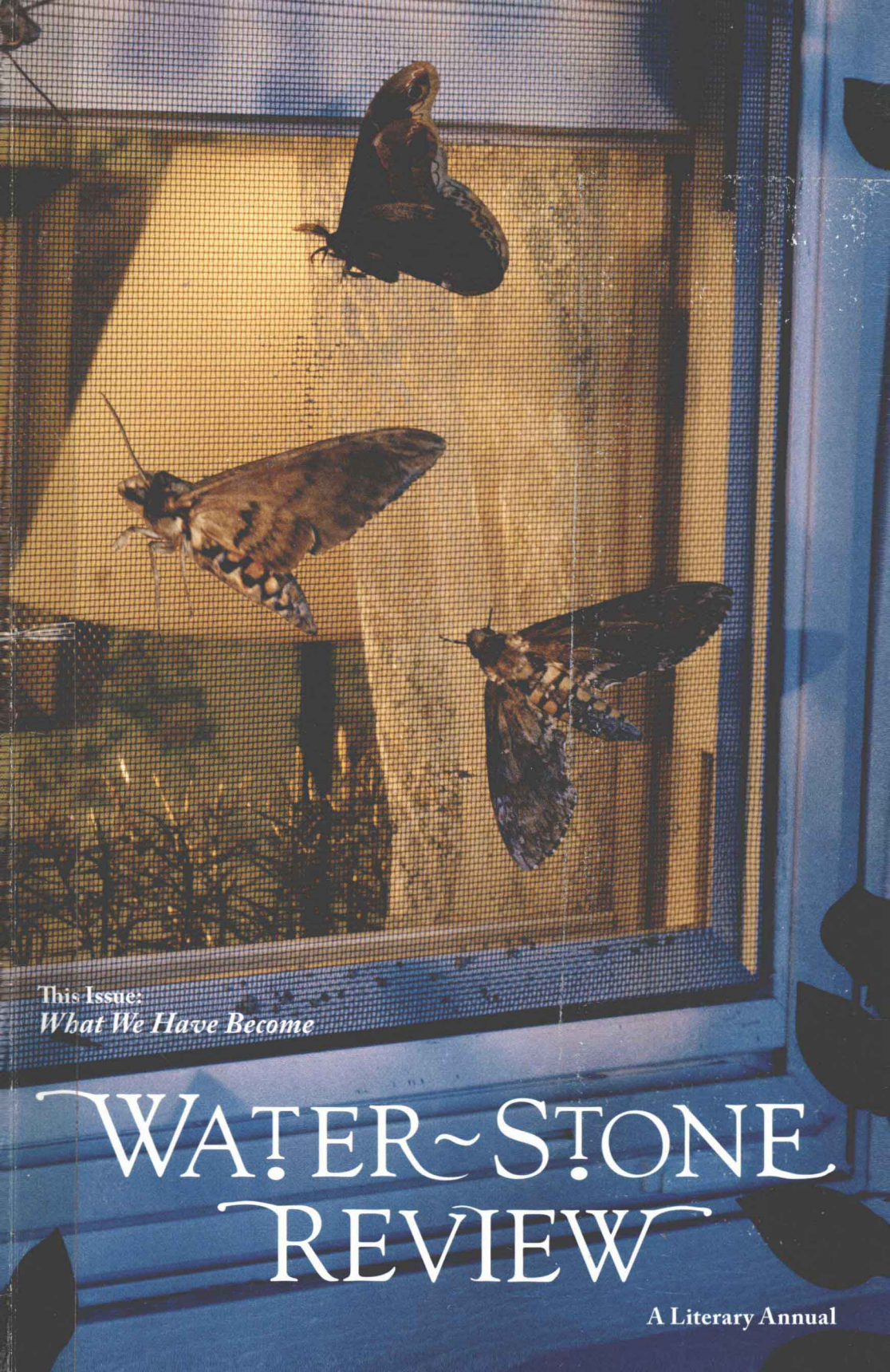

This Issue:
What We Have Become

WATER~STONE REVIEW

A Literary Annual

WATER~STONE REVIEW

HAMLINE UNIVERSITY
Graduate School *of* Liberal Studies

Water~Stone, known in alchemy as the Philosopher's Stone, was composed of the four elements of earth, fire, air, and water. The stone was supposed by alchemists to possess the property of changing base metals into gold, the most perfect of all metals. It was thought to combine within itself matter and spirit, or body and soul: a union of opposites in perfect harmony. *Water~Stone* connotes the dynamic, transformative power of literature, as well as the search for beauty and perfection at work in the hearts of aspiring writers. The logo type for *Water~Stone* is based on a hybrid of two ancient alchemic symbols: one for the amalgam of all elements, and the second for the element of water as a pure and dynamic force. The amalgam is a reference to the multigenre, interdisciplinary nature of the graduate writing program at Hamline University.

U.S. subscription rates for individuals are $32 for two years, plus shipping and handling. Subscription rates for institutions are $19 for one year, $37 for two years. Single copies of this issue: $18.

Water~Stone Review will accept unsolicited submissions from October 1 through December 1, 2010; all work received after December 1 will be returned unread. Work will be *read* between December 1 and April 1, 2011. All regular submissions must be accompanied by an SASE. Manuscripts will not be returned. Send one prose piece and/or one to three poems at a time. Prose should be no longer than 8,000 words, double-spaced. Please direct all correspondence to *Water~Stone Review*, Graduate School of Liberal Studies, Hamline University, MS-A1730, 1536 Hewitt Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104-1284, or e-mail to water-stone@hamline.edu.

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From the Executive Editor:

In each issue of *Water~Stone Review,* the editors, assistant editors, and members of the editorial board come together to review the subjects, themes, telling images, and lines from the work we've selected to arrive at a title that best captures its substance and tone. The title for this issue is *What We Have Become,* which conveys both a state of being (who a person or people is/are *now*) and an act of change (who that person or people is/are as a result of some kind of growth, evolution, or transformation). In many of the poems, short stories, and works of creative nonfiction in Volume 13, there is a powerful sense of characters having arrived at a place—a place physical and/or psychic that represents the lightest and darkest of human intentions and actions—through their own choices and histories, good and bad. These choices, as well as the behavior of those on the receiving end, are, ultimately, what form the people we become.

The characters in the fiction we're publishing in this issue have a strong impulse to hurt or protect others. Their varied responses to this impulse, often complicated by the circumstances of their lives, speak powerfully to our title: *What We Have Become.* While they have a much different scope, the poems in Volume 13 echo and deepen the creation of these myriad states of being and acts of transformation.

WATER~STONE REVIEW

Volume 13 Fall 2010

In "Palestine Boy" by Luke Rolfes, two teenagers—one an overweight Iowa football player prone to violence, the other his Palestinian classmate—struggle to overcome their preconceptions and jealousy of the other. In "Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley," Ann Pancake, winner of this year's *Brenda Ueland Fiction Prize*, judged by Dan Chaon, maximizes her originality and gift for language to capture the mesmerizing and unfamiliar (to us, the adult readers) interior world of a vulnerable but resilient small boy in the car of a chillingly inept father. Joshua Wilkes, another writer with a gift for voice and language, portrays a harsher, more violent picture of a young mother trying to protect herself and her children from her unhappy, out-of-control boyfriend.

Eric Charles Hansen honors a different kind of father in his poem, "Father's Restraint": "He stands on this continent knowing he chose / again and again to avoid ruining the people he loved. / Stayed out of trouble. All he did is refuse."

The teenage protagonist in Sean Padraic McCarthy's story, "Tell Me Something Good," must decide whether he will join his friends or not in the rape of a drunken teenage girl. Jamer, the main character in "Straight Up and No Sky There" by Stephanie Dickinson, must face retribution from a neighborhood gang when he rebels against the gang's cruelty to an old woman, her pet chicken, and his own beloved hummingbirds.

"The men I love are collecting suicide songs again," writes Christina Olson in her poem, "The Men I Love." "They are cutting the seatbelts out of their Pontiacs and driving around the city taking sharp turns."

The creative nonfiction in this issue travels further afield, but it, too, explores the movement from one state of being to another and the choices we make getting there. A teenager's first job in Michele Morano's "Evenings at the Collegeview Diner" becomes a vehicle not only for making money of her own but for reuniting, for short periods of time, her broken family. Aaron Raz Link, in "Comics," draws on the accounts of travelers such as Odysseus and Marco Polo, his study of physical theater, his experience living as a white girl in an all-black neighborhood, and Abraham Lincoln's writing of the Emancipation Proclamation to reflect on his transformation from female to male. Re'Lynn Hansen revisits the kidnapping of Patty Hearst in the early 1970s and the ways in which that kidnapping (plus Vietnam, music, Watergate) entered and affected her own life as a teen during that time.

"*May it be to me as you have said,* / she is said to have told the angel." The ordinary girl in Jacqueline Kolosov's poem, "Incarnate," has been marked for transformation by a force too big to resist. "How could she, just a girl really, have said no?"

Whether the transformation of the body is chosen, as in the act of giving birth in Aimee Nezhukumatathil's lovely "Birth Geographic," or not, as in having to rediscover the taste and smell of food after a heart-rending breakup in Brenda Miller's "What I Could Eat" or the struggle to survive cancer in Ruthann Robson's "In the Kingdom of Things: Sampling an Unmarketable Memoir," *how* we deal with that transformation means everything. Here's how Ruthann Robson sees it: "The task of art is to make something out of something else. The task of life is to make nothing like nothing else. The task of love is to look and look and never look away."

In this year's *Meridel Le Sueur* Essay, "A Window at Civitella," Honor Moore writes a meditation on solitude and aging. For her, choosing the life of the writer meant choosing, too, a life of solitude. She names the gifts, as well as the losses, that came from that choice.

There is comfort in "the utility of things," Stephen Knauth writes in "Tardy Lament." An heirloom tomato, flowering jasmine, dusk falling, yeast rising in a bowl, a garage door, a spider caught in the navel of an orange, a sherbet cone, a tree swing, pigeons in a black sky, pine needles, a line of lindens, the sound of a train, an auger cutting ice, a lone wren. There is comfort, too, in ordinary moments: practicing a Bach fugue, playing a game of cards, digging a tulip bed, lifting a wheelchair, drinking tea, sneaking a smoke, watching a child coloring on a wall, writing on a chalkboard, weeding beans.

Our writer's interview is with Terry Tempest Williams, author of *Finding Beauty in a Broken World, Refuge—An Unnatural History of Family and Place,* and nine other books and essay collections. In her interview Ms. Williams explores the particulars of her own creative process, the paradox of death, the experience of turning fifty in Rwanda, her love of the French feminist deconstructionists, her Mormon upbringing, the role of the artist to "widen and heal the split within ourselves," and more.

We are pleased to include a folio of photographs curated by Minneapolis College of Art and Design graduate Ashley Kapaun. In selecting the photographs for this issue, Ashley wrote the following:

My inspiration revolves around the aspect of photographic storytelling and exploring 'who we have become' through identities lost, cultivated, and transformed. The photography is narrative, but the internal and reflective qualities create an abstraction from specific thoughts and stories. Each conveys the harmony and/or conflict of human presence and the fingerprints left.

We are proud of the correspondences created between and across these photos and text.

This year we are saying goodbye to Judith Kitchen, whose smart and eloquent essay reviews of creative nonfiction have graced *Water~Stone Review* for ten years. Judith is focusing her time and attention on her own creative work and teaching. In her place we are happy to welcome Mary Cappello, a writer whose work and opinions we've long admired. Her first essay review, "Abundance of the Short Form," is in this issue. We wish to honor Judith Kitchen's contributions to the review and to the field of creative nonfiction by naming our triennial prize in creative nonfiction after her. The first *Judith Kitchen Creative Nonfiction Prize* winner will be published in our fall 2011 issue.

In his essay review of four books of poetry, Stan Sanvel Rubin focuses on the nature, and sound, of *voice* in the written poem. When we hear the voice of the poem, what exactly are we hearing? "Maybe what we read for," Stan writes, "even without realizing it, is not so much *voice* as presence, the possibility of transformational encounter, the sense that the words before us, whatever their shape or content, were produced by some*one*."

The possibility, and the act, of transformational encounter run throughout this issue of *Water~Stone Review*. The voices on these pages, in Terry Tempest Williams's words, "offend," "disturb," "widen and heal the split within ourselves." Please turn the page and see for yourselves.

Mary François Rockcastle

From the Fiction Editor:

Recently several major newspapers, including *The New York Times*, ran pieces reporting the results of a study on empathy conducted by a researcher at the University of Michigan. While the results of the study were of some interest to me—college students today are 40 percent less empathetic than those thirty years ago—I was more intrigued by the four aspects used to measure empathy. Among those listed, two in particular caught my attention: *perspective taking, an intellectual capacity to imagine other people's point of view; fantasy, or people's tendency to identify imaginatively with fictional characters in books or movies.*

I don't know who designed this scale, or how the study was conducted, nor does that interest me. What interests me is that someone, somewhere, in a field removed from fiction, confirms something I have long known intuitively to be true: the intellectual capacity to imagine another person's point of view, as well as the ability to identify imaginatively with fictional characters, is essential work of the human psyche. It is also the primary work of literary fiction.

I came to fiction first as a reader, later as a writer. In my earliest book memory, I am four years old listening to my mother read one of the *Betsy-Tacy*

books by Maude Hart Lovelace. Young Tacy's baby brother has died, and Betsy, usually so self-assured, struggles with how to respond. I don't remember what Betsy said or did, or how the loss was resolved. I only remember sitting on my bedroom floor and realizing—*this is what it feels like to lose a brother or sister; this is what it feels like when someone else dies, and you don't know what to say.* That leap into someone else's suffering, vicariously experienced through the act of reading, changed me. Never again would I be a child unaware of the deep well of grief; I had not lost a sibling, but I knew in my heart how it felt.

On the face of it, Ann Pancake's stunning, award-winning story, "Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley," is a lifetime away from Lovelace's *Betsy-Tacy.* After all, there is little in the world of the young boy Mish, a victim of the harrowing cycle of parental neglect and poverty that often accompanies addiction, that calls to mind the idyllic nostalgia of *Betsy-Tacy.* And yet for me, both stories accomplish the same end—both stories ask readers to make an empathetic leap into the heart of another human being, to imagine another person's point of view, to identify with a fictional character, however far that experience might be from their own.

But there is another element of empathy at work in fiction, one equally as important as the reader's imaginative transformation, and one that perhaps for me, remains the most breathtaking feat of the art form: to put it plainly, in the best fiction, I am awed by the writer's astonishing capacity to envision the story in the first place. There are both mastery and miracle at work, when out of nothing but page and language and dream, and whatever the writer believes to be true of the world, the author creates a tale so credible, so moving, we believe it to be real. We trust it. We trust it enough to be changed by it.

This is the work of writer and reader; it is the marvel Ann Pancake has achieved in her brilliant short story, the work we are called to do when we enter her dream. Imagine. Imagine young Mish's heart.

Sheila O'Connor

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Brenda Ueland Fiction Prize

Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley

ANN PANCAKE

In the good Granma smells Mish stands—the nighttime powder, the church perfume—tumbling with his fingers the man in his pocket. His daddy peels the foil from the tiny package he has taken from Gran's dressing table drawer. Daddy, his hand tremoring, fishes in the package's dropper of water, snares the lens on a finger and daubs it at his eye. Mish watches. Not out of curiosity for the contacts—those he has seen his whole life, whenever Daddy can get them, Mish looking on from the low single bed at Daddy's house, bedtime, get-up time, Daddy picking plastic in and out of his eyes—Mish is used to that. He watches for the funniness of Daddy at the dressing table, where Granma puts on her makeup, combs her hair. For the strangeness in Gran's mirror of Daddy's raggedy-brimmed Stihl cap, his penny-colored beard. With the effort to keep his eye open, Daddy's top lip is raised, and in the mirror, Mish can see the two big front teeth browning from the middle out, like a banana left too long. Then the lens pops in, and as though having the thing in his eye grants him the gift of seeing behind, Daddy turns.

"I told you, wait for me downstairs."

The man somersaults in Mish's pocket. Daddy's right eye streams.

"Well." Daddy is whispering. "Be very, very quiet. We can't wake Pappy up."

Mish feels around him his coat.

Daddy presses the other contact at the other eye, his hand quivering, the lens falling onto the table top, and he quiet-cusses. They are very breakable. They are very expensive. The contact goes in, and Daddy is stepping away from the mirror, blinking hard, then he remembers, turns back, sweeps the little packages into the pockets of his coat, and as he passes Mish, he hisses, "You wait right here, Mish. You hear me? I'll be right back."

Mish turns to watch Daddy. Daddy doesn't hear the rustle-roar of his coat, just like he didn't hear it when Mish walked into Gran's room to watch. His arms held away from his body, his feet in slow motion, Daddy wobbles down the hallway like a cartoon wolf, Mish swishing behind, them passing the bathroom, the closet. To the open door of Pappy's room.

Mish stops. The smells of this room are the inside-out of the Gran room smells—unflushed toilet smells, dead thing in the ditch smells, smells of crusted laundry—and Mish never enters this room. Daddy does. A floorboard shrieks. Daddy's outsplayed elbow hooks Pappy's hat rack, the rack bobs, but Daddy teeters on, balancing on the toes of his boots until he can reach into the clutter-junk on Pappy's high chest of drawers. From the door Mish can see only the standing-up things on the dresser. He knows there is a picture of old-timey people, a picture of Uncle David as a grown-up, another of Daddy as a little boy, looking exactly like Mish except with blond hair. Daddy is unfolding Pappy's hip-worn wallet, and Mish flicks his eyes to the caterpillar shape under the rusty knit blanket on the bed, Pappy's head on its end. The spooky pink of Pappy's shut eyelids without his glasses over them. Mish looks back to Daddy, one hand replacing the wallet, the other tucking bills into his jeans pocket, then back to Pappy. Mish sucks a quick breath. Pappy's blue eyes are open. They hold Mish's there.

Then Daddy is hurrying through the door, scooping up Mish as he does, Mish's coat clashing, and they are down the stairs and into the kitchen where Daddy sets Mish on his feet. "Shhhh." He grabs a block of cheese from the refrigerator, a package of lunch meat, reaches across to the bread box and snags one of Gran's mini doughnuts for Mish—Mish crams it in his mouth right there—and Daddy swings Mish up again, Daddy grunting, staggering back a step, the enormous coat, the cheese and lunch meat, Mish's lengthening legs, then he finds his footing and they slam out the back door.

It is late afternoon, the land winter-hard and unsnowed, the air hard also, Christmas three weeks past. Gran's car is gone, her at Walmart in Renfield a long drive away, exchanging one of Daddy's Christmas presents. Daddy is strapping Mish into his car seat in the old car of Pappy's that Daddy has been driving since he had his wreck in Pappy's newer one—Mish was at Mommy's during that—then they are tearing out of Gran's driveway, gravel splattering, and the Cavalier leaps onto the highway.

Daddy leans into the gas. They swallow Route 30, fast, faster, spewing it spent behind, and as Gran's house vanishes and the woods close in, them alone except for the cars passing in the other lane, Mish feels the man who lives in Daddy ease down. The Cavalier insides are sealed, invisible to the other cars, just whush and gone, and by the time they swing onto the county back road that goes to Daddy's house, Daddy has loosened enough to scrabble in the mess on the front seat floor. "Listen, Mish," he calls over his shoulder. "Tater made me this for Christmas." He thrusts a cassette into the deck and begins to sing, a high, choky string. It is not Bob. Mish reaches into his coat pockets and pulls out the Silver Surfer in one hand, a red Power Ranger in the other.

He'd waited until lunch on the couch at Mommy's in his new coat, a Dallas Cowboys coat given him for Christmas by Gran, the coat reaching almost to his knees on one end and almost to his ears on the other, *Now I got it a couple sizes too big so you can grow into it,* a Ninja Turtle shell, Ranger armor, the Dallas Cowboys coat is football pads. The Dallas Cowboys are his daddy's favorite team, and the noise of its nylon, the "I'm here!" crash, the blue star on its back with a white border around it, and sometimes Mish can feel the star there behind him. Lit. Hot. Him on the couch and Mommy on the phone, her face bearing down as she made her fourth call to Daddy, her fifth. She sucked a breath and blew it out, loud. "Get out of that coat, Mish. You're gonna burn up."

Carlin sat cross-legged in front of the TV, thumbing the iPod his own daddy got him for Christmas, while Kenzie, whose daddy got her nothing, perched at the kitchen bar where Mommy'd put her because she couldn't keep her hands to herself. Kenzie pitched at Mish pizza coupons folded tight and hard when Mommy couldn't see—"You look like you're wearing a hole with your head sticking out!"—but Mish heard her voice only at a distance, didn't hear her words at all. He was watching Carlin. "Wet me wisshen," Mish said it again, low, conspiratorial, his tone simultaneously pleading and leaden with respect. "Wet me