**Lost in the Lewis & Clark Water Park**

1. **Purchase Price**

I stand in line with my promise in cash,

while Jefferson uncorks a bottle of Bordeaux.

What Congress can’t sell they bury in a cache,

or package with reappearing buffalo.

Pursuits of happiness congest & queue

as Tourist video the Dream we bought,

& terrorists disguised as Teton Sioux

tweet into evening news what Gold hath wrought.

Caught in the trance of a Liberty Pole

we’d already begun revising maps

that stripped nature to its invisible soul

with traffic jams, amusement parks, & apps

that promise consumer vacation spots

where savages tend crowded parking lots.

1. **Fashion Arcade**

*Left Pittsburgh this day at 11 ock with a party*

*halted went on shore to try my airgun Blaze*

*Cenas with pretty good success suffered her to discharge*

*herself accedentaly the ball passed through the hat*

*of a woman cutting her temple we supposed she was dead*

*but revived we proceeded to a ripple and lift*

[Lewis: August 30th —03]

Sometimes you must throw the script away & lift

free of a consuming plot. The homecoming party

avoids drive-by shooters, separates the dead

plans from their dreams, throws out, in a blaze

of burn-offs, native homes, & announces that

every reservation has a gate & admission charge.

Cut the guide rope, & release the bilge discharge

along the quay, & fill the lock lift.

The dock crowd watches a sea of receding hats.

Powwows, all the rage this season, greet the party

drifting downriver & into the shallows. Scars blaze

beneath the brim of a history overflowing with its dead.

I gave up my acting gig to play with the dead.

The role roiled around until I was discharged

without pay. I follow the troupe as they blaze

new trails on a shifting stage & wear only uplifting

styles, but still I never feel a part of the party

when they take their bows or flourish their hats.

Really, must a performance mirror reality, or is that

too much to expect with shifting scenes & the dead

crowding to make an appearance—life of the party,

so to speak—or a still performance discharged

like a fashion arcade in a wax museum lift

moving up & down enough to set the heart ablaze.

From the glare on the rippled reflections Blaze

spilled in the water I adjust the pins of my hat

& recover the Journal entry they tried to lift

from the floating pages, & all around the dead

sinking deeper into mud. Soldiers discharged

from a later war rise from the debris to party.

Lifting limp flags of the defeated party

the soldiers blaze away at a dead-letter box,

& I can still see hats flying & musket discharge.

1. **York’s Letter Home**

Dear Wife:

My friend George

writes my words for me.

Here is where we be

happy & you no

more hear York yammer.

From here I send back

this Indian gourd

& buffalo robe

to show you how we

keep warm on cold nights.

Here I be proud Black,

big medicine &

buffalo caller.

I hunt, swim, do all

everyone else do.

Indians paint them-

selves black to make war,

mean they have courage.

Native wives like black,

think big medicine.

Natives dance and dance,

& York’s dance makes much

medicine for hunt.

Here, I feel I bury

cache of Black History.

When I return home

I buy with my share

you & we come back

to here where we like

others but better.

1. **Sand Storms**

*. . . immence quantities of sand which is driven*

*by wind from the sandbars of the river in such clouds*

*that you are unable to discover the opposite bank*

*of the river in many instances. the particles of this*

*sand are so fine and light that they are easily supported*

*by the air, and are carried by the wind for many miles,*

*and at a distance exhibiting every appearance*

*of a collumn of thick smoke.*

[Lewis, Wednesday April 24th —05]

We follow smoke drifting up river until

shore foundations shift in a way that will soon

be forgotten. Time slips & funnels. It’s like

the domino effect—a slow falling off

in which we were nearly swept away. Only

overhanging vines held us strapped at the end

of starting over on firmer ground where time

slips through thought’s possible anticipation

of winds down river stalking the dam’s shadow.

Sing farewell to complications of memory

soon everything washes away & comes clean.

We all watch expecting at any moment

to be covered in a landslide of this present

passing through that’s sure to cover us with what

might still be useful for tomorrow’s showcase.

The banks crumble & drop off as water eats

another slice, but what’s left to imagine

beneath it all if the bottom scours clear

to a shifting surface—one surface held to

another & nothing to stop the sliding,

regain footing, or hold us upright. Once viewed

as an indiscriminate depth that wavered

in our calibrations of rocky banks &

sudden shallows changing the depth with a swirl

of sand to refill a past uncertainty.

The keelboat rocks, & we on board feel there’s more

than an amusement ride powering these wild waves.

Each joy brings a higher tax assessment. Here

both banks stay on sight, but still this vast unex-

plored civilization enlightens what’s

to become but sand spillage of tomorrow.

But you are (we are) in part what’s left behind.

How can it be otherwise? Sure, there are some

who hold they exist only for the future

& every I becomes a we filling one

role or another prepared & shaped, a game

plan they can never execute & often

die trying. Troublesome mosquitos breed &

map a river of bloody design, & we

must watch our step as sand continues shifting

& filling the hour glass of our return. All

that is foretold, but how the current changes

& where the river winds off & strikes next no

one can say. Tourists such as we few must face

this mystery of flow even as we lose

ourselves wandering the Water Park rivers.

Soon we begin to panic, only a few

grains remain & they will drop before the sun

burns out tomorrow. We signed on with this

no clause contract, but a stay was issued that

gives us sole permission to re-explore

all those areas of the Park yet to be mapped.

The land lays loose here & the air turns arid.

& so we must not stray beyond the range of

a dowser rod or we’ll surely lose our way.

At last the winds uncover their secrets &

let fly until we’re covered with the fine sand

of their telling. We could see nothing else &

wished we had never asked to be uncovered

in the mysteries of invisible change

where shifts in wind direction will disrupt Park

play & the sand castles these native children

fashion, each expecting to win the contest

& be awarded firm footed congratulations

from ticket takers as they close their booths, crack.

1. **Open Season on the Purchase**

May 23rd —04: KILLED a deer

July 11th: seven deer

KILLED today

&c

July 14th: KILLED two goslings nearly grown

July 29th: CAUGHT [& KILLED]

three very large catfish

very fat

August 5th: KILLED one snake

August 8th: KILLED an elk

KILLED a pelican

August 16th: CAUGHT [& KILLED]

upwards of 800 fine fish

August 17th: two beaver CAUGHT [& KILLED]

August 23rd: KILLED a buffalo

August 24th: KILLED two buck elks & a fawn

September 7th: KILLED a dark rattlesnake

September 10th: KILLED 3 buffalo & one elk

September 11th: KILLED an elk & two deer & squirrels

the men with me

KILLED an elk, 2 deer & a pelican

September 22nd: KILLED two deer & a beaver

September 23rd: KILLED a doe goat

&c

October 20th: KILLED 10 deer & a goat today, &

WOUNDED a white bear

&c

December 9th: went out to send in the meat

KILLED yesterday, &

KILL more

KILLED 9 buffalo

&c

February 21st —05: KILLED 36 deer & 14 elk

May 5th: KILLED the largest brown bear

which we have yet seen,

it was a most tremendous-looking animal,

& extremely hard to KILL

May 6th: it is now only amusement

for Captain Clark & myself to KILL

as much as the party can consume

May 8th: KILLED a beaver which I found

on the bank, & a wolf

&c

May 11th: SHOT him [grizzly bear] through the skull

with two balls

being so hard to die

May 19th: KILLED an elk, a buck, & a beaver

&c

&c

June 5th: KILLED 2 buck elk & dined

on their marrowbones

June 6th: KILLED 7 deer for their skins,

KILLED an elk & two buffalo

June 12th: KILLED a buffalo,

an antelope,

& three mule deer

&c

June 23rd: KILLED seven deer & several buffalo

& dried about 600 pounds of buffalo meat,

but KILLED no elk

July 2nd: the bear changed his course

we pursued him

about 100 yards by the blood

& found him dead

July 24th: KILLED a deer & dined

July 26th: KILLED a pore deer

August 16th: hunters KILLED

a deer & the Indians

tumbling over each other

like a parcel of famished dogs,

each SEIZING & TEARING away

a part of the intestines . . .

the blood RUNNING

from corners of their mouths

Shields

KILLED an antelope

August 22nd: Drouilliard

KILLED a fawn

September 14th—18th: KILLED colt & ate

with portable soup &

about 20 pounds of candles

September 19th: KILLED horse & hung up

for the party after

taking a breakfast off

September 25th: KILLED 9 fine salmon

October 10th: purchased fish & dogs,

dined, & proceeded on

October 11th: dinner of dog & a few fish

October 14th: dinner of blue-winged teal

October 23rd: purchased 8 small fat dogs

[KILLED] for the party to eat

&c

November 19th: KILLED a small deer,

on which we breakfasted

November 22nd: KILLED 3 bucks, 4 brant, & 3 ducks

December 3rd: KILLED 6 elk

&c

January 1st —06: KILLED two buck elk

supped on a marrowbone & tongue

&c

May 6th: KILLED & BUTCHERED [young horse]

May 10th : [the Indians] soon produced us

two fat horses, one of which we

KILLED & consumed

&c

&c

August 2nd: when the bear was in a few paces

of the shore, I SHOT it in the head

August 4th: find it entirely impossible

to hunt in the bottoms,

those insects [the mosquitoes] being

so numerous and tormenting

&c

KILLED a porcupine

August 11th: a ball struck [Lewis’s] left thigh

about an inch below [his] hip joint

SHOT by Cruzat in mistake

for an elk, as [Lewis] was dressed

in brown leather & [Cruzat]

cannot see very well

August 30th: sent out two men to a village

of barking squirrels to

KILL some of those animals

September 6th: came up with two of the hunters

they had not

KILLED anything

September 13th: KILLED nothing

September 23rd: suffered the party to FIRE off

their pieces as a salute to the town

&c

& all these morsels

I BUTCHERED

from the John Bakeless edition:

*The Journals of Lewis and Clark*,

a KILLER read

&c

1. **The Woodcarver**

In showers of chips

—my tools, honed edges—

I fashion from trees:

Lewis, Clark, & all

the Corps’ explorers,

bears taller than men,

buffalo, mule deer,

elks, ducks, & muskrats.

Gnawing beaver pose,

& *Petits chiens*

taunt & whistle from

hidden speakers. Carved

dogs sniff along trails

that wander the steep

crumbling riverbanks.

Park Tourists pause here

near my creatures to

watch me work where, like

Geppetto, I give

life to what I hew.

I cut my way through

forest & wood, I

frame beast & form man.

I carve up History

into intricate

figures resembling

nothing but themselves

as Re-enactors

parade past kicking

the scattered chips of

my late revisions.

1. **Bird of Passage**

Caught in her desire for fame

Amanda Bird flies

into her act, clinching the part

of Water Park Bird Woman:

“Wern’t Lewis listed the birds

were me. Call me Bird Woman.

I pointed out the feathered,

showd the captains difference

& same—gave each its Indian

name. They know best, they say, but

make no sense new names they give.

They say much when much mean more.”

—least tern, aquatic: prairie sharp-tailed grouse,

saw first: black-billed magpie, killed: nuttall’s

poor-will, caught: northern flicker, yellow

wings with black spot on brest: montana

horned owl, killed first: hutchins’s goose, small

goose: western willet, killed four: mccown’s

longspur, small action like lark: sage grouse,

mountain cock with a long pointed tail—

Begun as reenactment the role re-rails

her every morning wandering our back yards

filling feeders, cleaning perches, flushing the bird

baths of our Development. She swoops, she dives,

she feeds dawn with song soaring between fir &

cottonwood crown, & on snowy days when felines

stalk her flocks she pirouettes from a framed picture

window & waves bird books at the prowling cats.

—pale goldfinch, enchanting song: white-rumped

shrike, small: western meadowlark, looks like

oldfield lark but different note: long-billed

curlew, large brown: brewer’s blackbird, young

& many: pacific nighthawk, large

goat sucker: lewis’s woodpecker,

small black: richardson’s blue grouse: pinion

jay, blue: clark’s nutcracker, woodpecker—

She takes on aspects

of a life replete

with another &

portrays a native

girl caught & swept off,

reissued revised,

won on a bet & bedded

she bears Pomp

bracketing her to

play boat launcher role.

—oregon ruffed grouse, brown & yellow:

franklin’s grouse, red stripe above eye: black-

headed jay: double-crested cormorant:

dusky horned owl, large hooter: western

common crow: oregon jay, white breas,

first: columbian sharp-tailed grouse, dives,

beak straight & pointed: northwestern crow:

american raven, builds cliff nests—

Young girls outfitted as birds

step outside to try their wings.

Full color posters hang for sale

from walls in Mandan earth lodges.

Postcard pictures: Bird Woman

in classic poses, statues black

& white, & swooping Bird Women

Re-enactor tryouts.

She ranks first in gift shop sales.

Full reservation baskets

of her figurines point out

in every direction.

—western pileated woodpecker,

log cock: western winter wren, flycatch:

western grebe, dives: pacific fulmar,

head sketched: pacific loon, lots: glaucous-

winged gull, light brown: western gull, large gray:

bonaparte’s gull, white with black head spots:

lesser canada goose, less than brant:

whistling swan, strange whistling note—

Her moves become movies starring her

& she wins Water Park wannabe

awards until she becomes famous

in U-Tube videos where other

girls run off with Frenchman who beat them,

play pregnant teenage interpreters,

& commit themselves to Shoshone

reservations, then train Re-enactors to

dig roots & feed the Corps of Tourists.

—red-necked grebe, diver: white-fronted goose,

brant: prairie horned lark: ring-necked duck, killed:

harris’s woodpecker, speckled with white

back: mountain quail, killed: western tanager,

first: broad tailed hummingbird, first: cabanis’s

woodpecker, speckled: western mourning

dove, first: forster’s tern, white gulls about

size of pigeon with top of head black—

At the bird sanctuary

in an old woman’s body

youth surges. Intent to keep

her fame & fit frame she works

out daily. Surgeon’s suggest

a touch up here, tuck-in there,

& so, year by year, she evolves:

her breasts merge, her face sharpens,

her appendages begin

to feather & crust, her nose

hooks & hardens, & each morning

as the sun rises she sings, Sings, SINGS.

1. **American Art**

Ticket line Tourists leaf through thick binders & study

bodies on display. Some seek to disrobe the stories

that leak past the edges of worn costumes. Decked bodies

such as these convey more than the replete

structures we reflect & refract. Native art lays bare

the invisible that’s written into opinion.

Roses thorn their way across the cursive display marked

forever or at least until Monday morning when

odds & ends thrown in with the wash become art that is

forever changing perspective & turning our eyes

back upon what we overlooked to watch youth enjoy

the water slides & pony rides that end up Pony

Burgers at the Bitterroot Café. The prairies shift

what we once thought as years ago come crashing back

& we stand without weapons consuming mass destruction

as promised so we’ll have something else to put down

in inky patterns of innocence or whatever

we lost by being branded Water Park souvenirs.

Stamped with eagles & flags our skin bleeds ink into

markers blind to purpose and progress. Parlor flyers

dog the trail-bound, pitch, & insist everyone longs to be-

come a work of art. Designs run rampant. The old stand-

bys fractal & unfold like maps upon the hands of

Tourists. Few pick the narrative up at the same place—

the channels forever changing until we lose plot

and flow—still, rivers spring from their mouths & GPS

instructions enjoin us to turn at the next side stream.

This far north, museums hibernate & spilled

colors clot. We were not invited to read, but go

anyway & say much more than we could ever know.

Art layers location, & already those still there

await our return. Soon they too will awaken on

the trail less traveled which is always open, & to-

day sunlight covers where the unblemished disappeared.

Leave the light on, phone chatter cannot reach the mountains.

Explorers with mapped torsos mime to find a way West.

It was too early to get up, but we all knew time

for sleep was past & we must find what the night wrote on

us. Our skin’s no longer as pliable as the past,

& our guide knows only what we encouraged her to

know, but we can never be sure what to leave out &

so tattoo every pattern meaning measures.

Sure we’re tired, but great art must remain awake to

exhaust possibility, & each exhibition

issues glossy catalogues: Water Park blueprints fresh

burned into taut flesh. Each American body has

its own tale to tell. Everything’s in the Journals, we’ve

only to read our blazed skin for memory.