



## John Biguenet

**Oyster**  
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Readers of my collection of stories, *The Torturer's Apprentice*, may be surprised by *Oyster*, my first novel. While most of the main characters in the story collection are men, the two major figures in *Oyster* are a young woman and her mother. My stories roam across the world from Cincinnati to southern Germany to Philadelphia to medieval France to places where a boy can transform himself into various animals and a ghost can persuade a young couple to become its parents. The novel, on the other hand, never travels far from Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish. (Mostly coastline bordering the mouth of the Mississippi River, the parish is called by some locals "The End of the World.") While my short stories shift from contemporary to historical, from realist to fantastic, and adopt the forms of fairy tale and chronicle and ghost story and dialogue, *Oyster* is a simply told tale of a few months in the lives of a few people in a single place.

Of course, at the end of the world, nothing is ever really simple, because that's where things turn into other things: a river becomes a sea, land melts into marsh, human beings return to the water. *Oyster* is about the verge, about things becoming something else, about decay frothing with new life. In the

wetlands, the surging of the tide tatters the dying but nourishes the hungry.

As the variety of structures employed in *The Torturer's Apprentice* suggests, I try to find a way to tell a particular story that springs from the conflict about which I write rather than to impose a single voice and narrative strategy over and over again. Similarly, in my novel I have tried to invent a form appropriate to a story about things in between what they were and what they will be. So *Oyster* is difficult to classify. Is it a literary thriller or a kind of sea tale or a mystery or a family saga? Or like its subject, is *Oyster* itself in between?

In between — that is always fertile hatching ground for storytelling.