



Some Notes on River Country

Eudora Welty

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The Mississippi river country from Vicksburg to Natchez was a source and a setting for several of Eudora Welty's early stories and for her novel *The Robber Bridegroom*. Her eloquent essay about this region, reprinted here with a selection of her black-and-white photographs, is a reflection on the development and history of these lands in the old American Southwest in a time before and in the years just after the Louisiana Purchase.

Originally published in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1944, this piece evokes both the elemental terrain and notables who traversed it via the river and the Natchez Trace--Aaron Burr, the flatboatman Mike Fink, the villainous Harpe brothers, and John James Audubon, as well as assorted fire-and-brimstone preachers, bandits, planters, and Native Americans.

In *Some Notes on River Country*, a dreamlike meandering through the landscape in eloquent prose and evocative photographs, Welty's empathetic presence is felt. Taking the reader on an imagined journey, Welty combines the genres of travel narrative, character study, and geographical history to give a grand tour of the region. This brilliant portrait of a place is both elegiac and animated as she shows how much has changed, how much can never be recovered, and how much of the old river country remains in its contemporary incarnation. The essay and photographs explore the Natchez Trace, Grand Gulf, Port Gibson, Vicksburg, Natchez, Rodney's Landing, and other locales, offering insight on their quirky denizens, their significant history, and their entrancing uniqueness.

In this setting Welty discovered a presence and a sense of place that stimulated her artistic vision and imbued her work forever after.

Eudora Welty, one of America's most acclaimed and honored writers, is the author of many novels and story collections, including *The Optimist's Daughter* (Pulitzer Prize), *Losing Battles*, *The Ponder Heart*, *The Robber Bridegroom*, *A Curtain of Green*, and *The Wide Net*. Three collections of her photographic work--*Photographs*, *Country Churchyards*, and *One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression*--were published by the University Press of Mississippi.

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