

Crossing Bayou Teche

A Review

This memoir is a fascinating human story of how a person is formed, for better or worse, in the environs of family. As I read the book it soon became clear that it is also a story of one person's journey of love: a yearned-for love of parents, and love tentatively begun near the banks of a Louisiana bayou and the waters of the town swimming pool. The author pulled me into her world describing the onslaught of feelings, from dread, confusion, and angst to curiosity, excitement, and inadequacy. The book is just as likely to bring tears as chuckles with the familial ambience that moves the reader across one seemingly opposite cultural world into another, bringing along ample drama and surprises.

Reading this memoir seemed to knit me into the fabric of her French and Cajun family, the matrix of her growing up, and the intimate outline of a transformative personal journey. Vivid detailed descriptions gave me a profound sense of location - in the geography of a small southern town and from one side of the continent to the other and beyond. It is a story of crossings, fording rivers of religion, language, and numerous cultural and social divides. The insecurities of youth and fears of leaping into muddy waters haunt the writer from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. The author charms and draws the reader into her saga by juxtaposing major life events and with her determination to become the person she believes she was meant to be.

She includes long and interesting dialogs with the people she encounters on her adventures. There are photos of family, friends and loves as well as narratives from childhood play with a horse, to imaginative adventures in the rooms of the family business, to searches for careers.

This work checks all the boxes of what a memoir ought to be. It is intelligent, literary, and heart-warming. It pulls the readers into a story they can relate to.

One of the themes of the book is the importance of religion and how it wormed its way into her personality and challenged her to stretch across boundaries and discover both the fruits and the obstacles inherent in relational bonds. In the end, each reader will have to decide or imagine how much or how little Durand Grossman's travels are similar to or different from those of Odysseus who both left home and searched for it.

Glenn Currier - August 28, 2021