



September 2, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Following Your Bliss. Writing Your Bliss.**

Sharman Apt Russell lives and writes in Silver City NM and says of herself, "I am pleased to be considered in the book world as a nature/science writer. At the same time, I have relied on Joseph Campbell's advice to follow my bliss." At the Southwest Festival of the Written Word in downtown Silver City, September 27-29, Sharman will relate where this journey has taken her in her life and her writing.

Russell is a professor of humanities at WNMU and also teaches in the MFA program at Antioch University in Los Angeles. Her *Standing in the Light: My Life as a Pantheist* (Basic Books, 2008) was a New Mexico Book Award finalist and one of Booklist's top ten books in religion. Her *Hunger: An Unnatural History* (Basic Books, 2005) was written with the help of a Rockefeller Fellowship.

She is one of twelve Festival presenters to be honored by the New Mexico Humanities Council as a New Mexico Humanities Scholar.

Some of Sharman's other awards include a Writers at Work Fellowship, a Henry Joseph Jackson Award, a Pushcart Prize, and a Mountains and Plains Booksellers Award. Her work has been widely anthologized and her ten published books translated into Chinese, Russian, Polish, Korean, Portuguese, Swedish, Turkish, German, and Spanish.

In a review of Russell's *Of Hunger: An Unnatural History*, The Economist writes, "[An] elegant meditation... Ms. Apt Russell scoops every morsel of interest from her subject. She also writes beautifully. Not surprisingly, this produces a feast."

Publishers Weekly praises her *Anatomy of a Rose* as "A luminous blend of memoir, botany lesson, and history of science. Like a guided walking tour in a field of wildflowers on a splendid summer day."

Should you visit Russell's blog ( [www.loveofplace.blogspot.com](http://www.loveofplace.blogspot.com)) you will find a writer who is fiercely in love with the natural world around her and who studies it from the point of view of her different life-roles, that of a citizen scientist, a humanitarian, a teacher, a mother, a spouse, and a prose-poet.

Consider this, posted in August 2012: "The best part of this day is when I focus on tiger beetles and the insect drama at my feet. But a good part of the day is when I look at my life from a certain distance and feel pleasantly relaxed about all that. A

PO Box 1767, Silver City, NM 88062 575.388.4856 [www.swordfiesta.org](http://www.swordfiesta.org)  
Proudly sponsored by Western New Mexico University



## SOUTHWEST FESTIVAL *of the* WRITTEN WORD

good part of the day is when I think about what it means to be human, 40,000 years ago and right now in the twenty-first century, when I let myself range across time and space, one of the stranger competencies of the human mind."

Or this: "Everyday we walk outside and we are knocked-out, bedazzled. And all this beauty is so wonderfully democratic. You don't have to be rich or famous or lucky. (You don't even have to be a good writer.) It's just there. For all of us. Not one of us is left outside the beauty. Not one of us is left outside the celebration."

On Saturday September 28, 10 am, Russell's Festival session "*The scripture of snail and fern: Nature writing as spiritual memoir*" looks at nature and science writing as powerful expressions of spirituality and mysticism, a witnessing of the beauty of the world that can inspire gratitude and deepen wonder. "In this tradition of the spiritual memoir," she tells us, "we fall in love with the Creation. The Other becomes the Beloved which becomes the Sacred."

Later the same day, Saturday September 28, 2 pm, Russell appears at the Festival session "*No end in sight: The writer's life*" with Felipe Ortego y Gasca and Mark Medoff.

More about Sharman Apt Russell can be found at her website, [www.sharmanaptrussell.com](http://www.sharmanaptrussell.com)

The Southwest Festival of the Written Word invites readers and writers of all ages to attend the 3-day event where over 50 writers and publishing professionals gather to talk and visit in more than 30 events, September 27-29, in downtown Silver City, NM. All sessions are open and free of charge to the public except the Memoir Workshop with Ana Castillo (\$125) and the Festival banquet--Dine with your Favorite Writers--featuring keynote speaker, Denise Chavez (\$30). Contact [chair@swwordfiesta.org](mailto:chair@swwordfiesta.org) for information on these two events.

Visit [www.swwordfiesta.org](http://www.swwordfiesta.org) for full Festival details.