

To Our Readers

The Paul Bunyanesque/Napoleonic woodsman in fire engine red who stands athwart our front cover, as well as the haunted woodland shopper posed on the back, are the oil-on-canvas inventions of Terry Rowlett, whose paintings made their first appearance in our pages just shy of a decade ago. His earlier portfolio, “Images of Faith,” had its tongue in a religious cheek rather than in the more secular one that dominates this issue’s “Trespassing in Eden,” but the powerful application of allegory remains a constant in both selections from his work.

Rowlett’s new creations sit, lie, stand, and walk especially well with our five-essay symposium on culture and the environment (pages 11–79), with Jeff Gundy’s essay-review of three recent books focusing on the natural world, with several of the poems in the issue, and—from somewhat different angles—with Ron Smith’s many-pronged approach to the glory that is recent book publishing about Rome, as well as Greg Johnson’s review of several new studies of that great southern allegorist Flannery O’Connor.

As always, we welcome a mix of familiar and new voices to *The Georgia Review*, with our two short-fiction writers this time offering the most notable case in point: David Huddle’s first-ever publication anywhere was a story titled “Rosie Baby” that came out in our Fall 1969 issue, and his prose and poetry have been in our pages a number of times since then; Lori Ostlund joins us for her first—and we trust not her last—appearance. Similarly, first-time *GR* reviewers Nicky Beer and John G. Nettles complement Gundy and Johnson, commentators whom our regular readers will immediately recognize.

In our perfectly objective editorial minds, everything in the *Review* constitutes a “best of” of contemporary writing, and on a regular basis other editors give us partial confirmation of our view. In recent news on this score, Philip Levine’s “Words on the Wind” (Spring 2008) and Margaret Gibson’s “Black Snake” (Summer 2008) will appear in *Best American Poetry 2009*, and *Poetry Daily*’s reprint offerings from our 2008 pages included Brian Turner’s “Wading Out” (Spring), Robert Cording’s “Walking with Ruskin” (Summer), Albert Goldbarth’s “October” (Fall), Lola Haskins’ “Moles” and “My Heart (Cut View)” (Fall), and Coleman Barks’s “Inbetween Deaths” (Winter). We congratulate all of these writers, whose strong works bring honor to themselves and also to *The Georgia Review*.

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We invite you to (or back to) our website, www.thegeorgiareview.com, which has been fully redesigned since the appearance of our previous issue. The old features have a new look, new features have been added, and more new features are in the offing.

In particular we draw your attention to the announcement there of “A *Devil’s Dictionary* for the Twenty-First Century,” first noted in “To Our Readers” for Winter 2008. A devilishly good time should be had by all as this project unfolds. If you’re a writer, consider submitting entries for our consideration; if you’re a reader, watch for the *Dictionary* in an upcoming issue; and whichever you are, check that website announcement or send us a self-addressed stamped envelope for printed information about contributing and/or ordering.

With a reader’s and writer’s sadness I note the passing of John Updike (18 March 1932–27 January 2009). Any assertion of superlatives invites raised eyebrows, raised hackles, and raised voices. So be it. I assert here that our country has lost its finest writer, and one of the greatest we have ever had.

Closer to home I note and honor the passing of Betty L. Sargent, who died on 12 March 2009 in Scottsdale, Arizona, two months shy of her ninety-seventh birthday. An international and then domestic journalist during the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s, Betty worked for eighteen years with *The Georgia Review*—as business manager from 1964 to 1977 and (under then-new editor Stanley W. Lindberg) as assistant editor from 1977 until her retirement in 1982. Her presence under five editors gave the journal critical continuity during the two decades when it went from being a regional to a national publication.

A lifelong activist for human and civil rights, Betty showed that side of herself to *Review* readers with “The Desperate Mission of Stefan Lux” (Winter 1989), a moving essay about the nearly forgotten Czech reporter who committed suicide “on the crowded assembly floor of the League of Nations in Geneva” in 1936 to protest the League’s failure to take strong enough action against the rise of Hitler. We reprinted this important work in the *Review*’s fiftieth-anniversary essay retrospective (Winter 2001/Spring 2002) and have now made it available on our website. I know that Betty would have been particularly proud of the environmental feature in the following pages, and so on behalf of the *Review* staff I respectfully dedicate this issue to her memory.

S.C.