

Terrence M. Price

New Orleans, Six Months After

1.

Walk the Ninth Ward,
mold and brine
crust air until heavier
than your footsteps
crunching into
shattered asphalt.
Take a deep breath.
Meet your new companion—
that hacking,
parched cough.

Stop by the plywood
replacing doors,
red spray paint X's
marked with two numbers:
survivors rescued,
(too many zeros)
bodies recovered,
(not enough zeroes.)
Paint still wet.

The next house stood
on the concrete slab
several yards away
with the pickup truck
upside down
in the parking lot.

2.

Find your way
to Bourbon Street.
Off-season Mardi Gras beads
spark green-gold-purple.

Listen to the artists
hawking velvet prints
between walls choked
with feather boas, short skirts,
and love on consignment.

3.

Scatter beignet crumbs
and drown your screams
in black French drip.

Laughter's notes
are loud enough
and ache less.

Across the street,
cardboard reads:

"Portraits double price
if your name is Katrina.
Triple, if your sister is Rita."

