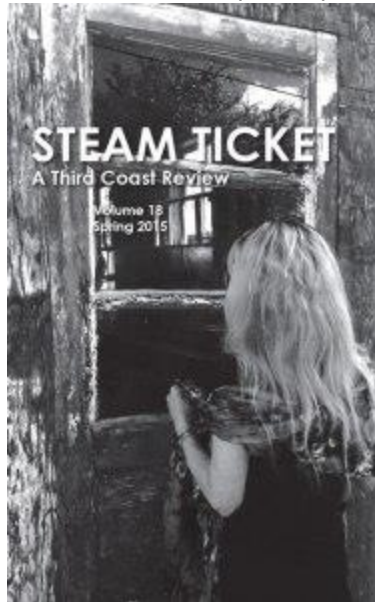


## Volume 18 (2015)



### Featured Selections:

- 'How to End a Life' by Alisha Casey  
'Your Hands are an Indigo City' by Sean Thomas Dougherty  
'Happy Childhood' by Wade Bentley  
'Cento Sonnet for a Violin Master Class' by Philip Dacey  
'An Auden Lecture in the Age of Situation Ethics' by Terry Savoie

### FICTION:

The Ferris-Wheel Sonata – Samuel Simas  
Spare Change – Jeff Fleischer  
Too Nice to Drop – John Gifford  
Letting Loose the Reins – Marlene Olin  
Reindeer Games at the Coffee Bar – JC Reilly  
How to End a Life – Alisha Casey  
Break – Andrea Marcusa  
Connection – Shannon Cothran

### CREATIVE NONFICTION:

Where Waters Entwine – Orman Day

### POETRY:

Your Hands Are an Indigo City – Sean Thomas Dougherty  
Stolen Clothes – Mark Taksa  
Turner's Snowstorm – Charles L. Calia  
College Roommates, 1978 – Julia Meylor Simpson  
The decorators have left for good – Fiona Sinclair  
Rite of Passage – Kelly Talbot  
Chalok Ban Kao – Jota Boombaba  
Long Hair Blown – Diane Webster  
Incomplete Footprint – Sally Houtman  
Kooser Groupies – Ed Werstein  
cigarette liar cigarette lie – Michael Casey

Happy Childhood – Wade Bentley  
Cento Sonnet for a Violin Master Class – Philip Dacey  
Mirage – Carl Palmer  
Trial Separation – Adrian Potter  
Candy Crush on Election Day in Arkansas – Cassi Lapp  
As Her Children Debate Godzilla's Gender – Glen Armstrong  
On Comfort and Cowardice – Elton Glaser  
An Auden Lecture in the Age of Situation Ethics – Terry Savoie  
Poem Mixed in the Key of B Flat – Sean Thomas Dougherty

### ARTWORK:

Jenny Window – Carl Scharwath (front cover)  
Open House – Kathleen Gunton (back cover)  
Mississippi Migration – Brittany Vogt  
Steps & Stones – Kathleen Gunton  
Untitled – Emily Ziegler  
Old Blue – Brittany Vogt  
Please & Thank You – Kathleen Gunton  
Canton's Edge – Chris Ammon  
Printopus – Brittany Vogt  
Flying Blind – Brittany Vogt  
Squidy 1 – Alyssa Hensen

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Fiction

<b>The Ferris-Wheel Sonata</b>	22
<i>Samuel Simas</i>	
<b>Spare Change</b>	35
<i>Jeff Fleischer</i>	
<b>Too Nice to Drop</b>	40
<i>John Gifford</i>	
<b>Letting Loose the Reins</b>	43
<i>Marlene Olin</i>	
<b>Reindeer Games at the Coffee Bar</b>	49
<i>JC Reilly</i>	
<b>How to End a Life</b>	58
<i>Alisha Casey</i>	
<b>Break</b>	67
<i>Andrea Marcusa</i>	
<b>Connection</b>	78
<i>Shannon Cothran</i>	

### Creative Nonfiction

<b>Where Waters Entwine</b>	9
<i>Orman Day</i>	

### Poetry

<b>Your Hands Are an Indigo City</b>	17
<i>Sean Thomas Dougherty</i>	
<b>Stolen Clothes</b>	20
<i>Mark Taksa</i>	
<b>Turner's Snowstorm</b>	33
<i>Charles L. Calia</i>	

<b>College Roommates, 1978</b>	41
<i>Julia Meylor Simpson</i>	
<b>The decorators have left for good</b>	47
<i>Fiona Sinclair</i>	
<b>Rite of Passage</b>	51
<i>Kelly Talbot</i>	
<b>Chalok Ban Kao</b>	53
<i>Jota Boombaba</i>	
<b>Long Hair Blown</b>	54
<i>Diane Webster</i>	
<b>Incomplete Footprint</b>	56
<i>Sally Houtman</i>	
<b>Kooser Groupies</b>	57
<i>Ed Werstein</i>	
<b>cigarette liar cigarette lie</b>	63
<i>Michael Casey</i>	
<b>Happy Childhood</b>	64
<i>Wade Bentley</i>	
<b>Cento Sonnet for a Violin Master Class</b>	66
<i>Philip Dacey</i>	
<b>Mirage</b>	74
<i>Carl Palmer</i>	
<b>Trial Separation</b>	75
<i>Adrian Potter</i>	
<b>Candy Crush on Election Day in Arkansas</b>	76
<i>Cassi Lapp</i>	
<b>As Her Children Debate Godzilla's Gender</b>	82
<i>Glen Armstrong</i>	
<b>On Comfort and Cowardice</b>	83
<i>Elton Glaser</i>	

<b>An Auden Lecture in the Age of Situation Ethics</b>	84
<i>Terry Savoie</i>	
<b>Poem Mixed in the Key of B Flat</b>	85
<i>Sean Thomas Dougherty</i>	
<b>Art</b>	
<b>Jenny Window</b>	Cover
<i>Carl Scharwath</i>	
<b>Open House</b>	Back cover
<i>Kathleen Gunton</i>	
<b>Mississippi Migration</b>	16
<i>Brittany Vogt</i>	
<b>Steps &amp; Stones</b>	21
<i>Kathleen Gunton</i>	
<b>Untitled</b>	32
<i>Emily Ziegler</i>	
<b>Old Blue</b>	34
<i>Brittany Vogt</i>	
<b>Please &amp; Thank You</b>	48
<i>Kathleen Gunton</i>	
<b>Canton's Edge</b>	52
<i>Chris Ammon</i>	
<b>Printopus</b>	55
<i>Brittany Vogt</i>	
<b>Flying Blind</b>	65
<i>Brittany Vogt</i>	
<b>Squidy 1</b>	73
<i>Alyssa Hensen</i>	
<b>Contributors' Notes</b>	89

**Steam Ticket**  
**A Third Coast Review**  
Volume 18  
Spring 2015



**Staff**

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Katherine Svitavsky

**Fiction Editor**  
Kyndra Rothermel

**Poetry Editor**  
Charleton Skinner

**Poetry Readers**  
David Blackey  
Shiyang Chen  
Jayne Korotev  
Mikaela Koronowski  
Ying Li  
Yi Wei  
Alayna Stein  
April Wildes

**Fiction Readers**  
Sarah Abel  
Jingjing Fang  
Raquel Forss  
Madelyn Kulas  
Sam Schneider  
Christian Velguth  
Andrew Wildt

**Faculty Advisor**  
Matthew Cashion

## 'How to End a Life' by Alisha Casey



Turn on your iPod, plug it into the speakers, adjust the volume—not too loud that the neighbors will hear, but not too quiet that the voices aren't drowned out. Tonight isn't their time. First, delete "How to Save a Life" from your playlist. You won't need conflicting messages, and anyway, you stopped listening to that song in college. Today, your tastes are more mature. Jimi Hendrix and Nirvana, John Henry Bonham. Enjoy the greats with a common thread. You find it poetic: a life taken to the sounds of life taken. Take a moment to congratulate yourself on your deepness, on the philosophical debates that rage between your left and right brain. All of your college classes paid off. All those late nights studying under the dim light of a library lamp, the boy at the desk next to you blowing his nose for the dozenth time, your phone ringing, ringing, ringing from the calls of a girl you didn't have time for. Those nights feel important now, your hero's journey, your odyssey.

Choose "Mad World" as your farewell song. Find it kind of funny, find it kind of sad that the dreams in which you're dying are the best you've ever had. Turn up the volume. Dance around the kitchen, the way you used to with the girl from your ethics class, remember the way her blue eyes always looked sad, remember that your storybooks and the novels you read in elementary told you that blue-eyed people were the most exciting, the most lively, the most beautiful. Remember that they lied. Worry that the music is too loud and turn it down. Turn it off. Listen to your neighbors walking across the floor above, assure yourself they don't notice, that you have time. Turn the music back up.

You line up the pill bottles. Aspirin and Tylenol and every anti-depressant that never worked, every bottle that a sad-eyed doctor handed you in a crowded pharmacy. You turn them so the labels face away. Remove the child lock caps now. You won't want to do it later. Pull out the knives and organize them by sharpness. Change your mind and organize them by size instead. Find your book on knots, the

one your brother gave you when you were fifteen because you said you wanted to be a sailor. You'd never been on a boat. You get seasick. It takes you an hour to tie the right knot, but you think that your brother would be proud. You imagine that he finds your body. He watches you hanging there, rotting, your brown hair stiff, your feet cold, and he rubs his chin and says, "What a mighty good knot."

Think of the paramedics, the poor, overworked, too-tired paramedics, and decide to clean the house. Scrub the floors and try not to think about your blood ruining the shining surfaces. Remember your old school counselor. The one with the wobble in her neck, the one with the gray hair, the one whose husband died in your senior year, who went "on vacation" and never came back. Hear her say: "Don't waste your time on the things that don't matter." Give up on the floors. Do the laundry instead. When you're gone, the paramedics will search the rooms for you, the police will search your belongings, your family will sort your things: don't leave out dirty underwear. Throw away the granny-panties you never wanted anyone to see, make the bed so your mother will be proud. Your bedside drawer will leave an impression; throw away the vibrator. Take out the trash.

When you finish the laundry, remember that you hate the smell of your detergent. Run to the store and buy air freshener. Pick the fresh linen scent. In line, you'll meet a woman with five kids. They hang off the edge of her cart and sing Christmas carols in January. She says: "Kids, right?" Nod to be polite; say you understand. You won't.

Remember being pregnant. Remember painting the nursery yellow and green because you thought they were gender-neutral colors. Remember that you never believed in gender anyway. But the woman has boys, and her cart is filled with superhero figures and trucks. Sigh. Watch her leave the store, feel sorry; hope her car doesn't freeze on the way home. As you watch the snow hug the store windows, think of buying your brother a new coat. You won't, but for a moment, you will feel generous. Enjoy the moment.

When the cashier asks you, "is that all?" nod and explain that you have a busy night ahead of you, smile, tell her a joke you heard at work. "What does Tarzan use to keep his loincloth on?" She'll shake her head, wait for the answer, and ask you if you need a bag. Say: "Gorilla glue." Refuse the bag.

If the traffic isn't too bad, you'll return home in time for your favorite late-night comedy. Turn it on while you spray the house with your new linen scent. Don't laugh at the TV. Remind yourself that it's easier if you don't laugh.

But when you laugh—which you will—turn the television off and leave the room. Spray down the bathroom instead. The extra toothbrush by the sink will catch your eye. Ignore it. If this doesn't work, throw the toothbrush away. Spray the garbage. Now the whole house will smell fresh. The paramedics will be pleased.

Hope that the neighbors don't find you too soon; winter is busy, and between the ice-sliding car accidents and snow-caused-roof cave in's, the paramedics will be too tired to take down your body that night. Give them until morning before the smell sets in. Contemplate spraying yourself with your new linen scent.

Back in the living room, touch the soft spots on your wrists. You'll want a quick cut, an easy cut, so test the knives' sharpness on the carrots you find at the bottom of your fridge. There are twenty-six knives in your kitchen; try them all. When you've finished, put the carrot pieces in the blender. Add celery and the

beats you swore you'd make a salad out of but never did. Throw in the parsley that your father made you buy. Drink half the juice then pour yourself a glass of wine instead. Pour another. Finish the bottle.

When the wine settles into your brain instead of your stomach, remember that you don't like pain. Remember falling off the swing set in the first grade and having Penny Clementine laugh at you beneath her pigtails while your knees bled. Remember her pout. Remember that she grew up to be an actress. You saw her face once on a magazine cover. You still have the scars on your knees.

Put the knives away and read every label on every pill bottle. Regret reading when you reach the side effects. Headaches, vomiting, dizziness, seizures. On television, the risks are always said quickly, quietly; the commercials do not dwell on the pain. Look for more wine. When you don't find any, walk to the liquor store across the street. The shop smells like your brother, like musky, masculine mint, but the owner has blue eyes. Think: you could drown in blue eyes. Think: hers were prettier. Think: blue eyes cry better. Wish you knew more names for blue.

Buy wine and cigarettes. Smoke outside. Cough. Gag. Give the cigarettes to a man on the corner. Return home. Drink the wine.

"Nice night," you'll say to the empty room. Look out the window, watch the snow fall. Your nieces will have to buy new sleds this year. Imagine them in matching snowsuits, pink and purple and blue coats, the scarves you knitted them for Christmas, and beanies with their names embroidered on the side. Temporarily regret that you won't see their next Christmas card. Put your glass in the sink and drink wine out of the bottle to forget. You'll feel numb; enjoy the way your tongue disappears in your mouth; smack your lips together and feel nothing.

When the clock hits eleven, you'll remember that you haven't finished your note. Find it taped under the sink and grab a pen. The ink will be faded from all the times you rewrote it, from the water that dripped over your carefully crafted sentences when you hid it from your sister-in-law. Make a mental note: don't store paper next to pipes. Remember that it won't matter. Start the letter over. Write that you're sorry. Cross it out.

By midnight, it reads:

*I hope you have a great New Year. Someone please feed the cats. Missy (that's the white one) is allergic to tuna. Sell the apartment to a college student. They'll need it.*

You'll have read every self-help book on your shelf by then—the little blue one your mother gave you on your last birthday, and the three your boss lent you when she thought you were "looking down." You know they will call you "selfish" but that your family will miss you when you're gone. You know there are hotlines for these sorts of things. You know they'll question you, will cry over each other, will shout "why" to the skies. You're counting on it. You only wish you could attend the funeral. You hope they play Bob Dylan. You've never liked black at funerals, but you like the idea of a crowd wearing black for you. Imagine the eulogies as you open the first bottle of pills.

Group them by color and quickly forget what they're for—headaches mixed with sadness mixed with menstrual cramps and the birth control you never really needed. Leave out your cat's heartworm medicine; it will smell animalistic, and it will taste worst.



Your throat will burn. Be prepared for the coughing, prepare to gag worse than when you had that cigarette, worse than when you tried oysters for the first time, worse than your first blow job. He was sixteen and you were fifteen, and he was small, but you were young, and that made all the difference. Wash the pills down with wine.

At one a.m., the phone rings. Your sister, crying across the line, tells you that your father is dead. Heart attack. High cholesterol. Probably. They're not sure yet. Know that he was only sixty-five, but had been overweight since you were twelve. Remember his laugh when he told you bedtime stories, your feet tucked under his legs and your head on his shoulder. Ask: "How's mom?" Ask: "Should I fly home tonight?" Ask: "Did it hurt? Was he in pain?"

Hang up and run to the bathroom. Force yourself to throw up. Sit down by the toilet and cry. Come morning, take down the rope, put away the pills, find a new song.

'Your Hands Are an Indigo City' by Sean Thomas Dougherty



"And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows  
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless."

—Philip Larkin

hold me up there—  
I will miss you  
as if through a window  
sky  
& endless  
the roofs & the blue  
& saw what they saw  
& you leaned your head back  
on the rusty swings  
shouting & singing  
& their falsetto voices  
of children  
the chorus  
at the playground  
of wind I caught  
carrying a knapsack  
where I walked  
were an indigo city  
& your swollen hands  
with those plastic letters  
our daughter playing on the floor

& an alphabet  
there was the first office  
& the doctor's libretto  
& the waiting rooms  
after your balance was off  
Before a prayer on repeat  
at the base of your spine  
Before the dark hall  
& we traveled for tests  
Before the lake, like a black ocean  
Before your legs swelled  
Before lost teeth  
Before the light turned yellow  
Before your hands turned blue  
Before your hands turned blue  
Before the light turned yellow

Before lost teeth  
Before your legs swelled  
Before the lake, like a black ocean  
& we traveled for tests  
Before the dark hall  
at the base of your spine  
Before a prayer on repeat  
after your balance was off  
& the waiting rooms  
& the doctor's libretto  
there was the first office  
& an alphabet  
our daughter playing on the floor  
with those plastic letters  
& your swollen hands  
were an indigo city  
where I walked  
carrying a knapsack  
of wind I caught  
at the playground  
the chorus  
of children  
& their falsetto voices  
shouting & singing  
on the rusty swings  
& you leaned your head back  
& saw what they saw  
the roofs & the blue  
& endless  
sky  
as if through a window  
I will miss you  
hold me up there—

## 'Happy Childhood' by Wade Bentley



*Scientists say babies tend to remember best those things associated with positive feelings.*

The hairy big brother who according to photos was actually an English Sheepdog who shared with me his slobber-softened ham bone.  
The man in the blue sweater on the TV who played with puppets and had a voice like a good nap.  
Riding in the front seat on the way to the liquor store, mom singing show tunes and tickling my knees, *Are your nostrils aquiver?*  
*What about that pie, boy?* That first happy hour of dancing me around the front room when we got home. How when dad arrived and mom disappeared he would hum softly as he put me in my high chair, hum as he cooked pasta for us—mine with butter only; his with a red sauce, sopped up with bread, that ringed his lips like blood, looking like a clown to me then, his eyes shiny and wide—and say, *it's you and me, chief. Eat up. It doesn't get any better than this.*

'Cento Sonnet for a Violin Master Class' by Philip Dacey



Even if it says pianissimo, go big.  
Nail the F but not at the expense of the C.  
For fireworks play all the way down to the frog.  
Sometimes live a little dangerously.

Don't sound like the Monster Who Came From the Mud.  
Excite the audience but don't give us a scare.  
Accent with your bow, not with your head.  
Some sounds should come as if from behind a door.

Make the listeners' hair stand up; not your own.  
You can come up on your toes for that last note.  
This movement's a killer. Don't step on a land mine.  
Can you slap? Crescendo to freedom. Count while you wait.  
Think Irish washerwoman gone insane.  
Give a little. Be juicy. Exaggerate.

## 'An Auden Lecture in the Age of Situation Ethics' by Terry Savoie



"God died last year..." in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion

Was it the winter of '67 or '68? I'm lost, but without doubt it was Dubuque & in an unheated auditorium of an all-girls Catholic college. Beyond the glassed-in lobby & the all-too predictable monotony of snowdrifts, the wind raged on with its teeth-clenched vengeance while, inside, we were resigned, numb to the bone in an endless winter, but forcing ourselves to rise to the challenge of practicing our inbred, mid-American penchant of high-minded endurance until God deigned to send down some relief & spring might break out again & bless this land with new life once more. An glow lifting off the two hundred or more closely packed in coeds as they crowded together for Auden, the headline on all Lit professors' reading list for a hundred miles in every direction, his furrowed press photo papered & stapled onto campus kiosks from Decorah to Winona to DeKalb, his face so rucked, so wrinkled over that it seemed to be in mocking imitation of the winter-stubbed cornfields in & out of every small town, but then his lecture was so outrageously incomprehensible, his thoughts so wine-garbled after abundant faculty toasts that even the sober, underage coeds with all their blushed-on, high cheekbones could barely continue scribbling down notes crowded with classical allusions for papers everyone knew would never be written despite the girls' rock-foundation in Greek classics & Aquinas's casuistry under their belts. Muffled giggles throughout the auditorium, & now, so many years later, we clearly understand how, without any shadow of doubt, those coeds would soon be decimated as they took off for the promises of both coasts, having first discovered Morrison, Joplin, Sartre & their own brand of unbridled sex. Yes, there probably were even whispers then, hesitant certainly, but whispers & mumblings nonetheless akin to, *Sweet Jesus, what do you think? Maybe God really is dead?*