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**RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**


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ing the reactor's radioactive core can also stop the reactor's operation in an emergency. For example, the PIUS (Process Inherent Ultimately Safe) water-cooled reactor, designed by the Swedish firm AB Asea Atom, immerses the radioactive parts of a reactor in a massive pressurized pool of water, which also cools the reactor's radioactive core. Should the flow of water through the core stop (thus causing the temperature of the core to rise), water from a tank placed above the core floods the area. Because this flooding occurs automatically due to a change in pressure instead of through mechanical or human means, breakdowns such as the ones at Three Mile Island in 1979 or Chernobyl in 1986 will not happen.

Other new models use different coolants. The HTGR (high-temperature gas-cooled reactor) designed by the West German firm Interatom GmbH uses liquid helium to cool a core composed of 360,000 graphite-coated uranium "pebbles." The IFR (integral fast reactor) breeder reactor prototype built at the U.S. Argonne National Laboratory submerges all radioactive elements of the reactor in heat-absorbing liquid sodium. But all inherently safe reactors have much more coolant (and larger vessels to contain the coolant) than do current nuclear plants.

Few new nuclear plants are being planned in the West; none have been ordered in America since 1978. The few electric power utilities that might choose to build a reactor will not want a new, untried model. Congress's 1983 cancellation of the Clinch River breeder reactor plant in Tennessee casts doubt on the ability of either government or industry to assemble the funds needed to build a demonstration reactor.

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**ARTS & LETTERS**


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*Opening Diaries*

"Some Myths About Diaries" by Lawrence Rosenwald, in *Raritan* (Winter 1987), Rutgers Univ., 165 College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ. 08903.

"Do you really keep a diary?" Algernon asks Cecily in Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest*. "I'd give anything to look at it. May I?"

"Oh no," responds Cecily. "You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy."

Cecily's remark, says Rosenwald, an associate professor of English at Wellesley College, challenges the myth that in diaries writers commit to paper honest and revealing information about their private lives.

Few writers' diaries, Rosenwald says, are, or were, written to remain private. Before 1800, diaries were generally not published. But many were quoted extensively in biographies. During the 19th century, the posthumously published journals of such well-known authors and poets as Samuel Pepys and Lord Byron won widespread acclaim. "By the 1830s," says Rosenwald, "well-read diarists were surely looking ahead to posthumous publication, and thus thinking of their diaries as *books*."

Rosenwald rejects the notion that diarists penned their thoughts spon-

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

taneously, with little afterthought. Samuel Pepys polished his journal entries describing the Great Fire of London into a single narrative several weeks after the fire was over. And Ralph Waldo Emerson rewrote the journal of his travels through Italy while sailing back to Boston.

Moreover, Rosenwald doubts that even the most candid authors can write objective diaries, because a diary, he says, is "a commodity within its author's power." Diarists must choose, from many possibilities, the several ideas and events about which they will write. And how truthful can a diarist be about himself? Rosenwald quotes Byron: "I fear one lies more to one's self than to any one else."

Nevertheless, Rosenwald believes that readers can still learn a great deal about an author's life and work by reading his diary, if they understand "the conventions within which the writer operates." While "we need not accept our friends' sincerest self-assessments as truth," he observes, we should remember "how much we give away of ourselves in our best attempts at concealment."

### *Lewis and Clark*

"Beyond the Shining Mountains: The Lewis and Clark Expedition as an Enlightenment Epic" by John Seelye, in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Winter 1987), 1 West Range, Charlottesville, Va. 22903.

The expedition that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark undertook between 1804 and 1806 did more for America than secure the Oregon Territory and discover the grizzly bear. The *Journals of Lewis and Clark*, says John Seelye, a professor of American literature at the University of Florida, are "the premier epic of the Enlightenment in America."

Lewis and Clark were, Seelye states, on a "voyage of inquiry . . . bent to the utilitarian necessity which defined so many expressions of the Enlightenment in America." They were instructed to bring momentary order to the wilderness, not only to study the Indian tribes they encountered, but also to teach those tribes white American ideals.

The explorers greeted each tribe with "imperial theatrics." Each chief was given a medal with a portrait of President Thomas Jefferson on the front and symbols of agriculture and peace on the back. Tribesmen usually behaved peacefully while the expedition passed through their territory, but once Lewis and Clark left, the tribes resumed their lawless ways.

The names that Lewis and Clark gave to many features devolved from 18th-century rationalist principles. The three tributaries of the Jefferson River were named "Philosophy," "Philanthropy," and "Wisdom." A large rock carved by Indians became "Pompey's Pillar," converting an Indian totem pole into a pedestal for heroic statuary.

The Enlightenment aesthetics of English essayist Edmund Burke also provided ways for the explorers to see the landscape as an expression of the sublime. For example, the Great Falls of the Missouri was "one of the most beautiful objects in nature . . . [with] all the regular elegances which the fancy of a painter would select to form a beautiful waterfall."

Yet Nature was destined to pierce the Enlightenment notions that Lewis and Clark carried in their heads. For Nature—as manifested in both