

## Campus Anticipates Author Valerie Martin

March 16, 2011 1:15 AM Carol J. Schlueter  
cjs@tulane.edu

Students who are aspiring writers will have an opportunity to learn from an acclaimed novelist next week when Valerie Martin, who wrote *Property* and *Mary Reilly*, comes to Tulane to serve as the 26th Zale-Kimmerling Writer-in-Residence.



Novelist Valerie Martin is this year's Zale-Kimmerling Writer-in-Residence. Her works "have much to say about gender, race and the historical reality of this place," says Sally Kenney, executive director, Newcomb College Institute.

During the week, sponsored by the [Newcomb College Institute](#), Martin will visit English classes at Tulane and lead a master class in creative writing with students from Lusher High School and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. She will read from her works at a public event in the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall at 7 p.m. on Monday (March 21).

What advice will she have for those young would-be novelists?

"The basic advice is, just keep writing," Martin said in a pre-visit interview. Being a writer is "largely a gift" ? some have it, some don't.

"If you can comfortably give up writing stories, you probably don't have the gift. If you can't, then, heaven help you, you're some kind of a writer. And if that's the case, the skills you should develop are patience and concentration. The practice is simple: read fiction."

It's a welcome visit to the Crescent City for Martin, who considers New Orleans her hometown; her family moved to the city when she was three years old.

"I like the idea that my writing roots are in New Orleans," said Martin, whose novel *Property*, narrated by a woman slave-owner in antebellum New Orleans, won Britain's Orange Prize in 2003. "Whenever I return, I immediately feel relaxed and I understand why everyone thinks what they think. I continue writing about the city, and in some sense it's always on my mind."

A visiting professor of English at Mount Holyoke College, she taught at the University of New Orleans early in her career and has written nine novels and three collections of short stories. Her earlier novel *Mary Reilly*, which purports to be the diary of Dr. Jekyll's housemaid, won the Janet Heidinger Kafka prize in 1990.