

TADDLE CREEK

NO. 49

WHAT KIND
OF SICK JOKE
IS THIS?!



MIRSKI

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THE MAGAZINE OF ZINE CULTURE
AND UNDERGROUND PRINT ARTS



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TADDLE CREEK

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THE CONTRIBUTORS

Cecily Ross is the author of *The Lost Diaries of Susanna Moodie: A Novel*. “No Man’s Land” (p. 6) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on November 5, 2001.

Stuart Ross is the author of over twenty books of fiction, poetry, and essays. He also runs Anvil Press’s surrealist Feed Dog Book imprint. His latest book, *The Book of Grief and Hamburgers*, was published this spring. “Invitation to Love” (p. 8) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on April 9, 2001.

Deanna McFadden is the executive publishing director at Wattpad Webtoon Studios. She has authored more than twenty abridged classics for kids. “Johnny Cash II” (p. 9) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on July 20, 2003, and was the follow-up to a poem published in *Taddle Creek* No. 10.

John Degen has lived in northern Ontario since March, 2020. He has written books both published and unpublished and is re-evaluating his relationship with creativity. “Smelt” (p. 10) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on January 3, 2001.

Steven Charles Manale is a cartoonist and storyboard/portrait artist. “Funnybabyland” (p. 11) was created for an art show celebrating the anniversary of Toronto’s Jet Fuel Coffee Shop, in June, 2009. It is previously unpublished. An additional “Funnybabyland” strip appeared in *Taddle Creek* No. 22.

Conan Tobias is *Taddle Creek*’s editor-in-chief. The text portion of “Cover Star” (p. 12) is a supplement to the *Taddle Creek* art show of the same name, featuring original cover photographs from the magazine’s first decade, which ran from June 1 to 30, 2013, at the Jet Fuel Coffee Shop, and is previously unpublished.

Elissa Joy lives and writes in Xalapa, Mexico. She is the author of *Atomic Time* and several books published by Toronto’s Pas de Chance press. “Mysteries of the Internal Combustion Engine” (p. 18) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on March 9, 2004.

Elana Wolff is the author of the poetry collection *Swoon*, which received the 2020 Canadian Jewish Literary Award for poetry. Her latest collection is *Shape Taking*. “Conceit” (p. 20) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on February 1, 2001.

Paul Vermeersch is a poet, professor, artist, and editor. He teaches publishing and creative writing at Sheridan College. His most recent book is *Shared Universe: New and Selected Poems 1995–2020*. “Take 1 Tablet(s) Daily” (p. 21) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on October 16, 2003.

Dave Lapp is the author of *People Around Here*, a collection of his strips from *Taddle Creek* and elsewhere. “Black Bloc on Yonge” (p. 22) was originally published on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, on July 14, 2010.

Cole Closser is the author of the graphic novels *Little Tommy Lost* and *Black Rat*. A native of the Ozarks, Cole is an associate professor of art and design at Missouri State University whose work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *The Best American Comics* and *Black Warrior Review*. Cole’s proposed cover for *Taddle Creek* No. 31 (p. 23) is previously unpublished.

Robb Mirsky is an illustrator and cartoonist. His most recent series is *Sludgy*, a cute little horror comic about a swamp monster looking for good vibes and good friends. His cover illustration is this issue’s only new work.



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THE EPHEMERA

A magazine of *Taddle Creek's* means does not end up with a lot of excess, unpublished content. Nor is it able to feed its Web site with exclusive stories on a regular basis. But there was a time when the magazine gave that latter a shot. Most of the content in this issue originally appeared exclusively on the *Taddle Creek* Web site, in the early days of the twenty-first century. Of the nine authors whose fiction, poetry, and comics are included here, eight have appeared in the magazine before, while one, Cecily Ross, is making her long overdue *Taddle Creek* print debut. (One additional piece, written by David Whitton specifically for the magazine's tenth anniversary outdoor reading, has been lost, much to Dave's delight, and is now the

ultimate piece of *Taddle Creek* ephemera.)

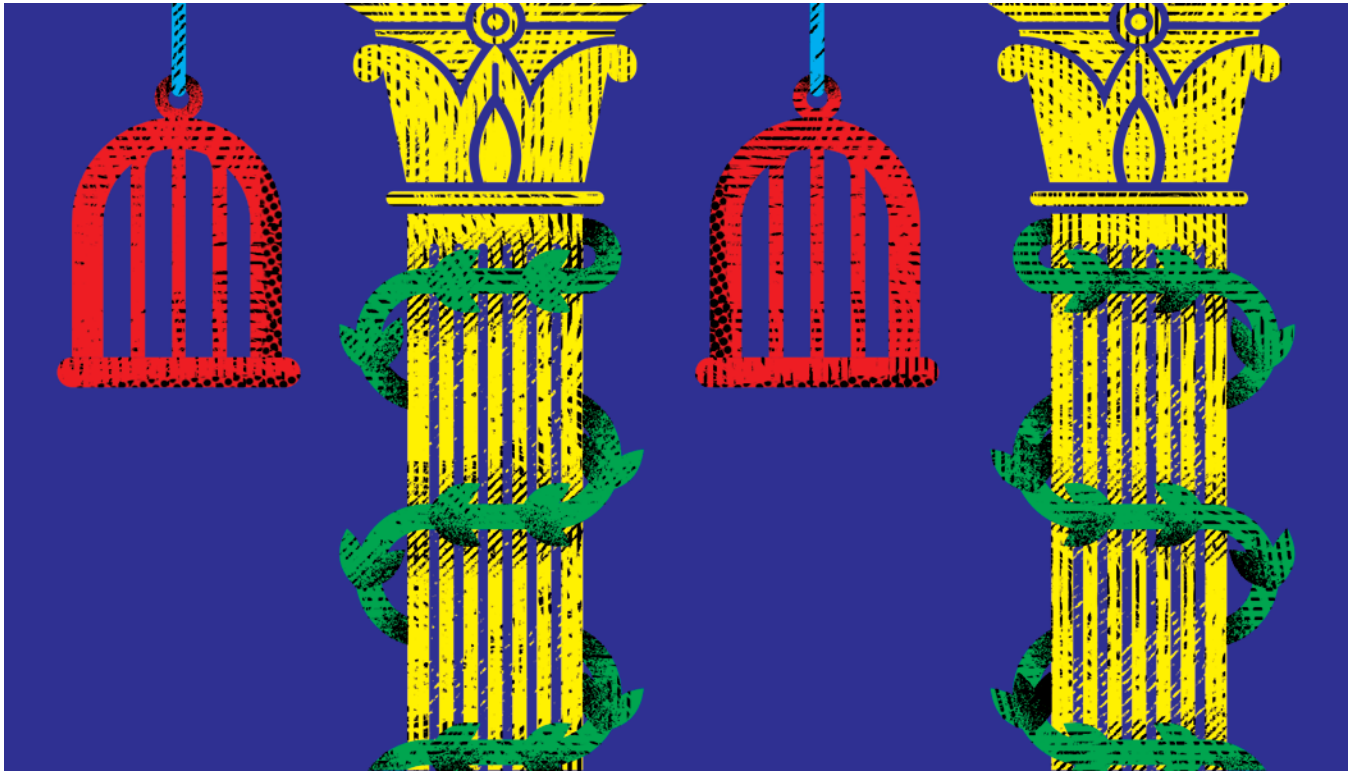
This issue completes the magazine's secret twenty-year plan to "make up" three issues, letting it arrive at an even fifty for its upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary. (As long-time readers may recall, *Taddle Creek* was published annually for its first three years.) The first bonus issue, *Taddle Creek* No. 6, published in 2001, was possibly Canada's first (and last?) issue of a regular print magazine published only in digital form, as a PDF, an Open eBook file, and in Microsoft Reader format, the latter two of which are long defunct. It worked great on a PalmPilot. (The PDF can still be downloaded from the *Taddle Creek* Web site.)

The second bonus issue, No. 32, was a newspaper broadsheet comic section—

very similar to the one published in *Taddle Creek* No. 48—and appeared in 2014. And now, this third extra, known around the office as the *Taddle Creek* ashcan: a format used by the comic industry in its early days to establish title trademarks via cheaply produced issues not intended for resale. Since all of the stories in this issue have appeared somewhere in the *Taddle Creek* literary universe but never in the magazine proper, this B-sides-and-rarities collection officially gives them canon status at last.

The magazine hopes you enjoy this low-cost collection of recycled content. Next issue: *Taddle Creek's* story comes to an end in a double-ish-sized anniversary number. Don't miss the exciting conclusion!

—TADDLE CREEK



THE FICTION

NO MAN'S LAND

BY CECILY ROSS

The last time I saw my mother was at Union Station. I was on my way to Montreal to visit my brother and his family after taking the Amtrak from Chicago, where I attend university. I had a couple of hours to kill, so I called ahead and suggested she meet me for lunch.

I saw her before she saw me, gliding through the midday mill of travellers like the prow of a gilded galleon. At first, in the cavernous hall, she appeared smaller than I remembered her, but the illusion waned as she got closer to where I was waiting, beside the information kiosk. Fifty years old and almost six feet tall, with thick blond hair that was still magnificent, my mother could not be dwarfed by anything as prosaic as a train station.

Without a word, she shoved a large pot of yellow mums into my arms and

enfolded me in a suffocating embrace. There were tears in her eyes as she pushed herself away and, gripping me by the shoulders, she fixed me with a deep, appraising look. She wiped her face with the back of one hand and grabbed my duffel bag with the other.

"There's a Greek place down the street. It's not very good, but it's close. We can talk. I can tell you about Andy before he gets there. He's trying to slip away from the office. He's dying to meet you. You're going to love him."

The Greek place was dark and filled with bankers, the kind who still drink Manhattans and eat roast chicken and garlic-laced potatoes for lunch. My mother ordered two Martinis, straight up.

"This is a special occasion," she whispered, as she lit a long, thin brown cigarette. She leaned close to me. "You are

going to love Andy. I am so happy. I have never been happier."

She had her back to the entrance, and every couple of seconds she glanced over her shoulder and then at her watch.

"I wish he'd hurry up." And then, "I can't understand what's keeping him."

When the waiter came to take our order, she waved him away with a flick of her wrist.

"No, no, no. Just another Martini. You'll have one too, won't you, dear?" She looked at the door again and muttered under her breath to no one in particular, "Where is he anyway?"

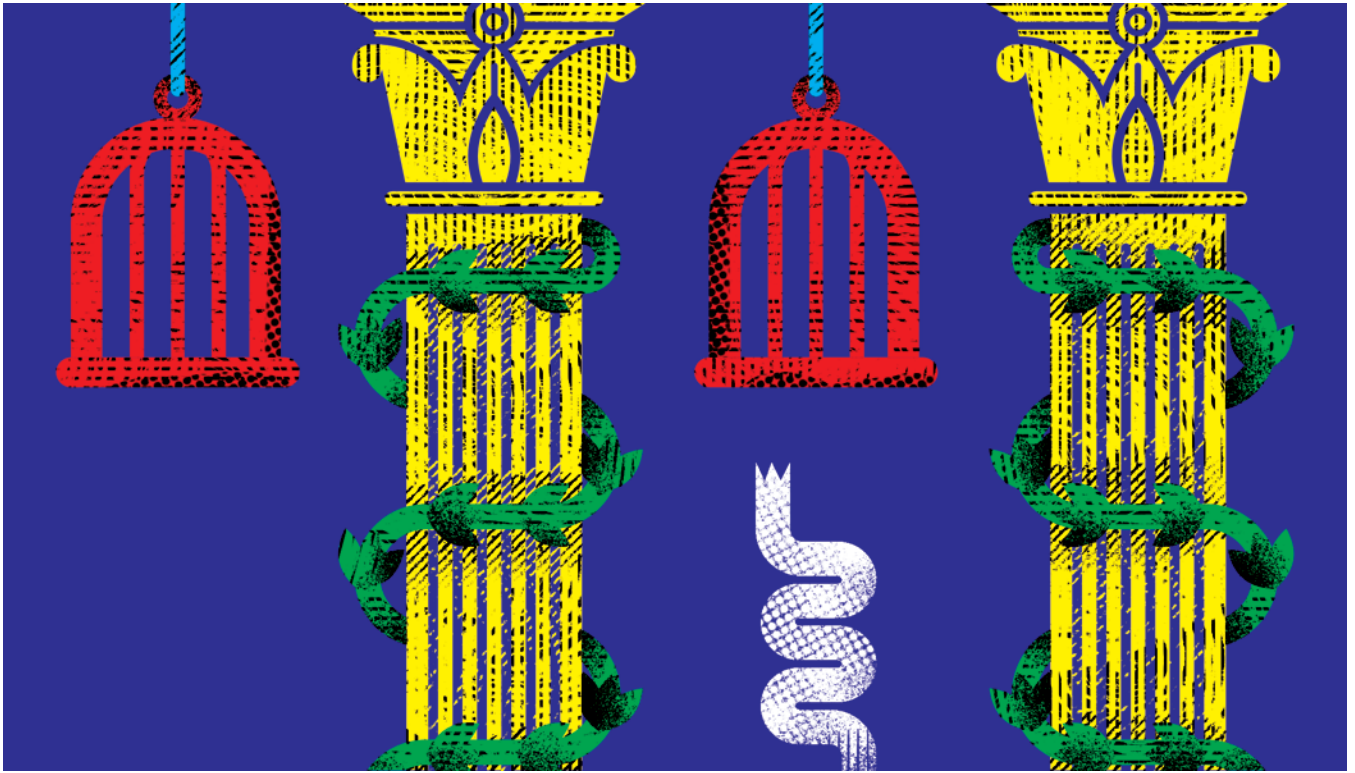
After she had drained her second drink and smoked another cigarette, she stopped looking back at the doorway.

"That bastard," she fumed. "I am really pissed off."

She threw twenty dollars on the table.

"C'mon. I hate Greek food and it's

MATTHEW DALEY



too dark in here anyway. Let's go."

I grabbed my bag and the pot of flowers and followed her for about two blocks until we came to a sidewalk café.

"There. This is perfect. We'll sit outside. It's really lovely in the sun."

It was a brisk, albeit bright, April day, but my mother and I were the only people willing to wrestle with the paper placemats in the breeze. Everyone else sat indoors. A waiter brought us a carafe of red wine, two glasses, an ashtray, and two long, laminated menus.

"Don't ever get mixed up with someone in the insurance business. They never keep their appointments."

She lit another cigarette, pulled up the collar of her leather coat, and slumped in her chair.

"Whatever happened to Graham?" I finally asked.

My mother's eyes gleamed.

"That sonuvabitch. He went back to his wife. Don't ever get mixed up with a married man. Oh, the sex is terrific, but the emotional strain is hell. And after a while you want to do something besides ball all the time. You want to do something normal, like go for a walk maybe,

or have dinner in a restaurant. I got sick of eating Chinese takeout in two-bit hotel rooms."

The sun had disappeared, and the wind was getting really cold. A waiter came out.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but we are not serving food on the patio this afternoon. Would you like to move indoors for lunch?"

"We don't mind a little breeze," my mother insisted. "I'll have the Swiss cheese and smoked salmon omelet."

"I'm sorry, but the patio is closed," the waiter reiterated.

Large, intermittent drops of rain plunked onto the white plastic table.

"In that case, we're leaving," my mother announced.

We stopped in the shelter of a store awning so my mother could reapply her lipstick and light another cigarette. It was raining harder, so we stood there waiting until it let up enough for us to dash across the street to a pub my mother had spotted. There, we sank into a darkly upholstered booth and the waitress brought us a very large pitcher of draft beer. My mother lit another

cigarette. The rain had made dark grey smudges under her eyes.

"The thing is," she began, "the thing is, this single parenting business is for the birds. Kids need a male role model. But did your father ever show any interest in you and your brother? No. There he was, living in the same city, married again with two more kids. But did he ever call or visit or show even the slightest bit of interest? No."

My mother poured herself another glass of beer and started to giggle.

"What do you call all that loose skin around a penis?"

I shook my head.

"A man."

She threw her head back, blond hair flying, and laughed out loud. Then she lit another cigarette.

The next place we went to had huge brass birdcages suspended from the ceilings. Lush artificial ivy snaked its way up fake Corinthian columns, and the sound of invisible canaries filled the air.

"I just wish you could've met Andy. He's never done this before. He's usually completely dependable; treats me like a queen. He's pissing me off today,



INVITATION TO LOVE

Hi there, my name is Stuart.
 I'm forty-one. I have brown hair—
 at least I used to have brown hair,
 it's grey now. I have brown eyes—
 well, I used to have brown eyes,
 but I poked them out.
 I'm five feet nine when I'm standing straight,
 though normally I'm hunched over.
 I don't really believe in astrology,
 but I'm a Cancer, which seems appropriate,
 and I was born in 1959, the Year of the Pig,
 which explains the condition my apartment is in,
 although I did do a couple of dishes last week,
 before I got distracted. Things I enjoy . . .
 I enjoy moping about the state of the world
 and worrying about missile attacks
 by rogue states,
 and I enjoy just spending an evening by the fireplace,
 thinking about leaping into it
 because of how depressed I am.
 I also like to drink alone
 and watch Meat Loaf and Pat Benatar videos
 on MuchMoreMusic. I consider myself
 a nature person and have a dead
 plant on my windowsill,
 but I'm not sure what kind it is.
 I am employed, and I love my job
 but fear I may get fired anytime soon
 because they're always downsizing.
 I'm looking for that special someone
 who will say nice things to me
 because my self-esteem is so low
 (it's off the scale in this psychology test I took
 that's named after two German psychiatrists),
 and basically I'm looking for someone
 who I may be able to drag down with me.
 If you're interested, get back to me, and
 maybe we can work something out.

—STUART ROSS

but this is definitely the best relationship I've ever had. It's so important to find a man you can talk to. We just never stop talking."

"How did you meet?" I asked.

My mother stuck her formidable index finger into her glass and paddled

the ice cubes round and round. She looked up at me shyly, with misty eyes.

"We only met last night."

She closed her eyes and smiled a secret smile.

"But, oh, what a night. He saw me from behind at Caps, that sports bar on Jarvis,

JOHNNY CASH II

Would you please sing to me of that pretty place, Johnny Cash?
With green, green grass, terrible beauty, and memories of Jackson,
Where I gave my love to Brian Boru, and you gave yours to Rose.

Because I'm not convinced this world is for me,
With its dreary days, concrete parks, and young boys with rifles, so
Would you please sing to me of that pretty place, Johnny Cash?

On our way there, you'll wear your heart like a guitar strap,
Low slung, on a dusty trail, exposed but safe, just here,
Where I gave my love to Brian Boru, and you gave yours to Rose.

And if I beg, plead, borrow, loot, lie, and steal,
Just to quiet the rage in my aching heart,
Would you please sing to me of that pretty place, Johnny Cash?

Because all I have are faded memories,
Of better times, of lesser cares, of a simple place,
Where I gave my love to Brian Boru, and you gave yours to Rose.

Please let us not stop by the side of a bare road, you and I,
Let's drive through the night, through Memphis, through Dublin. Home,
Where you sang to me of that pretty place, Johnny Cash,
And I gave my love to Brian Boru, and you gave yours to Rose.

—DEANNA MCFADDEN

and he knew before he even saw my face that I was his woman. We have so much in common. He's asked me to go camping in Algonquin this weekend. Isn't that a cool first date? I just love nature."

She took a long drag on her cigarette, blew the smoke out through her nostrils, and then applied herself to studying the menu.

"Well, kiddo, what about some lunch? All these memories are making me hungry."

"I have to catch my train soon. I don't think there's time."

My mother squinted at her watch. "Oh, my God. Where did the time go? And I haven't even told you about my new job. There's just so much to catch up on. I'll have one more cigarette and then we'd better get you on that train."

She signaled the waiter.

"Sweetheart, bring me just one more teeny-weeny Martini." Then she sat back and gave me a conspiratorial wink.

My mother was silent on the walk back to the train station. Inside, she draped her arm over my shoulders and leaned heavily against me. Once again, her eyes filled up with tears.

"It's been so good to see you, baby. Maybe next time you'll meet Andy. Don't forget to write."

At the gateway to the platform, I kissed her cheek and extricated myself from her long arms. I handed her the pot of mums and she accepted it without comment. She reached her fingers out to touch my cheek, but she missed.

"Sorry about lunch," was all she said.

The last time I saw her she was weaving away like a galleon on uncertain seas. I haven't seen her since. ☹

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SMELT

you hang a light
from a pole
to fake the moon maybe,
turn them off course
and lead them into
shallows they'd avoid
given a choice

mostly you hang the light
because it works, because smelt
can't choose, won't discern
when the moon signals life
and when it draws
a net, everyone knows
a moth will slam
itself against hot glass
until it dies of exhaustion,
until it dies of light

and every year, the
same April moon draws
a group of men north
along the highway,
generations of their family
meeting generations of mine,
for a few nights each year

grandfathers first,
when the trip was longer
because cars and roads were younger;
the Italian men slept in canvas
tents, wet with breathing
beside my grandfather's cabin,
a wooden slat box just
inside the unlocked screen door,
full of vegetables from their
market downtown, bottles
of last year's backyard wine
on the steps, rained on
or sweating with frosty dew

and the smelt ran
for three nights straight,
the same three nights every year,
and the lake was darker then,
the trees thicker;
and they talked for over
an hour when he finally
ran hydro to the place;
talked about the two
light bulbs, and how many
moths there suddenly were,
their lanterns on poles

bringing the shoreline to a boil,
more smelt than water after
a while, tiny bodies
stretching the nets
wine and shouting,
and my grandfather
wading in to help them
haul the load

a generation later came
the neighbour, Mr. Lough,
and the scientific method;
came me on the rocks
beside the beach, watching—
my grandfather long retired
from the nets, and
the Italian men moving next door
to comfortable chairs
in the boathouse, fire in
the oil drum, and every year
a new system,
and every year fish like prairie wheat,
fish like simmering rice,
fish like hordes of life trying
to swim to the moon

tonight, we step from the car
to find a small group
of laughing men
beneath the trees, young men
wondering how and old men
to make it happen;
still with wine and still
with vegetables, who remember
my grandfather like I never knew him,
young and thin
and not bothered by cold water

they know where to find the lights
in the shed; they light
the fire, and they spread
the nets, faking the moon

the lake hasn't boiled in years,
and we could all lose patience;
we could stop briefly
knowing each other

soon we will stop,
when it feels right;
it doesn't yet feel right

—JOHN DEGEN

FROM THE BRAIN-MEATS OF STEVEN CHARLES MANALE —

FUNNYBABYLAND™

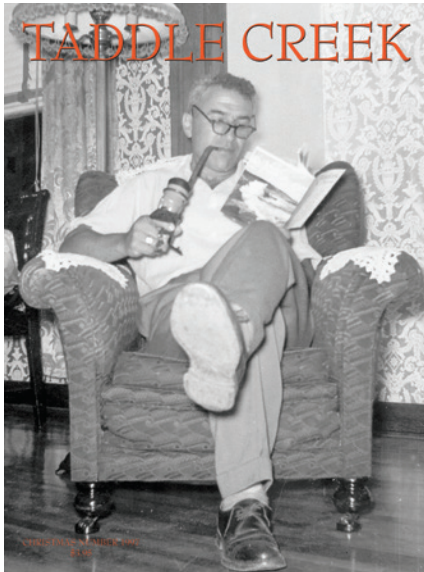
STARRING



AND



MANALE '09

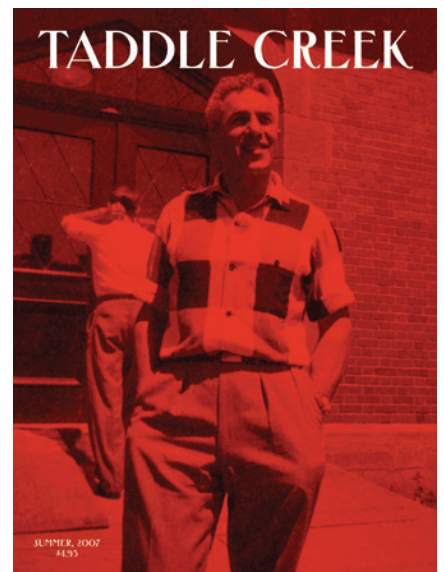


THE GALLERY

COVER STAR

From 1997 to 2007, Taddle Creek covers featured vintage photography, taken from a variety of sources. The magazine's founder offers some background on several of these early cover subjects.

BY CONAN TOBIAS





"In 1995, I art directed a volume of Acta Victoriana, a University of Toronto literary magazine. My first of two Acta covers featured a photo of my father, Fred Tobias, taken in Quebec City, probably in the nineteen-sixties. When I launched Taddle Creek, I decided to kick things off with another photo of him. He wasn't a regular pipe smoker, so he's probably putting on a bit of a show here, while reading what looks to be a copy of Reader's Digest. When the magazine switched to illustrated covers, Ian Phillips drew his own version of this photo, with Tad, Taddle Creek's mascot, in my father's place. A similar illustration is found on Taddle Creek's bound volumes."



"My father appeared on a few Taddle Creek covers, including the final photo cover, in 2007 (No. 18)."



"Cover photos for the magazine's first five years were all taken from my family archive and date from around the mid-nineteen-forties to early nineteen-fifties. In most cases, the photographer is unknown. This photo of my mother, Laura Tobias (top), which appeared on Taddle Creek No. 8, is a rare case in which, thanks to some shadows and another photo from the same series, the photographer—my father—can be identified."

TOP: M. FRED TOBIAS; BOTTOM: LAURA TOBIAS



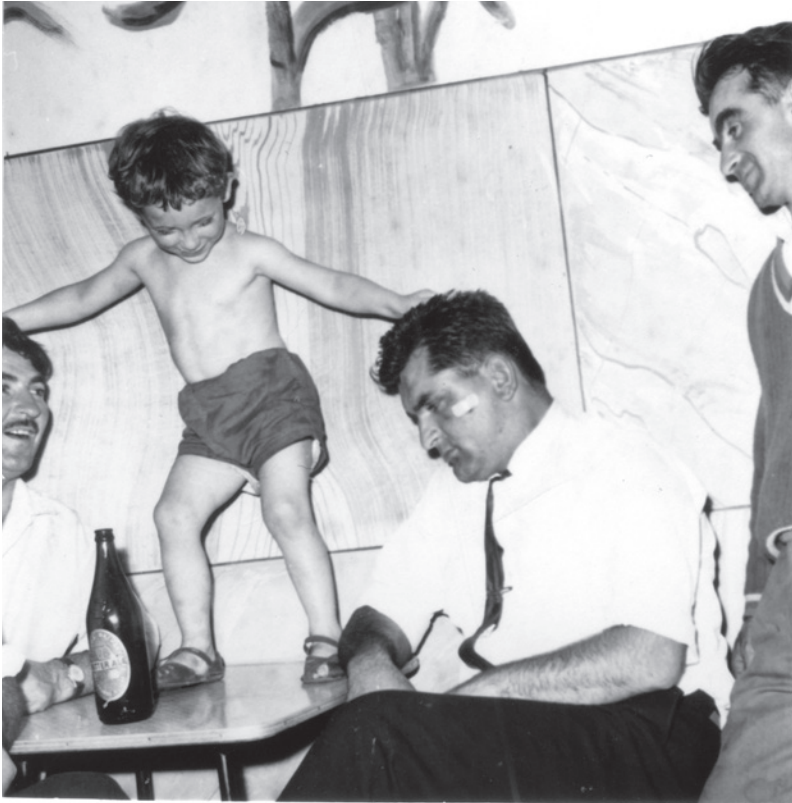
A Full Chute

Haymarket Square

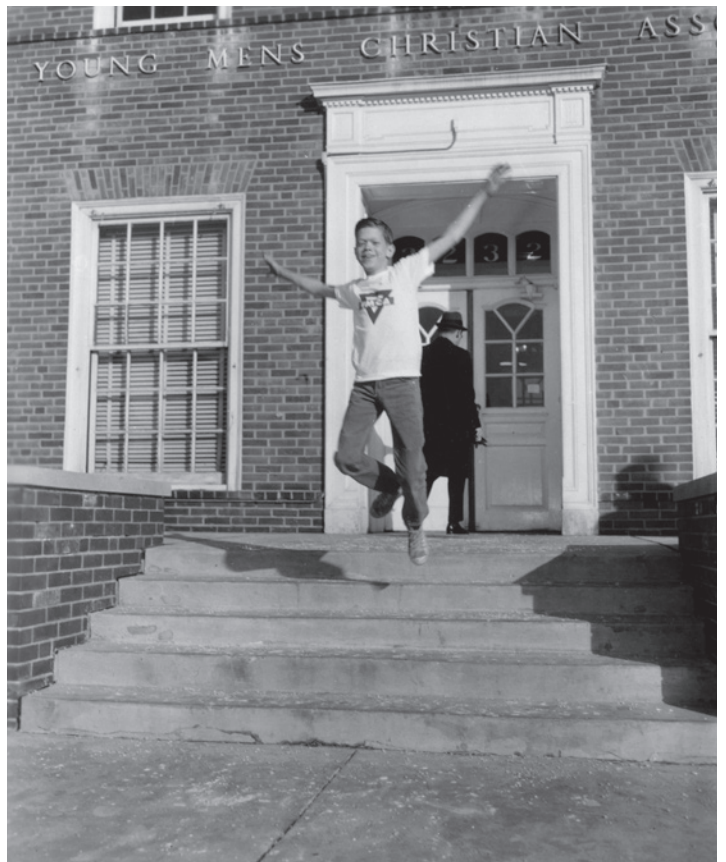
MCK "After the Second World War, my father served as physical director of the Saint John, New Brunswick, Catholic Youth Organization, or C.Y.O., providing counselling and recreation to local youth. This photo, which appeared on Taddle Creek No. 5, is from a series showing children using playground equipment that was bound together as some sort of promotional booklet. I first used several photos from the set in 1997, for the cover and inner sleeve of *Lighter, Flicker, Smoke and Fade*, an album by a local Toronto band, *Sleepwalker's Union*."



"I eventually ran out of decent family photos and started scrounging antique shops, and eventually eBay, for cover shots, advancing the time frame of photos used by a decade, to the mid-fifties and early sixties. The top photo, from a box of slides I paid two dollars for at a shop on St. Catherine Street, in Montreal, in 2002, was used for the covers of both Taddle Creek Nos. 10 and 11. Two other slides in the box featured the same couple, posed in a hotel room; the remaining six featured an older couple at home, with one outdoor shot."



"The Taddle Creek super fan Tim Davin dubbed this photograph, an eBay find, used for issue No. 13, "Daddy Drinks Because You Dance," which really sums it up perfectly."



"The cover of Taddle Creek No. 17 was modelled after the sleeve for the Smiths single "The Boy With the Thorn in His Side," which featured a young Truman Capote jumping against a yellow background—which is exactly the treatment given to this eBay find."

TOP: —AUL NICOLITCH; BOTTOM: W. C. RINDER PHOTO COMPANY INCORPORATED

MYSTERIES OF THE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE

BY ELISSA JOY

"Then Sara denied, saying: I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

—*Genesis 18:15.*

You think you understand it, right? The elements—gas and air—are antithetical, yet somehow the right mixture makes it happen. Makes *it* happen. First a spark, then cylinders swell, pistons churn, and finally the motor roars, promising to take you anywhere you want to go. But who can say, I mean, who can really say what goes on down there?

"I don't know, it just happened!" you say, finding yourself at the altar or waking up in some bed with strange sheets and an unknown landscape outside the window and a name you didn't even know yesterday now emblazoned on your heart, like a prayer. A question of faith: "I just turned the ignition and ..."

I don't know how it happened. Someone handed me the key; I didn't go around asking for it. I used to walk, ride a bike, take the bus, but I met this guy who was a mechanic and then there I was, rolling down the highway—that stretch between cities where the speed limit is pushed up to seventy—holding thickly to the wheel, stiff, taut, fragments of prayers clouding the windshield. Denying responsibility, as in biblical times—praying only when things go wrong. Someone told me I should call him and so I did, and later he asked me to dance, and later we woke up together, except that he said he hadn't slept, just watched me laughing through my dreams, like a circus madwoman.

He said he was happy, but then sometimes you think everything is going so smoothly that you forget it's not all one

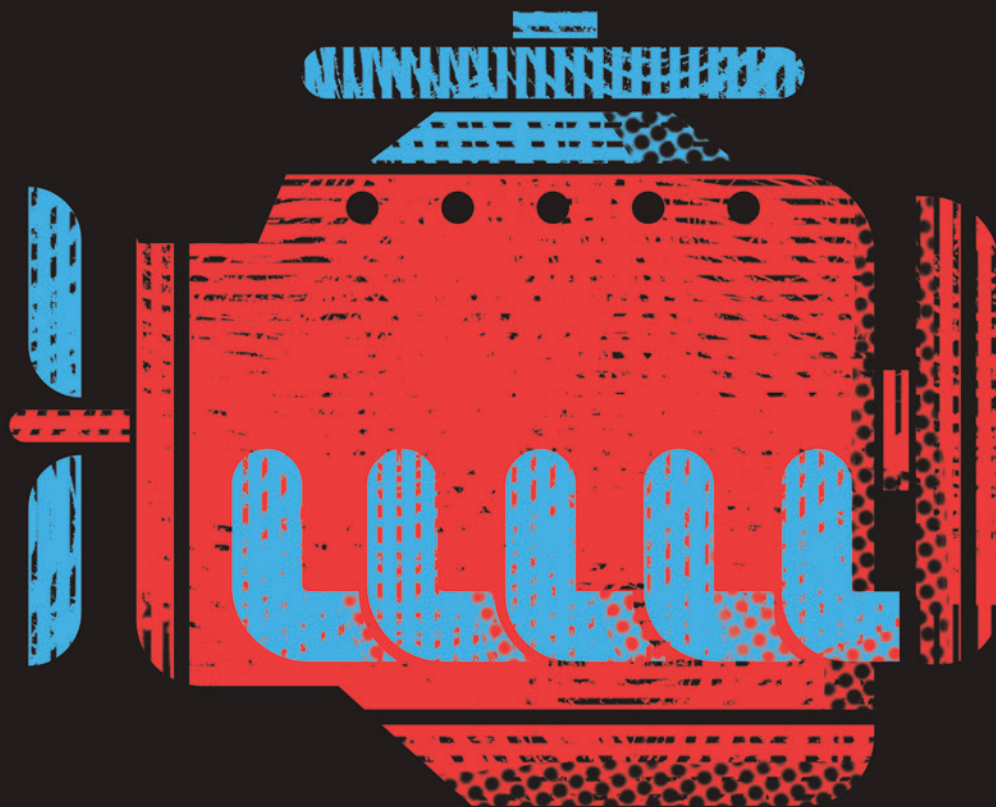
continuous motion but really a series of systematically controlled explosions taking place under a deceptively still metal exterior, and who's to say the spark won't one day refuse to ignite, or that the explosion won't burst out of its mechanical confines and melt the whole machine down—who's to say? Something unforeseen happens, his voice started to sound different, every time it was a toss-up: would the motor start or not, or would I be stranded. Sometimes you stop at a signal and then the light changes, and maybe it won't go back into gear, or maybe it just sputters, maybe I flooded the engine, maybe it's the alternator, when did I last check the battery, what did I do wrong, baby, tell me where, oh where, did I go wrong? I just want things to be like they used to be, that's all. Back when there was hope.

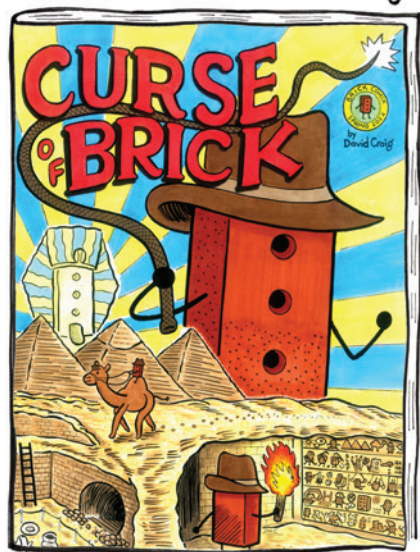
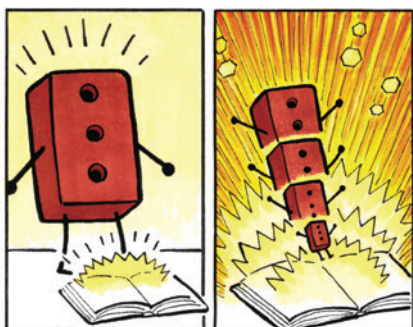
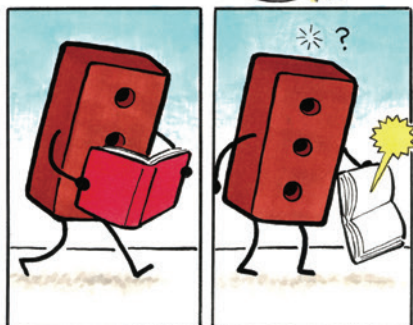
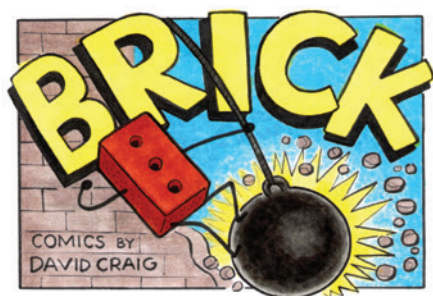
Seeking easy answers returns me, unfairly, to the person who set us up. A kindness, perhaps, but where's the generosity in putting two good people together so they can tear themselves apart? I really wanted—I mean I really, really wanted—it to be simple. He said I was beautiful, and he told everyone we ran into that I was the woman he was going to marry, even though we'd just met. I laughed. Something was wrong. The tachymeter started fluctuating wildly, and the lights flickered and the battery gauge dropped down and soon I was pushing the vehicle over to the unpaved shoulder area with about, I don't know, a thousand people giving me advice or showing me other ways that it could have been, used to be—don't remind me—the greater my faith the more unjust the reality.

I'm in the garage writing this. Waiting—what else is there to do? No one

knows what's going to happen until it happens, or not even then. Not even afterward, not until it's too late to make adjustments. Don't get me wrong, it's not like I slashed my wrists or anything. Just that, ever since all this took place, I've been so tired. It's hard to sleep, to concentrate. My work suffers. That's what my boss tells me: your work is suffering. No, no, *it's something else*. I keep realizing how little I knew him. Know him, I should say. It's not like he's stopped existing. He used to be a mechanic, and I thought he could fix things. I'm so sick of doing everything for myself, when all I know is how much I don't know. Where does the spark come from, anyway? I can't tell you how many times I've tried rubbing two sticks together to make fire, like they do in books. Nothing ever happens, but still I try to pinpoint the exact moment of transformation, when water becomes steam or when solid wax suddenly melts and drips down the side of the candle, or when red and blue paints together stop being red and blue and become purple—but I can't find it. If you knew these things you could influence the outcome. If you could see what happened in between you would know why yesterday's kisses fade to nothing and the voice on the phone changes frequency, turns vague and detached when just the other night it was slipping through the wires and the bones in your wrist and arm and straight inside your veins and taking possession of your whole bloodstream and you had to say—was this where it started to end?—you had to say, "Wait," but maybe he got tired of waiting or maybe you weren't worth waiting for after all.

People will tell you a watched pot never





CONCEIT

Alfred Wolfsohn will tell her that “art is bound up with self love.”

But they haven’t met yet.

In 1936

Berlin

institutes of higher learning are all but closed to Jews and Lotte is a Jew.

Furthermore, she’s thought to have no great artistic gift.

Ironic then she should have thought:

“Perhaps I could learn to draw,
that might be the thing.

Perhaps

I could learn to draw,

I’d really have a fling.”

Maybe not ironic,

maybe harmonic; maybe not harmonic,

maybe just bad verse.

—ELANA WOLFF

boils. Another easy answer. Like going to church, as people do, to avoid the face of God. No one can account for the moment of metamorphosis, is all. A plant will sprout a new leaf while you’re not looking. A tomato is green and then suddenly it’s ripe or rotten. The gas I spill after filling the tank, it just evaporates. When I first met him, I didn’t really notice that much, and it wasn’t until almost a year later that he started to consume every moment of my waking existence. I say waking because I don’t sleep anymore. He said he dreamt of me but I don’t dream about anything. It’s not even a question of what do I want. No one knows what she wants till it’s snatched away.

So let’s talk about the electrical system. As I understand it, energy is transformed three or four times before it starts to make something go. Strangely it starts in my wrist. Everything but the hands and feet are still. The key, the pedal quickly pumped and . . . coils, cables, and energy is converted and produces motion, *no*, but

it’s too hard to explain. Can anyone really say with any honesty that they know how plain boxes of corrosive acid produce the voltage that can take you from your past to your future in, say, sixty seconds flat?

I exaggerate, my engine is slower, but the concept is the same. I don’t mean “know” like can you draw a diagram or take it apart and put it back together. What I mean is can you really get inside the mystery, immerse yourself in the mystery of it all, and come through to the other side without drowning in the process. Isn’t that why Sara laughed, confronting the terrifying infinity of the divine? Maybe I should have laughed too, considering how not very far I’ve come on faith alone. Except really I can’t think of anything funny anymore. It seemed funny at the time and I laughed, but that was a mistake. He was serious. He would have done anything for me. But you turn your back for a second and the window of opportunity falls shut. Snap! There was this . . . I

TAKE 1 TABLET(S) DAILY

Twenty mils paroxetine HCl. Two weeks in mania;
this is the free ride, bad case
of the giggles on doctors' samples, kite-high.

When you settle in, there's a calm, there's
an "ahh" that skims over
the silver ocean in a hoverchair, breezy and noiseless,
but then you notice: legs are electric, techno-realism
in dream vision, alien feelings
that come in peace, bug-eyed, and strange things below.
Not sure when the lethargy thickens, but it's
ingrown like a second skeleton,
without joints. Contentment becomes apathy, marble,
even Christ can't feel the nails when he's carved of stone.

—PAUL VERMEERSCH

think it must be a belt of some sort, broken . . . the ignition is working but nothing's happening. . . I don't know, there's, like, sand in the radiator or something . . . sand everywhere, and I can't see where I'm going, it's stinging my eyes, cutting into my skin, thousands of tiny razors, and my feet are so heavy, like rocks sinking in the sand, heavier with every step, and my arms are tired, holding them up over my eyes, and we just have to keep moving forward and not looking back because behind us no longer exists, nothing exists except this sand, this wind, the Egyptian desert, the storm so heavy it obliterates the sun.

If only I could find a way to explain. It's not like I was handing my heart out on every street corner or something. It was supposed to be special. I mean, not that I saw it coming. Not that I decided. "I just turned the ignition and it happened!" Not even that. He handed me the keys, so what was I supposed to do, use them for decoration? Those weren't my words, I didn't make any promises, I didn't put any thoughts in his head. I was just there, letting things happen to me as usual. Whoever came up with the crazy idea that explosions could be controlled?

I'm waiting here at the doctor's office,

and it's taking hours. I don't know why. They are always behind schedule and there are always emergencies and someone always stands up and walks out in disgust. Dripping wounds and all. But if nothing else, I want some medication because, well, I barely sleep as it is, but imagine the torment of not sleeping at all. The more I can sleep, the less time I have to ponder the mysteries. The more I can sleep, the less dangerous I am to myself and others. After all, I have to drive.

And that, finally, is where the difficulty lies. If he never comes back, if I never penetrate the mystery, if I never make it out of this desert, Sara's mad laughter ringing in my ears, if the seas never part, or if I have to swim the length of the ocean, cry a river, a vale of tears, if there are no more miracles, no blessings, no convulsions, the task remains. The route itself I know by heart—its exits, its signals, its blind intersections, where the school bus stops, the logging trucks turn sharply into the mill grounds, where the county sheriff hides behind a spindly bush. Knowing these things, the ride is smooth.

But once upon a time, something happened . . . ☹

NOTHO paintings



**"NOTHO PAINTINGS
ARE AS MUCH AN
EMOTIONAL TRIP AS
THEY ARE VISUAL
ONE. IMAGINE
WATCHING THE
SHINING THIRTY
TIMES STRAIGHT
BUT INSTEAD OF
HEARING THE FILM'S
HORRIFIC FOLEY,
ITS JUST ALLAN
SHERMAN SONGS.
OH, AND YOU'RE ON
A LOT OF DRUGS."**

FUNHOUSE MAGAZINE

 **Instagram**

**INSTAGRAM.COM/
NOTHO_PAINTINGS**

I WAS RIGHT THERE WITH THE BLACK BLOC AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY NORTH ON YONGE. BECAUSE OF WHAT I'D SEEN ON THE T.V. I WAS INITIALLY NERVOUS, BUT AN ELDERLY GENT'S COMMENT GAVE ME PERSPECTIVE.



FOR A LARGE, ANGRY GROUP THEY WERE SURPRISINGLY QUIET... OCCASIONALLY A BRIEF CHANT WOULD ARISE.



AFTER SMASHING A WINDOW AT THE EATON'S CENTRE, A YOUNG WOMAN WITH A BASEBALL BAT RETURNED TO THE GROUP AND RECEIVED A REASSURING EMBRACE.



ALWAYS ABOUT 30 METRES AHEAD WAS A SMALL BAND OF POLICE... ALWAYS ON THE RADIO... ALWAYS BACKING UP... ALWAYS LETTING THE BLOC BREAK THE WINDOWS?



IT'S HARD TO CONVEY HOW GENERALLY QUIET AND RELATIVELY PEACEFUL THE GROUP WAS. NO THREATS, NO HARM TO PASSERSBY OR SPECTATORS... IT HARDLY SEEMED VIOLENT AT ALL... EXCEPT TO WINDOWS.



THE CLOSEST THING TO PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION WAS A GUY DENIED FILMING BY A FRIENDLY LOOKING BLOC MEMBER. SHE TOOK HIS ARM AND FIRMLY, WARMLY URGED RESPECT FOR PRIVACY.



UNMASKED INDIVIDUALS RAN AHEAD OF THE GROUP TO WARN STORE OWNERS TO LOCK DOORS AND STAY AWAY FROM THE WINDOWS.



AT FIRST IT SEEMED ONLY LARGE CHAINS AND BANKS WERE BEING TARGETED, BUT THEY ALSO TRIED TO SMASH AMATO'S PIZZA. ... BUT THE WINDOW HELD!



MY GREATEST SENSE OF 'WRONGNESS' CAME WHEN THEY SMASHED THE BIG WINDOWS OF THE TIM HORTONS AT COLLEGE PARK... THAT WAS BAD BECAUSE OF MY STRONG BRAND ASSOCIATION WITH THAT PARTICULAR CORPORATION.



ONE OF THE MEMBERS CARRIED A HEAVY STEEL CHAIR FROM TIM HORTONS AND USED IT TO SMASH IN A DOOR AT THE STARBUCKS ACROSS THE STREET.

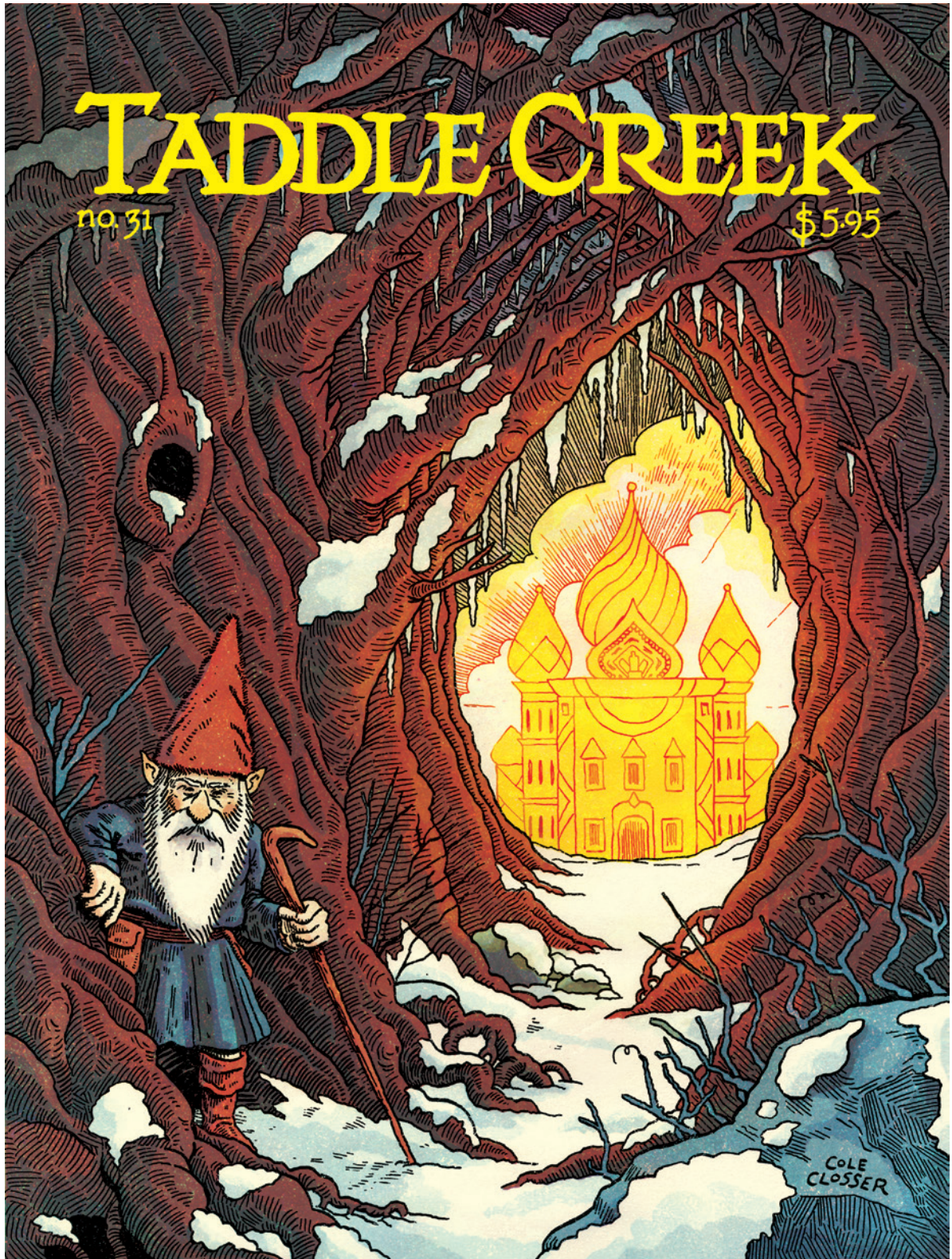


THE PROTESTORS TURNED THE CORNER ONTO COLLEGE STREET, TO MARCH RIGHT PAST POLICE HEADQUARTERS, WHERE AT LEAST THIRTY OFFICERS STOOD ON GUARD IN FULL RIOT GEAR!



SO, WITH ALL THOSE COPS WATCHING, THE BLACK BLOC PROCEEDED TO SMASH THE WINDOWS OF THE TD BANK DIRECTLY ACROSS THE ROAD.





As mentioned earlier in this issue, Taddle Creek does not exactly have a large stash of unpublished work sitting around. This proposed cover for Taddle Creek No. 31, by the cartoonist Cole Closser, is a notable exception. The magazine is pleased to be able to present it here for the first time.



Canada's
**PREMIUM
BEER**