
MB Hamilton

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976

This is an unpublished manuscript in which copyright subsists. Any further reprinting of its contents must be approved by the author.

Mansfield Library
University of Montana
Date: 1989

By

MB Hamilton

B.A., San Diego State University, 1983

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts University of Montana 1989

Approved by

William D. Reis
Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

May 31, 1989

Date
-- dedicated to my father,

Harold L. Hamilton, Jr.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Section I: Lyrics and Long Poems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Missoula Valley Poem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise and Season</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here &amp; There</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barefoot</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Tangerine</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Information</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Last Hour With W.K.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Love Alone</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem: 2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Parable</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along the Columbia River</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Pier . . . Los Osos</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Fishing, Salmon Brook</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Abyss</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Heart As Prisoner</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing With Your City</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section II: Condensations from The Original Journals Of The Lewis And Clark Expedition, 1804-1806, Reuben Gold Thwaites, editor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 1805 [Lewis]</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 1805 [Clark]</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 29, 1805 [Lewis]</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 1805 [Lewis]</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24, 1805 [Lewis]</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25, 1805 [Clark]</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25, 1805 [Lewis]</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26, 1805 [Clark]</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would like to thank the Matthew Hansen Endowment Fund for Wilderness Studies, Wilderness Institute, School of Forestry, University of Montana, and my Committee Members: Bill Bevis (Chairman), Harry Fritz, Richard Clow, and Greg Pape for their kind help.
Section I:

Lyrics and Long Poems
A Missoula Valley Poem

1.

In the morning it's just a cold white sky, but by eleven the sun makes it up over the mountain, warming the squirrel rocks and the coffee shop seats.

I have few bad days. Already snow is on the mountains to the north and clouds camp in the valley, the abrupt change of weather creating a giddy atmosphere. Robins gather for days in the bare branches, poised and fluffed above the darkening river.

I count them twice, sending them south to you who also live in a valley of bears and can tend to them, while monarchs throb all day in the sun like ornaments high up in the eucalyptus.

2.

My past passed me on the footbridge today, a bum quoting quarters, muttering something about a "glim future."

 Oddly optimistic, I could imagine several.

3.

Below, the river meanders between autumn, caught yellow, even golden in light as trees, bent over its lengthening water, seemingly contemplate the distance between them and the frost, -- all offering small pieces of flight.
Like a leaf, or a hobo
nearly glazed to a southbound freight,
I labor to loosen
my grip on eternity.
Promise and Season

The power of the sun
leaps into our nets.
We eat this flesh
that leaps from the sun
to our nets.
We are together.

Redds bloom from the quiet
of the stream,
from the gravel they hatch
for our children, who,
like them, are a generation
together in the sun.

Pulled back
old salmon die:
pulled out of the stream
by the bear and eaten,
his great chin
resting on the water
like the sun.

We walk
amid this intricate
belonging.
We are together
in the power of the sun.
There is a lot of time in this old dog's whistle. There is some perfection between me and the world.
Strings

Strings stretch up from a wood pile
for ivy, I suppose, but each
has its own darkness
because the hidden, upper end seems unattached.

My father says,
"You have to have something
to aim at before you can hit it."

From a thin branch of black birch,
he suspends a shiny pie plate.
It spins in the wind.

I wait,
noticing how evenly the strings
parallel each other
and how, finally, they wrap themselves
into a knot free in the sky
around a cord stretched between two trees.

I feel cool in his calm shadow and breathe,
plinking
more ragged holes in his dark swirl of trees.
Here & There

A river. A map
of this many colored
world: a tree,
the ant’s dark nest,
an electrical harness
of a metal pulling bird.

At this age,
my father had left Brazil
following the Amazon,
a DC-6
bumping over the Andes.

Tonight,
I stumble-heel home,
hunch under a bush
for the winter,
dream of the wind
bending reeds
& blackbirds whistling.
Barefoot

Barefoot
and far away,
I sit like a stone
unaware
of the kelp or waves,
unaware of the sea,
or even the cloud
echoing up around me.
I sit
without even myself!

But a once dark ceiling
closes its stars, lifting
the sun with its wing:
a surface rehearsed
in sleep like a squall.

Is this
the solid stone of my dream?
this ritual of earth,
my feet stumbling
over its color like dwarfs
descended from steeples,
standing me in the light
of flowers in fragrance
at some undetermined height?
Green Tangerine

A necklaced woman adorned in song caresses the sky with her music, crinkling the raven's wings into a small, black goodbye.

Having been here before in this motion of tree, her pin-stripped dress slit to the thigh, I cling like a cat blinking in a sharply shadowed doorway, my knees bent into questions.

Listen! the wind says, As the sun searches the lost heart, number as leaves the crowded limb of your hope.
Transit Information

The earth rolls itself
into a dusty clod,
the birds singing the sun up.

A bum sits quietly
on a green slat bench
like a readied drum
shrunk from all those things
once most valued.
His dark suit
is a thickness,
a space he is left with.

Dry weeds
fill the vacant lot.

I drink my tea,
count my losses.
A foggy, drizzly evening in the city.
He steps off the bus, carries a paper sack
slowly up the street,
checks amid the twelve mail boxes,
stoops to unlock his door.

The click of a slow light rests
its whole weight upon him,
the weathered side of his door.
Going into the kitchen
he opens the cupboard for a glass,
opens the freezer: apricot brandy,
thick and smooth, is like
a lump of sugar melting into fire.
He places a new bottle in the groove
and recrosses the room,
the glass on its coaster,
a dog barking somewhere off in the fog,
out beyond the wet black trees in the yard.
(Probably a mongrel, he thinks,
wire-haired whiskers
as quiet now as the damp street.)

He watches the fog
as it presses
against the curtains,
feels the thin rug
cooling beneath the opal-shaded light.
He pours more brandy, empties the glass,
remembers his shoes
squishing along the grey mirror of sidewalk,
listens to the warp in other people's rooms.
In Love Alone

I wake.
I walk. I wish I may,
I wish I might.
At night, I stand and scan
everything I've lost. All my flesh
flayed and left.
I stay in dream, shed my scream
on rocks.

I wake. I walk.
At night I row through fog,
circling past voices on the dunes.
Emotions are my mind.
All my flesh flayed and left
as light when night trains collide.

To lean against this weathered gate
I answer pain inside myself, and I often
think too far
to things that are not there,
but I work in emptiness to see them real.
I memorize a universe
until it moves,
and then pat this boat
to curl and see the light
that hovers here with me
inside. I wake. I wake, and I walk.
Poem: 2

In the winter
a man might meditate
on the trees
while another
might jabber and gesture
at the sky.

At the end of a day,
or a month, the first
would have created the gods,
the second, the demons,

while the inbetweens,
the tribe
would have considered
and then created
as all the values,
and all the laws.
A Parable

He dreamt
of the multi-storied farm
and conduits of pure sunshine,
but he lived
with a hole in his pocket.

The stone whispered,
"Live small. Claim the outside."
But the pocket hollered,
"I can take it. I can take it all!"

So he measured
the river of Life,
and calculated
the landscape of his passage

until his dream
became like a stone in the world
and Time like its soft pocket.
Along The Columbia River

... from a ragged black and white country into the drizzle of grey.

But that's how it is. One does something and all the others help out.

To the east of the divide fog used to rest, or float in the valleys,

but here it lies down on the mountains and crawls about.

Massive humps of land are still green with grass and moss,

December sloping up into snow, into white sky, the cliffs like standing men

or singing women, the gulls lifting on the first currents of ocean air at the Dalles.
From The Pier . . . Los Osos

cfull breasted bird, fluffed,  
   fluffing on the gunwale,  
on the side of a ship,  
fluffing, making itself bigger,  
   part of something much wider  
so it might relax out of the air --

even as you, the painter,  
grow still  
in the drowse of evening greys

to your left  
there is a pushing, the gurgle of a bow,  
your silvery black brush  
dabbing the bay sides  
with oyster shells

Point Loma on the sea again  
  like a train on fire that you jump from  
to bring back flowers  
  for the world we live in

  even though Oden's Day  
  has roasted the last cloud  
    into a fragile, throbbing  
ragged pink,  
  the sand is cool and firm,  
  the waves rising and falling  
  like hydrangeas pulsing in your hand

  the golden greens bending  
in wind on the dunes,  
darkening whorls, ebbing generations
My lungs hang
like two hams in a smokehouse.
Like a dog, death enters
the sandcastle of my brain.
When Fishing, Salmon Brook

Like a golden cat
the sun full stream
leapt between mountains
toward the sea.
Sawgrass
glossily wove, rushed
in rain-bladed waves
of faces and toads,
passed the dog's ears
bent toward plunging stones.

I was bobbing
the drop-plucked moon
and gathering silence
near tufts of grass
where the air still hung
beneath the birch
and a leaf woven limb
shimmering
with early morning cold.

My line snapped
taut blank into shadow,
my pole arching,
half gone roots
clawing into cutbank
as I reeled and reeled.
It was
so heavily, and so darkly
unknown.

It rose towards me, a snagged
weight of black
shirt, or dead drifting
watery spider
finally wriggling
its great bulk of slimy tangle
on the shore.
I thought
I had caught a snake,
finned and blinking.
Slowly
from this
slick, nestlike ball
of waterlogged branches,
my young arm upstretched the eel,
eye to eye,
its pink mouth smiling,
disentangled and released it
into cold clear water
quietly shouldering curves
above the solid
green of streambed rocks.
The Abyss

If we don't step away
from our industrial machine, our
robot-assisted animal superiority

we'll relegate
evolution to technology
as our carapace, our sense and our system.

Presently, civilization develops
under the sea of its own wastes,
and will, perhaps, evolve to a stage
as high as that of the crustaceans,
the corals, or the fertile polyps,

but as you can see, pollution is the result
of living beyond our ecological means.

We slash and burn deep tropical habitat,
our smelters, our furnace factory stacks
belching fogs of acid rain.

We eat hamburgers from styrofoam
disintegrating an ozone layer
as we prepare for some final war
against the microb, the cancerous lesions --
these partners in our penchant for power.

Technology, of course, will win, so we think.
The miniature micro-machine will subvert reality,
artificially induced habitats,
such as gilled buildings, will save us.
Video palaces will evoke genetic memories
of sounds, tastes and sensations
for our amusement and elucidation, fulfilling
some primitive strain of biological compulsion.

Walkways, like plastic worms, will weave us
from place to place, each with color-coded helmets
with titles such as "Walk Through Garden," or
"Walk Along Embarcadero," or "Walk To Store for Six-Pack,
and Home Again for the Game,"
history edited forever, bodies atrophied
by the need of efficiently using space
even though we spend all our working hours
in a supracentric attempt to reinvent the sun.
Leadership, of course, was gutted out a long time ago, and we are basically alone with each event like blown shells without significance waiting for someone to just step in and take it over.

We wear wrist watches of digital plastic: two dinosaurs fighting out the optimum rex in blue and orange. We melt our meals on a friction stove wondering when that first nuclear-induced microb, like some mean hatted cat, will take us by exploding throat, wanting the earth as much as us. Death will sit at our receding brow ridge as we remember the story of the dog who thought it could outsmart the skunk by sneaking up to it in the dark, but found out it was more a question of the skunk's fear, than a matter of its own intelligence.

Blood thick. Blood slow. We'll wonder as we eat our melted dinners.

As scientific philosophers we'll say, "To know is to be." But that is the trouble with new knowledge, you never know until you're there and then the knowledge IS.

But we have to learn how to keep going, so we live a general rule, a Minimal Impact Life.

Hey! What can I say! Blue crystal bites of glass . . . like, when ya fish too fast, all ya catch is mouths.

A fool's sexual impulse scatters subjugated to the sides of old, crumbling streets as if creation WAS destruction, the North Sea toxic soup, 200 year concrete canisters with a radioactive half-life of 200,000+ years: wastes evolving rabid seals, a great breeding place for viruses -- their mutant multiplicities against our micro metachip economics -- an armored gene pool mutated at mc²!!
Is status the thing
that makes us
so unliveable?
We buck and struggle.
We compete. We win!

But how long a passage
was it
to imitate this bell
with words that lie so still?
The Heart As Prisoner

i.
The tulip was her native form.

She sipped
the cool, red wine evening of July.

ii.
Resting against the stiff fur
of rough cut plank, she felt
the surface of curving river flicker,
flash and flicker
like the caress of a long and golden fish.
Her wooden bridge
hung from the last beams of sky.
Her eyes swung down to the smooth stones
eroded like a family
from the bank.

The tulip was her native form,
thoughts embodied by the sun
as it skipped off the water, stroking
lightly her hair in the rapids.

She let her thoughts fall
into dark sounds. She let her body rise
into the motion of the constellations.

She sipped
the cool, red wine evening of July.

iii.
He sat
behind his eyes until they bled,
telling her that fantastic story
of Lorca's assassination.

It was July. Opium had been the only cure
in the woods -- the elixir for his mangled mind.

The heart of America was burning down
as he pressured her body into softness,
as he detested the curve of her native form.
iv.
She sipped
the cool, red wine evening of July.
shit swirled up from the bullet
at the end of the bottle, like a secret grave,
a Fascist conspiracy.

His mind
was a blank branch of lures in the sky,
her tulips
bursting into pails of blood
carried by the four, insane men
who splashed it as they buried Lorca in the wood.
I. So time is a quiescent form, tumbling into a larger Self, a hat for its own occasion. So the mind construes from memory, amassing an imagination to obliterate confusion. So the poet takes control through the force of his personality, his past re-created in accord with his sense of that past -- at once the chosie and the usherings. So the world jettisons-in upon his inner flow of being, upon his emotional river moulded from plains of experience. So his foot is found upon the path. So his will holds the image to the wind shaping it to this drive, to this desire to integrate "herrings and apples," a prophesy beyond the terror or prophesy, the change composing itself as order and proportion, in opposition to contradiction, in resolution as truth thought more strongly than fear, chaos introduced as the Bull Sun standing amid the "old dependency of day and night," communing in colors of the mind and flooding again the senses with their sense of ease, the obscure desire hounded out into transparencies.

So rags are loosed upon the emptiness of cry. So the womb is wet again with tears.

So life shapes itself into the perfect dancer. First the pressure of the will to create the chrysalis, and then the emptiness. And then the sensing of blindness within emptiness to the center beyond emptiness. Empty categories, and now empty Self.
II. So it begins.
So forever the now surrounds, the power to reality:
the precision amid flux, the chub legs within passage,
the man, small mote, beginning. So to the cell's titillations.
So to the skin's immense good humor. So to the grand
illustration,
forever the fecundity of giants!
The winter sun and a credible warmth of day.
"So the lovers dressed in blue sky and were happy,
walking anonymously amid the cry." So like
the confidence of a seed
at once the question and answer, an outer reality
the transfixing purity. The designs,
the patterns appearing in the stars, those roadmaps to epiphany.

III. Ever make a mistake? Get cast in a role you had to take?
Embalmed alive from the outside? Oozed up by green hands,
caught by the vines of your own mind?
Escape? How?

Held by yourself in ruins?
Reality is a truth of one's Self.
Appeased, the past remains total and irrevocable.

Rumors of a Soul in the City.
The glare of rain settles
lifting the pavement with primordial colors.
Language settles
flexing the idea with the imaginative fact, recognizing virtue
by its own great act. "Nature seen in the light
of its significance . . . of forms," "a transcendent analogue,
"a satisfying of the desire for resemblance."
Noble steps toward the knowing,
and yet the rejection of that known.
A center of light
voiced and still voiced in the night echoing night.
IV. Poets neither fear nor do they inhabit, they settle like rain on what reality there is, on a manikin's future which is life and then more life, the inner Being being enlivened until even was is not. Being passes into seeing. Seeing passes Being into thought until the world has its own voice to hear.

V. So we train into Being. So we leap amid rivulets beckoning the newly emerging. So we trust the abstract though we bite and bay, rooted in ancient clay, the shops sprung from common and simple needs.

But when on the sill not the flower but only metal-channeled water from a cloud, when eyes see objects as only strangely separate, strangling things, then meaning merely bewilders the will. Chose now patience preserving the existence beyond subjective wings. No acceptance of mere counterpoint, the counterfeited heart, will define a human realm from these elemental forces, but from the tangle of reflection (from where the symbol might have been) meditate a juncture as the gentle actuality of am: the roots in clay and ancientness, the lovers in celestial polarity, their shimmerings of eternal light—the porch, the tree and autumn.
VI. Poet! flitting amid these briars of brevity, 
do perceptions bind essence? Does the present become aidos? 
Flower maker! is it an advent?

No, just the cry of leaves, the wind, the janglings
of Self, a man, a diviner, perhaps, but still the answer
arises like a chant always in a new place.

Transformation and apotheosis! We age.

VII. The struggle clarifies, shapes an integrity of effort, 
patterns the purity of "naked will"
from the power essential to things,
yet men still clash, bearing the necessity
to claim that far sea surge
sweeping down again as rain, that delicate pattern
of the near and the far.

Full of himself in the cold
man creates warmth, re-creating from the ether
the skeleton searched from origins.
VIII. "Bodiless half," man obliterated by his will to the real, the now a great hood of sun, too real for him, too full of real that he needs the blank of night, fulfilled, balanced in that singular nesting.

Nameless man. Nameless chant in bloom amid fate—the carpenter of a toy box who hears the certain whirrings of his absolute. There in the unquiet sky, a cloud larger than any statue of Jove, a creation beyond repetition. Strangers stare, measuring those great uncertainties, their search turning the hints of known into a foreign tongue.

Isolations become increasingly false with distance and are overcome by the power and abstract of the hidalgo, a man on the balcony of the nuclear age, an ox who lives in the sun.

IX. From a tincan the fuchsia retains a form of its bloom in petals on the walk like a sea rearing up to shake itself of color. A scholar shrinks nearer to touch its fragrant presence.

"If there is nothing, the heart in gentle repose is all." Or, if he were to say, "Yea, to the hype of hip," "Yes, to the ruler of a comical unreal," then he must certainly become one true real to his Queen of Fact.
X. A reality willed by thought, reconciled in that will of thought, for the wanting of not having, for the real made more real by its lack. The lemon trees "folded over, turned around" until they are as good as elms by words alone.

Ancient words, ancient hopes, placed on new trees, the alterations of nature changed by the light in the word. And in the end no weeping for the lost or the absent, but still this force "coming on" and "coming forth," a force of which we are only part,

our imaginations conjoined with spirit,
conjuring within that moment
a restored clarity to the now,
the words as much a shield to thought as containers for its music.

Between the high cold and the warmth coming off the sea lies our reality, this tensioning into being, this event too rich with evocations to easily surrender the tomb of its reason,
the ideal affirming with emotion,
with its own sense of ineffability, its own constant truth with room for us all, always interdependent with our wills, our expenditures of energy to reveal those flowers that "shout, explode all over the pasture space and generally oppose the rage of the world."
End Notes

Dancing With Your City is a subtext to the Wallace Stevens poem An Ordinary Evening In New Haven. The corresponding roman numerals for the sections of An Ordinary Evening In New Haven have been placed in parentheses.

I. (I.)
  line 4: "to obliterate confusion"
  line 13: "herrings and apples"
  line 15: "as order and proportion"
  Stevens, OPUS POSTHUMOUS, p. xxi.
  line 19: "old dependency of day and night"
  line 20: "colors of the mind"
  Stevens, Palm At The End Of The Mind, p. 331, ii, 6.

II. (VI.)

III. (X.)
  line 57, 58, 59: "Nature seen in the light of its significance . . . of forms," "a transcendant analogue," "a satisfying of the desire for resemblance."
  Stevens, The Necessary Angel, p. 162, 130, 77.

IV. (XII.)

V. (XIII.)
  line 78, 79: "strangely separate, strangling things"
  Theobald, Dr. John, Judging Modern Verse, (Audio Text Cassettes, tape 31449) side one.
  line 85: "meditate a juncture"

VI. (XVIII.)
  line 91: "aidos"
VII. (XX.)
line 96: "Transformation and apotheosis"
Stevens, The Necessary Angel, p. 49.
line 98: "naked will"
Stevens, Palm At The End Of The Mind, p. 344; XX, 15.
line 106, 107: "from the ether" "the skeleton searched from origins"
Stevens, Wallace, A Primitive Like An Orb (USA: The Banyan Press, 1948) p. xii, 8; xii, 5.

VIII. (XXXIII.) IX. (XXIV.) X. (XXVIII.)
line 161, 162: "shout, explode all over the pasture space/and generally oppose the rage of the world."
Stevens, The Necessary Angel, p. 34.
Section II: Condensations from

The Original Journals Of The Lewis And Clark Expedition, 1804-1806, Reuben Gold Thwaites, editor.
April 28, 1805 [Lewis]

The early morning wind
so favorable to our sails
that Captain Clark walks on shore
as I proceed, upriver, with the party.

This land is open
yet very broken near the fertile river hills.
Some bluffs have a mineral appearance,
and coal is in great abundance.
There is much salt, whitely encrusted
on the burnt hills as if they were covered
with snow or frost.
The thin timber is tinged with green.

Great quantities of game: mule deer, elk,
buffalo and antelope, brown bear and beaver
edge along the small threads of water
heading a few miles back from the river.

The beaver have cut a great amount of timber.
One tree felled is three feet in diameter.

Captain Clark killed a deer and a goose,
saw three black bear. We made 24 miles.
April 28, 1805 [Clark]

The antelope are all nearly red on that part which is subject to change — the sides and two thirds of the head. Their other parts are as white as snow.

The bluffs show different strata of coal or carbonated wood and colored earths, such as dark brown, yellow, a lightish brown and a dark red.

We made 24 miles today.
April 29 [Lewis]

I walked on shore with one man. About 8 am we fell in with two brown or yellow bear, both of which we wounded. One of them made his escape, the other pursued me 70 or 80 yards through brush and small trees but fortunately had been so badly wounded that we were able to recharge and kill him.

This male, not fully grown at about 300 pounds, has legs much longer than the black bear's and tallons and tusks incomparably longer and larger. The testicles, which in the black bear are placed back between the thighs and contained in one pouch like those of a dog and most quadrupeds, are in the yellow or brown bear placed further forward, suspended in separate pouches two to four inches asunder.

Its fur is finer, thicker and deeper than that of the black bear and its eyes small, black and piercing. There exists no more furious and formidable animal and it is astonishing to see the wounds necessary to put it to death. The Indian fear this bear equipped as they generally are with bows and arrows or indifferent fuzees, but the skilled rifleman finds them by no means as formidable or dangerous as they have been represented.

Game remains abundant. We can scarcely cast our eyes in any direction without perceiving deer, Elk, Buffaloe or antelope.

The wolves take antelope most generally while they are attempting to cross the river. In this manner our dog caught one, drowned it and brought it to shore. Clumsy swimmers, though on land they are extremely fleet and durable, they are also hunted in relay by 6, 8, or 10 wolves decoying a single one.

We took the flesh of the bear on board.
Here the highlands recede from the Missouri
leaving a valley seven or eight miles wide.
One solitary tree stands along this stretch of river.
The water is clear with a brownish yellow tinge.
This stream my friend Capt. Clark named Martha's River.

[now the Big Muddy confluence at the Missouri]
May 1, 1805  [Lewis]

Set our early, the wind favorable
until midday when it became so violent
our small canoes could not proceed.

Gusts ran the waves several feet high.

We landed amid thick cottonwood, compelled
to spend the balance of the day. The undergrowth
verges on the river and sandbars: rose bushes, red and broadleafed willow. A high country
above the river is one vast plain
destitute of timber but apparently fertile,
consisting of a dark rich mellow looking loam.

Shannon killed a bird of the plover kind
weighing one pound: 1 ft. 10 inches tip to toe,
wing span 2 ft. 5 inches, beak 3 and 5/8ths inch,
legs and toes 10 inches.

Its eyes are black, prominent and large.
Its legs flat thin and slightly imbricated
with a pale sky blue color. Three of its four toes
are webbed, tips black, short, the middle extremely singular
having overlaying nails.

Black feathers are at the pinion, the second
and third joint along the upper side
and the ruffs above the joining of the wing.
The head and neck are brickdust brown, beak black,
curving upwards and of a substance resembling whalebone.

Its note favors the grey plover although louder
and more varied. Its habits appear the same
with this difference — it sometimes rests on the water
and swims. Generally feeding about the shallow bars,
it immerses its beak, throwing its head from side to side
with every step it takes. This bird
I will henceforth style the Missouri Plover.

[The avocet (Recurvirostra Americana)] — Thwaites.
May 24, 1805  [Lewis]

Ice, this morning, one eighth of an inch thick
in the vessels and along the river's verge.
Some cottonwood foliage has been entirely destroyed,
but the trees are again putting forth other buds.

This country, called the black hills by the Indians
and French engages, tracts high and broken into irregular
hills,
a short chain of mountains 120 miles in width
but narrowing as they obliquely approach the Rockies
from West of Northwest from the Kansas and Arkansas,
passing the Platt above the forks,
intercepting the Yellowstone near the big bend and then
passing the Missouri, continuing north, probably to the
Saskashawan.

We proceeded
principally by the cord until 9 am
when a Southeasterly wind
enabled us to employ our sails to advantage,
and at a good pace
notwithstanding the current being very strong.

The air here is so pure it brings the distance closer.
One may walk his estimation but remain, seemingly,
only half way there.
Streams are rocky with gravelly beds and sand,
the high country spotted by hills
covered with a scattering of pine, spruce
and dwarf cedar. The soil seems poor and sterile, to me,
sandy with little grass. The narrow bottoms
have little else than Hysop or southern wood
and the pulpy leafed thorn. Game becomes scarce,
particularly beaver which paces the timber.
May 25, 1805  [Clark]

Mountains rise detached on either side of the river and I believe I saw a range of high mountains at a great distance to the SSW, but am not certain as the horizon was not clear enough to view them with certainty.

Near about, dark brown rugged rock intermixed with soft white sandstone comprise the cliffs, while the river slides and banks into coarse gravel.

The air in this quarter is pure and healthy, the water higher and muddied by recent runoff.

We have food today and have made 18 miles.
May 25, 1805  [Lewis]

The river remains strong especially around the points against which the current sets, and where the gullies from the hills have tumbled stone out forty or fifty feet upon which the water runs with great violence, making us double our efforts to force our way by them as we ascend.

Several gangues of buffaloe up on the hills. Sent Drewyer. He accomplished his hunt. Captain Clark and Bratton, both on shore this evening, also each killed one of these animals.

The country remains high, rocky and broken, soft brown in color with sand and stone, stratas of limestone and rugged black granite, salts, quartz, some coal and pumice. There is scarcely any timber, gravel bars are bush, hillsides spaced with a few pine.

Saw a pole-cat this evening. Buffaloe scarce. I begin to fear our harvest of white puddings are at an end.

18 miles.
May 26, 1805 [Clark]

This country may with propriety, I think, be termed the Deserts of America, as I do not conceive any part can either be settled, as it is deficient in water, timber and too steep to be tilled.