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Exploring Changing Interpretations

The Historiographic Essay

In this chapter we will explore more fully the nature of the revisionist process by considering the writing of a historiographic essay. In Chapter 1 we examined a few of the major currents in historiography in the broadest sense of the word – that is, the history of historical writing. Now we will consider historiography in its narrower meaning – the variety of approaches, methods, and interpretations employed by historians on a particular topic. The historiographic essay is an important literary form in its own right, endowing the reader with a sense of how the topic in which he or she is interested has been approached by previous scholars. An awareness of the historiography of your topic is an essential prerequisite to undertaking research and writing that use primary sources. Knowing the kinds of approaches and interpretations already employed by others as well as the still unanswered questions on your topic can help direct your inquiry along original lines. The writing of a historiographic essay is also an excellent learning exercise, since in order to write one it is

Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing, Fifth Edition.
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necessary to become immersed in the intellectual processes of historians as they modify and revise our views of the past.

Selecting and Refining a Topic

Selecting and refining a topic is vitally important. Many students are inclined to choose a particularly vivid historical incident like the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor or the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, in the belief that it will prove both interesting and manageable. In this they are not deceived. The intrinsic human drama of such events, together with their being limited to short and specific spans of time, makes them attractive research topics for the busy undergraduate. This is no doubt a major reason why a topic in military history is often a first choice. Another is that in many cases the survey courses students have encountered emphasize military conflicts and the more dramatic political events. Indeed many of these are quite suitable subjects for a historiographic essay, since they have been approached and interpreted by historians in a variety of ways. But before seizing too readily on one of the more "famous" topics, it is worth your while to ponder the many alternatives open to you.

For example, there is a great abundance of fascinating subjects in social history, each with a rich and varied historiography. Numerous books, articles, and essays have been written on aspects of the history of education, sexuality, trade unions, sports, religion, immigration, popular entertainment, and crime. The history of science, technology, or industry also comprises viable and interesting topics. You may feel a bit uncomfortable selecting a less familiar topic, but doing so will offer you greater opportunities for expanding your intellectual horizons. Even if you choose a biographical topic, it need not concern a well-known political or military figure. Many thousands of fascinating people in all fields of endeavor throughout history have been the subject of significant scholarly attention.

The initial selection of a topic usually needs to be followed by a process of refining. Frequently the subject, as it is first concep-

tualized, turns out to be too broad; occasionally it is too narrow. You would soon discover, for example, that a topic like "Renaissance humanism" is extraordinarily vast and complex. It has such an extensive literature that you could not hope to find, read, and analyze more than a tiny fraction of it within the time constraints of your course and the space limitations of your paper. Even a reduction in the scope of the topic, say, to "Renaissance humanism in Florence" would still be too broad, though such a geographic narrowing of the subject is moving you toward something manageable. In addition to giving your paper this geographic focus, you could also limit its scope topically, chronologically, or biographically. A combination of these methods of narrowing is exemplified in a research paper title like "The Medici and civic humanism in fifteenth-century Florence." Even this topic may require additional refinement, but clearly it is much more viable than the first choice – or even the second. Probably the precise scope of your paper will not be defined until you have gained a clearer notion of the dimensions of the topic's historiography.

Research for a Historiographic Essay: A Case Study

The finding of historical sources was described in general terms in the last chapter; now we will examine the process as it applies to a specific topic. The example we will consider is an essay of about 4,500 words written by Patricia J. Autran, a student in my History Methods class.[1] The assignment was to write a historiographic essay of approximately 20 pages based on 15 to 20 secondary sources. Her paper is titled "The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Changing interpretations." This essay serves well as an example, since it cuts across a number of important topics in American history: exploration, westward expansion, scientific inquiry, encounters with indigenous peoples, the role of women,

[1] I wish to express my gratitude to Ms. Autran for permission to reproduce her paper.

and attitudes towards the natural environment – to name a few. It obviously has important biographical dimensions, too; not only through Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, but through such figures as Thomas Jefferson, who envisaged and launched the enterprise, and Sacagawea, the Native American woman who helped guide it.

In searching for books on this topic, the initial step is the logical one of doing a library catalog search by using the keywords "lewis and clark." Depending upon the extent of your library's holdings, this step alone should take you to dozens, perhaps even hundreds of titles. Having hit such a large number of titles can produce a sinking feeling. How can you be expected to winnow this down to a manageable number of titles, especially considering that these are just the books? You still have to search for articles and essays. Be of good cheer – the challenge is not as formidable as it appears. The key is to remain focused and systematic. The first thing to do is to keep in mind that you are looking for secondary works. Scrolling through the list of sources quickly shows that many of the titles are various editions of the journals of Lewis and Clark. They are primary sources – essential reading if you are undertaking a paper about the expedition itself; but remember, you are writing about historians and the different ways they have approached and interpreted the topic. Therefore you should consider only the secondary sources on the list. You can further exclude anything that is described on the catalog entry as "juvenile literature." The list is already considerably shorter, and not much time has been expended. What next?

Since the assignment is a historiographic essay, and therefore you want to explore as many different kinds of interpretation as possible, let that concern guide your further winnowing of sources. Titles and subtitles of books will usually give you a good idea of their scope and approach. Try to select works with as many approaches to the topic as possible. From the titles, it will be evident that some works are general in character, others have a biographical focus, while others deal with topics like the scientific observations of the expedition, relations with Native Americans, and so on. This provides a basis for further selection;

but at this point you need to go to the library stacks to have a look at the volumes you have identified for possible inclusion in your bibliography. Examining the books for apparent depth, scholarly rigor, and interpretive interest may take some time, and it involves looking at such matters as bibliographies, footnotes, and possibly even the author's academic credentials. This may not help you much in deciding between one scholarly book and another when drastic pruning is called for, but at least it should be possible to exclude works that are clearly superficial and unscholarly.

At this point you would be well advised to look at some recent scholarly books on the subject to see which secondary sources the authors of those books consider important. Perhaps in perusing the list of authors in your catalog search you recognized the name Stephen E. Ambrose, one of America's leading historians. Among his many books is *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (1996). Even if you had not heard of him before, a perusal of his volume in the stacks would make the value of his book evident. Examining the titles in the bibliography of his book, and perhaps also looking to see which sources he frequently cites in his endnotes, will assist you in further refining your selection of titles for your own bibliography. (In addition to this, you should also check out the Ambrose volume and begin reading it, because you need to acquire more factual knowledge of the topic in order to complete your search for titles.) One very likely result of perusing Ambrose's bibliography is that it will bring to your attention important sources that your own library does not have among its holdings. These can be ordered through interlibrary loan. You should also search any database of libraries affiliated with your own, to find titles that your library does not possess. WorldCat (described in Chapter 3) might also be helpful, though it is such a massive database that a simple search under "lewis and clark" is likely to produce thousands of hits. On the other hand, a "sacagawea" search in WorldCat is sure to produce a more manageable list of titles. When using WorldCat, always remember to use the search-reducing features described in Chapter 3.

In the search for scholarly articles on this topic, the online database (or the bound volume index) *America: History and Life* will prove especially valuable. The *Humanities Index* (either online, as part of WilsonWeb, or in bound-volume format) and the ArticleFirst database should also yield some good titles. Depending on the array of databases available in your library, other indexes and abstracts may also prove useful. These include some full-text databases such as JSTOR. By giving you immediate access to the complete article online, full-text databases will save time, especially if the article is in a journal to which your library does not subscribe. Fortunately, however, even when a full-text version of the article is not available to you online and your library does not have the journal in question, the interlibrary loan department can usually obtain a copy of the article for you in relatively short time. In addition to journal articles, don't forget the "hidden literature" (essays or chapters on the topic that are parts of books rather than printed in journals). The *Essay and General Literature Index* (online or the bound volume) is essential for this purpose. The footnotes and endnotes of the articles and essays you locate should also be examined for possible further additions to your bibliography.

Once you have reduced your sources to a manageable number (in this case, the guidelines called for a maximum of 20 titles), you are ready to read and take notes. You must necessarily approach your reading somewhat differently from what you would do for an ordinary term paper, where you are reading in order to extract information about the topic itself. Remember, your focus should be on what the historians are doing. In order to extract this kind of information, it is necessary to read the sources with the purpose of the essay in mind: to inform the reader about some of the major writings on the topic, about how these works differ from one another, and about how the historiography evolves over time. Titles, as we have seen, usually give us some idea of the author's plan. As we saw in Chapter 4, examining tables of contents, prefaces, introductions, and conclusions is another way to get a quick fix on an author's orientation. If you do this before actually reading the work (and it is not always

necessary to read every work in its entirety), you will be much better able to look for and find especially significant passages, which reveal the author's approach or methodology. As you do so, take notes on 5 × 8 or 4 × 6 inch note cards, and don't forget to include precise page references to passages you may wish to cite or quote. The same care must be given to making full and precise note cards of your reading as to compiling your bibliography card file. It is also possible to take notes on your computer; but, if you do so, you must devise a good method of grouping entries that relate to the same topic. There are software products on the market that facilitate this. One clear advantage of computerized notes is that, when you are writing the paper, it is easy, if you have taken good notes, to copy and paste for quotations. You may, however, find that filling out cards by hand turns out to be simpler and quicker. While the computer makes both bibliographic searching and writing vastly more efficient than the old methods, its advantage when it comes to notetaking is by no means so clear-cut.

Writing the Historiographic Essay

Now we can turn to the writing of your historiographic essay on this subject. It is crucial to remember that this paper will not be a history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, but rather an account of how historians have written about the topic. Of course, a number of facts concerning Lewis and Clark will be introduced into the essay, but they are used to illustrate the approaches and findings of the various authors. When writing a historiographic essay, a good method is to think of yourself as preparing a guide to the historiography for a fellow student, who knows a little about the period but has a very limited knowledge of the topic. The introduction to the paper can therefore provide some facts about the Lewis and Clark Expedition in order to remind or inform the reader of some of its basic features. Consider how the opening paragraphs in Patricia Autran's historiographic essay establish this foundation and conclude with a "bridge" to the

discussion of the historians who have written about Lewis and Clark – which forms the body of the paper. Note that quotations from the secondary sources being discussed are either set off by quotation marks or, for longer passages, given in "block quotation" (or "extract") form, without quotation marks. Some quotations of less than a sentence are grafted onto the author's sentence, making a "run-in" quotation. These types of quotations, along with other aspects of the essay, are pointed out in the marginal comments. (For more on quotations, see the section on quoting in the next chapter). Further observations on how this essay is constructed follow the essay, and also appear in the marginal comments. You will find endnote references immediately following the text of the essay.

Introduction providing the basic facts about the Lewis and Clark Expedition

"Ocian[1] in View! O! the joy."[2] These words were written on November 6, 1805 by the jubilant William Clark upon reaching the goal of one of the most dramatic undertakings in American history. Long before the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson had begun planning for the exploration of this enormous area that no American citizen had ever traversed. Jefferson, who had long been fascinated by the unknown territory, hoped that the exploration would lead to the discovery of a river route capable of carrying trading goods from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. The Louisiana Purchase facilitated the enterprise and gave the president a sense of urgency about beginning the exploration as soon as possible. Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark[3] led the Corps of Discovery on an exciting and hazardous journey, which began in May 1804 and lasted 28 months, ending with their return to St. Louis in September 1806.

In addition to discovering a water route from the Mississippi to the Pacific, the expedition had several other important purposes. Lewis and Clark were to make a complete scientific survey of the regions along the route of the Missouri River, across the Rocky Mountains, down the Columbia River, and finally to the Pacific Ocean. They were to determine the longitude and latitude of the area, analyze and describe plant and animal life, and report on the culture of the native peoples they encountered. Most importantly, they were asked to evaluate the possibilities of trade and agriculture in that region.

During the journey, Lewis and Clark produced eight detailed volumes, whose content ranged from maps, climate, geography, and ethnic observations to descriptions of new species of plants and animals. Their journals also included a dramatic day-by-day story of the adventures and hardships experienced by the group. The information contained in them would be studied and analyzed for the next two centuries. Historians produced many books, articles, and essays using the material from these volumes. Over time, each writer has interpreted and approached the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in a different manner and each has attempted to meet a particular historiographic goal.

Transition to discussion of historiography of the topic

Although the writing of the expedition's history began soon after the volumes were released, this essay will focus on those works produced during the last half century or so. Most of the serious scholarly studies were undertaken after the end of World War II. In the 1940s, most of the writings are of a general, narrative nature. John Bakeless, in his 1947 book *Partners in Discovery*,[4] offers an overall description of the great adventure. He begins with the planning of the expedition, continues with the dramatic details of the exploration, and ends by discussing the aftermath and results of the enterprise. His narrative tells the story of the expedition in a very thorough and clear manner. The author is deeply impressed by the explorers' achievements, though he considers Lewis to have often been rash and reckless in his judgments. Bakeless's book is considered one of the first satisfactory accounts of the Lewis and Clark Expedition[5] and it provided a foundation for later scholars. It also reflects the confident, even triumphalist mood of the United States following World War II.

Transition to next author

In the same year when Bakeless's book appeared, Jay Monaghan produced a lengthy essay entitled "Lewis and Clark." Monaghan begins his account when Lewis was a boy and Jefferson first had thoughts of a westering exploration. He approaches the story in an individualistic manner, attempting to give the reader the background of each participant and to humanize them, so that the reader may better understand how and why the events took place. Monaghan tries to establish the view that Lewis may have been "born" for this adventure, that it was destiny: "He was also a seeker of knowledge like Jefferson himself."[6] His account differs from the previous ones in that, as well as retelling the story of the expedition, it touches on political motives and gives significant credit to the other members of the

Short quotation

Corps, stating that each played an important role and had a unique personality. In his analysis of the various personalities, Monaghan highlights the importance of the psychological interplay between the expedition's members. Monaghan even mentions York, Clark's Negro slave who went along on the difficult trip. York would become a subject of interest to future historians, as would Sacagawea, the Indian woman who played a role in the success of the expedition. Monaghan describes her participation as well.

By the 1950s, historians began to take a deeper look into not only the adventurous aspects of the expedition, but the impact that the exploration had on the development of the United States. In 1952 Bernard DeVoto, who also edited a selection of the Lewis and Clark journals,[7] published a book called *The Course of Empire*. Since DeVoto's book is on western exploration generally, the Lewis and Clark Expedition forms only a part of his story, yet he devotes considerable space to it. Like previous historians, DeVoto points out its romantic and adventurous aspects, noting that "one who spends time reading the records of wilderness men is in danger of taking for granted the labor, strain, hardship, weariness, hunger, thirst, passion, fear, anger, pain, desire and wonder that were their fare."[8] Yet DeVoto also stresses the importance of this expedition by connecting it to Jefferson's goal of establishing an empire of liberty: "Here was the Great South Sea, the Pacific Ocean and they had brought the United States to its shore."[9] With this, he implies the major impact that the expedition had on the future success of the United States. Most importantly, DeVoto calls attention to the fact that many technical aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition had been neglected and needed further comprehensive study. This observation led to a richer historiography of the expedition, as writers began to look more into the achievements of the Corps of Discovery in the field of natural history.

Transition to next author

Responding to this perceived need for greater attention to the Corps' scientific achievements, Raymond Darwin Burroughs released his book *The Natural History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* in 1961.[10] Burroughs approached his history in a very scientific manner. Following a brief narrative of the expedition in the introduction, the rest of the book is quite technical. He divides it into chapters named after the animals that were discovered and studied by Lewis and Clark during their journey: bears, raccoons, weasels, wild dogs and cats, and bison. Lewis and Clark are credited with being the first to give reliable descriptions of wildlife in this area. Throughout his book, Burroughs stresses the importance of analyzing thoroughly the natural discoveries made by the expedition and their impact on scientific study.

Transition to next author

Paul Russell Cutright, in his 1969 book *Lewis and Clark: Pioneering Naturalists*, successfully accomplishes the goals set by both DeVoto and Burroughs.[11] Like them, he calls attention to the neglect of the technical aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition among historians. Cutright offers what he believes to be the reason for the neglect of the scientific aspects of the expedition, claiming that the slighting of the scientific phases had its inception almost immediately after Lewis and Clark concluded their historic journey. Thomas Jefferson, early in 1807, appointed Meriwether Lewis to the post of Governor of the Territory of Louisiana instead of allowing him to devote all his energies and talents to writing a compendious narrative, which would encompass the scientific discoveries of the expedition. The appointment was an illusory reward and a consequential error, as Jefferson would soon learn. Cutright goes on to explain that Lewis died an unexpected death and that the volumes were edited by other writers, who left out much of the natural history. Cutright, a biologist, meets his objectives by presenting a careful assessment of the expedition's scientific accomplishments. He focuses on botany, zoology, geography, anthropology, and medicine. His book contains many historical facts about the events and the people involved, but these facts revolve around his main purpose of presenting to the reader the major scientific contributions made by Lewis and Clark. He concludes each chapter with a summary of the discoveries within each area traversed by the Corps.

Transitional paragraph to works dealing with the medical history of the expedition

Interest in the scientific aspects of the expedition did not end with Cutright, but rather continued after him with an even deeper focus. The often harrowing facts concerning the health of the expedition members seem almost fictional in nature. It is nothing short of a miracle that all but one of the original members survived the long and dangerous exploration of the Wild West. Several writers were intrigued by this fact and were compelled to study and write about it. Now the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition would take on a medical turn.

The medical aspects of the expedition came to the fore in a 1971 article entitled "Lewis and Clark: Westering physicians."[12] The author, Drake Will, employs a narrative style, but his story revolves strictly around the health, illnesses, and treatments of the exploring party. Will's introduction includes portions of a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, asking Doctor Rush to prepare some notes for Captain Lewis. These notes were to include several medical questions about the native people and some directions for the preservation of Lewis's health as well as the health of

the other members of the Corps. Will goes in detail through the various illnesses experienced by members and informs the reader about the remedies and treatments that were used by both Lewis and Clark throughout the journey. Interestingly, he even explains the medical events involved in the birth of Sacagawea's baby, Pompey. Nor did Will omit the fact that the men of the Corps purchased moments of passion from the native women and consequently contracted venereal diseases. He also mentions the fact that Lewis and Clark were for the most part very skeptical of the medical practices of the native people, even though at times they reported the apparent success of those practices.

Continuing the emphasis on the medical history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was Eldon Chuinard, a medical doctor, in his 1979 book *Only One Man Died*. It is not surprising that Dr. Chuinard would be fascinated by the fact that, although not one licensed physician accompanied the Corps of Discovery on this dangerous expedition, only one man failed to survive. In the introduction Dr. Chuinard mentions a comment made by Bernard DeVoto in his book *The Course of Empire* to the effect that the medical aspects of the expedition had received little attention. To this comment Chuinard replies: "To this author this subject is interesting and important; and it has been my effort in this book to exhaust the subject without exhausting the reader [. . .]."[13]

Ellipsis to show omitted material at end of sentence

Dr. Chuinard states his objectives clearly in the introduction:

> This book is not meant to be another general and complete review of the story of the Expedition. Terrain, climate, geography, biology, botany, and the commercial aspects are muted, being mentioned to orient the reader in time and place, and mainly for the purpose of indicating their effects on the health of the men [. . .] only enough of the geography, climate, edibles, and Indian customs are excerpted from the journals to indicate the health problems that the Expedition faced in certain locations and conditions [. . .] therefore the scope of medical reference is considerably more extensive than the recounting of specific diseases and their treatments.[14]

Block quotation above

The author writes about the medical practices of Lewis and Clark and credits them with considerable success in the treatment of the expedition's members. Dr. Chuinard believes that, although the captains were not physicians by profession, "they were truly

great physicians in native ability and devotion."[15] Chuinard includes lists of medicines that were purchased for the journey. He describes the illnesses and treatments that were experienced by all the members and devotes an entire chapter to Indian medicine. His amazement that the expedition accomplished all of the president's requests while losing only one man is evident throughout his book.

Yet another writer interested in the scientific aspects of the journey was the geographer John Logan Allen. In his 1979 book *Passage through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest*, Allen examines the expedition's geographical achievements. After exhaustively analyzing every map, narrative, and scrap of information that the explorers had at the start of their journey, the author is able to present a clear picture of their mental image of the region. He then shows how their discoveries altered this image and shattered many erroneous beliefs, such as that the Rockies were of the same height as the Appalachians. This profusely illustrated volume allows the reader to gain a much clearer sense of the changes brought about by the expedition in the field of geographic knowledge.[16]

Transition to discussion of works with a biographical focus

Some historians have focused their attention not on the expedition as a whole or on some aspect of it such as medical care, but rather on its two heroic leaders. This biographical approach to the topic can be seen in Richard Dillon's 1965 book *Meriwether Lewis*. Dillon's main purpose in writing the biography was to consider Lewis in isolation from the expedition, and especially from Clark, so that the reader might better understand the "one man who deserves to be considered as the person who opened up the Far West." Dillon seems adamant about persuading the reader away from thinking of Lewis as only one half in the partnership with Clark, and he is critical of the failure of previous writers and historians to focus on each of the expedition's leaders individually: "Both Lewis and Clark have suffered from this shotgun marriage of convenience, brokered by lazy historians more content with image than reality."[17] Dillon attempts a full reappraisal of Lewis, who, he argues, was much more important than Clark to the success of the expedition. Dillon calls attention to two characteristics of Lewis that, in his opinion, are often unnoticed. The first is Lewis's narrative abilities, demonstrated in the writing of his national epic. The second characteristic is Lewis's superior ability as a diplomat among the Indian nations.

Run-in quotation

The other half of the famous duo has not been ignored by biographers. In 1977, Jerome Steffen published his study of William Clark. The book, entitled *William Clark: Jeffersonian Man on the Frontier*, provides information about Clark's early years as well as about his post-expedition accomplishments. Steffen suggests that Lewis may have been given more credit than he deserved in regard to the scientific success of the Corps of Discovery: "The expedition provided an intellectual opportunity for a man who, from boyhood, had demonstrated a deep interest in natural science and history. Clark made innumerable scientific contributions to the expedition, many usually attributed to his partner."[18] Unlike Dillon, Steffen is not anxious to study Clark in isolation from Lewis. His goal is to identify William Clark as an eighteenth-century Enlightenment figure.

The historiography of the Lewis and Clark Expedition has been enriched by the perspectives of the histories of ethnic minorities, which have developed over the last few decades. The complex relationship between the expedition members and the native peoples they encountered was, until the 1960s, only lightly covered. In the earlier works discussed in this essay, the Indians were mentioned only in a general manner and for the purpose of glorifying the civilized ways of Lewis and Clark. In the medical aspects of the expedition's history, the Indians tend to be blamed for soldiers' venereal diseases.

Transition to works focusing on Native Americans

A deepening interest in the native people of the West emerged as early as 1966, when John Ewers published an article called "Plains Indian reactions to the Lewis and Clark Expedition." For the first time, the history of the expedition was interpreted from a native perspective. Ewers explains that the encounter of these Indians with Lewis and Clark was by no means their first encounter with whites. By the time of the expedition the Indians had been trading with them for quite some time. For the most part, Indians were suspicious of whites. They were not ignorant of the interest that white men had in them and in the resources of their country. Despite this, the Indians' overall reaction to Lewis and Clark was fair. Ewers concentrates his study mostly on the Mandan Tribe. He does this because Lewis and Clark spent several months near the Mandan villages and these Indians had a greater opportunity to get to know the explorers. Ewers goes into detail about the relationship between the Mandan Indians and the explorers. For the most part, the Mandans regarded Lewis and Clark in a friendly manner, but the author concludes that, in the field of diplomacy, the expedition was

not as successful as in other fields. He claims that the reactions of the Indians to Lewis and Clark were of historical importance: "The reactions of these Indians to their meetings with Lewis and Clark were important to the future relations of United States Citizens with the native peoples of an area larger than that of the original thirteen states."[19]

James P. Ronda continued the line of emphasizing the Indian encounters with the expedition. His book *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* was released in 1984. Ronda's purpose in writing it was to shift the focus of the history of the expedition to Indian–white encounters in North America. This approach is symptomatic of a tendency, during the last two decades, for historians – especially those writing on the history of the Americas – to dispense with the concept of heroic "discovery" by white men and to recast events as a series of "encounters." Ronda makes it clear, from the beginning, that his book is not another general review of the famous expedition. He concentrates on the daily dealings of the Indians with the Corps of Discovery and gives much detail about the customs and culture of the Indians: "In the simplest terms, this book is about what happens when people from different cultural persuasions meet and deal with each other."[20] He gives much credit to Lewis and Clark for the gathering of information on natives that has helped historians to better understand the culture of the Indians during this period. Ronda credits himself with filling a gap in the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and with offering a fresh approach as well. He shares Ewers's view that, overall, the expedition failed in point of diplomacy toward Indians. Ronda makes a final statement about the important role the Indians played in the success of the exploration. Furthermore, he points to the presence of Sacagawea in the group as a key to understanding just how important the support of the natives was to the survival of the explorers.

Even before Ronda's book appeared, historians had begun to look in detail at this intrepid Indian woman. In *Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1979), Ella Clark and Margot Edmonds tackled the controversy over Sacagawea's true role in the expedition. Popular but unfounded beliefs about the brave and beautiful Indian woman had her single-handedly guiding the large group through unexplored territory and dying as an old woman in Wind River, Wyoming, in 1884. While demonstrating that neither of these beliefs is supported by the evidence, the authors do relate in considerable detail the significant contributions of Sacagawea to the expedition. Their biography is an attempt to clarify the truth about the "myths," as they call them:

Block quotation below

> It is the aim of this biography to place Sacagawea's life and accomplishments in historical perspective, and to dispel the fog of idolatry which has surrounded her for so long. Our intention is not, as might be supposed, to depreciate what she did or to lessen her role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. On the contrary, we hope to emphasize her importance by plainly stating the part she played in a historic feat.[21]

The first part of the book tells the story of Sacagawea's role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, while the second part covers her life following the expedition. It seems natural that Sacagawea would become a focus of attention for historians in the 1970s, at a time when the fight for women's equality and recognition was prominent and women's history had emerged as a significant area of study.

Transition to works on African American members of the expedition

Another member of the expedition whose role was in need of clarification was York, William Clark's slave. The attention paid to York is certainly connected to the emergence of African American history as an important field during the past few decades. Robert B. Betts makes an attempt to clarify this element of background in his 1985 book *In Search of York*. As with Sacagawea, it was York's fate that many myths were created about his role in the expedition. He has been portrayed as a tall, strong man who contributed only entertainment in the form of comedy to the rest of the Corps and had an amicable relationship with his master. Betts boldly claims: "How this came about is in itself a cameo example of the way our history was for so long presented from an almost exclusively white point of view […]." He continues by stating the primary purpose of his book, which is "to break through the stereotype and try to see York as a credible human being, a man who knew firsthand his country at its best and its worst – from the heights of magnificent achievement of the exploration to the depths of slavery."[22] Betts accomplishes his goal by offering details about York and his participation in the expedition. He obtained most of this information directly, from what was written about York in the journals. Betts makes it no secret that he is disappointed in the failure of historians, both black and white, to take seriously this forgotten slave – who in his opinion made important contributions to the expedition.

Run-in quotation

Transition to recent works, some of them postmodernist, dealing with the writings of the expedition

Several works on the expedition published during the 1990s, partly under the influence of postmodernist interest in deconstructing historical "discourses," focus on the language employed by members of the Corps in their letters and journals. In his book *Acts of Discovery: Visions of America in the Lewis and Clark Journals*, published in 1993,[23] Albert Furtwangler examines the Lewis and Clark Expedition as history, literature, and science. Furtwangler, a specialist in American literature, argues that the journals are not simply primary-source materials for historians, but should also be considered an important literary work. He is more interested in the idea of discovery and in how this idea evolved in the minds of Lewis and Clark during their journey than he is in the external events of the discovery. The author is especially concerned with how Lewis and Clark fashioned new modes of expression to convey their encounters with new terrain, people, animals, plants, and foods.

In 1994 Gunther Barth examined the impact of the expedition's journals in his article "Timeless journals: Reading Lewis and Clark with Nicholas Biddle's help." Barth reviews the publication history of the journals of the expedition, focusing in on the contributions of Nicholas Biddle, who was the author of *History of the Expedition of Captains Lewis and Clark*, published in 1814. He begins with an overview of the expedition and notes that Biddle, not Lewis or Clark, was the main source of knowledge about the enterprise throughout the nineteenth century. Biddle chose to downplay any elements of doubt or confusion in the captains' behavior and to ignore all references in the journals to topics like sex and venereal disease. The resulting journals, expurgated and sanitized, presented, according to Barth, a grand, heroic narrative that suited the nationalistic needs of nineteenth-century Americans and changed the expedition's leaders into "taciturn classic heroes."[24] Continuing this interest in closely analyzing the language of the explorers, in 1997 Frank Bergon published an article titled "Wilderness aesthetics." Bergon praises Lewis and Clark for their "fresh, flexible uses of the vernacular," which anticipate writers like Thoreau; but his overall assessment is critical: "In portending the destruction of one civilization and the rise of another, the journals reveal the dark, imperialistic underside of the epical adventure."[25]

Combination of run-in quotation with one set off by a colon

The most recent among the books discussed here is also the most impressive: Stephen E. Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (1996). A comprehensive account of the background and details of the expedition, Ambrose's book resembles some of the much earlier works in its celebration of courage. The author examines Lewis's close and enduring friendship with Thomas Jefferson and shows how faithfully Lewis reflected the president's passionate interest in the commercial potential as well as in the scientific discoveries of the expedition. The overall tone is adulatory, and Ambrose does not accept Bakeless's negative assessment of Lewis. He does admit that Lewis mishandled several crises in the wilderness, but he considers these to be occasional and uncharacteristic lapses of judgment. Putting these missteps into context with Lewis's alcohol problem and with his suicide several years later, Ambrose suggests that he was probably a manic depressive.[26] The author takes fully into account the recent, more specialized scholarship on the expedition, making this highly readable book a skillful work of synthesis as well as a careful study based on primary-source materials.

Concluding paragraph notes the overall evolution of the historiography and anticipates future interest in the topic

Over the years, since Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led the Corps of Discovery across the uncharted wilderness to the Pacific Ocean and back, the achievements of their expedition and its significance for America have been carefully studied. The earlier emphasis on the journey as an epic of courage and heroism has, throughout the years, evolved historiographically into more tightly focused analyses and interpretations, involving such topics as natural discoveries, medicine, geography, and perspectives based on the history of Native Americans, women, and blacks. The recent postmodernist interest in deconstructing historical narratives has also attracted scholars to the topic. Scholarly interest in the Lewis and Clark Expedition shows no sign of fading. Rather it is likely to increase with the approach of the bicentennial of the expedition and with the release of the final volumes of the most complete and accurate scholarly edition of the Lewis and Clark Journals ever published.[27]

Endnotes

#1 content endnote

1 An example of the eccentric spelling employed by both Lewis and Clark.

2 Quoted in Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 310.

#2 indicates primary-source material quoted from second source

3 Actually only Lewis held the rank of captain. Clark was still a lieutenant. However, Lewis insisted that they were co-commanders, and the enlisted men, believing them to be of equal rank, addressed them both as "Captain." Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*, 134–6.

#3 combination of content and reference note

4 John Bakeless, *Lewis and Clark: Partners in Discovery* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1947).

5 According to *Readers' Guide to American History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 402.

6 Jay Monaghan, "Lewis and Clark," in Jay Monaghan, *The Overland Trail* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947), 34.

7 Bernard DeVoto, ed. *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1953).

8 Bernard DeVoto, *The Course of Empire* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1952), xvii.

9 DeVoto, *The Course of Empire*, 553.

#9 Subsequent reference to previously cited work (more than one work by author)

10 Raymond Darwin Burroughs, *The Natural History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1961).

11 Paul Russell Cutright, *Lewis and Clark: Pioneering Naturalists* (Urbana, IL: University of Illlinois Press, 1969).

12 Drake Will, "Westering physicians," *Montana History* 21.4 (1971): 2–17.

13 Eldon Chuinard, *Only One Man Died: The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1979), 26.

14 Chuinard, *Only One Man Died*, 27–28.

15 Chuinard, *Only One Man Died*, 31.

#14 & 15 subsequent references to previously cited work (only one work by author)

16 John Logan Allen, *Passage through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

17 Richard Dillon, *Meriwether Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965), xiii.

18 Jerome Steffen, *William Clark: Jeffersonian Man on the Frontier* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 6.

19 John Ewers, "Plains Indians reactions to the Lewis and Clark Expedition," *Montana History* 16.1 (1966): 2.
20 James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), xi.
21 Ella Clark and Margot Edmonds, *Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 2.
22 Robert B. Betts, *In Search of York* (Boulder, CO: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 6.
23 Albert Furtwangler, *Acts of Discovery, Visions of America in the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
24 Gunther Barth, "Timeless journals: Reading Lewis and Clark with Nicholas Biddle's help," *Pacific Historical Review* 63 (1994): 515.
25 Frank Bergon, "Wilderness aesthetics," *American Literary History* 9 (1997): 133, 159.
26 Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*, 312.
27 Gary E. Moulton, ed. *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 13 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). The final volumes of this edition are scheduled to be published by 2003.

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It will be noted that the concluding paragraph sums up the major approaches that have been taken by historians of this topic since the end of World War II. It also reminds the reader of the approaching bicentennial and suggests that considerable scholarly activity on this topic should be expected in the next few years. Since the bicentennial of the expedition (2004) has come and gone, anyone undertaking such an essay presently would obviously have to pay heed to major recent works of scholarship, such as Jeffrey Ostler's *The Plains Sioux and US Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* or William R. Swagerty's *The Indianization of Lewis and Clark*.[2] It might also be possible,

2 Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and US Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); William R. Swagerty, *The Indianization of Lewis and Clark* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012).

depending on the guidelines of your essay, to include some film source, such as Ken's Burns's excellent 1997 TV documentary *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*.

Note that, in the historiographic essay, endnotes rather than footnotes were used. If the specifications for the paper had called for footnotes, these would have been placed at the bottom of each page (this is done automatically by selecting "footnotes" rather than "endnotes" in your word processor). Use arabic numerals for notes. If the footnote/endnote menu on your word processor happens to be set to roman numerals, change the setting to arabic. The bibliography should come last. Also, every page of the essay, including the bibliography, should be consecutively paginated (use the pagination function of your word processor). It is customary to leave the first page of text unpaginated. An unpaginated cover sheet should also be attached, giving the title of the paper, your name, course information, instructor, and date.

Alternative Approaches

Because we considered Ms. Autran's essay as a good example, it should not be imagined that the structure and style of all historiographic essays must conform to it. There are other successful methods of writing this kind of essay. It will be noted that in our example the author chose to organize the material chronologically – that is, proceeding from the first book discussed (published in 1947), through succeeding years up to the late 1990s. Alternatively, she might have employed a topical approach in which, for example, all biographical works, or those concerned with the scientific activities of the expedition, would be discussed in succession, regardless of their date of publication. The chronological approach usually works best, but there is no rigid formula. Whether the approach is topical, chronological, or some combination thereof depends on many factors, not least on the author's preference.

Regardless of the approach you choose to take, a number of valuable insights should emerge from the writing of a historiographic essay. For one thing, it is an especially valuable device for developing and honing your library research skills. Even more importantly, it encourages, indeed compels, the reading of history with an eye to understanding the approaches and methods of various historians. It enables you to think historiographically, an essential attainment for those who are serious about understanding history as an intellectual discipline. It also puts one in an excellent frame of mind for undertaking a major research paper – an operation we will examine next.