

## To Our Readers

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Few acts of the mind are easier to accomplish than to encounter some broad truth incisively stated and then to respond by thinking or saying, “Well, of course—that’s so obvious as to be hardly worth asserting.” Few acts are more difficult than being the person who makes the initial statement.

Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) is one of those rare books that makes wiser fools of us all. Campbell’s premise, culled from his extensive worldwide studies of mythology—with inevitable side trips into religion, art, and psychology—is so simply persuasive as to be both exhilarating and embarrassing:

The hero . . . is the man or woman who has been able to battle past personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms.

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The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in [our] rites of passage: *separation—initiation—return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.

*A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.*

In the pages of this issue, one man walks onto the nighttime expanse of Antarctic ice, another—on a rescue mission—rushes into a snowdrift in his rural Wisconsin backyard. One woman finds a measure of peace, and hopes for some vision of some god, while traversing the United States by car; another woman, sometimes traveling by car but more importantly by “dragon-ship,” tries to become a literal goddess—and her life implodes to a core of madness and violence. A man journeys into the life of a woman by reading a letter in which she denounces *his* life; a woman travels to the seventeenth century through a painting from that period and returns with a clearer understanding of her family. A man-woman crosses and recrosses gender boundaries, seeking to know which is the way out and which the way home. And the list goes on.

I did not think about Joseph Campbell while accepting the works that appear here, nor while deciding they would go in this issue rather than some

other. Toward the end of the process, the works themselves returned me to the great mythologist, conjured the hero with the thousand faces. One writer here is on his thirteenth book, and another is seeing her work in print for the first time anywhere, but both are leaning the same way out and the same way back. Just as we hope and fear, the story is always the same and its renditions are innumerable; on bad days we feel we are spinning our wheels, but on the good we trust we are spinning vital webs of nuance and recognition.

S.C.



#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The Georgia Review* is beginning what we believe will be a long and fruitful association with the Bowers House Literary Center, a beautiful residential retreat where writers will be able to work in comfortable solitude or to meet in moderately sized groups to confer and learn. The historic Bowers House, built in 1922 and fully restored in the 1990s, is safely isolated in a small town but only a pleasant forty-five-minute drive from the rich and diverse communities of Athens and the University of Georgia. The owner of this two-story, 4,000-square-foot, eight-bedroom home is making it available at very modest cost for individual writers' residencies by the week; for daylong or multiday literary meetings, workshops, and conferences; and for brief events such as readings, lectures, and receptions. *The Georgia Review* has been invited (1) to establish a fellowship series that will invite writers to the Bowers House to be in residence at no charge, and (2) to conduct a variety of occasional programs—the first of which, on 24 October 2009, will feature fiction writer George Singleton, poet Alice Friman, and *Review* staff members leading a day of presentations, conversations, and readings.

Further information about the October event, as well as details of how to take advantage of this wonderful new home for writers, will be forthcoming shortly.

*The Georgia Review* has extended its submission deadline to 1 December 2009 for a planned special feature, "A *Devil's Dictionary* for the Twenty-First Century"—an update of sorts of Ambrose Bierce's brilliant satirical work *The Devil's Dictionary*. Visit [thegeorgiareview.com](http://thegeorgiareview.com) for more information.