

Lost in the Lewis & Clark Water Park

(revised 7/2016)

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.

(revised 3/2016)

2. 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 discharge d
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.

(7/2016)

3. 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.

(7/2016)

4. Sand Storms

. . . immense 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 column 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 unexplored 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 dowsing 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.