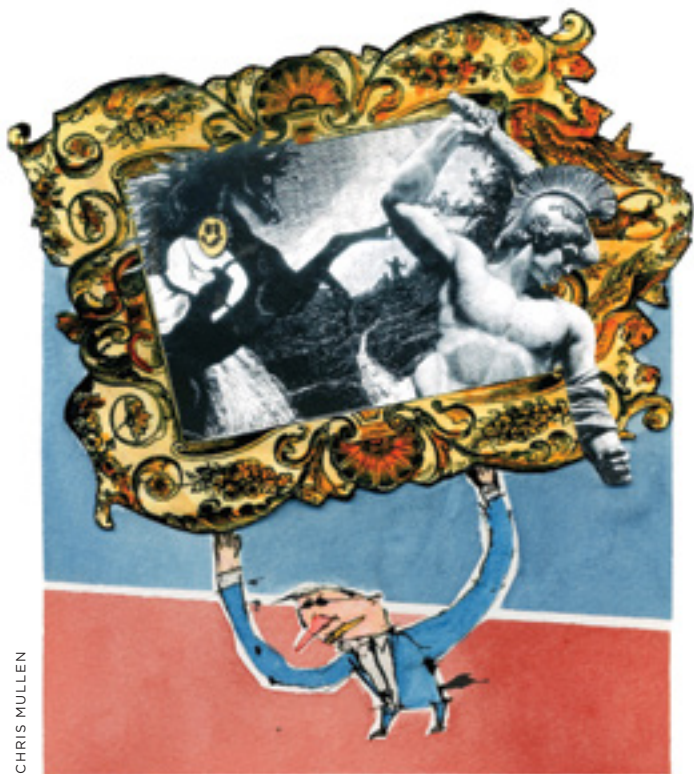
—*Christian Science Monitor*

RHONDA LIEBERMAN

“Bernie Madoff’s prized piece of office art was a four-foot sculpture of a screw that he frequently dusted off himself (he, like Donald Trump and scores of other plutocrats, is a notorious neat freak). A defense lawyer pleaded for the valued object to be photoshopped out of court documents, lest it be prejudicial to members of the jury. When Madoff’s Ponzi scheme went bust, J. Ezra Merkin, whose feeder funds supplied Madoff with investors, was no longer Mastering the Universe quite so comfortably. So he sold his stunning batch of Rothkos for \$310 million. Whenever I see a Rothko I think of Madoff, and how the afterlife of modern art is



MARK S. FISHER



CHRIS MULLEN

now yoked to the pissing matches performed by the big swinging schlongs of Wall Street.”

—Rhonda Lieberman, “Hoard d’Oeuvres,”
The Baffler (no. 24)

“Positively searing.”

—*Los Angeles Times*

❧ PAUL MALISZEWSKI AND J. WAGNER

“I am recording this. I don’t mind your knowing. I find that recordings produce Greater Honesty. Don’t you? Recordings—by which I mean audiovisual monitoring synced up with one’s heart rate, one’s thermal imaging profile, and so forth—produce more information, and more information creates a more honest state of affairs. Several years ago, the Board was less than convinced when I brought this formulation to them along with my plan to install high-definition digital cameras and sensitive microphones in the toilets. Well, but the toilets, I was given to understand, are private, severely off-limits, and yet my feeling was, Why? Do we not all go tinkle? Do we not all go boop-boop? Do we not all sit there straining over our turds, crouching like animals on the bowl?”

—Paul Maliszewski and J. Wagner,
from the story “Bcc: Dridge,” *The Baffler* (no. 24)

❧ **TIMOTHY DONNELLY**

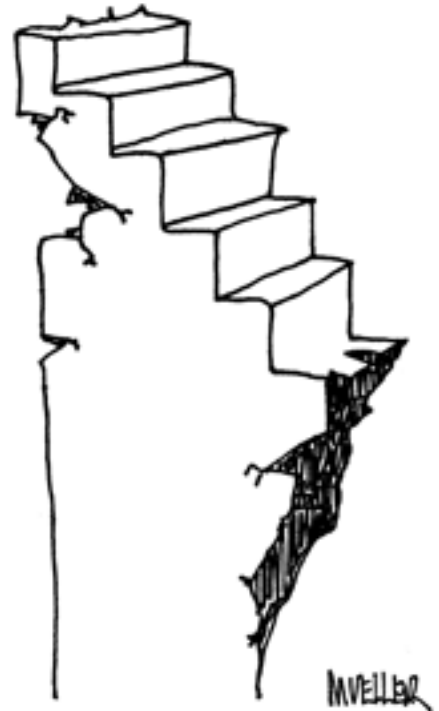
For example I go back to the twenty-five caged fish
dropped into Snow Creek to assess the toxicity
of the waters that the infamous chemical company
released its wastes into over decades and how
all of them, all twenty-five, lost their equilibrium

more or less immediately, how three minutes later
blood billowed from their gills like wild fuchsia
loosened from a hedgerow four thousand miles away
and how, shortly after that, all of them had finished
early with this life, as did the people of Alabama

who fished and swam and drank from the great
Choccolocco Creek which the smaller Snow Creek fed
its bad chemistry into, on and on without advisory
from the many who knew, the long processions
shuddering in time from church to gravesite quietly

—Timothy Donnelly, from the poem “Chemical Life,”
The Baffler (no. 24)

STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN



MARK S. FISHER



2013





The Baffler no. 23, illustrated by Lou Beach, was an Amazon.com “Hot New Release.”

A Carnival of Buncombe

“**H**uman nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.” That’s how the terminally unfashionable liberal journalist John Stuart Mill sketched the human prospect in his 1859 study *On Liberty*. Since then, alas, liberalism and journalism have been downsized to a mere speck of computer dust.

You can count on *The Baffler* no. 23 to assail the computerized dicta and cutting-edge crapola that the country’s most serious persons in academia, business, and government pass off as its most significant thinking.

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

—*Berliner Zeitung*

“**A**lphabeticly 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,”
The Baffler (no. 23)



SPENCER WALTS

❧ 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)



DAVID MCLIMANS

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**.

—*The Baffler* (no. 23)

Events!

October 10, 2013

**Academy Fight Song:
Issue 23 Release Party**
w/ Thomas Frank
and John Summers
University of Virginia,
Charlottesville, VA

October 30, 2013

**Why Higher
Education Sucks:
Issue 23 Release Party**
w/ Thomas Frank
and John Summers
University of Texas,
Austin, TX

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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)

"A really good and sophisticated criticism of upper-class women's feminism." —*Slate*

"The whole essay is a must-read." —*The Hairpin*

"Articles like Faludi's remind us of the importance of staying engaged, finding (and using) our voices, broadening our vision, being open to new insight, and remembering to pay it forward, while we continue our advance."

—*Executive Women's Networking Blog*



ELEANOR DAVIS

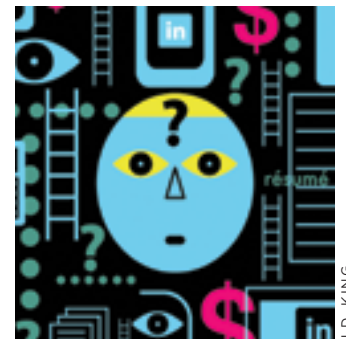
❧ ANN FRIEDMAN

"LinkedIn merely digitizes the core, and frequently cruel, paradox of networking events and conferences. You show up at such gatherings because you want to know more important people in your line of work—but the only people mingling are those who, like you, don't seem to know anyone important."

—Ann Friedman, "All LinkedIn with Nowhere to Go," *The Baffler* (no. 23)

"Ann Friedman wins the 'Why didn't I write this first?' prize."

—*New Yorker, Best Business Journalism of 2013*



J.D. KING



JAKOB HINRICHS

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

**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)

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)



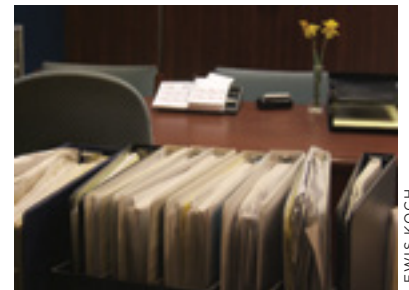
“The Baffler number 23 has three long pieces, about the fight over information, the American education system, and the Yummies of Berlin. These are accompanied by many other observations, reviews, investigations and disturbances in S, M, L, and XL.”

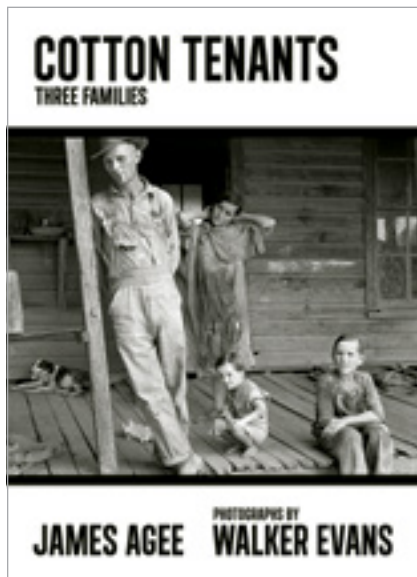
—Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Sept. 5, 2013

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 story “The Act,” *The Baffler* (no. 23)





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)

Cotton Tenants

Cotton Tenants, copublished this summer by *The Baffler* and Melville House, marked James 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* 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. *Cotton Tenants*, our first book editing project, was hailed as a major cultural event.

“Highbrow...brilliant.” —*New York magazine*

“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*

“*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*

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

—*Boston Globe*

“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*

“Now we have *Cotton Tenants: Three Families*, courtesy of the revitalized *Baffler* magazine and Melville House. . . . A wonderful piece of writing, an example of what documentary journalism can do as an organ of social justice.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Open it and you are transported to ‘a brief account of what happens to human life,’ specifically the lives of three impoverished tenant farmers—Floyd Burroughs, Bud Fields, and Frank Tingle—and their families, captured in Agee’s honest, unflinching, and brilliant prose.”

—*Publisher’s Weekly (Starred Review)*

“Agee’s discerning eye, crushing bluntness, and forward-falling prose poetry urge along before dunking readers’ senses, again and again, into the families’ way of life. Disdainful of sentiment and melodrama, Agee shows no bias, revealing his subjects and skewering both oppressors and supposed reformers.”

—*Booklist*

“*Cotton Tenants*, a rare discovery, adds another chapter to James Agee’s enduring Southern literary achievements, more than a half century after his death.”

—*Knoxville News Sentinel*



“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

Events!

September 18, 2013

The Baffler and
Melville House
Celebrate James Agee
w/ John Summers
and Chris Lehmann
Melville House Books,
Brooklyn, NY

March 26, 2014

James Agee's
Cotton Tenants
w/ John Summers
Arlington Community
Education Center,
Arlington, MA

“An all-in, embracive rendering, panoramic as Brueghel while typecasting like Ben Shahn. Agee may be our foundational maximalist, the progenitor of Norman Mailer, Thomas Pynchon, and David Foster Wallace.”

—*Los Angeles Review of Books*

“Summers’ discovery calls into question the long-held assumption that *Fortune* rejected Agee’s Alabama travelogue because of the article’s unrelenting experimentation. The new book is a more accessible take on Agee’s Alabama trip, offering a sublime showcase for his masterly prose style.”

—*Christian Science Monitor*

“Reading *Cotton Tenants: Three Families* all the way through without taking *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* down from the shelf for cross-reference may be possible, but I couldn’t do it. Each book makes you curious about the other and acts as the other’s gloss.”

—*Ian Frazier, New York Review of Books*

“*Cotton Tenants* reads with the spare and measured beauty of a writer who knows that under the social circumstances he can only allow himself so much. It is a deeply moving work . . . fresh and painful reading.”

—*The Awl*



Baffler editor in chief
John Summers on C-SPAN's
Book TV. Jimmy Carter
Library and Museum,
Atlanta, Georgia. June 17,
2013.

“An invaluable addition to the Agee shelf. . . . Agee and Evans recognized that art and memory conjoined are the only true bulwarks against the obliteration of all we hold dear about the past.”

—*The Daily Beast*

“*Cotton Tenants* stands as James Agee’s more powerful depiction of poverty and the moral lapse that perpetuates it. We can’t have too many artful reminders of this failure, and few are as artful as this.”

—*The American Prospect*

“*Cotton Tenants* demonstrates the pleasure to be found, as Agee writes in these pages, when someone does ‘the work he cares most to do and is best capable of doing.’”

—*Washington Post*

“A timeless depiction of poverty and social injustice.”

—*Maclean’s Top 20 Books of 2013*



Photographs, above and left, by Walker Evans from *Cotton Tenants*.

Institute Baffler

It's been five years since the financial crisis, yet the whole scheme of theories, metaphors, and confidences that enabled it remains intact. Inequality yawns across the country and bankruptcy looms over our cities, yet big corporations and the super-wealthy entrepreneurs behind them are still celebrated in the popular media. Conventional measures of progress have failed, yet almost nobody in national life intervenes to ask what progress is for. The social crisis grinds on, collapsing our assumptions about business civilization. Yet its cherished theories and justifications remain in place, fatuous as ever.

And now ask yourself the question: For all the hue and cry over our supposed stranglehold on universities, the media and entertainment industries, and the legal establishment, how many strong and nimble institutions do we have dedicated to dislodging this consensus? Certainly, we have nothing to match the forces propping it up—the convergence of power and intellectual capital that's presided over the conservative movement since Ronald Reagan. "It's a war of ideas," they cried, while handily building a media apparatus complete with their own magazines, publishers, radio and television shows, speaking bureaus, websites, think tanks, and all-star team, featuring brand names from William F. Buckley Jr. and Friedrich Hayek to Charles Murray and Ann Coulter.

Their ultimate aim has been to rewrite the rules by which American popular thought is measured, to produce a policy world in which alternatives do not seem possible because its major premises appear perfectly natural and perennially necessary. And who can deny that conservatives and their neoliberal allies have succeeded in their ultimate aim? In our time of paralyzing stagnation and progress-free innovation—a condition brought about courtesy of decades of cutting taxes, cutting

INSTITUTE) BAFFLER

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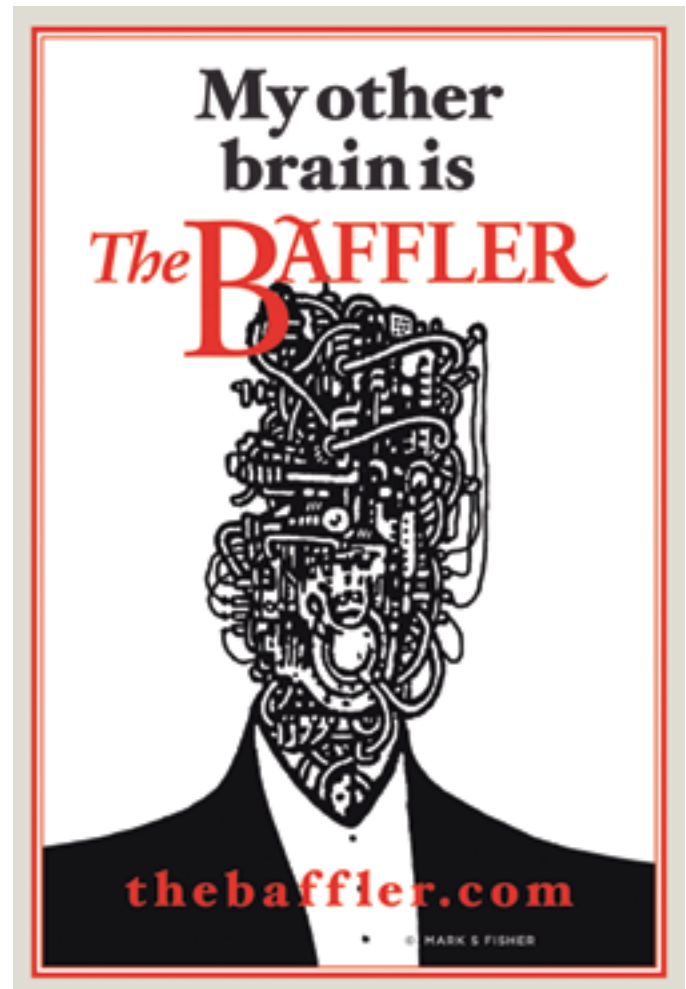
DIRECT ACTION THROUGH ideas)

social spending, divesting from higher education and cultural funding, downsizing workers and deregulating financial markets—this same fixed way of thinking remains the world’s dominant economic ideology, the default position for Serious Discussion of America’s future.

Combating the stagnation of our politics and culture is a job for innumerable self-starting, coordinated efforts. Whether they call themselves liberals or call themselves progressives, hearken back to the republicanism of the Founders or advocate ultra-contemporary forms of anarchism, some of them will have to fight with, and eventually take back, the city halls, city councils, courthouses, legislatures, and state houses that have given Big Business carte blanche to hollow out the economy, squeeze the workforce, snatch resources at bargain-basement prices, and pollute the landscape. Issue-oriented struggles fought in the arena of electoral politics are central, essential.

But no less essential is a twenty-first-century institute to operate on the level of ideas and ideology, a place to synthesize the experiences of local, front-line struggles into credible and constructive visions of the future. It’s not enough to elect good men and women to high office; these days, it’s hardly enough to fund them. There must be independent groups devoted to visions of a political system without privileges, a culture of excellence without commodification, a cooperative market economy in which maximum return on investment is not the sole criterion of value. If we don’t explore, advocate, and promote these aspirations, who will?

As recently as the 1960s, liberal, anarchistic, and progressive forces created a movement culture that sparked a university-based political insurgency (Students for a Democratic Society), invented new fields of thought and value (women’s



studies, black studies), launched the careers of bestselling social critics (Michael Harrington, Betty Friedan), and defended the values and premises behind governmental programs (Medicare) and legislation (the Civil Rights Act) in the best traditions of American history.

But that movement culture—together with the thinkers and ideas that sustained it—is a faded memory of yesteryear. Between power and ideas, the rising generations have inherited naught but a technocratic liberalism centered on electoral strategy and a twenty-first-century leftism narrowed to single-issue advocacy. No liberal or progressive politician or thinker has managed to put across a vision of the good society over this long slump. And as the cultural industry we supposedly control has disintegrated, there have been all the fewer institutions to support big and imaginative thinking, fewer mechanisms of cohesion and reproduction to connect our best writers and thinkers to the young and the disillusioned, whose ranks grow larger year after year.

So Institute Baffler begins with a leap of faith and an act of confidence, an attitude toward ideas that's long figured in liberal, progressive, and visionary thinking. By acting and thinking "as if" the world we wanted were already real, we help create the conditions to make it so. "Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place," philosopher John Dewey once wrote.

We can put our own contrived world of no-alternatives into peril, but only if we

Thomas Frank, founding editor of *The Baffler*, on *Real Time with Bill Maher*, HBO, April 25, 2012.



can bring a new outlook into a new cultural institution while recognizing the material limitations and obsolete models that have dogged such efforts before. We must be determined to ask the questions that remain off the agenda of the DC consensus-makers and to renew an intellectual culture of practical proposals,

speculative theory, and debunking for the age of investment capital. Unless we succeed in expanding our social imagination, crackpot economics will remain in place, and the “war of ideas” will march on and on.

Too Funded to Fail

It’s no secret how conservatives have reshaped contemporary political ideology with ideas that persistently fail the test of common sense. For nearly a half century, their financiers have showered Babylonian sums on an obedient cultural apparatus that has ushered in an ideology taken straight from Gilded Age apologetics. The boom-and-bust style of life and its inequalities were said to reflect merely temporary abnormalities in an otherwise sound system—just as our own crisis is cast as a trial of faith needing nothing but austere sacrifice. The heavenly market offered a perfect mechanism for distributing resources justly and efficiently. More than that, it was a source of spiritual values. God wanted you to be rich. But rich, poor, or somewhere in between, you had what you deserved.

Overturning this big fib was the breakthrough of Progressive social thought and the moral predicate for the New Deal and the Great Society. Liberals and progressives entered modern political life by discovering “society” as a realm of obligation bridging economics and politics, and “the market” as a component of institutions that could be democratically controlled to enhance the life chances of all society’s members.

RESEARCH AREA NO. 1

The Poverty of Creativity

Creativity is the premier legitimization device of our time. It is what every management book implores us to foster. It is the desired object of educational theory. It is the quality that will supposedly rescue our dying cities. It is the favored word for describing the class formerly known as “professionals.” And it is, of course, the reason some people win so much more than others in life’s lottery.

And yet, for all this—and despite all the superficial sturm and drang of media culture—we are living through a time of unimpressive creative achievement. These are days of triumphant groupthink, not brave self-expression. Why is this? My hypothesis is that markets are not the friends of creativity, as most everyone believes, but that quality’s mortal enemy. That all the talk of a creative millennium serves to conceal the broad corruption of the so-called “creative class.”

—THOMAS FRANK



This basic idea encountered no serious theoretical challenge as late as the 1970s. Social scientists positioned at the country's elite research universities were still looking forward to a postindustrial, fully socialized economy then. They were still thinking confidently, expansively, about shaping such possibilities when Milton Friedman conjured his "natural rate" of unemployment in 1967. Soon after, future Supreme Court justice Lewis Powell called for the "wisdom, ingenuity, and resources of American business to be marshalled against" labor and consumer groups and their allies in government. Even so, most observers believed so completely in the permanence of the Great Society that they expected to pass full-employment legislation.

But a recession hit in 1970, and then a second one in 1973 and 1974—at that time the worst since the 1930s. The establishment's faith in macroeconomic management of the business cycle went wobbly, and conservative business leaders pounced, seizing the moment to amp up funding for a cultural infrastructure that wound up transforming their fringe ideas into the common sense of American popular thought. Magazines like *National Review*, *Commentary*, *Human Events*, and *The Public Interest* joined forces with the Heritage Foundation (founded in 1973), the Charles Koch Foundation (founded in 1974 and later renamed the Cato Institute), and the newly capitalized American Enterprise Institute. The flurry of policy papers, newsletters, radio broadcasts, and books that appeared under these brands gave narrow, self-interested ideas a confident public voice.

This revolution in reverse could never have won an open competition of ideas without generalissimos like Richard Mellon Scaife, Pete Peterson, Sheldon Adelson, Charles and David Koch, Foster Friess, and their armies of right-thinking hirelings peddling influence in Washington. It was the American Enterprise Institute, after all, that gave Jude Wanniski a chance to promote his nutty "Laffer Curve," according to which tax cuts magically pay for themselves. It was the Smith Richardson Foundation that gave

David Graeber,
contributing editor
of *The Baffler*, on *The Charlie
Rose Show*, Bloomberg TV,
August 3, 2012.



George Gilder a grant to finish *Wealth and Poverty*, which was presented to Ronald Reagan's cabinetful of dewy-eyed intellectuals. The "law and economics" movement foisted market models on jurisprudence as the Olin Foundation and the Mont Pelerin Society spent millions on journals and books to retrain judges, congressional aides, and law professors, and to pay (yes, pay) students to take their courses.

Soon, indeed, a pseudo-sophisticated brand of economistic reasoning began flowing through the cultural politic, pushing the idea of a public interest into the ash heap. "Game theory" moved into philosophy; "rational choice" moved into political science; "social capital" became a byword of everything from school reform to industrial policy; and all these well-financed intellectual sub-movements came armed with the same abstract methodology. Selfish, market-motivated individuals were the only reality that counted. The sum total of their individual choices was nothing but a fiction. There was no such thing as "society," as Margaret Thatcher famously said. *Laissez-faire* economics returned with a snarl, brandishing the same old high-blown metaphysic that Depression-era liberalism had shown the door; this time, it was liberalism sent packing.

The intellectual entrepreneurs of the new conservative movement excelled at swiping liberal, progressive, and left vocabulary and twisting it into a distorted context. "For twenty years," the Heritage Foundation advised its members in 1984, "the most important battle in the civil rights field has been for the control of language." Thomas Paine and Martin Luther King Jr. soon became conservative icons. Eventu-

 RESEARCH AREA NO. 2

The Deciders Are Us

One reason the libertarian Right grabbed the political initiative amid the fallout of the 2008 crash lies in their well-developed critique of bureaucracy—a critique that conveniently narrows policy alternatives to market allocation and big g'ment. Libertarian conservative theorists believe that bureaucracy is a phenomenon limited to government offices. Meanwhile, theorists on the political Left appear to believe little need be said on the subject at all. Here, as elsewhere, theoretical stagnation has coincided with political frustration and impotence. But any expectation we may have of devolving power from vertically integrated administrative units in government and industry will require us to develop an updated critique of bureaucracy, one that shows how anarchist models of decision making can be an alternative that's both more democratic and more efficient.

—David Graeber



MARK S. FISHER

ally, evolutionary science became just another theory (you know, like creationism), global warming became “climate change,” and all liberals became “the Left,” which promptly went dark.

The result is our own clouded, austerity-ridden mental atmosphere, which makes it possible for the media to tout Newt Gingrich as an intellectual visionary and for the Republican Party to nominate a geeky budget analyst named Paul Ryan to the vice presidency. Ryan’s veneer of mental prowess is entirely a creation of the insular movement culture of the Right—he began his career as a speechwriter for Empower America, where he learned supply-side economics, and then acquired his bizarre reputation as a brainiac by hanging out at the Cato Institute, where he discovered, yes, Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*.

Ideas may have consequences for the rest of us, but the function of the right-wing cultural apparatus has been to insulate such practitioners from any reckoning at all. We know that the planning for the Iraq War was hatched by the twenty-odd American Enterprise Institute numbskulls who served in George W. Bush’s administration. We know that the Tea Party was contrived by FreedomWorks, whose “values are deeply rooted in the philosophy of freedom found in the works of our Founding Fathers, Adam Smith, Ayn Rand, Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, and Milton Friedman.”

John Summers, editor in chief of *The Baffler*, on *Greater Boston with Emily Rooney*, WGBH-TV, July 17, 2013.



But how often does exposing error, dogma, or fraud make a difference? How many pundits resigned in shame after getting wrong the major issues of the last twenty years? The same columnists who argued for war and the same bankers and economists who nearly brought down the global economy remain respectable members of the country’s thought leadership class. They live

a subsidized, synthetic existence, an erritocracy that can exist only where power and money produce their own reality. That's what keeps the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute high on the list of think tanks cited by nonpartisan radio, television, and newspapers week in, week out. And that's the least of it.

Don't Wait for Lefty

To counter the dominance of this all-business-all-the-time ideology, it's hardly enough to observe how it has squeezed the educational institutions, public sector bureaucracies, and labor unions to

which liberals once appealed as immanent agents of transformation. It's not enough to complain that the Obama administration's one big idea, the greatest legislative achievement of contemporary Democratic Party liberalism, was cribbed from *A National Health System for America*, a 1989 brief by the Heritage Foundation.

It's not enough because, in truth, most of the damage to the movement culture of the 1960s has been self-inflicted. It wasn't that long ago that history seemed permanently on our side, after all. At the end of World War II, so many socially conscious artists, radical writers, and members of the modernist avant-garde found havens in higher education, publishing, and Hollywood that the independent, dissenting writer virtually disappeared as a social type. New Left strategists and their liberal rivals all assumed the long postwar economic boom would continue on forev-

RESEARCH AREA NO. 3

Who Rules?

Americans have articulated no more than three clear answers to this question since 1787. One is the liberal theory embedded in the U.S. Constitution and laid out in the Federalist Papers, according to which nobody really rules because the divided structure of government means power disperses among competing interest groups. That's badly outdated. Another is the Marxist thesis, which traces power back to the point of industrial production and singles out the business class as the ruling class. That's too simple. The third, associated with sociologist C. Wright Mills and developed by his New Left protégés, sees a "power elite" triangle connecting military, the corporations, and the executive branch of the government. That was true in the postwar period.

Who rules now? Who knows? Power is like time in history or energy in physics—it's both omnipresent and fiendishly elusive. But the simple, world-defining query "Who Rules?" is among the crucial questions we have stopped asking.

—John Summers



MARK S. FISHER



TONY RINALDO

Susan Faludi, contributing editor of *The Baffler*, delivers the keynote address at *The Baffler*'s conference on Lean In feminism, "Feminism for What? Equality in the Workplace After Lean In."

er, and plotted a "long march through the institutions," a permanent cultural front for a more democratic America.

And now those strong institutions are pretty much gone, victims of the market logic spun out by conservative theorists. Journalism has collapsed, for all intents and purposes. The Hollywood studio system has receded, replaced by innumerable independent production companies always on the hustle for investors. At least since the 1990s, when the market for academic labor fell apart and the last pseudo-revolutionary campus fads played themselves out, it's been clear that the "war of ideas" has been fought asymmetrically.

The big liberal foundations grew gun-shy from the cultural wars and sought refuge for their funding decisions in market metrics. The lefty universities grew balky and stagnant—bloated by administration, lacking in confidence, and dependent on a debt-producing business model that's heavily invested in reproducing the status quo. The bold ideas of the 1960s weren't refuted so much as fragmented, downsized, and finally adjuncted out of sight.

An unprecedented stratum of unemployed and unaffiliated artists, writers, and scholars is now expanding across the country, the surplus production of the higher education boom. You'd have to revisit the 1920s, when the choice among our ancestors was felt to be either expatriation or inner emigration, to recognize the mood of despair and isolation spreading among those who have become functionally superfluous, without a firm connection to a cultural infrastructure or strong belief in an intellectual mission.

The way forward is to create a new feeling of belonging, a durable basis for the creativity entailed by the surprises and blessings of independence. We must think together, ecstatically, in the no-man's land between politics and culture, power and conscience, confrontation and withdrawal.

Instead of creating new cultural institutions oriented toward social change, however, we've been clinging to obsolete models. The major assumption of liberalism and leftism—that responsible, accountable public institutions or movements can mobilize people and resources for the common good—has lost ground in the popular imagination and political culture. And what have our public intellectuals

had to offer? More of the same, by and large.

Just recall *Time's* November 13, 2008, cover story, “The New Liberal Order,” by the conventionally wise insider Peter Beinart, to remind yourself of the need for the new outlook that never came. “In the Obama era liberalism could become—once again—America’s ruling creed,” Beinart wrote, adding that another New Deal stood an “excellent chance,” as “liberals will probably hold sway in Washington until Sasha and Malia have kids.”

Assume that you want to rebuild a federal regulatory bureaucracy to implement social programs and to staff it with the same unaccountable experts who once stirred so much resentment. Where would they come from? The liberalism of the New Deal and the Great Society expressed the ideology of a rising social class that has now fractured. The culture and morale that were indispensable in designing and implementing social legislation are scarcely noticeable among the state-administering work of today’s scandal-plagued professionals and civil servants. Any honest argument would have to choose between criticism of meritocracy as the professional class’s mask for privilege and a credulous belief that those same professionals stand ready to staff a regulatory state.

In fact, a second New Deal stands today about as much chance as the agrarian

👑 RESEARCH AREA NO. 4

The Dance of Feminism and Capitalism

You may have noticed the recent campaign to install yoga studios and nap rooms in corporations—nap rooms, that is, for grown-ups. (Onsite childcare did not make the cut.) Arianna Huffington dubbed this initiative, which she first announced in *Forbes* magazine, the “second women’s revolution.” The revolution circulates through media appearances and corporately funded conferences with names like “Women Rule,” where a few very powerful women deliver speeches to one another about female empowerment. An excellent example of the disembodied state of this revolution is Lean In, the organization launched by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg to encourage women to strive for top positions in business.

What’s amazing about this executive fixation is that it’s happening in the aftermath of the 2008 crash and at a time of breathtaking economic polarization—in other words, at the very moment when female income inequality should be *the* feminist issue. Where is the feminist equivalent of Occupy?

—from Susan Faludi, “From the Lowell ‘Mill Girls’ to Lean In: The Long Dance of Feminism and Capitalism”



MARK S. FISHER

program envisioned in the Twelve Southerners' manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* did in 1930, and the reason is not mainly due to the recalcitrance of the Republican opposition. The rapidly declining number of farm jobs over the first decades of the twentieth century eerily parallels the decline in manufacturing jobs in its latter decades, and raises—or ought to raise—hard questions about prospects for reviving liberalism's authority and expertise after industrialism.

And just as liberals entered modern political life by managing a material structure that no longer exists, so the modern Left discovered itself as the party of social movements that no longer work. From the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia to the Seneca Falls gathering, reformers spoke the natural-rights language of the Founders and expressed themselves in the idiom of romantic individualism and personal redemption.

The language of natural rights began to fade with the appearance of the factory system, and the idea of society grew to take its place. From the 1880s through the 1930s, while the social sciences took shape in American universities and foundations, workers located their grievances in a new system of production and exchange and waged collective insurgencies to redeem class justice from colliding social forces. Later, in the middle decades of the twentieth century, African Americans and college students created their own social insurgencies, participated in the making of their own histories, and tried to edify the moral culture.

But the Left's popular-front model of majoritarian politics via a quilt of inclusive social movements now seems as obsolete as the industrial system itself. De-

industrialization has not only hollowed out the ranks of the managerial class that once represented liberalism in power; it's also disaggregated the political bases of the Left. It was always the industrial system of organization and its institutions of economy and society—the railroad lines, the factory

The Baffler's senior editor
Chris Lehmann on Reason
TV, November 8, 2010.



farms, the manufactories, the multiversities, the office towers—that performed the necessary preliminary work of organizing workers, farmers, students, and white-collar professionals and prepared them for consciousness raising.

Social movements as we know them didn't occur before the triumph of industrialism in the 1880s. Have any succeeded since deindustrialization began a century later? John Sweeney's 1995 election as chief of the AFL-CIO was supposed to herald a new, labor-based movement. Four years later, protests at a World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle were supposed to herald an even bigger one—a global social movement. More recently, Occupy Wall Street burst into public view, with many déclassé white-collar professionals in attendance, to bring an even bigger and more up-to-date global social movement. It didn't last the winter.

How is it possible to reform a society that no longer recognizes itself? How can we mobilize a collective sense of agency in an age when our life chances are sub-contracted to the microeconomics of rational choice theory? If there is no party in power to heed descriptions of how freedom and equality are imperiled, and if there are not large numbers of people capable of standing together to defend these values against their practical negation, then what is the real value of these values? As they find no home in the patterns of our daily lives, so they become verbal expressions of sanctimonious communities of virtue led by those prosperous enough to afford the time off or credentialed enough to think they know better.

👑 RESEARCH AREA NO. 5

What Happened to the Churches?

Why has the tradition of Protestant reform devolved into the uncritical worship of wealth? One of the market corrections that never came after the 2008 financial meltdown was the obvious moral one: the effort to comprehend the predations and malfunctions of the paper economy as a species of sin.

One reason our lead religious institutions and preachers have refrained from launching jeremiads at the investor class is that, over the past four decades, the Protestant moral imagination has been quietly annexed to the cult of money. In everything from Christian-themed works of therapeutic self-help to fictionalized accounts of end-times prophecy, the money culture has subsumed the Protestant mainstream—and along with it, the vital tradition of religious dissent in the nation's economic life.

—Chris Lehmann



An Institute Whose Time Has Come

Now imagine a group whose mission is to conduct research and coordinate speculation on social problems “as if” the results mattered, to create and defend the field of value without which even our most talented and intelligent rising politicians and cultural leaders lose sight. Imagine the group independent of the romantic moralizing and pantomiming of revolution that mark the poles of dissenting criticism today. Imagine that in power and sophistication, the group was more than equal to the nation’s most influential pundits, TED talkers, think tank fellows, and self-styled thought leaders, though not so reliably useful, so professional, or so well-compensated for inspiring calm amid the country’s prolonged bout of jitters.

This institute is growing from the writers, artists, and thinkers currently grouped around *The Baffler* magazine, which is supremely well prepared for the job. Founded in 1988, just before the end of history, *The Baffler* was the first and most effective magazine to figure the boom for a giant confidence game. It laughed at the antinomian rebellion that broke out among corporate titans, jeered at the millennialist delusions of their neoconservative allies, and zeroed in on the neoliberal New Economy evangel. By the 1990s, the conservative cultural apparatus had reached deeply into the nation’s leading business magazines, academic seminars, television news shows, and editorial pages. *The Baffler*, outside the debate, offered an advance memoranda on the coming bust; its pages ran heavy with criticism of the growing power of the financial industry and the bubbles it facilitated in the housing and technology sectors.

The group around the magazine has stood out ever since then for its independent cultural criticism—its signal distinction from the usual language of wonkery, moral uplift, dialectical obfuscation, and related forms of tedium on offer from the competition. The magazine’s editors have been skeptical both about the aspirations of liberalism to reincarnate itself as a foundation for national rule and the grandiose attempt by the activist Left to bring about a redemptive metanarrative. Instead, the editorial program has offered a mix of social analysis, political criticism, and high-tone satire—comic juxtapositions that suggest criticism can be a literary art—and has recruited by force of attraction people who do not typically read cultural journals.

Behind the polemical exuberance of the magazine’s outsider style has been a quiet work of reinvention for the age of investment capital and high-tech chicanery. The editors have kept the focus trained on corporate America—the way it talks to

itself, the dogmas it generates in culture, the pathologies it produces in politics. But the magazine hasn't been complacent. Advocating populism in economics, it's jettisoned prejudices of the old agrarian populism—the racism of Southern white farmers, the superstitious faith in “the People,” the disdain for urban life. Aloof from the mass production of dead language in today's popular thought, yet rooted in the best of American history, the magazine is now primed to bring the spirit of adaptation into this new enterprise.

“The other day, a copy of *The Baffler* came in the mail,” George Packer recently wrote on his *New Yorker* blog. “Back in the nineties, published out of Chicago and edited by Thomas Frank, *The Baffler* articulated an anti-cool sort of cool that appealed to young readers and writers on the margins of journalism and academia, subjecting the iconic brands of consumer capitalism to a critical scrutiny. During the Bush years it went out of business. Now it's back, with a table of contents largely devoted to the economic crisis: a perfect moment for *The Baffler's* kind of cultural criticism to be revived.”

Packer thought the revival is “a little like the appearance of [William F.] Buckley's *National Review*, whose original mission statement, back in 1955, declared that the magazine ‘stands athwart history, yelling Stop, at a time when no one is inclined to do so, or to have much patience with those who so urge it.’ Buckley ended up riding history, and even guiding it. I'd like to believe that something with *The Baffler's* anti-market world view could do the same.”

Will you join us? You supply the resources and strategic acumen. We enlist the country's most prominent and exciting writers, artists, and scholars in a new venture. And together we'll usher the frauds and jokers off stage and get on with our duty of reducing waste, diminishing cruelty, and reimagining the flourishing of life in America.

—John Summers, 2013





Brad Holland's cover art was selected for publication in *American Illustration* (2013).

Modem and Taboo

Behold *The Baffler* no. 22. We marked our twenty-fifth anniversary in color.

You may recognize the name Aaron Swartz from the outpouring of public grief that followed his suicide, at age twenty-six, in January 2013. Aaron was a computer programmer and democracy activist.

Just as printed magazines are supposed to get out of the way of history, so computer programmers endowed with Aaron's gifts are supposed to go to Silicon Valley, to start companies, improve efficiencies, and save the world through market-directed use of their creativity. They aren't supposed to become contributing editors of magazines that blunt the cutting edge. Nor are they supposed to turn their creativity to fighting big business's conception of intellectual property. Least of all are they meant to become the target of bullying federal prosecutors. Aaron was different, though. He was his own man, and our friend. We love and mourn him for that.

***"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

PHILIP BURKE



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,” *The Baffler* (no. 22)

“I read Evgeny Morozov’s profile of me with a kind of bemused fascination.”

—Tim O’Reilly

“The essay equivalent of *The Social Network*. . . . This is the kind of article that made *The Baffler* famous back in the 1990s.”

—*iog.com*

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)

“A hilarious take-down.”

—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

“A bravura performance.”

—*New York Times Book Review*



VICTOR KERLOW

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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 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)

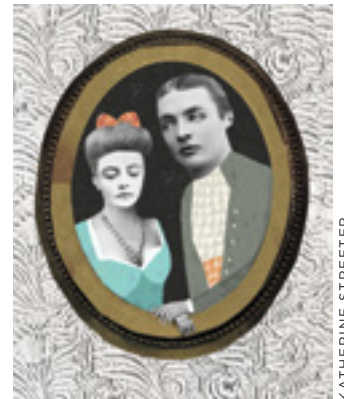


RANDALL ENOS

❧ 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. 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 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 story “Up in Birdland,” *The Baffler* (no. 22)



KATHERINE STREETER



“Inter Course” by Eleanor Davis, from *The Baffler* no. 22.

🌸 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)



JOSEPH CIARDIELLO

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



MARK WAGNER

American Neoclassic, currency-collage art by Mark Wagner, published in *The Baffler* no. 19.

2012





Cover of *The Baffler* no. 21, illustrated by Stephen Kroninger.

Your Money and Your Life

We sighted the cultural apparatus of American politics, the focus of this third and last issue of our revival year, spinning long past the pixie-dust trails and superfascinating polls of the campaign season. The all-digital, all-the-time brand of political journalism at work today turns out to offer less cognitive resistance to consensus formation than one might hope. Political managers and messaging professionals are hyperconscious of unconsciousness, in tune with the irrational. Channeling PR flunkies, celebrity editors, social media programmers, casino promoters, and cultural theorists, inward-looking politicians have moved post-crash politics out of the hand and into the head.

Against our age's dreampolitik, we set our own act of imagination—issue 21 of *The Baffler*, assembled *as if* it were perfectly normal to expect a political system without privileges and a culture without commodification. Hey, it's no more foolish, and a lot more fun, than the stylized despair of the American literati, or the cynicism peddled by our public intellectuals.

“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

♥ ALEX PAREENE

“*Politico* manages to maintain—or enshrine—the worst features of the post-war ‘objective’ American press: horserace-style campaign coverage and the ritual fetishization of a phantom centrist vision of how national politics should work. These empty postures work out, in practical terms, to a pervasive cynicism about the entire process of politics that ends up rewarding the worst actors on the national political scene for their shamelessness and skill at being horrible. At the same time, *Politico*’s managers have deliberately excised long-form reporting and investigative journalism. No awards-grubbing for *Politico*, thank you.”

—Alex Pareene, “Come On, Feel the Buzz,” *The Baffler* (no. 21)

“Top 10 Longread of 2012.”

—*Longreads*

♥ RICK PERLSTEIN

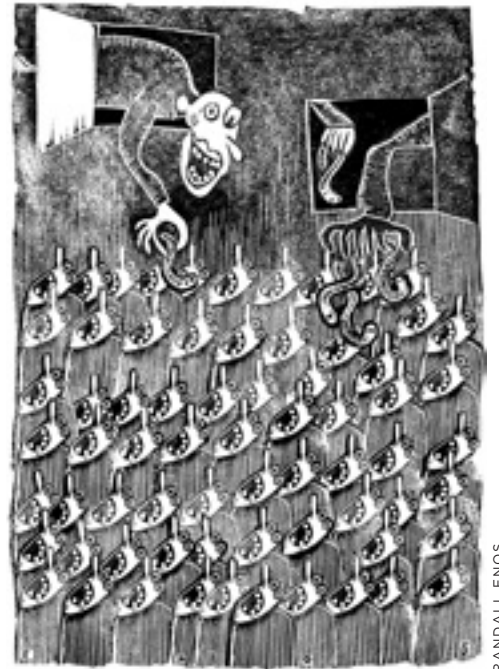
“If the 2012 GOP nominee lied louder than most—and even more astoundingly than he has during his prior campaigns—it’s just because he felt like he had more to prove to his core following. Lying is an initiation into the conservative elite. In this respect,

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 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)



MARK DANCEY



RANDALL ENOS

“A great piece!”

—*Rachel Maddow,*
MSNBC

“A fascinating essay.
Go read.”

—*Paul Krugman,*
New York Times

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

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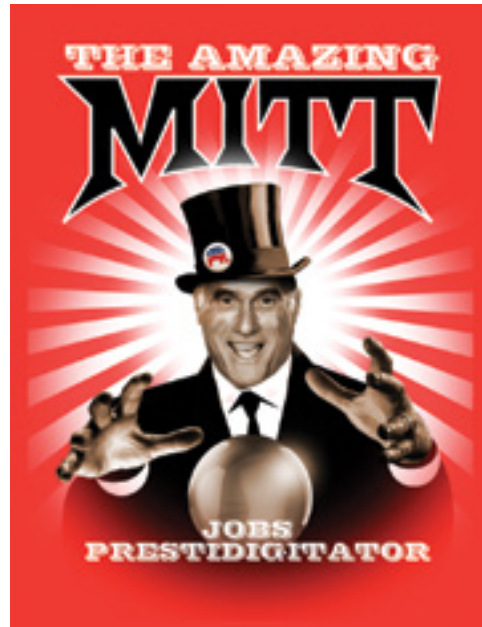
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 JOSH MACPHEE

“Say you run a Kickstarter 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. 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 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. 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?” *The Baffler* (no. 21)





MICHAEL DUFFY

From *The Baffler* no. 21.

Event!

November 27, 2012

Ayn Rand Game Show / Issue 21 Release Party

w/ Thomas Frank and Julie Klausner

Housing Works Bookstore, New York, NY

“When *The Baffler* launched its third issue at Housing Works last night, it was not content to have an ordinary party. The evening’s conceit was that we had been transported to the year 2112, where the libertarians ruled, and Ayn Rand had been reanimated. Then two contestants on a ‘game show’ were quizzed, essentially, on their knowledge of Western literature—as seen by Rand, who described, for example, *Lord of the Flies* as a book she ‘wished was autobiographical.’”

—*Hazlitt*



LEONARD MCCOMBE

🌹 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)



THE FLYINSTITUTE

From *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 bummalu. The word is derived from bombil in Marathi.

—Manohar Shetty, "Three Odd Words,"
The Baffler (no. 21)



STUART GOLDENBERG



Cover of *The Baffler* no. 20, illustrated by Mark Fisher.

The High, the Low, the Vibrant!

There seems no point any longer in questioning whether a painting, book, or film is good or bad. A society that has lost hope of seeing itself reflected in its culture naturally loses interest in it.

The results have been a culture for nobody's sake. In the foundations and universities, as in the corporate marketing departments from which they borrow their strange notions, a class-specific fetish for creativity coincides with an invincible belief in meritocracy, while cartel-like techniques of managed competition muffle the contradiction. America's stagnation proceeds directly from the assumption that cultural activity requires only enough funding to generate ratings, credentials, prizes, and tourist dollars.

Let the new culture lords and minions cleave to their investment portfolios, their advertising metrics, and their tedious marketing schemes. The rest of us still need bread...and roses, too.

“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



DAVID McLIMANS

❧ **THOMAS FRANK**

“In 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:

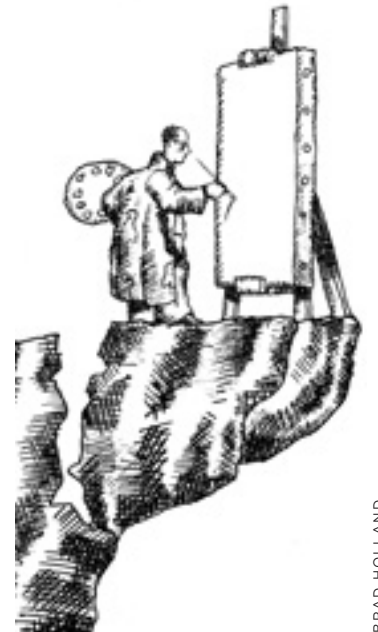
in the thirties, we protected artists from the market while today we expose them to it, imagining them as the stokers on the hurtling job-creation locomotive.”

—Thomas Frank, “Dead End on Shakin’ Street,” *The Baffler* (no. 20)

❧ **JED PERL**

“The 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. 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.

To be fair, every incoming Ivy League class since the dawn of time has had its share of opportunistic tools who arrive at campus embracing the well-known snob stereotypes that recruiters had sworn were the stuff of mythology.”

—Jim Newell, “Adam Wheeler Went to Harvard,” *The Baffler* (no. 20)

“**Lunchtime Longread.**” —*Chicago Tribune*

“**Highly amusing.**” —*Wall Street Journal*

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)



DAVID GOTHARD



RANDALL ENOS

“**An outstanding essay.**”

—*The Nation*



♣ **WILL BOISVERT**

“First, 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 shin-deep 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)

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)



ALAN GILBERT

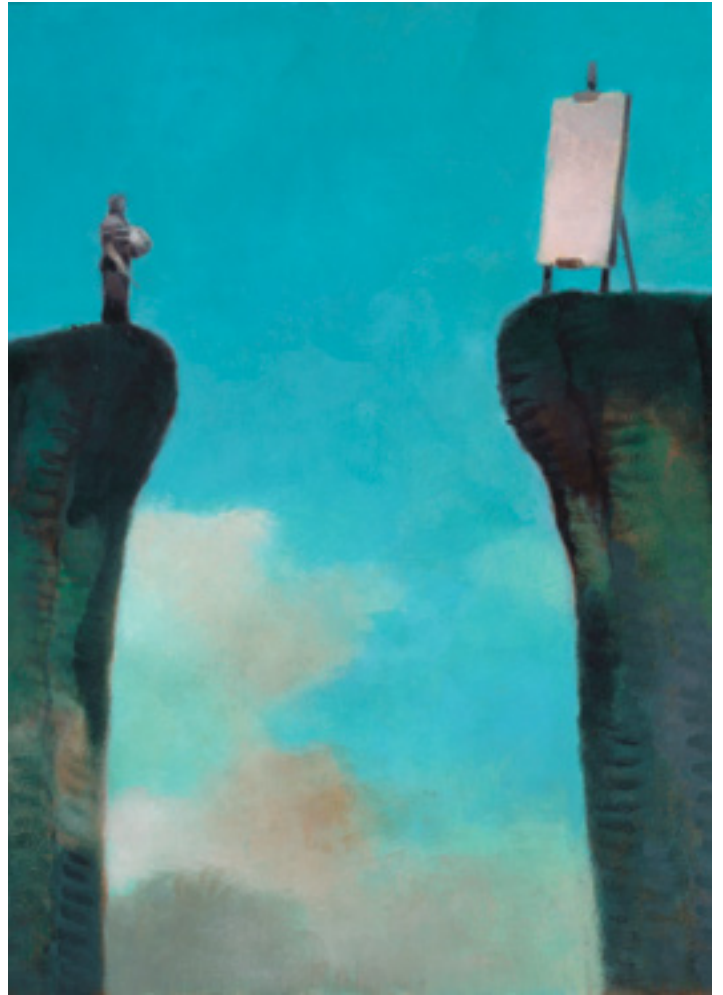
I'm from the rare generation that didn't go to war,
but it's still the inheritance.

Air raid sirens wail throughout the mall.

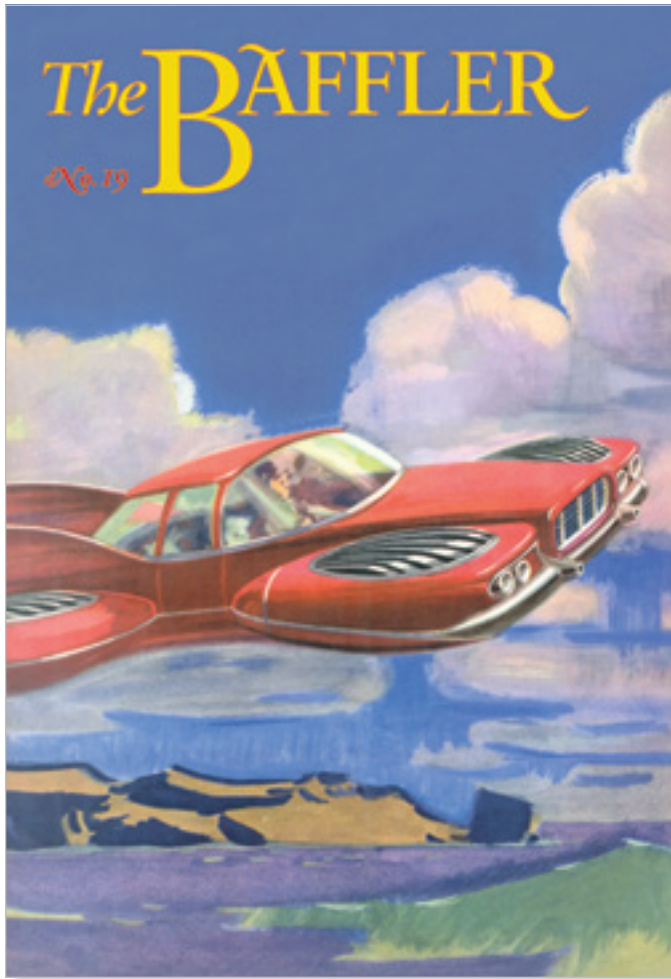
I think about you less on sunny days,
though I'm just as full of the clichés
we start with instead of an empty page.

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)



Back cover of *The Baffler* no. 20, with art by Brad Holland.



Cover of *The Baffler* no. 19, with art reprinted from Soviet magazine *Tekhnika-Molodezhi*, 1960.

The Revival Issue

The fable that we are living through a time of head-snapping innovation in technology drives American thought these days—dystopian and utopian alike. But the salvos in issue 19 of *The Baffler* chronicle America’s trajectory from megamachines to minimachines, from prosthetic gods to prosthetic pals, and raise a corollary question from amid all this strangely unimaginative innovation: How much of our collective awe rests on low expectations?

The stories, poems, and art in this new issue, our first since reviving the magazine, comment on the omnipresence of tools, applications, and utilities. These revolutionary improvements in the technique of living always seem to come packaged in the language of work, the cumulative effect of which is to inflict the disciplines and punishments of the office park on our everyday lives. For our part, we think the missing, redemptive element of culture in business civilization lies in the playful, spontaneous joy of literary and graphic art—in making believe, rather than making tools.

“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*

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)

“Obsessive, heady dissections.”

—*Time Out New York*



MICHAEL DUFFY

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Philosophical Intelligence Office—novel idea! But how did you come to dream that I wanted anything in your aboard 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 Officers, 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 moenings? 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 Mohrle, *The Confidence-Man*



JOSSELYN CHAMBERLAIN

The Baffler no. 19

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DAVID GRAEBER

“Where, 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)



MARK S. FISHER

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

“Must-read
of 2012.”

—Columbia
Journalism Review

“Very stimulating.”

—New York Times



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 story “Give Her to Me,” *The Baffler* (no. 19)

Events!

April 2, 2012

**BIFx: The Baffler
Innovation Forum**
w/ John Summers,
Chris Lehmann,
Barbara Ehrenreich,
and David Graeber
Housing Works Bookstore,
New York, NY



Barbara Ehrenreich, David Graeber,
Chris Lehmann, and John Summers.

April 9, 2012

Issue 19 Release Party w/ John Summers and Thomas Frank
Harvard Book Store, Cambridge, MA

“**Pick of U.S.
magazines.**”

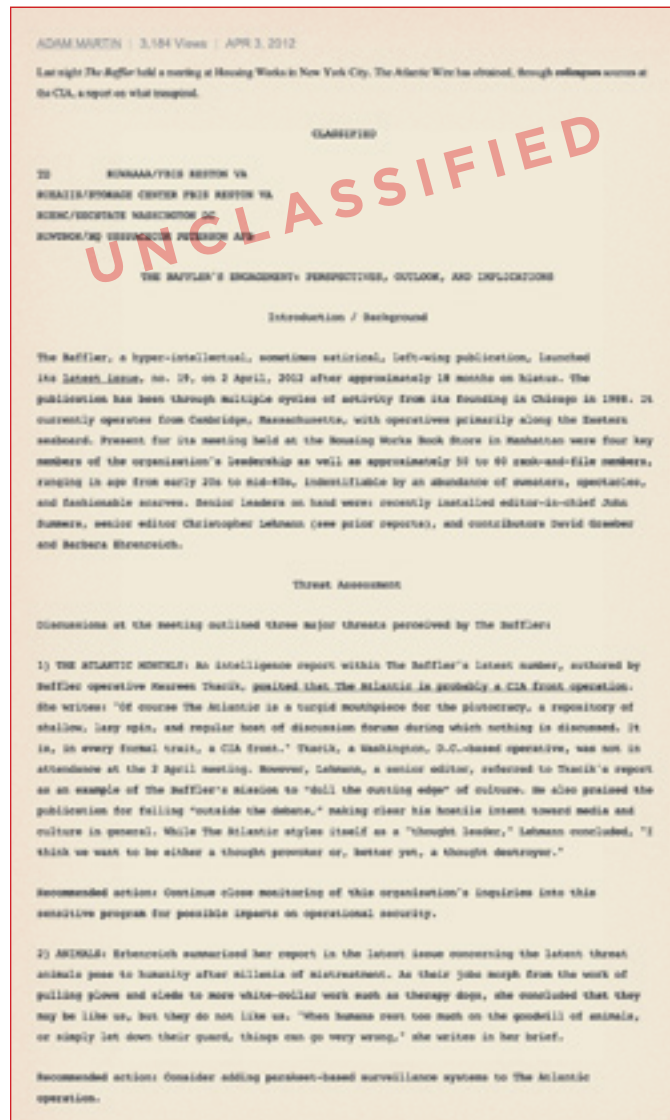
—*New Statesman*

JOSEPH BLOUGH

🔥 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

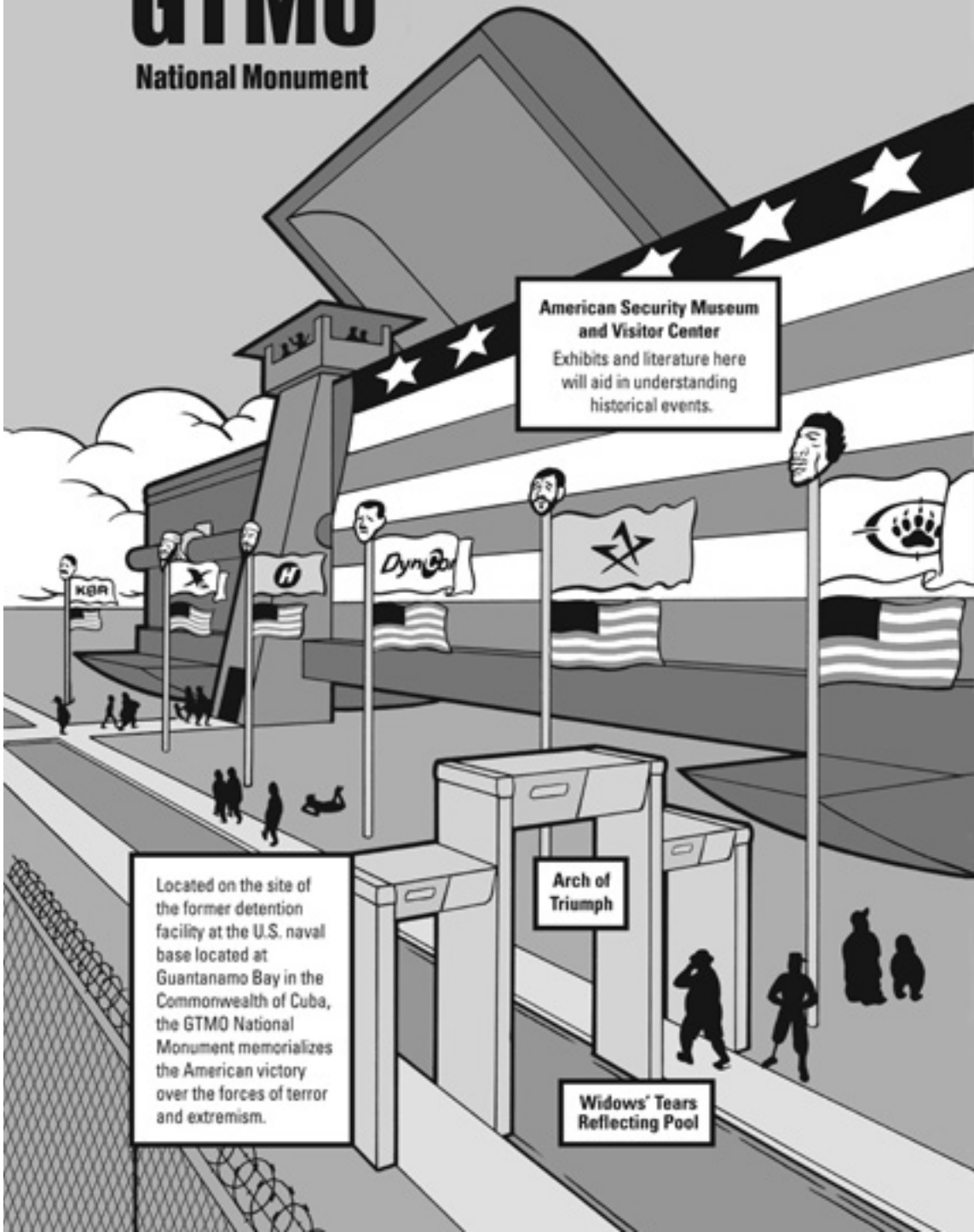
—Geoffrey Hill, from the poem *Odi Barbare*,
The Baffler (no. 19)



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

GTMO

National Monument



American Security Museum and Visitor Center
Exhibits and literature here will aid in understanding historical events.

Located on the site of the former detention facility at the U.S. naval base located at Guantanamo Bay in the Commonwealth of Cuba, the GTMO National Monument memorializes the American victory over the forces of terror and extremism.

Arch of Triumph

Widows' Tears Reflecting Pool

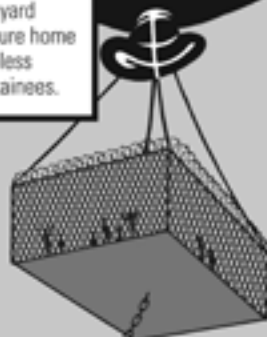
Illustration by Mark Dancey for *The Baffler* no. 19.

Enhanced Interrogation Chamber



Uighur Homeland

The camp's former exercise yard provides a secure home for stateless Chinese detainees.



Interview Rooms



Remembrance Walk

A pentagon-shaped labyrinth inscribed with the names of the fallen.



Detainee Quarters



Soldiers, Spies and Robots Monument

Dedicated to the Servicemen, Contractors, Drones and Presidents who led the American People to Safety.



Jack Bauer Educational Auditorium



About Us

The epigraph stamped on *The Baffler* no. 1, from Arthur Rimbaud’s “Morning of Drunkenness,” introduced it as a punk literary magazine. It was the summer of 1988. Thomas Frank and Keith White were recent graduates of the University of Virginia. They named their magazine as a joke on the academic fad of *undecidability*—on the jargon of the professors and the pretensions of the commercial avant-garde, with its paralyzing agonies of abstraction and interpretation. *The Baffler* would move in the opposite direction. It would strive for the lucidity of independent, critical intelligence. It would “blunt the cutting edge” of the creative class gurus, the entertainment moguls, the cyber-entrepreneurs, and the postmodern theorists who were said to be innovating the country out of the struggles of the Cold War, ushering us into the “end of history,” where there was *money* to be made.

Pop culture was entering its high hipster phase, and few souvenirs that entered *The Baffler*’s crosshairs were spared its ridicule, not even those countercultural sellouts Scooby Doo and Shaggy. (*The Baffler* no. 3 explained this pair’s meanderings as an example of the commercial exploitation of deviant subcultures.) In 1992, when

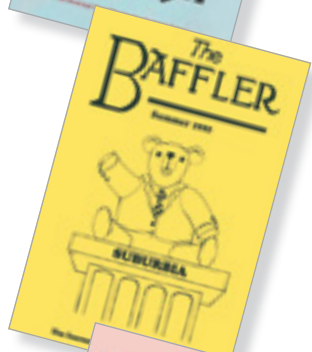
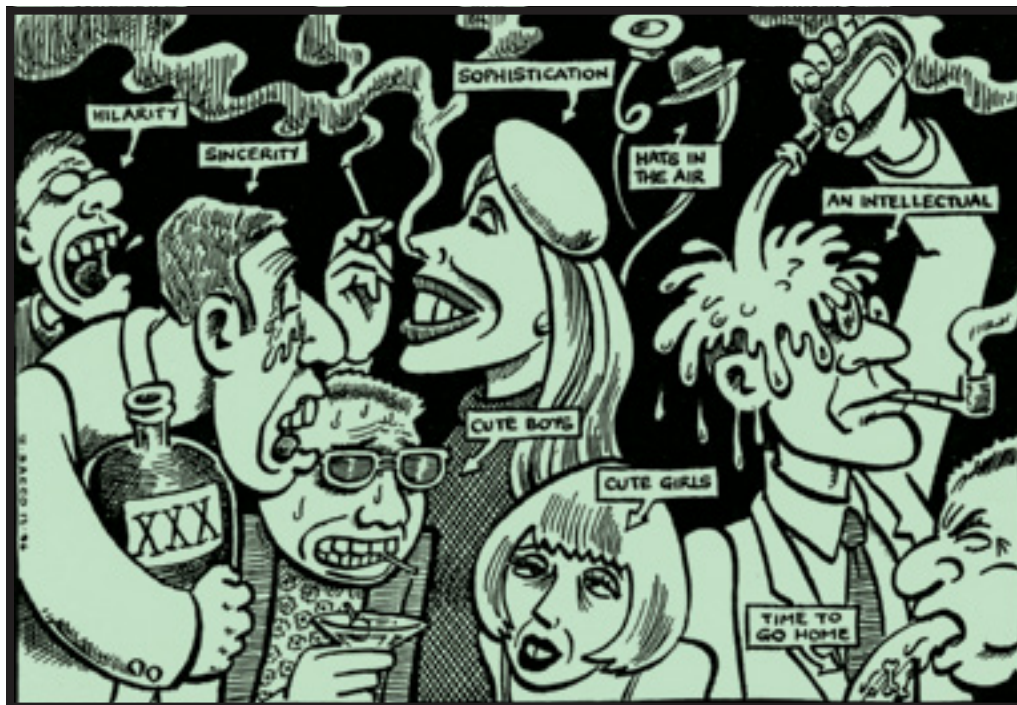


Illustration by Matt Roth, from *The Baffler* no. 6.



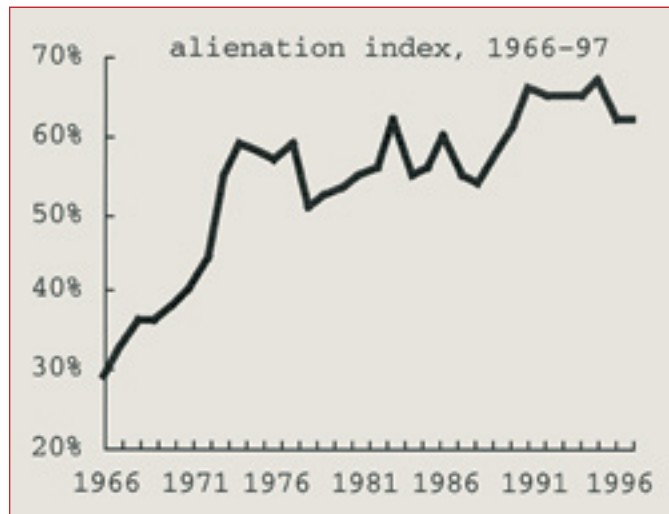
Baffler New Year's Eve party invitation, 1996. Illustrated by Joe Sacco.

the *New York Times* Style section unknowingly printed a phony glossary of “grunge speak” (having been fooled by a member of one such deviant subculture in Seattle), 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.”

Some prescient social analysis went along with the laughter. *The Baffler* said bubbles in the housing and finance industries were forming from an extremist New Economy movement that was doomed to fail, though generally deemed too smart to do so. *The Baffler* 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 so urgent and necessary.

A printed magazine of such unconstructive thinking was itself a protest. A





From *The Baffler* archives.

sound like outside the usual filters—the twee literati, the bloated universities, the velvet-gloved foundations, the viral strains of DC anti-thought, the meme hustlers. Think of an arts festival sponsored by a tobacco company, and you’ll get a whiff of the brand of fraudulence the magazine set out to expose. Issue no. 4, “Twenty-nothing,” was “dedicated to the memory of our friends gone under to the brainwash of corporate jobs, the intense and enthusiastic gone salesmen or congressional staffers; those we slammed with now in the military, hopeless on the dole, struggling on for the long lost cause in small college towns, and otherwise DEAD.”

Commodify Your Dissent

The founders didn’t exactly cozy up to benefactors. “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. As the big money ascended into the new media cloudscape, *The Baffler*’s print operation refused to heed the investor class’s siren song of obsolescence, and struggled successfully enough to disprove it.

The operation migrated from Charlottesville to Chicago with its second issue in the summer of 1990. Thomas Frank assumed the role of editor in chief and over the next two decades oversaw eighteen issues, plus two anthologies, *Commodify*

protest of what? The contraction of the cultural economy in journalism, higher education, and the arts, for one thing, and the torrent of euphemisms and business clichés designed to hide it, for another. *The Baffler* broke down post-Cold War market triumphalism into absurd juxtapositions of class and culture. It showed what art and criticism could look and

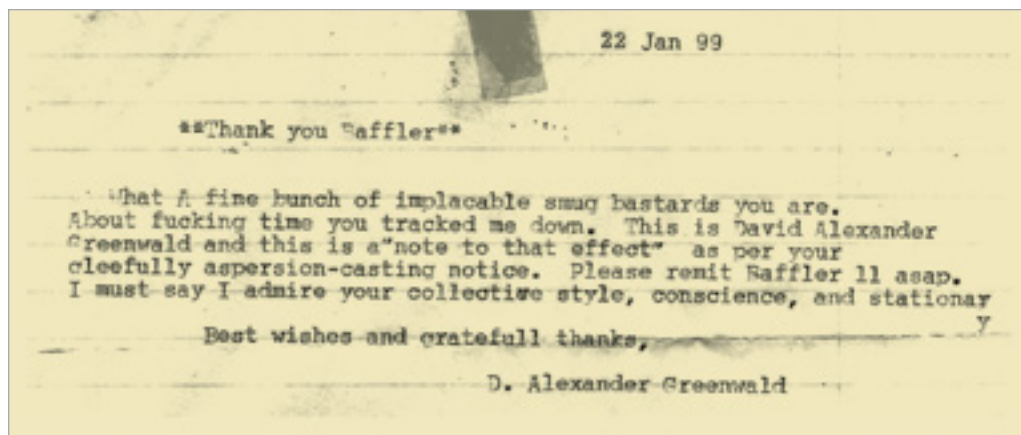


Your Dissent: The Business of Culture in the New Gilded Age and *Boob Jubilee: The Cultural Politics of the New Economy*.

A small crew of part-time volunteers edited, designed, and published the magazine—a quarterly that appeared only once in a while, according to one acerbic subscriber. When issues did appear in bookstores, they just as quickly disappeared. At the end of its first decade, the magazine seemed to many interested observers “as scarce as, well, a decent-paying job with reasonable hours and conditions and a future,” as the *Toronto Star* complained.

Midway through the Spring 2001 production of issue no. 14, “The God That Sucked,” the operation and most of 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.

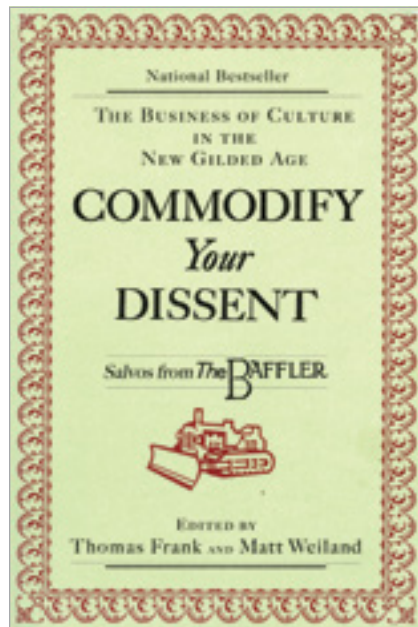
But the magazine never folded. Two more numbers issued from a rebuilt office three years after the fire. Three years later, in the summer of 2006, no. 17 showed up in subscribers’ mailboxes; three years after that, no. 18, “Margin Call,” arrived in time to gloat about the financial crisis. Around Labor Day in 2010, though, the founding crew had had enough, and decided to turn over the keys to the operation neither to a university creative writing program nor to a great pub-



Letter from a patient and loyal *Baffler* subscriber.



Commodify Your Dissent: The Business of Culture in the New Gilded Age.
Edited by Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, 1997.
(W. W. Norton, 288 pages.)



“Seldom have I come across a book that in so short a space says so much about the shambles of what now passes for the American cultural and intellectual enterprise.”

—Lewis Lapham, from the foreword



lishing house, but to a smaller, poorer, and less experienced crew in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

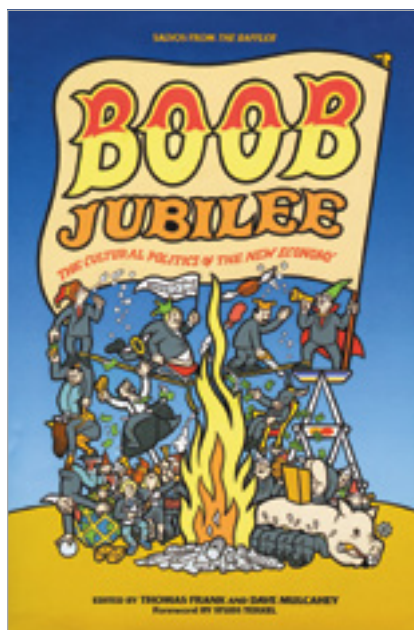
Boom Crash Baffler

Lo and behold, *The Baffler* is now publishing on its most prolific schedule since it first stirred to life. Every new issue features our signature salvos in cheerfully independent cultural criticism, oriented around an immortal theme, plus poems, stories, and illustrations agile and vivid enough to call adverse attention to the illusions propping up the leadership class. *Baffler* veterans like Thomas Frank, Chris Lehmann, and Rick Perlstein have returned to fine fettle in the magazine’s refreshed pages, alongside a corps of new contributors that includes Andrew Bacevich, Nicholson Baker, Barbara Ehrenreich, Susan Faludi, David Graeber, Jaron Lanier, Evgeny Morozov, and William T. Vollmann. Good luck finding a more concentrated antagonism toward the contradiction that is “business civilization.”

Yes, the time has finally come for the magazine that’s been filing advance memoranda on the American comedy for twenty-five years, observing the occult ways

“This is a hell of an important book.”

—*Studs Terkel, from the foreword*



Boob Jubilee: The Cultural Politics of the New Economy.
 Edited by Thomas Frank
 and David Mulcahey.
 (W. W. Norton, 416 pages)

that big business talks us into profitable stagnation and culture-free innovation. Our quest to unthink the branded life finds us spoiled for choice. In no time at all, we’ve covered a host of name-brand swindles, from digital rackets like LinkedIn, Kickstarter, and Facebook-branded feminism to banality shops like *The Atlantic* and *This American Life*, hip and cool cities like Berlin, and curious distillations of pretend meritocracy (i.e., Harvard).

The best that our most influential thought leaders can do is scratch after business as usual—concessions to the richest and sacrifices by the rest of us—to unlock the heavenly door of prosperity once again. Well, we were present at prosperity’s uncreative destruction. Now we want a new alternative—not a return, even in the best of the cases now put to us, to staffing cubicles and factories, puffing trends in fashion, consuming fake culture, or chasing career success via trampling, tricking, and elbowing. 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 carnival hokum.

—*John Summers*



Masthead

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