

# Reviews

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*All the Good Hiding Places Poems.*  
By Ralph Adamo. (Boston: Black  
Widow Press, 2020. Pp. 115. \$15.00,  
paperback)

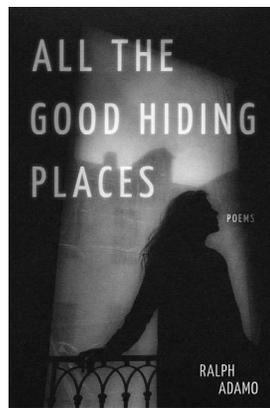
*All the Good Hiding Places* with its clever title captures and keeps its readers. Its author Ralph Adamo, a native New Orleanian and graduate of the MFA writing program at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, has eight books of poetry from presses with strong reputations. He is on the English faculty of Xavier University of Louisiana and edits *Xavier Review* and its press. Throughout the volume of seventy-one poems, his point of view is strong. One often feels tonal references to T.S. Eliot's poetry, notably "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The influences of long experience and acquired wisdom thread their seams through Adamo's lines.

"The Last Thing We Ever Do" with its smooth enjambment, "Dying Dancing" with its bridges between sound and silence, "A Partially Coherent Message to My Children" with its Yeats-like meditation, "The Bulge" with images of his father at war, "There You Are" with the moon in its multiple dimensions, and "This Is How I Leave" with its sense of memory and reflection stand out among the many appealing poems. The presences of war and conflict, issues that reflect the lives of all of us, emerge in

Adamo's poetry. Even in the few poems that were confusing, the power of their lines with the tensions between and among strong images were aesthetically pleasing: "The prow of a ship dissolving like blood in water" (p. 43), "The cat runs funny, sails catching wild wind" (p. 87).

Human mortality is a persistent motif throughout the volume. "If Jesus" asks the question, "If Jesus had lived to be 60 would he feel at all as I do sometimes?" (p. 26). In "The Old Life," Adamo writes, "In 1944 all the leaders of the War looked weary / on the verge of sudden death to tell the truth" (p. 96). "He Who Has Stalled" has a vague sense of finality: "This will do for destination / Nearing the end of the alphabet" (p. 94). Adamo often finds questions as consoling devices, as in "The Blues (Comes Close)" when he writes, "How to surrender, world of mine" (p. 90). The image of "the hint of violin in Your voice" (p. 82) from "Everything Dies That's a Fact" is haunting.

Although I have read Adamo's poems across the years, I was reminded of a story for children by Leo Lionni that focused on a field mouse standing beside his peers while they were collecting and storing resources underground for winter. When asked why he was not helping, he said that he was collecting warmth from the sun and colors. When the depth of winter came, and the mice were cold and depleted of food, they asked him about all that he had been collecting. He then began to recite a poem, and as he did the cold colors on the pages turned to warm ones. His fellow mice then said to him "You are a poet." And that is the way I felt as I concluded reading Adamo's poems in this new volume.



~Thomas Bonner, Jr.



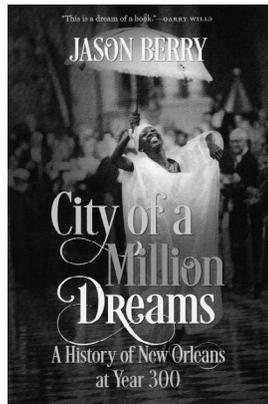
*City of a Million Dreams: A History of New Orleans at Year 300.* By Jason Berry. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. Pp. 5 + 412, acknowledgments, notes, index. \$22.00, paper)

New Orleans is an enchanting city that is as misunderstood as it is mythologized. Its rich history has attracted the attention of countless scholars, while its vibrant music scene continues to influence performers. Without question, the Crescent City is a special place. Investigative reporter Jason Berry, who is best known for his role in exposing the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, grew up in New Orleans. His connection to the city thus extends beyond the transient interest of many chroniclers as he possesses a deep passion for the place and its people. Berry's *City of a Million Dreams* attempts to capture the essence of this great American city as only an insider can by tracing the development of New Orleans from its 1718 founding to the present.

Berry's incredible story-telling skills are on display throughout as he ranges over the city's story. He is that rare author who can transport readers to a different time and place them at the center of historical events. Along the way, readers

meet such famous figures as Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville the founder of the city, Andrew Jackson the hero of the battle of New Orleans, and Michael White the scholar and musician. Berry focuses his narrative on the people of the city he loves. In many ways, the title of the book promises something that the work never delivers. *City of a Million Dreams* begins as a standard history by exploring the early settlement in New Orleans and the struggles under French and Spanish rule to keep it afloat. As the story advances to the events surrounding the Louisiana Purchase and the city coming under American rule, the narrative shifts direction. Gone are efforts to follow a strict chronology that hits the highpoints of the city's development. Instead, Berry focuses on important, yet often overlooked New Orleanians, who embody the spirit of the city, especially its prominent cultural icons. Berry would argue that grasping the essence of the city requires understanding the music and the people who made it, along with the faith traditions that kept it all together.

Berry reminds readers that New Orleans has always been a city unlike any other in North America. Nestled on the frontier of France's "New World" endeavors, New Orleans developed a cosmopolitan flair owing to its commercial and strategic importance despite its emergence in a provincial backwater. Throughout its history, Native Americans and those of European and African descent worked, fought, and died in the city, creating an unrivaled cultural mélange. Even following the arrival of Anglo-Americans by way of the Louisiana Purchase, the city retained its distinctiveness. He highlights the peculiar racial dynamic of the city that is illustrated, for example, by the nineteenth-century presence of both a free and an enslaved black population existing side-by-side within the context of a political establishment devoted to white supremacy. It is out



of this milieu brought about by decades of inter-racial exchange, that the city of New Orleans developed its distinctive religious and musical styles. This melding of old and new worlds across racial lines represents the soul of the city. Berry privileges the African American voice since theirs were always the most numerous and the culture they created the most long-lasting. By making their story the heart of his narrative, Berry ensures that those who are often overlooked in more “traditional” histories of the city are not forgotten. Berry tells the history of the city through the music following such well-known figures as Louis Armstrong and “Buddy” Bolden and lesser known yet equally important players such as George Lewis and Danny Barker. The author also introduces readers to the spiritual leaders of the city, such as Mother Catherine Seals and Sister Gertrude Morgan, all of whom helped keep the city’s often impoverished and oppressed black citizenry buoyant through seemingly endless trying times. Indeed, it is in this aspect of the story-telling where Berry shines. His ability to capture the robust African American cultural influence in the city that found expression in jazz funerals, second line parades, the Zulu mutual Aid Society, and the music scene that moved it all is remarkable. It is no surprise that mid-way through the writing of this book, Berry began work on a documentary film that shares the same name, *City of a Million Dreams*. Not surprisingly, music is its central focus as well.

*City of a Million Dreams* is a colorful examination of many New Orleans legends. Music lovers will delight in the discussions of the city’s famous jazz and blues legends, just as those interested in the syncretic religious tradition that developed in the city will find much of interest in Berry’s work. In short, this book promises to keep those fascinated by the city’s diverse cultural expressions avidly turning pages and looking for

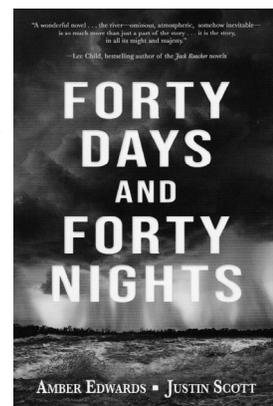
more. Those more engrossed by political and economic themes, however, will be disappointed by the peripheral role Berry assigns such topics. Likewise, the absence of contextual detail as the author navigates across decades of history with hardly a reference to anchor the narrative in time will try the patience of those who prefer their history to follow a tight chronology. Although marketed to a general audience, Berry’s account assumes a depth of knowledge regarding the city’s history that many casual readers might not possess. The absence of substantive commentary on the larger historical forces that acted on the city will be disconcerting to those who picked up this book because of its promise to provide a detailed history of the city at three-hundred years. Despite its occasional breezy approach to the subject, *City of a Million Dreams* is worth a look.

~Keith Finley



***Forty Days and Forty Nights.* By Amber Edwards and Justin Scott. (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2021. Pp. 366. \$20.00 paper)**

*Forty Days and Forty Nights* is a novel of the Mississippi River and a rare joint venture of two of America’s renowned storytellers, Amber Edwards and Justin Scott. Edwards has directed, produced, and written nineteen



national PBS documentaries and one theatrical feature. Scott, twice nominated for MWA Edgars, has written thirty-seven novels and collaborated with Clive Cussler on the Isaac Bell series. This literary power couple reportedly had a blast working on this novel, and readers will need to fasten their seat belts as they fly with Clementine Price down the Mississippi River in this hard-charging political action thriller. Price's small volunteer army faces down a wealthy domestic terrorist as he hopes to create a white homeland in the Delta and lead America into its second Civil War.

Clementine Price was raised on a farm near Tomato, Arkansas. Her family worked the rich alluvial soil for four generations. After tending to daily chores and helping raise her brothers, Clementine spent hours each day outside and unsupervised—blasphemy according to today's child-rearing handbook—yet it was precious time spent bonding with the soils and the trees and the smells and the wind whipping off the river. This land had become like the blood pulsating through her veins, giving her life and breath and a reason to drive on. She studied the river carefully, full of questions about why it behaved as oddly as it did, and this curiosity landed her at West Point studying hydraulic engineering and river science.

The farm flooded every year. Six times the Prices had to evacuate to higher ground. The Great Flood of 2008 swallowed up the place for the final time, and Clementine's heroism in getting her family out of harm's way, along with her years of accumulated practical wisdom, was not lost on Colonel Robert Garcia, commander of the US Army Corps of Engineers Memphis District. Garcia hired Ms. Price, an Army veteran, as his adjutant. A decade later, Clementine replaced Garcia as he moved up the ladder to take control of the New Orleans District of the Corps.

As Ms. Price was settling into her new job in Memphis, she was confronted with the crisis of her lifetime. The villain she faced was frighteningly real: White Supremacy 3.0—rich bigoted men flush with cash, hiding in plain sight, ready to make the white ethnostate a reality.

The face of evil in the story is Nathan Flowers, whose biography overlaps in spots with that of Clementine Price. As Ms. Price prepared to flee the 2008 flood, Flowers was about ten miles away, an Arkansas Department of Corrections inmate humping sandbags up to the top of a tall levee. Standing on the levee, taking in the surging river, Flowers spotted a runaway boat that happened to float tantalizingly close to his position. Sensing an opportunity, Flowers jumped aboard and believed for a while that he was a free man. ADC caught up with him, returning him to prison to serve a sentence lengthened by his foolish attempt to escape.

In prison, Flowers learned all the skills he would need to eventually become a megapastor at Hilltop, his community church and ministry constructed on the land where Clementine Price's family farm once stood. He worked hard at the prison library, becoming an ordained minister and earning a Bachelor of Science degree. He found God through Mary Kay Blankenship, a visiting pastor at the prison. He also found God as he joined a white supremacist gang called Pure Dominion. The gang was about survival, of course, but he also ingested the gang's bloodline religion, which was like a virus that he could never quite get rid of. It taught that Aryans were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, God's chosen people. The religion would take root in his mind and heart, and he would be a silent believer in the doctrine after prison, even while constructing his more mainstream megachurch. Flowers's public persona at Hilltop was that of an everlasting do-gooder who was surely going to

heaven for the selfless community work performed there.

Flowers is the evil genius in this novel due to his ability to work synergies in concepts that most of us find to be opposed and incompatible, for example, love/hate. Love builds congregations. Love builds fellow feeling between congregants and between those worshippers and the pastor. Hate attracted big donors, silent bigots, who paid the bills. Hate helped with cash flow and fundraising and allowed Flowers to dream of bigger projects than Hilltop. Hatred allowed space in Flowers's mind to use an epic forty-day flood as an opportunity to establish a new white nation in the Delta called Alluvia, leaving the USA divided into Eastern and Western states. Flowers saw no need to separate rival ideas in his mind; they worked together to serve a greater good.

When Flowers springs his plan for the ethnostate, Clementine Price counters with a small citizen army to resist. The fighting eventually narrows down to the novel's two central characters. The battle is not just about race or religion or America's future; it is also a deeply personal battle over who's family would lay claim to the legacy of the place in the Delta once known as Tomato, Arkansas.

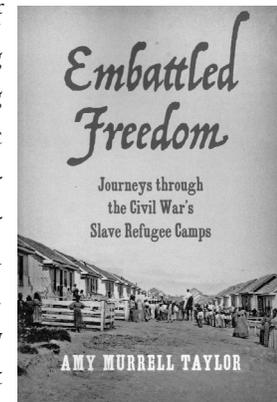
The most chilling aspect of this book is the thought that certain depictions in it may someday become real news. Weather is out of control, so forty consecutive days of rain can no longer be laughed off as an outdated Biblical myth. There are rich bigots around, dreaming for a white ethnostate and waiting for their moment to pounce, whether it be in a flood or other emergency. Militia groups and racist inmates would savor their role as norm enforcers in the new State. I'd be worried if not for this: out there somewhere there's a real-life Clementine Price ready to fight back.

-Stan Weeber



*Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Refugee Camps.* By Amy Murrell Taylor. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. Pp. 368, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95, paper)

Amy Murrell Taylor's *Embattled Freedom* looks at the impact of life in Civil War refugee camps on the Black refugees who fled to them during the war. In a broader sense she touches on the question of Black agency during that conflict. In doing so she address a topic that has been considered over time by numerous historians, both past and present. W. E. B. DuBois is generally considered the first



modern historian to advance the concept of Black agency during the Civil War. In his *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) he confronted the traditional narrative of slave passivity to insist that Blacks played an active role in securing and then determining the character of their freedom. Since then, historians have examined a variety of aspects of that agency, including such topics as slave resistance within the Confederacy and the role of Blacks as soldiers in the Union Army. It was, however, Willie Lee Rose's *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* (1976) that first examined life in the camps created on the

Sea Islands of the South Carolina for enslaved persons who had escaped to Union lines. Rose found that military and white missionaries brought with them to the Sea Islands ideas that would have limited freedom for Blacks and left them under white control. Blacks, however, aspired to another sort of freedom and the confrontation within the camps, in other words Black agency, helped produce a definition of freedom different than whites may have intended. Scholars since Rose have recognized that experiences in these camps played a role in determining how both whites and Blacks came to understand the meaning and limits of freedom, all recognizing the formative character of camp life. Taylor recognizes this scholarship and presents a useful bibliography of it in her notes (fn. 5, pp. 251-252).

Taylor's chief contribution to this literature is to look more broadly at life in camps located across the country. As she points out, the previous scholarship has taken narrower views of experiences within them. They have focused either on particular camps or on specific aspects of the refugee experience. The refugees, however, lived in at least some three hundred camps spread out from Virginia to the Mississippi River Valley. Her conclusion is that, as a result, what happened to the Black refugees within these camps differed greatly place to place. The interaction between unique individuals, both refugees and those who controlled the camps, and even location produced different results. Life in refugee camps was an elemental part of slavery's destruction, but in the interplay of the hopes of formerly enslaved people and the goals of the military (including the response to military necessity) and the ideas of the humanitarian overseers, the meaning of freedom was being constantly constructed and reconstructed. In many ways Taylor's story is one in which intended consequences often produced

unintended ones.

Taylor's examination of life in the camps is based on two different approaches. Eight of her chapters consider the situation in camps in a general way, relying heavily on official records, newspapers, and the correspondence and journals of those who operated the camps. These chapters look at issues such as the initial efforts to define the exact status of the refugees, the conflict between refugees and the various white interests controlling the camps over how they should be housed, the fight (especially with the military) over securing adequate food, and even disagreements over what clothing was appropriate. A particularly interesting aspect of this push and pull within the camps was exactly where they should be located, with freedmen often preferring to remain in the South, seen as home despite being the location of their enslavement, rather than being transported elsewhere. Like Willie Lee Rose, Taylor finds blacks playing a significant role in how events transpired.

In addition to this traditional narrative method Taylor provides three mini-biographies that emphasize the unique character of the camp experiences for individuals. She tells the story of Edward and Emma Whitehurst who for a time operated a store in the camp in Hampton, Virginia; Eliza Bogan, who refugeeed in Helena, Arkansas; and Gabriel Burdett, who was a soldier and a minister in Camp Nelson, Kentucky. These biographies are based on impressive research in sources not always examined by scholars. She is able to piece out in great detail their experiences using documents such as county records and the papers of the Southern Claims Commission, the Compiled Military Service Records, and the Civil War Pension Files, all in the National Archives. Those interested in Arkansas history will find the tale of Eliza Bogan of particular interest. Taylor is able to flesh out her life as a slave, her

reluctance to leave the plantation she was on to go to Union lines in Helena, her life working on a captured plantation, and then her joining the 1st Arkansas Infantry African Descent to be with her husband. As she does with the Whitehursts and Burdett, Taylor also follows Bogan's life after the war. In Bogan's case this meant tracing her life in Phillips County through the tragic years of segregation and the Elaine Massacre up to her death in 1928. These biographies provide a particularly human and individual meaning to the story of the life of Black refugees.

This book is highly recommended both for scholars and the general readers interested in the course of emancipation during the Civil War. Its analysis is both original and insightful. For Arkansas historians the biography of Eliza Bogan adds considerably to what we know of refugees and their wartime experiences in the state.

~Carl H. Moneyhon



***Tearing Down the Lost Cause: The Removal of New Orleans's Confederate Statues.* By James Gill and Howard Hunter. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2021 Pp. vii + 225, acknowledgments, appendices, index. \$25, hardcover)**

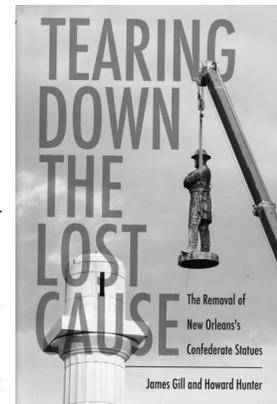
In the nearly 160 years since the end of the Civil War it has been suggested, initially by Union army veterans as well as future generations of historians and activists, that the North won the war but lost the peace due to the South's systematic use of violence and chicanery to suppress the political, social, and economic rights of freed

former slaves and their descendants. Although significant advances have been made in the past sixty years, public commemoration of Confederate leaders and ideals serves to sanitize and exonerate a legacy of inequality that has not completely dis-

appeared from modern American society. And while it is understandable that people (even in defeat) would wish to commemorate the battlefield valor of their ancestors, it must also be acknowledged that no amount of valor or commemoration can legitimize an illegitimate cause.

In *Tearing Down the Lost Cause* James Gill and Howard Hunter explore and explain the controversial history of four Confederate statues in New Orleans, within the larger context of the city's competing interpretations of its on-going role in the nation's racial history. The Civil War and its legacy, they argue, transformed the city of New Orleans. That process of transformation continues in relation to the recent removal of the city's four Confederate statues.

In its antebellum heyday New Orleans stood distinctly apart from the rest of the South. As a cosmopolitan city, whose economic and social character reflected a diverse population of Creoles as well as large numbers of Irish and German immigrants, New Orleans created a unique cultural and social identity with broad ties to the North and elsewhere (even as the nation teetered on the brink of secession and war). For example, although outgoing Vice President John Breckinridge and the States Rights faction of the divided Democratic Party carried Louisiana in the presidential election of 1860, voters in New Orleans



cast their ballots in favor of John Bell and the comparatively moderate Constitutional Union ticket. Indeed, New Orleans and its entrepreneurial and diverse population only accepted the state's eventual secession with reluctance.

The city's population remained somewhat divided in their wartime loyalties and experiences. Captured in late April of 1862, by the combined Union forces of Admiral David Farragut and Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler, the Crescent City spent the remainder of the war under federal occupation and as an early test case for Reconstruction policy. The post-war years witnessed additional changes to the city's legacy as it morphed into the standard-bearer of Lost Cause mythology, as embodied by efforts to commemorate and sanctify its contribution to the Confederacy and to symbolize control over the increasingly complex race relations of the post-war South.

Gill and Hunter trace the city's embrace of Confederate civic culture to the migration of numerous Confederate veterans into New Orleans in the 1880s. This gray-clad population inspired and led New Orleans's efforts to simultaneously justify racial segregation and the growing level of violence associated with white supremacy organizations, as well as to deny the central role that slavery played in the outbreak of the war.

In support of those goals, four statues played very specific symbolic roles, well beyond simple commemoration of ancestral valor. The statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee embodied the effort of Confederate veterans to search for common ground and reconciliation with their Union counterparts, through mutual admiration of Lee's actions and character on and off the battlefield, to thereby gain control of the process of reconciliation and our collective memory of the war according to the South's preferred terms of interpretation. Likewise, through their donation of the statue of Confederate President Jefferson

Davis, the Ladies Confederate Memorial Association sought to define southern patriotism through the narrow and romanticized lens of the Lost Cause along with a steadfast denial of the central role of slavery in relation to the South's antebellum development and as the primary cause of the war. The statue of Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard honored the state's most prominent native son as the embodiment of a fading French cultural presence. The Liberty Monument, erected in 1891, attempted to commemorate an essentially imaginary past as a means to justify the systematic and violent racial repression that defined New Orleans and the post-war South for decades.

New Orleans has, however, recently emerged as a leading participant in the movement to take down Confederate statues. That endeavor has inspired similar actions as part of an on-going effort to expand the public debate over still-prevalent racial inequities in twenty-first century American society. Through their thorough research and articulate narrative, Gill and Howard have produced a worthy contribution to our understanding of this emotionally-charged and timely issue. All subsequent public or published discussions of this controversial but on-going issue must consider Gill and Howard's analysis as a necessary starting point to that debate.

-Robert Patrick Bender

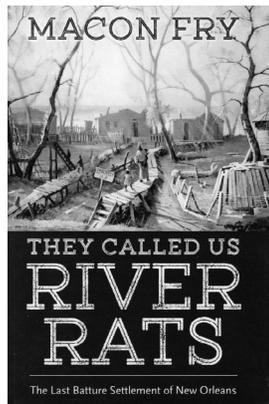


*They Called Us River Rats: The Last Batture Settlement of New Orleans.* By Macon Fry. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2021. Pp, xiii + 213, contents, pro-

logue, epilogue, notes, bibliography, index, 73 b&w illustrations. \$25.00, hardcover)

Macon Fry's *They Called Us River Rats* is an insider's examination and explanation of the residents inhabiting what the book's subtitle describes as the last batture settlement of New Orleans. At times history, largely memoir, and almost always celebration, this richly illustrated narrative introduces a community of free spirits, and their predecessors, living in crudely assembled structures perched on the batture between the Mississippi River levee and the river flowing within the normal banks. This is not a houseboat community. Rather, these "river rats" have constructed dwellings on piers or pilings featuring reused, repurposed, salvaged, and scavenged materials. They live on property without clear title, few if any public services, and at the mercy of the river's commercial traffic, current and floods, environment hazards, and government agencies charged with maintaining the levees.

Macon Fry is the pivot around which this narrative revolves, but the book is about life in this batture settlement. Now one of the community's senior residents, Fry is not a Louisiana native. Indeed, he grew up in the suburbs of Washington, DC. Fry acknowledges, however, that the most formative portions of his childhood were summers spent at the family's cottage along the Rappahannock River. This Chesapeake Estuary environment had, Fry later recounted,



"everything I wanted. I can't remember not knowing that I would live on a river" (p. xiii).

Having completed graduate school, Fry activated this desire by moving to New Orleans—an environment he describes as "a place of warmth and decay on the nation's greatest river" (p. 3). For the next few years Fry lived an urbanite existence in a neighborhood surrounding Tulane University. He was near the river but separated from it by the great Mississippi River levee. This all changed one evening in 1985 at a local tavern when Fry encountered a character identified only as Rob. This chance meeting generated a conversation focused on mutual fascination with riverine environments. Rob's comment that he lived on the river side of the levee led to an impromptu visit to his camp. Macon had found Nirvana. His description reveals a lot about the man and the structure:

The single twelve-by-fourteen-foot room contained a sleeping pallet, a crate of bike repair tools, and a wooden spool-table. . . . A plywood countertop supported an unplumbed sink and a two-burner Coleman stove. The tiny gas oven had no supply line. No electricity. No water. No gas. No toilet. Perfect! (p.4)

The serendipity continued when Rob announced his intention to move as the \$100 per month rent was more than he could afford. Macon leapt at the opportunity to become the next occupant. He wrote later "[m]y life in the last river community on the lower Mississippi began that damp night" (p. 6).

While the focus of Fry's interest is the people inhabiting this batture settlement, he supports the narrative with adequate geographic and historic context. Some *Arkansas Review* readers may appreciate greater attention to these topics. Fortunately, that information is readily available. Those seeking a more precise explanation of the

structure, composition, and physical transformation of the batture need look no further than Richard Campanella's *Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day* (Pelican Publishing Company, 2002). For a thorough treatment of the batture's historic significance turn to Ari Kelman's *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans* (University of California Press, 2003).

*They Called Us River Rats* is the second book-length treatment of this batture settlement, both published in the twenty-first century by the University Press of Mississippi. The other work is Oliver A. Houck's *Down on the Batture* (2010). While the authors cite and recount similar developments, events, locations, people, and structures, the perspectives are different. Thus, the works complement each other and enhance understanding of life in the batture settlement.

Houck recently retired from a forty-year career on the law faculty at Tulane University. In keeping with his environmental law specialty, *Down on the Batture* focuses on the riverine environment. An outside observer, Houck expresses deep concern regarding the batture residents' reliance on the river as a food source. He wrote:

I would no more fry up a catfish from the Mississippi than I would one from Chernobyl. Here we have the largest river in the country, loaded daily with toxins . . . (p. 16)

While not directly challenging Houck's prescription, Fry promotes the river's continuing wildness. Referencing a marine biologist from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Fry points to this environment's "relatively few extirpations of species . . . [M]ost of the plants and animals that explorers found in the lower Mississippi are still there today" (p. 30). He recounts how fellow river rats incorporate the bounty caught in the river and gathered from the batture into their diet. Locally harvested fish, shrimp,

garden produce, and wild berries are prominent in their food ways and commercial transactions with neighbors living behind the levee. Indeed, fellow batture inhabitants, past and present, created shelter and sustained life by applying, catching, harvesting, and marketing what the environment provided.

The richness of these stories comprise the core contribution of Fry's book. Some of them recount personal experience. Other vignettes Fry drew from oral interviews he conducted late in the twentieth century with individuals who inhabited batture settlements between 1927 and 1954. Reflecting both continuity and change, they offer a different perspective into a three-hundred-year-old city. Similar studies of other river side settlements would enhance our understanding of the Lower Mississippi River Valley.

-Brady Banta

