



**“A TASTE OF PARADISE”:  
Sacajawea and the Romanticizing of Americanization**

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There is a void deep at the heart of the Sacajawea legend. No true portrait of her exists, nor a real biography. Her voice, at times, can be discerned in the writings of Lewis and Clark; her character glimpsed in their accounts of her actions. The Sacajawea that we know from novels or “girl power” history books marketed to young American readers, the one who smiles at us from her commemorative coin and whose name newly graces a U.S. navy transport ship is a figment of our collective imagination. She is a guide, but not in the way most Americans would think. She is also a token, but not in the way Lewis and Clark imagined when they calculated that the presence of a Native American woman with a baby strapped to her back would reassure the tribes they might encounter as they sought a navigable route to the Pacific.

Historians and critics have recently attempted to set the record straight. Sacajawea’s destiny, nobility and bravery have been deconstructed and reconstructed. The “crude pencil of legend” [McMurtry: 155] has been at least partially erased, romance “peeled” off fact, doubts rightfully cast. Reassessments have documented the errors and exaggerations in the portrait of her handed down in expedition fiction since the late nineteenth century. Because of the absence of a full account of her life, the story of Sacajawea seems to have offered an opportunity to make a point, especially for feminists and American nationalists. The questions range from uncertainties over her name or its spelling to the question of whether she died in 1812 in her early twenties or in 1884 in her eighties. How to represent Sacajawea has become an “issue” for Native Americans, for scholars of the American West, and for promoters and detractors of popular American culture. The key to understanding the development of her character is the romanticizing of American expansionism.

The genesis and transmission of the Sacajawea legend bear examination insofar as they enable us to trace the evolution of the American people’s relationship to the history of expansionism. The particularity of the Sacajawea legend is its evolution over decades of reworking into a practically unassailable illustration of the merits of Manifest Destiny. I will examine how Sacajawea was instrumentalized as a proponent of the assimilation of Native Americans through an analysis of various editions of the journals, such as the 1893 edition by Elliot Coues and the 1964 edition by

John Bakeless, and original copies of several expedition novels, including *The Conquest: The True Story of Lewis and Clark* by Eva Emery Dye (1902), *Bird Woman (Sacajawea): The Guide of Lewis and Clark* by James Schultz (1918), *Red Heroines of the Northwest* by Byron Defenbach (1930), *Star of the West: The Romance of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* by Ethel Hueston (1935), *Forward the Nation* by Donald Peattie (1942), *Sacagawea of the Shoshones* by Della Gould Emmons (1943), *Sacajawea* by Anna Lee Waldo (1978), and *Stone Heart, A Novel of Sacajawea* by Diane Glancy (2003). In addition, the film *The Far Horizons* (directed by Rudolph Maté, 1955) will help me demonstrate how Sacajawea's actions are not related as they are in the expedition journals but rather interpreted as proof of her admiration of the white captains and recognition of American supremacy. Ultimately, I will argue, it has grown impossible to revise the legend of Sacajawea because of the blend of entertainment and moral uplift that Americans expect popular history to provide. As the Pocahontas story proves, even substantial biographical documentation cannot counter the American desire and need for a romantic Indian heroine to sweep away the horrors of disease and massacre that befell Native Americans at the hands of European colonists.

Scholars of the Lewis and Clark expedition have revealed that nineteenth-century Americans seem to have ignored or lacked interest in the journey of the Corps of Discovery. This apathy was mainly due to the lack of a widely available edition of the journals, as the first "Biddle edition" (1814) only had a print run of 1,417 copies. Ensuing reprints in the 1840s and 1850s were quite limited, and at the time of the nation's first great milestone, the centennial of 1876, "the expedition scarcely appeared in histories of the nation" [Spencer: 161]. Interest was renewed by the Coues edition of the journals in 1893, but still on a relatively limited basis. Coues's work, however, remains an important step in the evolution of the portrait of Sacajawea. He liberally redrew Sacajawea's character and increased her participation in the journey considerably. His work strayed widely from what was originally recorded about the expedition, for example when he formulates judgments for the readers by describing Sacajawea as "wonderful" and "admirable", and her husband Charbonneau, as her "craven French apology for a male" [Coues: I, 311].

The seeds of interpretation that Coues planted in his edition of the journals blossomed in expedition fiction when novelists used them to flesh out their characters. The seminal text in the creation of the Sacajawea legend is *The Conquest, The True Story of Lewis and Clark*, a novel written by the suffragette Eva Emery Dye and published in 1902. Her account of the "light bearers", as she refers to Lewis and Clark, is an exercise in hyperbole, carefully crafting the portrait of Sacajawea as an Indian princess. Dye wrote her novel at a time when new meaning was being given to the expedition. The celebrations planned for the expedition's centennial recast the journey not only as the origin of enlightenment and progress in the West, but as the justification for American imperialism, which reached its culmination during the Roosevelt presidency. Dye's novel is in fact an unwieldy mixture of quotes from the journals, an apology of imperialism, and flights of conservative feminist fancy. She recast Sacajawea as a "woman pilot", and attributed "manly" duties to her such as holding the keys to the West, unlocking the gates of the mountains, stretching her hands across the

continent, exhorting the Corps of Discovery to go forth to Asia. The seal for the centennial celebration of Lewis and Clark's journey in Portland, Oregon (1905) displays Lewis, Clark and a woman with flowing blond hair covered with a flag representing "Progress" or "Columbia" taking over for Sacajawea. The three of them walk into the Pacific Ocean, suggesting that the way has been opened for the conquest of new American colonies in Asia [Spencer: 166]. At this time, Sacajawea became a full partner in the "discovery" of the West. As the historian James Ronda stated, "In countless statues, poems, paintings, and books she is depicted as a westward-pointing pathfinder providing invaluable direction for bewildered explorers" [Ronda: 257].

Dye leaves no stone unturned in her effort to shroud Sacajawea in an aura of legend. Dye gave her "Indian princess" a noble setting in the Mandan village by relating a purely fabricated "romance" of that tribe which was "originally Welsh who had left in 1170". They are superior to other Indian tribes, being "blue-eyed", "fairer than other tribes, planting gardens, making pottery and dwelling in houses" [Dye: 185]. Although she was not a Mandan herself, Sacajawea is nonetheless superior to other Indian women because of her small, straight nose and her "skin pure copper like the statue in some old Florentine gallery" [290]. Dye constantly elevates Sacajawea to another plane, presenting her as poised, articulate and equally, if not more, important than Lewis and Clark. This mixture of stationary and dynamic images set the tone for future representations of Sacajawea. Simultaneously guide and statue, Sacajawea reflects the mandate given to Native Americans to cooperate with Americans and adopt sedentary lifestyles. The success of Dye's novel inspired the Portland Women's Club to commission a statue of her, unveiled in 1905.

Yet, Dye was very careful to soften Sacajawea's image by portraying her as a sort of a pioneer woman who was also "interested in domestic utensils, wooden bowls, spoons of horn, skewers and spits for roasting meat..." [252]. In addition, she was an attentive and affectionate mother. In short, she was "a model of purity, modesty, and domesticity" [Kessler: 84]. Dye used Sacajawea to argue that in the progress brought by Americans lay the prospect of progress for women as well. She converted Sacajawea into a successful agent of expansionism who knew what was in the best interests of Native Americans and could inspire women readers to fight to obtain the vote.

One of the most striking features of Dye's portrait is the "modern" relationship that Sacajawea has with her husband Charbonneau. Whereas all other authors of fictional accounts of the expedition vilify Charbonneau for his laziness and cowardice, Dye applies her imagination to their daily life together and spins a yarn of domestic harmony and complicity that she attributes to Sacajawea's exceptional character. Sacajawea, she states, is aware of her luck in having a white husband, because even "the worst white man was better than an Indian husband" [Dye: 196]. In order to highlight the contrast between Charbonneau and Native American men, Dye relates an imagined scene with Charbonneau "preparing the daintiest soups and steaks" for Sacajawea after she gave birth to Jean Baptiste [197]. Later on, amongst the Clatsop Indians, "with her beautiful dress and a husband who

sometimes carried the baby, [she] was a new sort of mortal on this Pacific coast" [252]. While we do know that Charbonneau's cooking skills were appreciated and that his *boudin blanc* was a great success<sup>1</sup>, we also know from the journals themselves that his conduct towards Sacajawea was nothing like that of a male supporter of suffragettes. On the contrary, the journals provide a rather neutral description of Sacajawea's subservience to her husband, and often refer to her simply as "Charbonneau's squaw"<sup>2</sup> with the exception of the incident cited on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1805 when Charbonneau hit her: "This evening Charbonneau struck his Indian woman, for which Captain Clark gave him a severe reprimand" [Bakeless: 235]. There is surely no evidence to suggest that feminists would find inspiration in the life that Sacajawea led with Charbonneau.

Coues and Dye laid the cornerstone of the new portrait of Sacajawea as an innately superior Indian woman who demonstrated a perfect blend of instinct and heroism. Showing her proximity to nature and the animal world is another part of the positive essentialist portrait they popularized. Sacajawea is often compared to different animals in expedition fiction. A noteworthy example is the frontispiece to *Bird Woman (Sacajawea): The Guide of Lewis and Clark* by James Schultz (1918) which offers the reader an original poem by Edna Dean Proctor (1838-1923), a New England poetess, in which noble animals are used to create her portrait:

Glad she turned from the grassy plains and led their way to the West,  
Her course as true as the swan's that flew north to its reedy nest;  
Her eye as keen as the eagle's when the young lambs feed below;  
Her ear alert as the stag's at morn guarding the fawn and doe.  
Straight was she as a hillside fir, lithe as the willow-tree,  
And her foot as fleet as the antelope's when the hunter rides the lea;  
In broided tunic and moccasins, with braided raven hair,  
And closely belted buffalo robe with her baby nestling there—  
Girl of but sixteen summers, the homing bird of the quest,  
Free of the tongues of the mountains, deep on her heart imprest,  
Sho-sho'-ne Sa-ca'-ga-we-a led the way to the West! [Proctor: i]

Proctor's portrait blends classic elements of poetry like the swan, eagle and stag with Western images like the antelope and the buffalo to convey Sacajawea's qualities. Sacajawea is also vested with the purpose of a homing bird; nothing can lead her off the course of her journey to be reunited with her people in the mountains. Her silhouette is modern, with naturally good posture and the athletic figure of a woman whose movements are not restrained by her clothing, distinguishing her both from conservative American matriarchs and from other Native American women who were often portrayed as squat and misshapen. Two years after the publication of this poem, American women were granted the right to vote in the Nineteenth Amendment. Not surprisingly, Sacajawea was shortly thereafter

<sup>1</sup> May 9, 1805, DeVoto, *The Course of Empire*: 107.

<sup>2</sup> Some have taken Lewis and Clark's use of the word "squaw" as demeaning, but there is no evidence to suggest the term was considered derogatory in the early nineteenth century as "squaw" was adopted from the Massachusetts (without an s) language and is attested in English in 1622 with the neutral meaning of "woman". Since the late 1970s, however, its use has become controversial and it is now widely held to be pejorative.

retired from duty as Native American suffragette. Another more romantic destiny awaited her.

The portrait of Sacajawea created by Byron Defenbach in *Red Heroines of the Northwest* (1930) is radically different in tone. In the introductory chapters of his novel, Defenbach, a historian of the state of Idaho, clearly states that Manifest Destiny was racially justified. Defenbach returns Sacajawea to what he claims is her rightful place on the inferior “plane of intelligence” of the primitive Indians. Defenbach’s short history of the evolution of the Native American stops at a place just beyond animal where “he retained many of the instinctive habits and emotions of the creatures below him. He was crafty like the fox and as imitative as any monkey”. Defenbach condemns the literary excesses in fiction about Native Americans, citing James Fenimore Cooper as “our first and greatest offender” in the misrepresentation of Indians: “His characters were continually doing and saying and thinking things altogether inconsistent with their mental equipment”. Although he does not cite Dye’s name, we can easily imagine him chastising her with this comment: “do not attempt to lift their moccasined feet to those paths on which you have an inherited right of way” [Defenbach: 28]. He refuses to grant Sacajawea the same innate status of princess as Coues and Dye did, and unlike Proctor, only compares her to a beaver in an image he invented, praising her “instinctive skill of an aquatic animal” as she supposedly swims along in the swift cold current of the Missouri saving the captain’s journals and instruments after a pirogue capsized [Defenbach: 83].<sup>3</sup>

Defenbach’s precept is that there was nothing truly exceptional about Sacajawea before she came into contact with the Americans. For him, she is simply a happy girl who happens to have presence of mind and courage in the face of adversity. She is the epitome of the child who needs the protection of her Great White Fathers. She is, however, “crafty” enough to recognize the superiority of white men and she flirts with Charbonneau in order to get herself married to a white man. The only thing that makes Sacajawea exemplary is her devotion to the Americans’ cause. Defenbach constantly evokes her happiness amongst the Americans. The scene of Sacajawea’s homecoming to Shoshone lands during the expedition provides Defenbach with the opportunity to turn Dye’s Indian princess image on end:

What the girl’s thoughts may have been on her return to her home and her brief stay there, we can only surmise. Certainly she saw little improvement in the conditions surrounding her people... If she saw little change in her people, they must have observed much that was new in her. We may well believe that she displayed to the fullest advantage the trinkets and gewgaws of which she was so fond. Her straight black hair flew in the wind as she rode her newly acquired horse; her skirt and robe of deerhide had given way to garments of many colors; ribbons adorned her, and outshining all other ornaments was the belt of royal blue beads [Defenbach: 106-7].

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<sup>3</sup> We know from the journals that Sacajawea never ended up in the river, rather she calmly plucked the objects washed overboard out of the water. The temptation to exaggerate is too great for the novelists and screenwriters. The swimming scene was also filmed for *The Far Horizons*.

In Defenbach's version, Sacajawea's mark of "royalty" is her American appearance. She prides herself in displaying the symbols of a better life. Her hair is no longer braided in the traditional fashion, and, unlike Shoshone women, she is allowed to mount a horse and even has one of her own. Defenbach, like so many novelists after him, redresses Sacajawea in colorful American clothes. Finally, her belt of blue beads is not a symbol of her status of princess amongst her people, but a gift from Lewis and Clark in recognition of her bravery in saving their instruments and papers. She wears it as a sign of her assimilation and her conversion to the Americans' cause. Indeed, according to Defenbach, "her life with a superior race was putting its mark upon her" [Defenbach: 111].

To remain fair to Defenbach, however, there is a basis for this interpretation of Sacajawea's character in the journals. Lewis declares on July 28, 1805: "if she has enough to eat and a few trinkets, I believe she would be perfectly content anywhere" [DeVoto: 171]. We may recognize in Lewis's reasoning one of the arguments which will later be used to justify the expulsion of Native Americans from their lands. Defenbach and other expedition novelists seize on this observation and develop it by ascribing to Sacajawea the desire to parade the trappings of life with the Americans before the women of her tribe, and to use these advantages to help her American father negotiate with her brother. Peattie, in *Forward the Nation* (1942), interprets Lewis's comment to mean that Lewis himself offered the reward of a string of glass beads to Sacajawea. He adds that "...it seemed to her that fire and the sun and the light of the stars all flashed from the depths of these mysterious and priceless jewels" [Peattie: 122]. The novels thus perpetuated the belief that the expedition marked the beginning of an improvement in the lives of Native Americans.

Ethel Hueston's *Star of the West: The Romance of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1935) blends elements from Dye and Defenbach's portraits, and makes Sacajawea into an insipid mish-mash of innocent child, bothersome coquette and eager beaver. Hueston's kitchen-sink approach to Sacajawea's character is summed up in her description of Sacajawea as a "loyal, royal princess slave" [Hueston: 334]. Hueston can't decide who Sacajawea is; she is simultaneously innately noble, inferior to the Americans and slave to an irascible husband. Lewis and Clark are portrayed as ridiculously solicitous of the young Sacajawea's comfort, eager to explain the importance of their expedition to her and give her a prominent place in it and its records. Hueston develops a considerable amount of interaction between Sacajawea and all of the members of the expedition. She voices the expedition in modern dialogues which remind us that Hollywood will soon be interested in producing a film on the subject. Of all the works of expedition fiction, this is certainly one of the most sentimental journeys west. Our heroes repeatedly heap praise on Sacajawea. Sometimes Clark vaunts her merits: "She has good stuff in her, that Indian woman" [137], sometimes Lewis: "She should be noble. It is the blood of kings she has in her savage veins" [239]. Hueston's Lewis and Clark often make comments in a tone we don't associate with the expedition. Here, Clark's "warm smile" and breezy reaction when Sacajawea brings them wild artichokes give only a slight indication of the Hollywood sound of Hueston's dialogues:

'Janey, what an unexpected asset you are turning out to be!' [Clark] declared. 'I dare say in the end it will be you and no one else who keeps us from starving, saving our lives and our expedition' [130].

Sacajawea literally crowds the Corps of Discovery off the page. As Bernard De Voto writes in *The Course of Empire*, one is led to believe that "Lewis, Clark, and their command were privileged to assist in the Sacajawea Expedition, which is not quite true" [De Voto, *The Course of Empire*: 478].

Like Defenbach, Hueston imagines Sacajawea's progress during the journey from a "breathless, thrilled, attentive witness to every small detail" [Hueston: 130] of the Americans' life to an active participant in the future of her people. At the moment of the vote on the winter camp, she is represented as enthralled with her "Great White Father" Jefferson and "so impressed that she could hardly speak" [247] at the idea that he would read about her vote in the journals. In one passage, Ordway gives Sacajawea a lecture on American democracy, including this description of what she pronounces as Con-gress:

That's where all the chiefs of all the white tribes put on their best clothes and go and sit in chairs and take snuff out of gold snuff-boxes and the President of the United States will get up and read them the book. It is the biggest council in the world [247].

The symbol of American civilization that Sacajawea chooses to bring as a gift from her new American father to her Shoshone brother Cameahwait is a lump of sugar. Hueston concocts a scene in which a "generous white man", the fictional expedition cook, tells her to help herself to the barrel of sugar:

The cook smiled. All women loved sweet things—savage or civilized. And this was the first sugar she had ever tasted. 'Take a bagful and put it away,' he said kindly. 'Then whenever you get an ache in your sweet tooth and want a nibble, you'll have it handy' [131].

Hueston probably simply ignored that sugar was not on the list of the provisions such as portable soup, salted pork, flour or corn meal that Lewis and Clark took with them on their journey. Sugar is simply what Hueston imagines to be the single most compelling symbol of American civilization for an Indian woman. The white sugar initiates Sacajawea to the notions of abundance, and indulgence of appetite which Hueston uses to demonstrate the superiority of American culture. Moreover, through the lump of sugar, she elevates Sacajawea to the status of a civilized woman, by stating that they share the same tastes.

The short dialogue between Sacajawea and the cook underlines one of the key notions present in all works of expedition fiction, that Sacajawea was compelled to help the Americans save her tribe from starvation. The observations made by Lewis in his journal entry on August 16, 1805 describe the dire conditions in which the Shoshone were living. He relates how the Shoshone fell on a deer killed by Drouillard "like a parcel of famished dogs" and ate raw deer entrails with blood running from their mouths. He shares his sentiment of astonishment that "human nature ever presented itself in a shape so nearly allied to the brute creation" and states that he "viewed these poor starved devils with pity and compassion" [De Voto, *The Course of*

*Empire*: 198-9]. The comments in the journals provide the raw material for fictional scenes in which Sacajawea takes the lead role in negotiating with her brother Cameahwait because she is spellbound by the Americans' wealth and ashamed that her people live in hunger and fear [Defenbach: 106]. Scenes such as these strengthened the justification of American expansionism for a contemporary audience. In *Star of the West*, Sacajawea describes how the Missouri tribes have benefited from the presence of the Americans to trade and lead comfortable lives sleeping in beds, wearing beautiful clothes, hunting and farming. Finally, as proof of the advantages of cooperating with the Americans, she brings out a small package and urges her brother to taste its contents.

Cameahwait tasted slowly, turning the delicate morsel on his tongue. 'It is the taste of paradise,' he said. 'Do the tribes on the Missouri have this rare food?' 'No,' she admitted, 'this is a food of the white men. It is the su-gar' [Hueston: 209].

In Hueston's version of Sacajawea's triumph, she brings the promise of a sweeter future to her tribe; she grows into the role of agent of Americanization because she herself is seduced by the paradise she imagines life in America to be. For the 1930s reader, this type of bribe would have been considered a legitimate way to improve the lives of Native Americans.

Novels such as *Star of the West*, *Forward the Nation* by Donald Peattie (1942), *Sacajawea of the Shoshones* by Della Gould Emmons (1943), *Sacajawea* by Anna Lee Waldo (1978) and the film *The Far Horizons*, directed by Rudolph Maté (1955) show how seduction came to play an increasing role in the Sacajawea story. Expedition fiction evolved once again, leaving behind the image of Sacajawea as a noble Indian princess or simply an eager convert to the American cause and introducing a heroine who had fallen in love with Lewis or Clark. Like Defenbach before her, Hueston portrays Sacajawea as simply spellbound by any white man: "A white man! She liked white men" [209]. Emmons describes how Sacajawea's "heart was singing, her face alight with worship for these white men going to her people, going to send traders to them, going to free them from hunger and fear" [Emmons: 106]. The very fact that Sacajawea may be portrayed as in love with Clark (in the majority of cases) or Lewis suggests that the need for a cautionary tale about the appropriate place of Native Americans outweighed the novelistic impulse to deny historical reality to the point of uniting Sacajawea with one of the explorers.

Although the question of interracial romance comes to the forefront in these works, few authors dare to transform Sacajawea into a sex symbol. In *Forward the Nation*, however, Peattie gives this description of Sacajawea, observed by Shannon, who has fallen in love with her:

Her coppery skin was beautiful as the wet rocks, gleaming in the sunshine, her breasts had a brave young lift to them like the rise of the land. Her braids he loved, for the way they fell straight down from her head, sloped in pride over her bosom, and swung free with every stroke of her paddle. He took a secret pleasure in her sturdy figure going ahead of him, with a step so much lighter and surer than his or

any other American's, and in the way she carried herself, true as a solitary pine [Peattie: 148].

Peattie's description of Sacajawea is not unlike Edna Dean Proctor's in its use of praise for her fleet foot and her erect posture. Peattie, however, eroticizes Proctor's text while sexualizing the conquest of the land. By using Shannon's voice, Peattie sidesteps the dangerous suggestion that one of the captains desired Sacajawea.

The majority of the novelists focus on the blossoming of Sacajawea as she falls in love with Manifest Destiny personified by the captains. She is transformed from the serious, diligent guide of feminist expedition romance into a coquettish Indian belle in American clothes obsessed with pleasing the captains. Scenes of Sacajawea's daily life no longer show her digging up roots all day. Instead, she is bent over her pewter mirror trying to twist her hair into a proper topknot in vain, or prancing about her tent attempting to master the art of walking with her toes turned outward.

Clothing is once again used as a symbol of Sacajawea's assimilation, but this time to demonstrate her aesthetic "Americanization", that is, her awakening to the importance of femininity. In many of the expedition novels, the captains give her a blue coat to replace the blue beads she offers to a trader in order to obtain a robe of sea otter fur for Clark. While Clark's trade for the robe is attested in the journals, the gift of a coat to Sacajawea is not. The fictional coat becomes the symbol of Sacajawea's accession to a new status akin to a white woman's: "... she folded [the coat] lovingly about her, preening a little, her face aglow, her lips parted with pleased excitement. 'Do I look like a paleface woman now?'" [Hueston: 239]. Another invention in the fiction from this period is Sacajawea's curiosity about white women. In truly absurd scenes, she asks Lewis and Clark numerous questions about them, including how white their skin is, how they wear their hair, etc. In *The Far Horizons*, Sacajawea earnestly asks Clark, "Are the women of your people beautiful?"

The movie *The Far Horizons* (1954) represents the most advanced attempt to whiten Sacajawea for American audiences. Not only is Sacajawea played by Donna Reed with heavy makeup, but after forty-five minutes, she is literally washed of her Native American appearance when she dives into the rapids of the Missouri River to save the expedition journals. Back on the boat, she leaves her fringed buckskin behind and appears in a soft dress of purple muslin. "Do you like it?" she murmurs to Clark. "It's very pretty," Clark responds hesitantly, giving her a critical glance. "Maybe we could fix it up a little." Clark proceeds to drape her with blue beads and even tie some around her waist. He then "rebaptizes" her:

Clark: 'You look a lot more like Mary Jane than Saca ... That name's going to give me a lot of trouble. You mind if I call you Janey?'

Sacajawea: 'Janey?'

Clark: 'It sounds pretty.'

Sacajawea: 'What does it mean?'

Clark: 'It means beautiful.'

After redressing her and renaming her after an enigmatic "Mary Jane" (no further explanation is given), Clark puts on the finishing touches by

chopping a foot of material off of the bottom of her dress, which was “too long”, and using the surplus material to tie her hair up. With Sacajawea’s make-over now complete, the expedition could proceed on.

In the end, these budding love stories all share the same cautionary message, that the lasting romance and drama in the expedition story is that of American expansion, not the impossible longings of Sacajawea for Clark. The Native Americans, like Sacajawea, must know their place and trust and admire white men from afar. In a multitude of scenes, our heroine is humbled by an encounter with Clark’s wife Julia. Going back to Dye’s novel, we may find the first of these meetings which throw the spotlight on Julia’s hair and dress:

We can see Sacagawea now, startled and expectant, her heart beating like a trip-hammer under her bodice, looking at Julia! No dreams of her mountains had ever shown such sunny hair, such fluffs of curls, like moonrise on the water. And that diaphanous cloud—was it a dress? No Shoshone girl ever saw such buckskin, finer than blossom of the bitter-root [Dye: 351].

The same scene in Hueston’s novel thirty years later shows clearly how the underpinnings of the drama have been shifted to incorporate the narrative of Sacajawea’s desire for Clark. Whereas Dye’s Sacajawea is simply in awe of Julia, Hueston’s heroine has her epiphany in St. Louis:

It was when she saw Judy that she realized once and for all, that she could never be quite like a white woman. Judy, not only generous and kind by nature, but ardently anxious to please her husband, exerted herself to be agreeable. It was not easy. Sacagawea had no pretty parlor graces, no social suavity...‘I cannot be like these people. Their clothes feels strange. My hands cannot be like those small white hands of Judith’s’ [Hueston: 356-8].

Despite all its build-up to a possible interracial marriage (Clark actually goes so far as to swear to Lewis that he is going to marry Janey), *The Far Horizons* is no exception to the rule against miscegenation. After one and a half hours of meaningful glances, ardent kisses and murmurs of “Janey darling”, the romance of Clark and Sacajawea moves off the trail to Washington, DC, where Clark introduces Sacajawea to Jefferson. Sacajawea’s heroic submission shines through to the bitter end. Clark introduces her as “responsible to a great extent for the success of the voyage”, but upstairs, with Julia, the sight of her dresses and perfume bottles make Sacajawea realize that she is not cut out for life with Americans and that she “cannot be something” she isn’t. She bravely takes the next stagecoach out of Washington without saying goodbye, as the cut to a still picture of the mountains suggests that she will find her own way back to her people.

Finally, even Anna Lee Waldo’s *Sacajawea*, the 1978 novel which once again defined the Indian heroine as a proto-feminist for a generation of baby-boomers, gives into the coat cliché. She draws an exhaustive portrait (over 1,300 pages in paperback) of a brave woman who wistfully takes leave of the man she admired (Clark), consoling herself with relics of the expedition, especially a comb, a mirror and a jacket:

She pulled the jacket around her bare shoulders and smelled the coat's familiar odor, breathing deeply into the folds. This was her medicine. This was the thing that preserved her courage and reminded her of places beyond the river villages [Waldo: 712].

Waldo's work is a reminder that even in a 1970s political climate more favorable to Native American determination, certain stereotypes about indigenous women's adoration of white men could not be shaken.

Since we will never know the true extent of the admiration that Clark and Sacajawea may have had for each other, the signs that do exist in the journals that they had a certain fondness for each other have been used to legitimize these fictional accounts. As far-fetched as the novels and the film are, most historians and critics acknowledge that there was some kind of attachment between them. They also generally credit Clark with greater sensitivity than Lewis. But the very fact that the nature of their relationship is a subject of scholarly inquiry is revelatory of a yearning for a deeper understanding of the motivations of the captains and the Native Americans. Sacajawea is ultimately a guide to what Americans would like to believe about the history of the Americanization of the continent.

Once the how and why of the romanticizing of Sacajawea's story have been fully analyzed, a new question crops up. Can her story be de-romanticized? As the critic Donna Kessler points out, "Sacagawea's persistent animation [1...] has addressed timely and seemingly timeless needs and aspirations of Euro-American culture, an association that has endured for nearly two hundred years" [Kessler: 175]. Attempts to bring this successful "association" to an end seem doomed. Diane Glancy's *Stone Heart, A Novel of Sacajawea* (2003) amputates the romance from Sacajawea's story by trying to produce a second-person narrative in her voice. Of Native American origin herself, the author writes a simple account of the expedition seen through Sacajawea's eyes with excerpts from the journals placed in inserts on a number of pages. The simplicity of the sentence structure and repetition of certain elements and images can make the text seem monotonous, but the author undeniably succeeds in making the reader feel she has achieved a more realistic representation of Sacajawea's experience of the expedition. Nonetheless, certain passages remind us that Glancy's enterprise is every bit as subjective as that of other expedition novelists: "You know the explorers will change what you are, that you will be taken into them, that they can look past you without thinking" [Glancy: 14].

It is certainly legitimate to wonder what may now be written or read about Sacajawea. In our day and age, historical re-enactments which focus intensely on the authentic reproduction of key moments in American history continue to evacuate the moral problems which generated them. Similarly, markers along the Lewis and Clark trail or stories in children's books glorify Sacajawea's role in the expedition without mentioning the American government's repeated betrayals of its treaties with tribes. The paradise which the legend of Sacajawea and the romance of Sacajawea and Clark now point to is a paradise of denial. Only discarding much overstatement and reading the journals with tact and care, to paraphrase Larry McMurtry, will

allow us to appreciate the significance of Sacajawea's presence amongst the expedition members.

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