

# the Writer's CHRONICLE

*"Advice" From Yours Ever:  
People & Their Letters*

by Thomas Mallon

On Inspiration: Thomas Wolfe,  
Jorge Luis Borges, & Raymond Carver

by Douglas Unger

Unfair Use

by Ronald Goldfarb

Too Much of *Moi*?

by Cris Mazza

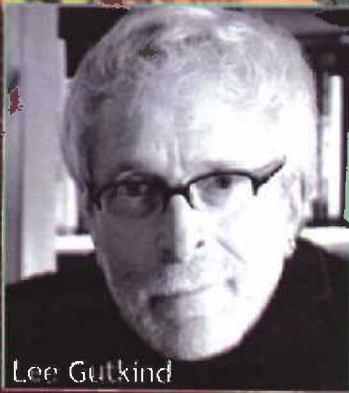
Ways to Achieve Authentic  
Voice in Memoir

by Sebastian Matthews

The Poet's Impulse to  
Ascend & Descend

by Amy Pence

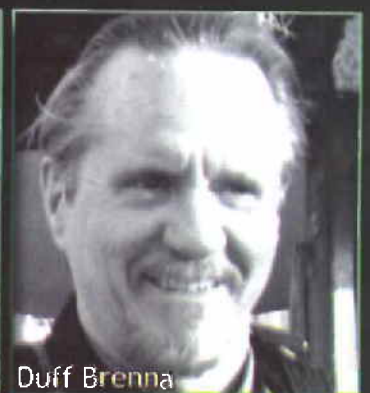
## Interviews:



Lee Gutkind



Sheri St. Germain



Duff Brenna



Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Fairfax, VA  
Permit No. 1532

2-2029803  
Association of Writers & Writing Programs  
Mail Stop 1E3  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA 22030-4444

# An Interview with Sheryl St. Germain

by Allison Schuette

Sheryl St. Germain is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *Let it Be A Dark Roux: New and Selected Poems* (Autumn House Press, 2007), a translation of Cajun poet Jean Arceneaux, and a collection of essays, *Swamp Songs: The Making of an Unruly Woman* (University of Utah, 2003). Her works explore her upbringing in New Orleans and her continuing fascination with the culture and geography of the area. She has recently completed a new collection of essays, *Navigating Disaster*, in which she continues that exploration, this time with a focused meditation on loss. Her work has received several awards, including two NEA Fellowships, an NEH Fellowship, the Dobie-Paisano Fellowship, the Ki Davis Award from the Aspen Writers Foundation, and most recently, the William Faulkner Award for the personal essay. St. Germain now lives in Pittsburgh, where she directs the MFA program in Creative Writing at Chatham University, a program with a focus on nature, environmental, and travel writing.

**Allison Schuette:** Did Hurricanes Katrina and Rita make you re-read *Swamp Songs* in a new way or confirm truths you discovered in writing about New Orleans?

**Sheryl St. Germain:** Katrina and Rita interrupted the story I was trying to write. I was in the middle

*Allison Schuette, Assistant Professor of English, currently teaches at Valparaiso University. Her most recent manuscript, American Dream Body: A Survivor's Tale, narrates how we imagine the perfectly fit and beautiful body by analyzing her personal experience with gender and Graves disease. Previous work has appeared in many journals.*

There's also something different about rendering it in prose as opposed to poetry. Prose provides more room to articulate connections. Threads and narratives get attached to an image in the essay.

of working on my new manuscript, *Navigating Disaster*—at a residency in an environmental writer's colony—writing about gardens, all of which were pretty much wiped out by Katrina. I'd also interviewed my uncle, whose house was destroyed. Half of the things I had notes about were either destroyed by Katrina or so changed that I couldn't write the book I wanted to. So I kept the first half of the manuscript and then let it be completely interrupted by Katrina. I didn't want it to be dominated by the hurricane, though. We all have disasters in our lives, but we don't want to be labeled by them. As bad as Katrina was, it's not going to be the first thing that comes to people's minds thirty or forty years from now when they think of New Orleans. I allowed Katrina to pierce the book. The second half of the manuscript becomes a meditation on loss—loss of the city, loss of my son from whom I became estranged for a while, and other kinds of loss, like the death of my second brother.

Katrina was difficult and personal. It's a hard thing to intellectualize. A number of reporters came to talk to me about the hurricane. At a certain point, I became really irritated. I felt so grief-stricken about the whole thing, it was hard to answer questions like, "What are you going to miss most about New Orleans?" I wanted to say, "My brother

with his crawfish boils." None of it seemed to matter anymore. It was a tough, tough time.

**Schuette:** Your writing makes it clear that place is important to you, but ironically, you're still writing about a place where you're not. How are place and home different for you?

**St. Germain:** The question of home for me is complicated. New Orleans feels like home still, but if I step back, it's the place where I was born and where I spent half my life. The other half, however, I've not been there. Sometimes I do feel like an exile, but if I wanted to go back, I could. I've chosen not to. It's not a lifestyle that I want.

I was just reading today that home is the place where you feel most guilty, where you'll never be forgiven. If that's true, then home is connected with my mother and New Orleans. Maybe that's why I write about it so much. It's something I'm longing for that I don't have.

Now, if you think of home as a place where you feel comfortable, where you can kick off your shoes and be yourself, then writing is my home. No matter where I am, if I have my laptop or my journal, I'm home. When I pick up the pen, I experience the most profound feeling of intimacy and acceptance and familiarity I know. Which is interesting

because it's not related to a place at all. Then again, it's the landscape itself that inspires me. One of the most productive times I had as a writer was at the residency in a writer's colony where my studio was in the Louisiana woods. There was something about the humidity, about the flora and fauna. I felt like an indigenous creature. I belonged. I didn't belong in Iowa, where I lived for seven years. That didn't mean I couldn't live there, but it wasn't the place I was born. It wasn't a place I could thrive.

I like the idea that I can always return to New Orleans. Almost every year, I go back for Mardi Gras or Jazz Fest or to visit my mother. These holidays are important to me; they're mine. The traditions, the music, the food—they're mine. I'm not living in New Orleans, but I can have some of the culture. I've transformed my house in Pittsburgh. Every wall is decorated with prints from Jazz Fest. I have beads in every room and voodoo dolls. I collect New Orleans music. To honor people or to bless a house, I make gumbo. The whole house smells like roux and sausage and chicken. Everything's okay because now we have gumbo.

**Schuette:** In *Swamp Songs*, you engage a hypothetical critic who is accusing you of "mythologizing, romanticizing and anthropomorphizing" the swamps. Is there something to this critique—what are the legitimate dangers of writing about place?

**St. Germain:** There is a famous section in *Walden* where Thoreau is looking at red and black ants fighting. He goes on for two pages imagining one as Achilles and one as some other great Hector, completely anthropomorphizing. The passage reveals much more about Thoreau's imagination than it does about the ants. But that's interest-

ing too. As long as we understand that when we mythologize, we reflect ourselves and our culture, it's okay.

I am aware that I have to be careful because I'm not living the every day reality of New Orleans. Even though I talk to my mother often, I'm not there. I have the lens of the traveler. There's something good about that and there's something you have to watch out for. With distance, you can appreciate things a bit more than those who are caught up in the day-to-day struggles, but you tend to romanticize because you remember all the good stuff.

We need to understand nonfiction as a kind of fiction; not a lie, but my version of the swamps isn't everybody's version of the swamps. Sometimes, I'm interested in the swamps metaphorically to represent what I don't want—to fall in or drive into like my sister did. Other times, I'm interested in it literally—the swamp about which Greg Guirard, the Cajun writer, photographer, and woodworker taught me. Both can be there; you just have to be careful. Do your research. Get the facts. Don't use the swamp as a metaphor if you don't understand what a wetland is.

**Schuette:** Reading from your work as a whole—*Going Home, Journals of Scheherazade, Swamp Songs*—I get the sense that there's this mass of experience continually presenting itself to you: family dynamics and upbringing, love/lost love, desire and its close proximity to addiction, the landscape in which these occur (including culture and food), and how the body fares throughout the experience. All your chosen metaphors for exploring this experience are organic, suggesting that the experiences



Sheryl St. Germain

are inextricably related. Do you write to highlight and emphasize the connections or to parse out the experiences so they don't simply clump together?

**St. Germain:** As a writer, I approach things out of love, not intellectually. I love gumbo. I love my mother's garden. I can intellectualize these things and see them as complicated nodes, but it's really



RUTGERS-NEWARK

## Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Real Lives, Real Stories

[www.mfa.newark.rutgers.edu](http://www.mfa.newark.rutgers.edu)

The Rutgers-Newark Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing will begin accepting applications for our Fall 2010 class in Fiction and Poetry on Nov. 15, 2009. November application is encouraged and applications must be received by January 5, 2010. We will notify applicants of acceptance by April 20, 2010. We encourage you to apply with a strong, competitive manuscript and the dedication required by your craft and your calling.

Our MFA Program, located on the most richly diverse undergraduate campus in the nation, a mere PATH train ride from Manhattan, is both cutting edge and deeply important. Literature comprises the consciousness and conscience of a culture, and our MFA for the 21st Century is designed to nurture many voices.

Our Writing Faculty in Fiction includes novelist, short story writer and MFA Director Jayne Anne Phillips, novelist Tayari Jones, and Rutgers-Newark Writer in Residence Alice Elliott Dark (*In The Gloaming*). Our Poetry faculty are distinguished poet and translator Rachel Hadas and Rigoberto González co-founder of Con Tinta, a collective of Chicano/Latino activist writers. M.F. Steinhardt Visiting Writers for 2009-2010 are Jaime Manrique and Paul Lisicky. Our accomplished Nonfiction faculty, Pulitzer Prize finalist James Goodman, Vietnam and science fiction specialist H. Bruce Franklin, and jazz pianist and author Lewis Porter, offer courses or workshops to our Fiction and Poetry students. The Visiting Authors who comprise our *Writers at Newark Reading Series* include E. L. Doctorow, Junot Diaz, Jo Ann Beard, Cornelius Eady, Suketu Mehta, Rick Moody, Cyrus Cassells, Scott Spencer, Yusef Komunyakka, Patricia Smith, Richard McCann, Cathy Park Hong, Pablo Medina, Chang-rae Lee, Mark Doty, Honor Moore, Jeffrey Eugenides, Caryl Phillips, and Nalini Jones, among others. The Series forms the basis of MFA-only Writers At Newark contemporary lit courses, as well as community outreach to Newark high school students and adult Reader's Groups co-sponsored by the Newark Public Library. Contact: [rnma@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:rnma@newark.rutgers.edu)

TWENTY-EIGHTH  
ANNUAL  
KEY WEST  
LITERARY SEMINAR



clearing the sill  
of the world

a celebration of 60 years  
of American poetry  
in honor of Richard Wilbur

JANUARY 7-10, 2010

BILLY COLLINS  
KIRBY CONGDON  
ERICA DAWSON  
RITA DOVE  
RHINA P. ESPAILLAT  
DAN GERBER  
RACHEL HADAS  
MATTHEA HARVEY  
YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA  
MAXINE KUMIN

BRAD LEITHAUSER  
PAUL MULDOON  
ROBERT PINSKY  
KAY RYAN  
MARY JO SALTER  
HARVEY SHAPIRO  
TIMOTHY STEELE  
MARK STRAND  
JAMES TATE  
NATASHA TRETHERWEY  
RICHARD WILBUR

Writers' Workshop Program  
January 11-14

with Billy Collins, Valerie Martin, E.J. Miller-Laino, Dara Wier

Visit [www.kwls.org](http://www.kwls.org) for  
growing audio archives,  
interviews, and more.

888-293-9291

The Florida Keys  
& Key West  
come as you are

If I want to reach more people and the subject is complicated enough, I'll write prose because the essay is very public, like a performance. The poem, on the other hand, always feels like its written to a beloved. It's like whispering to someone; it's intimate.

my inexpressible love that shows me how complicated they are. I think about these subjects as the eye of something and then untangle it. I'm not a linear thinker. You can see my origins in poetry. Things tend to grow; an essay develops from an image. I had to do research to learn the roots of gumbo, to learn about all the different cultures that contributed. I didn't know any of that growing up. I just knew that gumbo was something that I loved that tasted good. When I write, I like to look at something that seems uncomplicated on the surface but that reveals itself, under examination, to be layered and textured.

**Schuette:** Does that mean you start with metaphors? You mentioned in another context that you wanted to figure out stuff about your family and the wounds that you felt, but it sounds now like the images come first and lead you into family stories.

**St. Germain:** I think they come together. In my mind, we don't invent metaphors; they're already there. As a graduate student, I was in a fiction class working on a story about how my father used to put out three choir boys around Christmas time, and one year, inexplicably, one of them didn't have a head and he put them all out anyway, including the headless one. I didn't intellectually understand metaphor as a child, but I knew that I was drawn to the image, and my instructor said, "That's a natural metaphor for your family, Sheryl." I hadn't put the two together, but I realized the missingness, the woundedness, the display of it all. It's hard to explain, but I trust there's a kind of natural intelligence to the world. It's what draws me back again and again to the polluted lake I didn't understand as a child. As an adult, I look at the things that continue to draw me, and then I think about why that might have been, almost like a psychoanalyst. What is it that draws me in? What is so provocative about a polluted lake or my mother's messy garden? I try to think about each part of it and bring my imagination to it.

**Schuette:** What about the persistence of the material? Clearly, writing about it didn't make it "go away." Over the course of your books, stories get told and retold in new forms and contexts. Your mother's cooking, your father's affairs, your brother's death, your own lost loves—these events occur in poetry, then in essay, in the context of place (New Orleans), and then in the context of persona (Scheherazade). What does this reiteration bring for you?

**St. Germain:** When you're young, you have a particular understanding of something that changes as you get older. In fact, one of the things I love about getting older is that things you once took for granted, you don't anymore. Maybe I've thought

all these years about my father in one way, or my brother, or my culture, and then one day I wake up and for whatever reason—the way the sun is shining, the particular way my face looks in the mirror—I see something different because I've changed, I've become older.

There's also something different about rendering it in prose as opposed to poetry. Prose provides more room to articulate connections. Threads and narratives get attached to an image in the essay. I am a narrative lyric poet, but the narratives are really short. The essays in *Swamp Songs* are much longer and much more complicated and have more information embedded in them. For example, the first two pages and part of the last page of "Communion" used to be a three-page poem—I still have that poem—and it says something, but I didn't have the room to say everything that I wanted to say. Sometimes, when I'm doing a reading, I'll read that poem, and sometimes when I read that essay, I'll just read the first two pages and the last page because it works together as a whole, but all that stuff in the middle, it's really stuff that I want to say too: stuff about gumbo and how it came about and the oysters and the bread pudding—that used to be a poem as well. Prose provides a way of relating and putting images in a different context. When you write a book of poetry, the poems might be connected, but they really stand on their own. It's difficult to connect them in the way that you can connect things in a prose piece.

**Schuette:** Or the reader has to do it, and you don't know if they'll do it quite the way you want. Maybe an essay gives a bit more control.

**St. Germain:** It does. And I also want an audience. I'm not a difficult poet. I make an effort to write accessible poetry. A Cajun woman sent me an e-mail once and she said she had my poem "Cajun" on her refrigerator. She'd had it up so long that the typeface had worn away and she couldn't afford to buy another copy and could I please send her one. I was so happy, happier than if I had been published with a huge press and a million people had read my book because that's who I'm writing for. Sometimes with poetry, I worried the audience was just not there. People I wanted to reach were never going to read a poem. The lyric essay started for me when I realized I was writing these long poems and they were getting longer and longer and the line breaks were becoming arbitrary, and I thought, these are not poems, they're essays. But then I thought, no, they're really poems. My aim is the same, so what makes it an essay? It's longer? It doesn't have line breaks? What's the distinction? I argued with myself for a while, then I thought if I can fake people into reading it by calling it an essay and in my mind it's really a poem, that's great.

**Schuette:** I'm interested in these connections between nonfiction and poetry, in particular the tension between narrative and lyric for you. An early chapbook, *Going Home*, was largely driven by narrative, but *The Journals of Scheherazade* seven years later relies primarily on lyric, and then *Swamp Songs* seven years after that combines them in the essay form. And, in fact, you end that collection writing, "Maybe I should stop searching for an overarching narrative... maybe my story is lyric, not narrative." What does it mean to choose lyric over narrative, or why would you say, okay, maybe this isn't about finding a narrative then, maybe it's about letting the lyric stand?

**St. Germain:** In the essay "Whips and Unruly Women," I was trying to understand my own life history with men, and how I hadn't managed to stay with one man, a failure in our society. We often tell that story in popular myth and culture, the story about the couple that goes together throughout the world, and I didn't have that narrative. I realized, instead, that my experience with the partners I'd had were like poems, discrete pearls on a chain. The narrative form felt slightly imprisoning in some ways.

So often we're forced to tell our lives in the form of a story: this happened, then this happened. When someone walks up to you, they say, "So what's your story?" They don't say, "So what's your poem?" That implies this beginning, middle, and end, and I didn't feel like I always had a satisfactory story that I could tell.

**Schuette:** Is it something you see about the book as a whole, too, that experience comes in these lyrical pearls? Because, from reading *Swamp Songs*, it feels like you desired a narrative to give your life sense, at least for a time.

**St. Germain:** I just taught *Walden* again. In it, Thoreau is this thirty-year-old kid really, a Puritan, desiring spiritual transcendence. He doesn't want to drink or eat meat. He wants this Spartan-like existence, and yet, he's also this person of physical, sensual existence—eating, shitting, fucking. In *Walden*, he goes back and forth between these two versions of himself, anguished, and that's one of the things that makes *Walden* interesting. So I would answer by saying, "Yes, I have both these desires in me—lyric and narrative."

To me, telling a story is cleaner, but it's not always true. My mother tells this important family story about my ancestors and how they didn't have any boys. Later I learned I had an uncle and that he died young, but that didn't matter to my mother. She made the story better. Leaving one little thing out can shape a story in a completely different way. A poem can lie, too, but it feels purer. You're not trying to make an argument; it's just—here's the way you feel about a thing and here's your expression of that feeling. In fiction or creative nonfiction, even if you end in ambivalence, there's still some implied movement.

You can have a long narrative poem and you can have short flash fiction or nonfiction. The genre distinction is difficult for me. I recently stopped worrying about it. I'm at a point in my life where it doesn't matter what I call my work. If I want to reach more people and the subject is complicated enough, I'll write prose because the essay is very public, like a performance. The poem, on the other hand, always feels like it's written to a beloved. It's like whispering to someone; it's intimate. Poems always get started for me in my journal, so they carry the safe feeling of a journal.

If I'm confronting something really terrifying, I'll write a poem instead of prose, and it will stay there for a long time. When I'm more comfortable with it, I'll begin to make it a story, but sometimes all I can do is write a poem. The year my partner broke into my house and beat up my son and I came home and had to clean up the blood and they were both in jail and all I could think about was my son's face all bloody and bruised, I just wrote poem after poem after poem for about a year. I couldn't write a story. I didn't know what the story was. Eventually, after a year and a half, I started incorporating some elements of the poems into essay, and some of that is in the new manuscript. I don't know that I can fully articulate why, but when something terrifies me, I have to write a poem about it first. To be able to discover or uncover a metaphor that allows you to see something in another way, it's a really powerful tool for writing and healing, and a lot of my writing—even prose—is mixed up in that way. I'm very much like the little boy in Nabokov's "Signs and Symbols" who has some kind of disease. He cannot perceive anything literally. Everything is a symbol, so his parents have to be very careful about what they

## CONVERSE COLLEGE

# MFA

## Low-Residency

Fiction • Nonfiction • Poetry

*Real writers are those who want to write, need to write, have to write.*

—Robert Penn Warren

Renowned faculty include recipients of the National Book Critics Circle Award, PEN West Nonfiction Award, Goodheart Prize, Milt Kessler Book Award, Winnow Press Prize, Maurice English Prize, and NEA and Guggenheim Fellowships:

Nick Carbó	Robert Olmstead
Denise Duhamel	Leslie Pietrzyk
Albert Goldbarth	R.T. Smith
Sarah Kennedy	Susan Tekulve
Rick Mulkey	Dan Wakefield

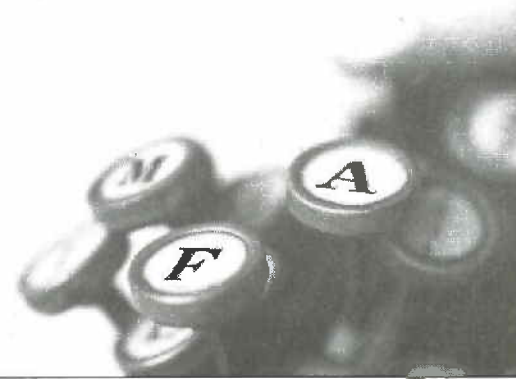
*Program features:*

- June and January residencies in SC followed by mentoring semesters
- Low 4:1 student/faculty ratio
- Sessions led by faculty, visiting writers, literary agents and editors, and independent publishers
- Tuition below national average
- Converse graduates include a Pulitzer Prize recipient, a 2007 National Book Award finalist, a 2006 winner of the X.J. Kennedy Poetry Prize, and a 2008 winner of the AWP Intro Award.

**Application Deadlines: October 1 for January residency and February 15 for June residency.**

**Rick Mulkey**

Director of MFA in Creative Writing  
Converse College  
580 East Main, Spartanburg, SC 29302  
rick.mulkey@converse.edu  
(864) 596-9111  
www.converse.edu/mfa



## Bowling Green State University

master of fine arts

One of the oldest established programs in the country, the MFA at Bowling Green State University provides a comprehensive and rigorous education in the professional writing, editing, and marketing of poetry and fiction. All qualified students receive funding, an opportunity to teach creative writing, and editorial experience with the literary journal *Mid-American Review*.

Faculty:

Lawrence Coates  
Wendell Mayo  
Sharon Muir  
Larissa Szporluk

*creative* writing

www.bgsu.edu/departments/  
creative-writing

Phone: (419) 372-8370

give him. I'm a little bit like that, so much so that my son yelled at me once, "Mom, everything is not a metaphor!" Of course I know that, but it's much more interesting to me if I can understand things metaphorically.

When my son was first diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and the doctor was trying to explain to me what was wrong with him, he said, "You know what, he thinks metaphorically." And this was bad, this was wrong! I really didn't understand this because I think like this. And most poets do. For me, the heart of a poem is the metaphor. I

know that lots of poets have moved in other directions, but still for me to say that something is like something else is incredibly powerful. We didn't understand the heart until we could say it's like a pump. Or depression. We have clinical ways to describe it that are useful, but what if we said depression is like a weed in the heart, and I can't pull the weed out by the roots without pulling the heart out. I don't know if that would help anyone with depression, but it gives you an image to think about and to work with. Metaphors are very consoling to me because, like narratives, they're ways of

imposing an order on something that doesn't have order. But metaphor is not a symbol; it's not a one-to-one correspondence. It's a rich, textured way of making beauty and sense out of something that might not have beauty and sense. AWP

## from *Let It Be A Dark Roux: New and Selected Poems*

by Sheryl St. Germain

### Carnival: an Ode to New Orleans

So your house stinks, really bad, and the inside, even the furniture, is covered with mold, it's like everything has grown another skin, furry, yellow, black, and you remember that sometimes when you walked in the Quarter late at night you used to smell something like this—a roux of rotting seafood, spoiled beer, and urine—and there's something almost familiar about the stink of your ruined house, as if this is the base smell, somehow, of the heart of your culture, the mold a mask that reveals something that was always already there.

Maybe your house has to be gutted, and you want to hire someone to scrape the insides out because you can't stand the smell or the pain of being bound so intimately to this wounded thing, but you can't afford to hire anyone, so you're doing it yourself.

Maybe the roof or walls of your house have fallen in. Maybe your house looks as if it's had a heart attack. Maybe a boat has knifed itself into the attic. Maybe another house is on top of yours so that it looks like the houses are fucking, and all of a sudden you can't remember the last time you made love or were happy, though you think of yourself as a happy person, you are from New Orleans, born and bred, how could you be otherwise,

and you think you would like to have some kind of hallucinatory, fierce sex with someone, right this very minute, right on the moldy floor of your house, you think you could loose your anger into it, empty your bruised heart into it.

Anger and sadness are boring, though, and don't help with the gutting of your house, and you think it might be better to make some gumbo and light up the cave, like Ann Sexton says in that one poem, instead of dreaming of having sex with someone, and anyway there's no one around to have sex with.

And you're not so bad at the gutting, it reminds you of eating crabs and crawfish; you're good, because you're a southerner, at cleaning crabs and crawfish, at dismantling them and scraping out any piece of sweet meat that might be hiding in any secret part, and that's how you have to hunt out the mold now, it's how you have to scrape and pull and be relentless. So you hold your breath and nose and think about cleaning crabs as you work.

Maybe your house has drifted into the middle of the street and has to be bulldozed because it's stopping the flow of traffic of journalists who want to photograph your house. You think about how hard the waters must have hit your house for it to have been wrenched from its moorings like this,

and you remember how you felt after being punished a long time when you were a kid and your mother finally said *okay now you can go outside*. How you bolted, exploded out of the house. You think the waters must have moved like that when the levees failed.

Maybe you've lost books or clothes or furniture or photo albums, maybe you've lost a refrigerator, a stove, a computer, your mother's wedding ring, your childhood piano. Maybe someone you love has died. Maybe you did not recognize the body when you saw it.

But it's spring, it's carnival, and you're sick of mourning and sick of cleaning and gutting and sick of not having sex so you wrap yourself in blue tarp and call it a costume, and you walk around uptown with a sign that says *FEMA called, Beads will Arrive in April*. Or maybe you and your friends dress up like Dutch lesbians and walk around with signs saying *New Orleans needs Strong Dikes*.

Maybe you put a toy helicopter on your head and disguise yourself as a sand bag, or maybe you design a float for your krewe called *The Corpse of Engineers*, and you are almost happy.

Or maybe you just show up, as you always do, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, and stand around on St. Charles, waiting for the parade. Maybe you think it's important just to show up, as if showing up proves you believe something about this shattered city and your wounded house, though you're not sure exactly what it is you believe,

and when the first float rounds the corner and you see the beads whipping through the spring air, all that color and shininess lighting up the sky, your heart almost stops, it is like seeing someone you love again after a long, long time, and you wiggle your way up close to the float, you put your hands up and you yell as loud as you can, you scream, you shout, you almost lose your voice, you are trying to get God's attention or maybe just trying to get the attention of someone

who will make fierce love to you, *hit me, hit me with some beads baby*, you're waving your hands like you've been entered by a hoodoo spirit, you got your mojo workin, you got your gris gris going, *hey hey hey, right here, me, me*, you're reaching for the roiling sky, for the beads that will change your life if only you can catch them, if only you can hear the sound of them hitting your hand, hard, the sound that means someone threw those useless, shimmering, indispensable things right to you, right into the palm of your hand, and you are shouting for your house, for the heart of your city, for the gone ones, *throw me, throw me something Mister*.

