

## PETER WILD

### *Lewis and Clark*

Here I am again in the little house  
with its pots and pans still jumbled in the kitchen  
behind the Mormon church, righteousness  
rising up across the alley from our patch of desert,  
a skyscraper blocking our view of the granitic Catalinas.

all day putting things away,  
taking them down again,  
I can hear him, sitting mouth agape  
painting in his studio while in the huge window  
the finches come to crack the seeds he throws out  
and the thin cactuses writhe thinner in the heat,  
the sputtering candles he puts into his paintings  
with the finches, fresh leaping hearts at their bases,  
hanging in every room of this pink adobe  
house with the sloping, dissolving walls.

it might as well be Ft. Dix  
twenty years ago, tossed across the Atlantic  
to be mustered out at last like Jonah  
and stand bewildered, saved but marooned  
before a whole continent of grizzlies and dancing girls,

to do what Lewis and Clark did,  
starved, lost for years, but steady, writing it all down  
as best they could, making sense for Jefferson  
the clinician, the flashes of an earthly kingdom,  
or what they did, houses burned, their raped  
women bleeding on the snow behind them  
as they escaped from Nauvoo, then gritting their teeth crossed  
the sandy, innumerable rivers to make the deserts indeed bloom  
among the mirages, using that pain  
to grow a heaven all around waiting  
for them in death, just beyond their fingertips,  
where they stand arms akimbo on their glass planets  
watching for their children still in their nightclothes  
to shoot up, fall down, worship them.