

A Standoff with History: The “Bad River Gathering” in Narrative Performance *

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Abstract

In the United States, the Lewis and Clark Expedition is legendary. Launched in 1804, it marked the will of the emerging state to expand and grow. In 2004 the grateful country commemorated this remarkable occasion by launching the Bicentennial celebrations for the Corps of Discovery. There was much to remember the explorers by: their brave exploits in the unknown territory, their thorough descriptions of geography and wildlife, but also their peaceful dealings with the native inhabitants. In the face of this almost perfect record, one encounter with the Indian population stands out: the meeting of the Corps with the Teton Sioux on the bank of the Bad River. The most serious confrontation with the native population, the event that can be considered a near failure for both sides was nonetheless chosen for a celebratory re-enactment on location by the community of Pierre and Fort Pierre in the fall of 2004. The authors of this essay had an opportunity to view the performance. In the wake of that experience, we came to the conclusion that the past historical crisis was carried over to the celebratory discourse by the “perpetrator” with the intention of remaking the failure “for one” into a success “for all.” Hence, the objective of this essay: to unfold the constitutive (narrative) mechanics of the failure being made successful.

Key words: narrative, performance, Corps of Discovery, history, failure, event, identity

1. Introduction

In the Spring of 2004, America began to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Previewed by extensive mass media coverage, the celebrations erupted in local and nationwide pageants, re-enactments, and exhibits. In Washington, DC, the Smithsonian mounted a special Corps of Discovery exposition, as did the Museum of Westward Expansion in St. Louis. In addition to the cornucopia of theme merchandise, a new commemorative edition of the Lewis and Clark Journals was published along with various accompanying literature that included historical treatises, fictional accounts, and children’s books (e.g., Copeland, 2004; Redmond & Manders, 2003; Johmann & Cline, 2002). For the occasion, the US Mint issued commemorative coins, and the US Postal Service came up with a Lewis and Clark series of A-stamps. For the fans of the hands-on experience, the National Park Service

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established the Lewis and Clark Trail marked by distinct brown signs depicting the silhouettes of Lewis and Clark standing together in striking poses on a high point looking up and forward at some distant wilderness and beyond. Information stands and interpretative centers along the way accompanied visual markers with maps and short descriptive blurbs that recounted the expedition's story bit by bit. An especially curious visitor could obtain a guided tour from a Park Ranger who could give a passionate account about the diversity of the native populations, local wildlife, as well as the dangers of the Wild West.

The celebratory rhetoric for the Bicentennial revolved around the same themes. Celebrated were the Louisiana Purchase and, by extension, President Jefferson's far-sighted political wisdom: "Jefferson's prediction of a 'tornado' that would burst upon the countries on both sides of the Atlantic had been averted, but his belief that the affair of Louisiana would impact upon 'their highest destinies' proved prophetic indeed" (Wilson, 2003). The naturalistic and geographic objectives of the expedition received much attention as well.¹ In this context, the true heroes of the expedition were the two Captains, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their men, whose courageous exploits made the grateful country award them with eternal glory:

The Lewis and Clark expedition lasted just a couple of years, but it changed the face of our country forever [...] the Lewis and Clark Expedition will stand forever as a monument to the American spirit, a spirit of optimism and courage and persistence in the face of adversity [...] American history is filled with remarkable examples of heroism and adventure, and the voyage of Lewis and Clark is one of the most remarkable of them all. And that's why we're here in the White House today. Their expedition became an epic of endurance and discovery, and that epic became an American legend which all Americans should know about, and they should teach their children about it, as well (President George W. Bush, 07.03.2002).

However, it is not just the brave conduct of the expedition that makes the Americans remember and celebrate the Corps today. In addition to the geographic and naturalistic contributions, one of the major achievements attributed to the two Captains has been the establishment of peaceful relations with the Indians, an achievement that had been seen as a welcome contrast to the otherwise inglorious treatment of the Indians at the hands of the

earlier colonial powers, and the United States in the later years. Often the Indians are cited as indispensable to the success of the expedition. Historian James P. Ronda phrases it in an exemplary way in his book *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians*:

Lewis and Clark left St. Louis filled with apprehension about encounters with hostile Indians. But what emerged over nearly two and a half years of western travel was an atmosphere of friendship and mutual trust between men and women who shared a common frontier life. [...] Lewis and Clark left behind among many Indians a legacy of nonviolent contact. Those who came later enjoyed that legacy and too often betrayed it (Rhonda, 2002, p.253).

In the spirit of critical suspicion, we would like to question the overtly positive interpretation of the relationship between the explorers and the natives. In question is the historical background of the famed expedition, and, especially, its mission concerning the Indians that it would inevitably and expectedly encounter along the way. In 1803, Thomas Jefferson purchased the Louisiana territory from Napoleon Bonaparte for the price of 15 million dollars, thereby doubling the size of the United States. Before Jefferson made this purchase, the territory had already changed hands twice. Originally a French colony, France had ceded it to Spain in 1762 and then, shortly before its sale, had received it back from the Spanish Crown. For Jefferson, the acquisition of this vast territory meant a big step towards realizing his dream of an empire that would span the country from coast to coast. Inspired, the President immediately decided to send off an expedition, headed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, to explore the geography of the territory that had not been entirely mapped yet, and to try to find a waterway to the Pacific Ocean. But the exploration of the rivers and land was not all that the president deemed essential for taking possession of his Louisiana Purchase. Lewis and Clark received specific instructions concerning the Indians who lived on the newly acquired territory:

Considering the interest which every nation has in extending and strengthening the authority of reason and justice among the people around them, it will be useful to acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion, and information among them; as it may better enable those who may endeavour to civilize and instruct them, to adapt their measures to the existing notions and practices of those on whom they are to operate (Letter from President Jefferson to Captain Meriwether Lewis,

February 12, 1804).

This passage interprets the status of the natives rather unequivocally. The Indians were to be explored by Lewis and Clark not as sovereign neighbours who would have to be respected on their own terms, but an “acquired people,” with the ultimate goal of converting these “people” to a culture, religion, and morality other than their own, in other words, of imposing on them the authority of the fledgling power. Even though Lewis and Clark did neither have the means nor the intention to accomplish an assimilation of the Indians during their expedition, inferiority of the other was the underlying assumption that accompanied the dealings between the Americans and the natives. This means that, from the outset, there was a conflict of interests between the explorers and the explored. Two hundred years later, this conflict is still perceived by some Indians as unresolved. Some go as far as to demand that the Lewis and Clark expedition should be commemorated rather than celebrated, because it marked the beginning of a violent colonization for the Indians in the United States. In an interview on the occasion of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, Gerard Baker, Superintendent of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, summarized the meaning of Lewis and Clark exploits for the American Indians in a few disillusioned words: “In a nutshell, what happened to our people in the years after Lewis and Clark is that we went downhill. In a nutshell, we lost” (Baker in a PBS interview, June 12, 2004).

Unsurprisingly, these and other dissenting voices easily drown in the celebratory rhetoric. The emphasis on the good intentions and “Undaunted Courage” of the explorers in the face of adversity successfully conceals real-time friction between the Corps and the natives, back-grounding alternative interpretations of the aims and the conducts of the members of the Expedition.ⁱⁱ Merging the theme of individual heroism with the theme of the growing nation allowed all Americans, including the ancestors of the native peoples, to celebrate the Voyage of Discovery with little if any reflection. After all, a country that stands united does not need to differentiate between history and its making. Yet, celebrating a unity

of differences is illusionary at best; as the dawn of this century has demonstrated, historical continuity is but a dream: dissolution of old regimes creates gaps, ruptures, and abrasions that fill history-making with explosive ambiguity. In this regard, the journal entries made by the members of the Expedition are no exception. It is there, in the most definitive archive of the expedition that one encounters the description of the event that challenges the spirit, the objectives, and the execution of the Corps of Discovery. On September 23-28, 1804, at the confluence of the Bad River and the Missouri, the expedition encountered a small band of the Teton Sioux, who almost ended Jefferson's dream. The event entered the annals of history through Lewis and Clark under the name of the Bad River Gathering. The following had happened:ⁱⁱⁱ

On September 23, 1804, the expedition met the first Teton Sioux when three Indian boys spotted the unfamiliar boats and swam across the river to the Expedition's camp. The Captains welcomed the boys and gave them some tobacco with the instructions to inform their chiefs about the Expedition and the intention to meet with their Chiefs. Several days later, on September 28, the Corps saw about 60 lodges on the West side of the Bad River. On the first meeting, a tense situation developed between the Explorers and the Sioux, apparently as a result of the chiefs' dissatisfaction with the gifts presented by the Captains. A brief exchange of threats and insults led to an armed standoff. After some time, the situation grew somewhat diffused. In the meantime, the Explorers lost an anchor, which seriously weakened their position and prompted them to stay longer than they expected. On the side of the Indians, hospitality was extended by celebrating feasts, smoking tobacco and tribal singing and dancing. In turn, the Americans presented their hosts with small gifts. At some point, a group of the Sioux warriors returned from a raid on a neighbouring Omaha camp with a group of captives, who secretly warned the Americans about the Sioux's plans to eliminate them. The armed watch had to be maintained around the clock. After a confusing episode during which the keelboat was struck by a pirogue (apparently by accident), arrows and muskets were

raised and aimed. The situation was again diffused by Chief Black Buffalo who asked the Captains for a token carrot of tobacco, which he got. The standoff came to a close: soon after, the Expedition left the camp with Black Buffalo on board. For two days, they sailed together, then the chief went ashore and the two sides parted ways for good.

The readiness of both sides to take up arms and threaten the other party shows how much adversity lurked beneath the surface of diplomatic interaction. In a letter to President Jefferson, Clark's position towards the Tetons is made even clearer when he refers to them as "the vilest miscreants of the savage race, who must ever remain the pirates of the Missouri." Clark's words clearly show that the confrontation between the Captains and the Indians was not an accident. Subsequent interpretations of the event have adopted this view and perpetuated it ever since. As recently as in 1954, a South Dakota tourist brochure calls the Indians "troublesome, rascally, and double-faced" (p. 23). In the summary of the encounter, the anonymous authors of the 1967 South Dakota Chamber of Commerce Guide to the State describe the key intention of the Indians as wanting to "stop the expedition by any means" (p. 23). The American historian Bernard DeVoto (1952) calls Indians greedy and deceptive: "Given their fine red coats, cocked hats, feathers, and tobacco, they announced that this was not enough" (p. 445) He openly praises the expedition's triumph over them: "Lewis and Clark had made women of the Teton Sioux" (p. 448). Even more recently, some clearly blamed the conflict on the savagery and petty malice of the Tetons. For example, Schmidt and Schmidt (1999) describe how numerous acts and exchanges had been done by the Indians in the name of "apparent friendliness only" (p. 68).

These and other interpretations pose a dilemma for the celebrating nation. Whether the Sioux were hostile and savage or wise and political does not really matter. Nor do the diplomatic skills of the Captains. What matters is the violent nature of the encounter and its one-sided documented description. Lewis and Clark did not just make history; they made a certain kind of history, the history that responded badly to the rhetoric of peace and harmony,

and an overtly successful enterprise. It therefore would not have been surprising if the Bad River Encounter would have simply bypassed by the festivities, or mentioned as an aberration. The event could have easily disappeared amidst the explicitly celebratory tonality that made phrases such as “building the nation,” “courage,” “despite all odds” into a staple vocabulary for both the written and oral Bicentennial narratives. In this climate, the thorny meeting with the Lakota Sioux on the bank of the Bad River could have been successfully ignored with little loss to the legendary proceeds of the voyage.

It was therefore surprising to us, an ethnographer and a historian, that the Lakota Heritage Society, National Park Service, the City of Fort Pierre, the Office of the Mayor, and various private donors in South Dakota went to considerable lengths not only to commemorate the Expedition at large, but to promote the very three days that could have made the entire mission obsolete. The celebrations of the Bad River Encounter began many months before the festivities when the local paper “Capitol Journal” launched a column with excerpts from the Lewis and Clark Journals and concise commentaries about the participating characters, the then state of the nation, and the diversity of the wildlife. Weeks before the anniversary of the encounter, radio and television announcements, flyers and circulars invited people to take part in the upcoming pageants. Those were presented under the rubric “A South Dakota Lewis and Clark Signature Event” and were supposed to take place on September 24, 25, and 26, 2004 on location, that is, in Fort Pierre, a satellite town of the State Capital, Pierre, across the Missouri River. The three day festivities known as Bad River Gathering advertised “Lakota culture showcased at the mouth of the Bad River with activities for all ages; Lakota/Lewis and Clark encounters re-enacted; and vendors with food, furs, crafts and more at Fort Pierre Expo Center.” Finally, the Lakota Heritage Society offered “dual narratives of Lewis and Clark encounter” that culminated the Event. In the advertising flyer, the organizers described the meaning of the Event:

We took the writings of the Lewis and Clark expedition to the event committee members and asked their thoughts on what the Lakota actions might have meant based on their culture. It was the consensus of committee members that the ‘bizarre behaviour’ referred to in the journals was actually a dispute between the different tribal factions and, in the end, Black Buffalo, who believed in diplomacy, ruled the day with courtesy and tact.

In a few words, the advertising excerpt made clear the problem and the intentions of the organizers: focus on some of the descriptions of the events that negatively implicated the Lakota Sioux during their meeting with the Lewis and Clark company and subject them to a reconsideration; more specifically, reinterpret the “bizarre behaviour” of the Indians as “actually a dispute between the different tribal factions.” In the course of the reinterpretation, the organizers also intended to reinstitute the historical character of Black Buffalo as the positive force behind the dispute, presenting him as an alternative authoritative figure, who, almost single-handedly, prevented bloodshed. Remarkably, this one bit of a text gave us a glimpse of the project’s overall mission: to reconstruct a historical event. While fulfilling these intentions, the performers faced an uneasy task: first, they had to admit to a conflict, thus taking Lewis’ and Clark’s account at face value, and this meant to assume the blame for the near failure of the Presidential mission. Second, they had to create and position such a convincing narrative as to make it become a legitimate counterpart to the Lewis and Clark account. Whether these tasks were accomplished and the history was successfully remade is the question that preoccupies the rest of this essay. We continue with a short ethnographic description of the Bad River Gathering pageant.^{iv} The purpose of this mini ethnography is to give the reader a sense of participating in the Event as a Performance (for the full transcript of the Performance, see Appendix).

2. The Bad River Gathering: “*See History Come Alive*”

September 27, 2004. Early Afternoon. Lilly Park across the river on the Pierre side. A man dressed up in a period costume tells the viewers who came over for the festivities that a performance of the Great Misunderstanding is going to take place on the premises of the high

school stadium in Fort Pierre later that day. He reads from the Lewis and Clark journals and connects the readings with the two figures who come up from the shore where the spectators can view a replica of the keel boat. The two men represent Captain Lewis and his interpreter. From the other direction three Indian boys are approaching. The Explorers ask the boys about their tribe and then give them small amounts of tobacco to pass on to their Chiefs. The ten-minute preview ends with a repeated invitation to see the performance later that day to “see how the Bad River Encounter unfolded and how the Great Misunderstanding played out and how the things nearly, nearly came to bloodshed.” During this short performance, a group of Lakota natives (six or seven people) are demonstrating at the far end of the fairgrounds. The Lakota flag hangs in the front. The man with the loudspeaker keeps on saying: “taking our river, sacred river, turning South Dakota into a place of racism, leading to sterilization of our women, and outright genocide. This is their [Lewis and Clark] legacy, and truth must be told.” The demonstrators stay on the outskirts, the yellow police ribbon separates them from the rest of the gatherers. They demonstrate for about an hour, then disperse.

Later That Day. At the entrance to the high school stadium in Fort Pierre an audience is being gathered: guests are buying their tickets; at the desk they receive a program with a short description of the performance and an attached coupon. The coupon entitles its holder to a Traditional Lakota meal, as well as Lakota dance and music. The meal is served by local volunteers. It consists of buffalo stew with chick peas and corn bread; the dance and music part is a 5-minute sampler of the Rain Dance. Shortly before the performance, the stadium benches are half full. The show begins with the presentation by the organizers who mention the preview and acknowledge the dignitaries in the audience (US Senator Jim Johnson; Bill Benjamin, the Great Plains Regional Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Park Service Superintendent for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail). Thanks to the actors, sponsors, and organizers follow. The performance proceeds with the

description of the historical context. In addition to the narrator from the preview, there comes an Indian narrator, who, for his part, offers a prayer to the Great Father. An Indian woman interpreter is translating the prayer in sign language. Both wear period costumes of the Teton Sioux.

The performance proper begins with the Lakota boys delivering the news to the Chief Black Buffalo. The Chief seems unimpressed, and soon joins a group of the elders sitting next to his tipi. In the meantime, the camp goes on with the trivialities of the everyday life: women scraping buffalo hides, men attending to horses, children playing, the elders sitting outside their tipis smoking. The pace of the action is slow. Then, Lakota Narrator takes the microphone and gives a broad overview of the Lakota and their culture. The emphasis is on the uniqueness of the Lakota tribe, its civilized and unthreatening ways. Next comes the Lewis and Clark Narrator who reads a neutral excerpt from the journals about the actual meeting with the Sioux. An exchange of goods is mentioned. The Indian chiefs are invited to the boat. A bit of a confrontation ensues (allegedly due to the one of the chiefs' drunkenness). The first indications of dislike by the Captains of their counterparts are displayed. They claim that the Indians simply pretended to be drunk as an excuse for their troublesome behavior. The Indian Narrator follows with an account of the behaviour of his ancestors, stating that they were unaccustomed to whisky and that they harboured no bad intentions. The action sequence depicts the next day meeting. Apparently, during the second encounter, the Sioux demand more goods as a toll for the river passage. The Crew refuse. An armed standoff follows, soon to be diffused by the Main Chief calling off his men. The parties part ways. The Lewis and Clark narrator steps in to read from the journals about the Sioux, their appearances and their ways of dealing with the expedition. At this point, on day three, much honour is given to the Captains, who, by their own admission, remain alert and suspicious of the Lakota intentions.

The Indian narrator explains some of the customs, such as scalp dance (enacted later), emphasizing the ritualistic order of the tribal life. The next action sequence brings about an exchange of speeches and mutual smoking of the peace pipe. Several journal entries are read by the Lewis and Clark narrator. They describe tension and unhappiness of the expedition members, who wish to proceed further. The final confrontation almost prevents them from doing so, after the rope from the boat gets seized by the Sioux men and both sides take up to arms. Allegedly it is Black Buffalo again, who manages to diffuse the situation. The show ends with the Lakota narrator summing up the event as a great misunderstanding, a result of the deeply rooted cultural prejudice that persists to bear fruit until the present day. His solution is to eliminate the misunderstanding by “trying to understand the meanings and the thoughts of the other, if we could work to understand not just the words spoken but the hearts that underline them.”

What we were watching was less entertaining than instructive. Aesthetic matters aside, there was a visible effort at play in the performance to create a cohesive whole that not only presented itself but somehow showed a development, transition, or transfiguration, of sorts. Unfortunately for the viewer, the show had little flow, since it consisted mainly of narrative recitals broken by an occasional performance sequence. Just looking at the distribution of the segments (see Appendix), it is easy to see how narration overwhelms action. Granted, while the narrators were reading their narratives, the actors were still in character, performing some neutral acts, representing what could be taken for a regular course of events at an ordinary Lakota Sioux camp. However, in the context of the show’s sequential organization, those filler sequences bore little significance on their own, rather forming an aesthetic horizon for the actions that took place in the verbal sphere where the two parties seem to have been engaged in some narrative duel. The confrontation theme was most strongly visible, producing an impression that it was the sole criterion for the selection of the scenes. Whether it was the first armed standoff, or the exchange of threats, or temporary

reconciliation before the second standoff, it appeared that the sole purpose of the organizers was to emphasize if not overemphasize the words from the preview, “nearly, nearly came to blood shed.” The nearness of the crisis thus became the main function of the live scenes and the topic of the discussion for the narratives. Hence, the impending disaster, a near failure became the main topic of the discussion, for on its own, the live performance could not have been able of sustaining a story. Neither the quality of performance, nor its continuity, could have made it possible for the viewer to make sense of the show without the accompanying narratives. Hence, the key function of the performance was to create a dramatic environment that could provide the two stories with visual texture and common points of attention. It was through the performance that the historical narrative and its contemporary sibling could position themselves vis-à-vis each other. We suggest that this position connoted *agon* in the original Ancient Greek usage: to show crisis.

In a theoretical aside, we would like to exploit the link between *agon* as art and political action with Victor Turner. In his seminal work on social drama, Turner asserted that if in the past *agon* was an enactment of some mythical archetype, these days it enacts any social drama (QUOTE and source). Leaning in strongly on the post-structuralist position, Turner proposed four phases to social drama: breach, crisis, redress, and recognition of schism. Importantly, social dramas occur within groups of people who used to share values and interests and who have had a common history. This is precisely what seems to be at stake in the performance of the dual narrative: the values and interests that unite the Americans as one people now, used to divide the two kinds of people who had very little in common. According to Turner, social dramas can be minute; they also can be prolonged: “prolonged social dramas always reveal the related sets of oppositions that give the group social structure its tensile character” (1980, p. 147). The drama that has led to the Bad River Show is undoubtedly a prolonged one. Note, for example the use of the temporal deixis of the Indian narrator in the conclusion: “This vindictive suggestion [that the Sioux Indians are savage, vile

miscreants] unfortunately has prejudiced American policy toward the Sioux to this day.” The prolonged sense of injustice creates resistance, and social dramas are perfect vehicles for venting resistance. To a great extent they are political processes, for they inevitably involve competition for scarce ends—power, dignity, honor, purity—by particular means and by the utilization of various resources. The ongoing crisis has been on the agenda of Native American organizations for decades, causing both unhappiness and resistance (SOURCES, or names of organizations). As we have mentioned before, in the course of the Bad River Gathering, a small demonstration of the local Indians demanded redress. Moreover, both the demonstration and the performance had the same makings of a social drama: one, by remembering wrongdoings and making explicit accusations; the other, by ritualizing similar tensions in a conventionalized ritual that isolated audience for instigating a different kind of action:

Rites of passage, like social dramas, involve temporal processes and agonistic relations—novices or initiands are separated from a previous social state or status, compelled to remain in seclusion during the liminal phase, submitted for ordeal by initiated figures, elders, or seniors (Turner, 1980, p. 154).

The analogy between ritual and social drama is essential to us, the ethnographers in the business of trying to figure out the significance of the narrative performance in the remaking of history. Ritual, explains Turner, is, in its most typical cross-cultural expressions, a synchronization of many performative genres and is often ordered by a *dramatic* structure, a plot, frequently involving an act of sacrifice or self-sacrifice, which energizes and gives emotional coloring to the interdependent communicative codes which express in manifold ways the meanings inherent in the dramatic leitmotiv. Dramatic is always related to agon, ritual is therefore is not threadbare but richly textured by implicit and explicit conflicts. Ritual is not just complex and multilayered; according to Turner, “it has an *abyss* in it” (p. 159). The abyss belongs to the liminal sphere, and ritual is always a transition that involves transcribing over the liminal sphere. The stage and the audience both become such liminal spheres; they

stand for ‘pupation’ of liminal seclusion, outside of the everyday reach. It is there, in hiding, that the secret passage from one thing to another takes place. The secluded place that harbors the secret is able to unleash both powers: it can construct and it can destroy what it was called to redeem. “In liminality, what is bound can be unbound.” (p. 161).

By now, the reader should be persuaded of the import of the performance for history-making. As a ritualistic transition, it gives the organizers an opportunity to unbind one Event - and here we presume that the Event in question comes from the Lewis and Clark Journals, the Bad River Gathering - and rebind it into a different Event, the Great Misunderstanding. As a result, at the end of this liminal transgression, history and, with it, identity of the participants will come anew. Anxious to see if the narrative *agon* succeeds, our next question is, *How shall we examine the contenders?*

3. At the Edge of the Genre

According to Jacques Derrida (1980), the wars of texts are waged at the edge, at the border of the genre; and history, the genre of genres, always stands at the edge. Moreover, the law of the genre is the law of history. In explaining this law, Paul Ricoeur begins by drawing the distinction between history and story. Story is what is leaning over the edge. History is what stands on it. In his analysis of the difference between history and story, Ricoeur identifies three distinct and co-extensive stages that prompt the division. One concerns the way of reasoning or explaining. Ricoeur argues that history is not possible without having it being explained. Reasons must necessarily be given; in themselves, facts do not hold unless supported by justification. Reasoning at the limits of objectivity makes history a science that “refers to objects of a new type appropriate to its form of explanation” (1980, p. 177). In order for them to form history in progress, however, historical objects must be designed so that they could be connected to each other. According to Ricoeur, fact-objects are connected sequentially by being placed in a continuous temporal stream that is delineated by cultural, social, and other values. Temporal refiguration does not only transform historical objects into

facts; “it replaces the subjects of action with entities that are anonymous in the strict sense of the term” (p. 177). Therefore, in addition to its object, a historical narrative loses its subject. This fact cuts off historical facts from both the lived time and from the original action. Since a subject-less narrative is strictly speaking a-temporal, “an indirect relation to lived time in historical narrative must be preserved through mediation or neutralization” (p. 75). Thus, history reverses itself from the state of a narrated probability, essentially, a story. And so, history does not create facts; it creates a-temporal subject-less objects that are cut from the modes of their production by way of modified transitions into a particular historical paradigm. The Lewis and Clark Journals are such a historical paradigm. It is to reverse this paradigm that the Lakota mounted their Show. But what can the little David do against the Goliath of history? We find an answer in the brochure about the pageant where the organizers indicate their method by first downgrading the allegedly historical account of the Lewis and Clark narrative to a story and then upgrading their story to a quasi historical account:

We tell the story as described in the “Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition” and we tell the story as described by the descendants of the people who lived more than two hundred years ago in the area that is now central South Dakota (Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates).

Technically speaking, the Alliance is correct: the Journals of Lewis and Clark are not properly historical. Their original purpose was to collect ethnographic observations by the members of the expedition. It was only after they were archived first and then became public that the explorers’ notes rose to the status of a historical document and have been treated as such ever since. The span of two hundred years confirmed this status, so it is no wonder that the celebrating nation utilized the Journals as the factual base and the original source for the festivities. Perhaps, at the time of the Bad River Gathering, the Lewis and Clark story was indeed a story, told and retold by the members of the expedition, but in the year 2004 it was a story made History. On the other hand, the story by the Lakota Indians could have made history from the start. In the oral culture, collective memory has the same legitimacy as the

historical chronicles of the pre-industrial age. Although the weight of the passing years would not show itself to the same extent in an oral tale as it did in the Journals, the Lakota narrative could have had the same historical continuity for its people. But it would not be history the way we understand it today. Thus, both stories were enveloped in two kinds of *discourse*: the Lewis and Clark Journals, the official discourse of the nation-in-becoming; and the story of the Lakota Indians, the discourse of the nation that has never become.

The meeting of these two discourses, like the meeting of the two people, is ripe with extreme possibilities. The official discourse gives us the Indians as Godless deceitful pirates, who would stop at nothing to get a piece of the expedition, if not all of it. In fact, the construction of the Indians as the inferior people commenced even before the expedition when the President himself singled out the Sioux to be potential troublemakers; hence, his cautious request that an especially favourable impression should be produced on them. According to the Journals, whether the impression to be created was favourable or unfavourable did not matter as much as what needed was precisely an impression, a strategy of deceit legitimized by the so-called civilized societies only when their opponents were barbarians. And the Captains obtained ample proof of their villainy: the Lakota's dark nature showed itself during the incident on the boat, when the Indians openly provoked the Captains by making fun of Clark and his red hair; then, the Sioux warriors tried to intimidate the soldiers who came to the camp. The same Sioux tricked the explorers into giving more gifts; finally, despite all the good words and deeds of the White folks, they fell on a deaf ear when the Indians grabbed the rope before the Corps' departure. Finally, following the keelboats for two days epitomized the vile nature of the antiheroes; the Lakota Sioux were still looking for an opportunity to take advantage of their "guests." The reader is constantly made aware of the tension coming from the Lakota: the Journals speak constantly of the explorers being "on guard," having "no sleep," and being "suspicious of rascally intentions" of their counterparts, and although the exact nature of those intentions is unclear to the reader, it was not to a member of an

expedition: the two instances when the bows got strung and muskets aimed testify to the overwhelming clarity of the latter to the participants themselves. The question that should preoccupy us now, however, is not whether it was true or not that the Indians tried to take advantage of the President's Men, but rather what means were deployed by the present day Lakota for rewriting the myth of the heroes and villains and to change the meaning of the "vindictive" words uttered by Clark: "These are the vilest miscreants of the savage race and must ever remain the pirates of the Missouri until such measures are pursued by our government as all make them feel the dependence on its will for their supply of merchandise."

Clark's words return us to the beginning of our narrative theorizing, where, with Ricoeur, we conceded that the laws of the narration require an ending for the understanding of the story. **Kermode, The sense of ending.** In the case of the "Bad River Gathering" Show, the ending did not just end the performance; it ended the performed Event of the encounter as it appeared to the explorers, thus defining what was at stake for the performers, its theme, and also genre that guided the narrators, the morality tale. In his *On Moral Fiction*, John Gardner wrote that the sole concern of the morality tale are "those values that hold off dissolution" (1979, p. 6). The synthesis of the two stories at the edge of the performance opened up a moral sphere and a possibility to remake history not with muskets but with value-laden accounts. Problematic was the image of the Lakota People as it entered history two hundred years ago, and it was that image that the participants vowed to replace. This did not mean to replace one set of facts with another--there was only one historically acceptable chronicle of the actions--but to construct such an alternative interpretation of those actions as to change the event of the Bad River Gathering into the event of Great Misunderstanding, or, to repeat the preview, "see how the Bad River Encounter unfolded and how the Great Misunderstanding played out and how the things nearly, nearly came to bloodshed". This also meant to construct a new identity for the Lakota Sioux and thus to show that it was indeed a mere misunderstanding that lead the Captains and their men to see their actions and intentions in

such an unfavorable light. In other words, the success of turning the past failure into the present-day success demanded staging the response to the Journals in the present-time and in the voice of an authority. *How could the narrators achieve that objective?*

5. Accounting for “Bizarre Behavior”

In the last volume of his trilogy “Time and Narrative,” Ricoeur suggests that one can overcome the appearance of historical objectivity and restore the epistemological break between history and narrative by questioning back to the historical facts in the narrative mode. It is by way of fictional narrative that the analyst should be guided into history. The premise that underlines this conviction has been argued by Ricoeur extensively in his other works. The brunt of his argument rests on the genealogical link: in contrast to historical narrative, fiction is narrative history par excellence already because it shows “in what unique way the imaginary is incorporated into the intended having-been, without weakening the ‘realist’ aspect of intention” (1992, p. 181). In part, explains Ricoeur, this is because the fictional object is always already imbedded in the object of history. Although the two modes of inquiry pursue different objectives, their paths cross along certain relay stations which punctuate all the transformative domains—justification, objectification, temporalization--that participate in making transitions from story to history. By working his way toward those relay stations, the audience finds itself in the liminal space between history and story” (p. 78).

The possibility that the performers resorted to questioning-back should be given serious consideration, for it can be traced in the organization of the performance as a whole. Given the uneasy history of the relations between the white settlers and the Indian natives for over three centuries, with various confrontational episodes informing into that history, the need to justify oneself should not be dismissed. If we accept that perspective, we might also want to accept that the key register of the communicative event “Bad River Gathering” is rhetorical. Following the Aristotelian division of forms of rhetoric into deliberative, epideictic, and forensic oratory, with their corresponding temporal aspects (future for

deliberative; past for forensic; and present for ceremonial), we can see how in the Lakota response to the Journals, all the rhetorical genres are utilized: forensic that addresses the past actions of both parties; epideictic that emphasizes the current occasion of celebration but also takes care of a potential blame, and, finally, the deliberative that, especially in the ending brings up the future course of action. Each of these forms of oratory utilizes various arguments that, in turn, bring up different appeals: as to logos (reason), pathos (emotions), or ethos (speaker's credibility). Finally, such rhetorical figures as abating, ellipsis, simile, and others, assisted the narrators. In a morality tale, rhetoric is applied to values, that is, the item that is being argued about or accounted for is a value. Therefore, the rhetorical analysis of values in the dual narrative is what should concern us next. Moral values exhibit themselves in the statements connoting a shared goodness of some kind (e.g., Maine, 1986). In the presence of the full transcript (see Appendix), we do not find it necessary to indulge in long supporting quotes. Instead, we focus on those specific statements that refer to moral values either explicitly or by way of *thematics*.^v We then identify the form or forms of oratory, the rhetorical appeal or appeals and finally, rhetorical figures that endow these statements with certain persuasive effects. The Lewis and Clark Journals are designated as LCJ, the Lakota narrative as the LN.

5.1 A Brief Analysis of the Lakota Rhetoric

(13)LN In the tradition of the Lakota we would like to begin the events of this evening by offering a prayer to the Great Creator.

(15)PRAYER

Interpretation: This opening passage follows the introduction of the show (“narrative pageant”). It thus imbeds itself in the celebratory discourse by presenting the event of performance as celebratory. By beginning the show with the prayer, the Lakota narrators appeal to their cultural heritage and spirituality, posing it as a familiar value. The placement of the prayer serves to display affiliation with the idea of an American pageant that may be ushered in by either a prayer or a national hymn. The use of the person deixis the “Great Creator” cuts close to the “Great Father” from the Lewis and Clark Journals. By the same token, the prayer designates ownership of the event: it clearly belongs to the Lakota Sioux represented by the collective person of the Lakota Heritage Society. In a certain way, the prayer evokes a-temporality, for it could have had the same wording at the times of Lewis and Clark. This connects the present-day Lakota to their ancestors, simultaneously establishing the

right to position their narrative next to the original one. The prayer is given in two languages with the sign interpreter serving as a mediator. The gesture symbolizes the ability to communicate in different languages, thus appealing to ethos, or common values and the understanding of difference that might exist within them. The action sequence that follows the prayer depicts a peaceful tribe that goes about its everyday business undisturbed by the explorers; hence the appeal to the value of peace and the preference for peaceful resolutions of conflicts. The next passage thematizes these values in the present day terms:

(20)LN The people they [Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark] encountered had religion, government, philosophy, manners, comedy, and etiquette. They were a healthy and wealthy society. They also had freedom of expression and dissension, and like in every society, there was factionalism, and Captains Lewis and Clark might have unwittingly sailed into a factional dispute.

Interpretation: It will be no exaggeration to say that the dominant figure for the above passage is hyperbole. Obviously, such terms as religion and government are broad enough to include a wide range of expressions; yet, by evoking them, the performers invited us to understand them in the present-day context, government instead of a tribal council, religion instead of spirituality, philosophy instead of native wisdom and, finally, dissent as democratic factionalism. Other items, such as wealth and health, seem to perform dual function: on the one hand, they appeal to the past which seemed to be as good to the then Lakota as it was to Lewis and Clark. On the other hand, health and wealth point to the current state of the United States, a wealthy and healthy nation. The hyperbolic nature of the above passage becomes evident when one considers the passages that the Lakota narrators found necessary to omit from the Journals. Ellipsis, as a figure of omission, was deployed to satisfy two purposes: to spare the Captains the image of bigots (here one must consider the predominantly white audience, dissenting from which would be undesirable), but also to avoid discrepancies with the statements below.

(44)LCJ Clark, September 25th, 1804. They appear sprightly [generally ill-looking and not well-made] their legs and arms small generally...The women [not handsome]...[do all the laborious work and I may say perfect slaves to the men, as all Squaws of nations much at war, or where the women are more numerous than the men].

Interpretation: In addition to the omissions that might have created a discrepancy between the two texts, there is also a deleted passage about the treatment of women. The Journals depict the Indian treatment of women as barbarian. Leaving this passage in the narrative would have created a controversy and called for an extensive account with an explanation about the Lakota society, its social structure and family relations. Like most North American tribes, the Lakota were a patriarchal society, which was a fact of their life then, but a bad value from the contemporary point of view. In their society, women were considered to be a commodity and could be sold, exchanged, or traded; hence, a series of related omission all of which speak of offers of women to the members of the expedition. Given that the Captains mentioned this custom on several occasions, the omission of such an item is both visible and telling: the Indians did not just offer women to the Captains: the latter declined their offer, thus showing their moral superiority. In the next passage below the omissions perform a different function as they concern the behaviour of the Indian men, namely, the Chiefs. Omitted are such items as the liking of alcohol and bad intentions but not feigned drunkenness which is used as a pretext for trouble-making. The omission of those might be explained by their indirect reference to the earlier statement in which the Lakota narrator claimed that his fellow men had

possession of etiquette as well as by an attempt to create too much of a gap between the two narratives.

(21)LCJ We invited those chiefs on [...] [we gave them a quarter of a glass of whiskey which they appeared to be very fond of, sucked the bottle after it was out and soon began to be troublesome on the second chief assuming drunkenness as a cloak for his rascally intentions].

Interpretation: The sense that the omission of too much problematic material could become noticeable, but also contradictory to the structure of the dual narrative. Therefore, certain negative items remain. Given the nature of those items, the Lakota Sioux put themselves in the position of having to explain or account for those items. They do so in the passages below. Note the direct rejection of Lewis' and Clark's suggestion that the Indians meant to stop the expedition followed by the appeals to pathos.

(22)LN Contrary to Lewis' and Clark's belief, the public had no ill intentions toward the newcomers. The people came to the river to satisfy their curiosity. It was a carnival like atmosphere, women and children talking and laughing, all wanting to see these new Americans, having no clue of the impending trouble.

(45)LN When Lewis and Clark entered the region, there was a contest for hunting territory that sometimes became brutal erupting in battles between different tribes. There was a code among the warriors that women and children should be spared because they were considered non-combatants. And the women and children were adopted.

(47)LN The Scalp Dance is actually a warrior-honoring ceremony. When the warriors return from the battle victoriously, they are honoured by their female relatives. It was a happy and festive occasion since the warriors were not paid with money as in contemporary society. They were honoured and songs were sung for them. These signs were the equivalent of the Marine Corps Hymn and the Ballad of the Green Beret.

Interpretation: From these descriptions, we receive an impression that the Indians were both simple and naïve, like children. As to the possible accusation that the Indians had a propensity to violence, of which the Journals speak referring to the battle with the Omaha, the Indian response comes immediately after. In this response, the Lakota appeal to logos. Obviously, even today limited resources provoke small and not so small conflicts. Yet, claimed the Lakota, those conflicts were regulated by certain codes, such as sparing women and children. Although the tribal code of honour cannot be equated with the modern rules of warfare (e.g., Geneva Convention prohibits that women and children be taken prisoners of war), the Lakota takes care of a potential discrepancy by deploying the figure of understatement: the children were "adopted" into a new family. A more direct appeal to logos and the present day value comes out in the following passage where the narrator explains the Scalp Dance as the equivalent of the present-day Marine Corps ritual. Here as elsewhere we deal with similitude, a figure of comparing. The rhetorical appeal associated with that figure is affiliation through identification. The final two passages construct an argument that supposedly gives the reasons for saving the expedition.

(55)LN Throughout the Captains' accounts about the Lakota, Black Buffalo and the people associated with him have repeatedly shown to be protective of the expedition. And Lewis and Clark [...] may have realized that having Black Buffalo on board was a preventive measure against an attack. Black Buffalo is the most important factor in the expedition's entire visit with the Lakota. With humility and tact he thwarts disaster seemingly at every

instant. Black Buffalo and the diplomacy faction should be credited with saving life of the expedition and innocents.

(57)LN That the meeting even ended without bloodshed is a testament to the ability of men on both sides, most probably Chief Black Buffalo to remain calm under such pressure and work toward the greater good and peaceful resolution. But Clark uses his anger as a fuel when he later writes on the Tetons: ‘These are the vilest miscreants of the savage race and must ever remain the pirates of the Missouri until such measures are pursued by our government as to make them feel the dependence on its will for their supply of merchandise.’ This vindictive suggestion unfortunately has prejudiced American policy toward the Sioux to this day. But if the expedition had not been prejudiced by others before meeting the Tetons, if they had not allied themselves with their enemy, if just one person could have spoken the words of the other, history might have been otherwise. These ifs are question marks today but they can guide our actions for tomorrow, if we could just listen to each other without prejudice, if we could just try to understand the meanings and the thoughts of the other, if we could work to understand not just the words spoken but the hearts that underline them, we could grow strong together, that’s the inspiration that our past can give us.

Interpretation: The reasons are connected mainly to the figure of Black Buffalo. As the generations to come after Black Buffalo, the Lakota appeal to ethos, or credibility of the tribe as it exists now. The preference for a peaceful resolution of conflicts, or diplomacy is as much the present day value as humility and tact are the present day positive qualities of the leader. With much certainty, we can identify the figure that brings Black Buffalo into prominence as overemphasis. Although the Journals do give sufficient evidence that the role of Black Buffalo was essential; ultimately, it would have been counter to the self-image of Lewis and Clark for them to support such an impression too much. In an attempt to remain on the reasonable plane might explain why in the following passages the writers of the Lakota narrative opted to mitigate the severity of their earlier claims. In the final passage we do not any longer see Black Buffalo as the sole conflict resolver. The final passage summarizes the role of the explorers. At this point, they are clearly presented as the source of prejudice. The discussion of prejudice connect the two rhetorical forms again: forensic discourse meets deliberative oratory. It is the misunderstanding that came to define the future course of actions after Lewis and Clark; hence, the appeal to stop it. Having shifted the blame for the misunderstanding on the Corps and moved by the “inspiration of the past” to the desire to reconcile, through a series of rhetorical if-questions, the Lakota offer a future together based on the where listening to each other and appreciating each other’s difference counts more than continuing the course set by history.

5.2 Summary

If we are to summarize our exegesis, we might see how the rhetorical appeal to common values underlined the construction of the new image for the Lakota Sioux and therefore for the event of the encounter between Lewis and Clark and the Teton Sioux. It therefore becomes clear that the persuasive purposes of the Lakota’s narrative performance is not to create an alternative moral order but to join in the existing one. The task of bringing the past into the present unites references to the actions that had happened and their interpretations in terms of

the current values. While appealing to reason, emotions, and credibility, the Lakota created a text filled with omissions and exaggerations, as well as unsupported claims. With the final appeal to communication, the performance ended and, with it, the desire to redo history faded. We, however, ought to ask, Can we view the dual narrative performance as a success? If we examine local publications, all of them lauded the show as a success, the reviews were extremely positive: “before hundreds of people, history came alive, filled with tension and confrontation was resolved owing to the wisdom of leading men...” (River News, September 31, 2004). However, the criterion of excellence remained unclear, most mention was given to action scenes and authentic costumes. Perhaps, some of the Bad River Gathering indeed came alive. But did it give way to another Event, that of Big Misunderstanding? Did the latter succeed to become history?

6. Conclusion

In order to answer this question, we need to again return to the very beginning of this essay and thus to the Bicentennial Celebrations of the Corps of Discovery. We should take the beginning in the sense of Edward Said, as the purpose-driven construction of reality in discourse. What the performance showed convincingly, and, perhaps, unequivocally, was the fragility of historical determinism, its fallibility in the face of the desire to redo the “common” history so that justice were to be finally done to the people who persisted without the Archive, to the people, who could not expose “their truth” by simply dipping into their records, but had to keep it alive by talking about it. If justice presupposes the right to express oneself against an unjust accusation, the Bad River Gathering Show with its dual narrative succeeded in obtaining justice in a paradoxical way: by putting a spotlight on the near failure of the legendary expedition, it brought the Lakota Sioux back on the US political agenda as a sovereign people. Then, in opposing the hegemonic narrative of the Journals with a counter story, they not only showed how the myth of Lewis’ and Clark’s heroism was made, but also the predetermined place of the Native People in that construction. Simultaneously, by

responding to the perspective of Lewis and Clark from the vantage point of the present day, the Lakota made a contemporary American re-experience the sense of the other, the very other who, like the dual narrative, could dwell in a parallel world, sharing a common identity without giving away his very difference.

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Notes

ⁱ A number of publications on Lewis and Clark emphasize these topics, a small selection being Daniel B. Botkin, *Our Natural History: The lessons of Lewis and Clark*, Putnam, New York 1995.

Cutright, Paul. *Lewis and Clark: Pioneering Naturalists*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

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ⁱⁱ According to the local organizers, the title of Stephen Ambrose's book, "Undaunted Courage" has become to symbolize the spirit of the Corps.

ⁱⁱⁱ Appendix I presents an extended summary of the event.

^{iv} Both authors had an opportunity to see the performance and then examined a videotape made by a local archivist. The full transcript of the performance is given in Appendix.

^v By thematic, we understand neither a topic, not a referent, but rather those "unarticulated possibilities" that create an alternative path for the story (Bremond and Pavel, 1995, p. 190).