

ARTS & 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

ARTS & LETTERS

animals and Indians—mocks artificial hierarchies. “Wilderness,” Seelye concludes, “is more infectious than law and order, [drawing] upon deep, dark springs in the human psyche.”

Sargent's Dream

“John Singer Sargent’s ‘Gift’ and His Early Critics” by Trevor J. Fairbrother, in *Arts Magazine* (Feb. 1987), 23 East 26th St., New York, N.Y. 10010.

John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), the most popular high society portraitist of the late 19th century, was no rebel. His technical brilliance, says Fairbrother, an *Arts Magazine* associate editor, combined with restrained experimentation to ensure Sargent’s rapid success.

In 1879, the prestigious Paris Salon awarded Sargent, then 23, a prize, passing over works by Manet and Renoir. His “progressive moderate” style was deemed “impressionistic without transgressing the limits set by the jurors.” To offset any unconventional aspects of his portraits, Sargent also submitted a series of “picturesque” crowd-pleasers featuring beautiful women in exotic settings.

Yet, over the next four years, Sargent’s experiments pushed Salon judges. Drawing inspiration for compositions from Velázquez, Goya, and Franz Hals, Sargent painted with a “marked flourish of the brush and



John Singer Sargent's 1903 painting, Mrs. Fiske Warren and her Daughter Rachel, displays the classic society portrait style that earned him high commissions. At this stage of his career, Sargent increasingly painted watercolors, which provided him with greater satisfaction than the more lucrative portraits in oil.