NORMAN K DENZIN

Sacagawea's Nickname[1], or The Sacagawea Problem

The tropical emotion that has created a legendary Sacajawea awaits study…Few others have had so much sentimental fantasy expended on them. A good many men who have written about her…have obviously fallen in love with her. Almost every woman who has written about her has become Sacajawea in her inner reverie (DeVoto, 1952, p. 618; see also Waldo, 1978, p. xii).

Anyway, what it all comes down to is this: the story of Sacagawea…can be told a lot of different ways (Allen, 1984, p. 24).

Many millions of Native American women have lived and died…and yet, until quite recently, only two – Pocahantas and Sacagawea – have left even faint tracings of their personalities on history (McMurtry, 2001, p. 155).

PROLOGUE 1

THE CAMERA EYE (1)[2]:

Introduction: Voice 1: Narrator-as-Dramatist

This essay[3] is a co-performance text, a four-act play – with act one and four presented here – that builds on and extends the performance texts presented in Denzin (2004, 2005).[4] "Sacagawea's Nickname, or the Sacagawea Problem" enacts a critical cultural politics concerning Native American women and their presence in the Lewis and Clark Journals. It is another telling of how critical race theory and critical pedagogy meet popular history. The revisionist history at hand is the history of Sacagawea and the representation of Native American women in two cultural and symbolic landscapes: the expedition journals, and Montana's most famous novel, A B Guthrie, Jr.'s mid-century novel (1947), *Big Sky* (Blew, 1988, p. 633; Farr and Bevis, 2001, p. 3).[5]

The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial corresponds with the 50 year anniversary of *Big Sky* (Farr and Bevis, 2001). Guthrie's book is Montana's most famous novel, the source of its big sky

origin myth. The journals and *Big Sky* are, at one level, interchangeable texts[6], for Guthrie "… drew from the journals…and in some cases…incidents appear to be lifted almost verbatim" (Garceau, 2001, p. 151). *Big Sky* is the foundational novel for modern western literature (see Blew, 1988, p. 634). Its West is the west of white males, Turner's (1920) frontier, a West that is: "Innocence, anti-civilization, savage and beautiful and doomed" (Stegner, 1965, p. viii). Guthrie's West is an imaginary, a site of "…a dream that most Americans, however briefly, or vainly, have dreamed and that some have briefly captured" (Stegner, 1965, p. viii).[7]

This play re-interprets Sacagawea's place in the Guthrie and Lewis and Clark mythology. In the summers of 2003, 2004 and 2005, Sacagawea's footprints, like those of the two explorers, were all over the greater Yellowstone region.[8] You could not pass a bookstore and not see her face or name on the cover of a new publication, or a revision of a so-called classic such as Anna Lee Waldo's expanded (1978) epic novel *Sacajawea*, (see also Slaughter, 2003; Metcalf, 2002; Tinling, 2001; Hunsaker, 2003; 2001; also Clark and Edmonds, 1979; Book, 2003; Fradin and Fradin, 2002; Rowland, 1989; Gilman, 2003).[9]

I attempt to create a chorus of competing voices (and images) concerning the west, Native American women and their place in our collective imagination. I situate these voices and discourses in my own biography, using the pain of memory as a way of writing my way into this complex cultural space (Ulmer, 1989, p. 209).[10] I understand that the presence of the Native American woman in the collective white imagination is almost entirely a matter of racist myth and Euro-American patriarchal stereotype, stereotypes which confine her to one of two categories, squaw or princess. (Garceau, 2001, p. 120).

In reading the Guthrie and Lewis and Clark texts side-by-side, I hope to create a political performance that contests the masculine, white frontier, version of the west (Garceau, 2001, p. 122). I want a performance that advances the project of indigenous decolonization (Williams, 1997), a project that unravels and deconstructs racist Western mythology. It is necessary to critically interpret the legend and the myth of Sacagawea. If we fail to come to terms with the Sacagawea problem, a problem symbolized in her American nickname Janey, we fail to confront our own past, and the place of the Lewis and Clark legend and its sexual politics in that past.

ACT ONE

Scene One: Getting Started:

Voice 2: ***(off-stage): An Aside:***

> If the woman named Sacagawea had not appeared in front of Lewis and Clark in November of 1804, she would have to have been invented. The Corps needed a gendered presence that would define proper, civilized, white, American male [and female] conduct – conduct that was not Indian-like, and not French, or British, or half-breed. She served this function and served it well. She is central to the Lewis and Clark narrative. In her telling, writers have created the proper place for the fully assimilated Native American woman and her family.

Voice 3: Donna Kessler and James Rhonda: paraphrase:

There are multiple versions of Sacagawea as she appears in legend and myth, versions which have undergone successive revisions since her original presence in the Journal diaries (1996, pp. 98, 104, 109).

> Three questions have preoccupied
> Sacagawea scholars:
> the spelling of her name;
> whether or not she was
> an indispensable guide
> for the Expedition;
> and the date and place of her death (Ronda, 1984, pp. 256-58).

Voice 4: Narrator:

From the moment she joins the Corps, 4 November, 1804, until 17 August 1806 when she is set back ashore at the Mandan villages in North Dakato, Sacagawea is a hovering presence in the journals.[11] There are more than 125 references to her (Slaughter, 2003, p. 102).[12] Of course there are multiple spellings of her name: Sacajawea, Sacagawea, Sakakawea, Sah ca gah we ah, and nicknames: Janey, the squaw, bird woman, boat launcher, interpretress, Wife of Shabano, the Indian woman, remarkable little woman (Ronda, 1984, pp. 256-57).

Voice 5: James Ronda:

The two recurrent spellings of her name – Sacajawea and Sacagawe – indicate membership in two different tribal communities. Sacajawea is Shoshoni, and means boat launcher. Sacagawea is Hidatsa, and translates as bird woman (Ronda, 1984, p. 257).

Voice 6: Narrator as Interpreter:

In the diaries she appears as a savage, a slave, a squaw, an Indian woman, a boat launcher, a guide, and "Bird Woman". In the second published version of the Journals (Coues, 1893), she is a savage, a guide and a heroine. In turn-of-the-century novels (Dye, 1902), popular history (Hosmer, 1903), drama (Wolfrom, 1918), and suffragist literature, she is transformed from a savage into a princess, a guide, a heroine, to a model of modern feminism's independent American woman (Kessler, 1996, p. 67). By mid-century, novelists suggest that she and William Clark are involved in a romantic relationship, thereby "…bringing interracial comity to Anglo-American conquest" (Slaughter, 2003, p. 87; also Kessler, 1996, p. 104).

Voice 7: Narrator who Summarizes History:

On the occasion of the Bicentennial, she appears as a captive mother and interpreter (Hall, 2003); a source of family for Clark (McMurtry, 2001, p. 161); a creation of 20th-century American popular culture; our "national Indian, our

founding princess" (Slaughter, 2003, p. 112). Her story and "…ours are so intertwined that any claim to have separated them would be a lie" (Slaughter, 2003, p. 86). Images of her appear on coins, stamps, paintings, crockery, and comic books. Some claim that more statues have been dedicated to her than to any other woman in the United States (Hunsaker, 2001, p. xiii).

Scene Two: An Obituary

Voice 8: NEWSREEL (1): (off-stage):

Sacagawea: Obituary: A Prose-Poem

Sacagawea was a
Wind River Shoshone,
AKA "Bird Woman."
She was born in
1788, or 1789 in Salmon, Idaho.
There are
two accounts of her death,
each discredits the other (Moulton, 2003, p. 380).
In one account she died
on December 20, 1812
at the age of 25
of a putrid fever
at Fort Manuel, South Dakatoa (Slaughter, 2003, pp. 88, 91).
In a second account
she is joined by her son,
on the Wind River Reservation,
where she dies on April 9, 1884,
at Fort Washakie, Wyoming (Hunsaker, 2001, p. 72).

* * *

We would honor her best
by celebrating
her
accomplishments
as a slave who
transcended
and escaped
her condition (Slaughter, 2003, p. 113).

Scene Three: *Big Sky*

Voice 9: Narrator-as-Literary Critic and Literary Historian:

I read this legend, in part, through one of its most famous literary extensions, A. B. Guthrie, Jr.s' *Big Sky (*1947).[13] Modeled after the Lewis and Clark narrative, *Big Sky* is the story of Kentuckian Boone Caudill, who, when the story begins, is seventeen years old and leaving home with hopes of becoming a mountain man. Boone meets, falls in love with, and fathers a blind son with a Native American woman named Teal Eye. Teal Eye is a fictional woman, much like Sacagawea, Lewis and Clark's Bird Woman. She is Guthrie's Indian princess, his Pocahontas. But she is more than Pocahontas.

In falling in love with Teal Eye, and in taking her into his teepee, Boone, who has become a White Indian, symbolically "...marries the wilderness" (Stegner, 1965, p. x), turning his back on ordinary white society. Teal Eye represents the freedom from constraint that he desires. But as he embraces the Native American and mountain man way of life, he experiences a fatal, moral lapse from civilization" (Stegner, 1965, p. x). He is self-reliant, courageous, and larger-than-life. But he is also ruthless, resentful, conspiratorial, and violent in his savagery. This savagery "...which has become his strength, is revealed as his fatal weakness" (Stegner, 1965, p. x). Untamable, he is called to the western territory beyond the edge of civilization (Stegner, 1965, p. xii). And he cannot go back. In a jealous rage, he shoots his best friend Jim Deakins. This murder shuts him off from all connections to the wilderness and to civilization. Doomed, he has nowhere to go. And it all started when he fell in love with Teal Eye, the Indian princess.[14]

> The simplistic princess-squaw,
> Virgin-Whore gender system
> that operates in the Journals, and in *Big Sky*
> reveals an unbridgeable gap between...
> fictional squaws and the actual lives of mid-nineteenth-century native... women...
> There is an adamance to... [these] caricatures of
> women, native and white that suggests strong feelings
> about gender and power
> in American society...
> economic productivity and active sexuality
> are desirable traits in the women who inhabit the pages of
> the journals and *Big Sky,* but
> only if these women do not challenge white male authority (Garceau, 2001, p. 150, paraphrase).

When Boone takes Teal Eye as a wife he does more than marry the wilderness (Garceau, 2001, p. 121). He marries into an imaginary gender system, to paraphrase Garceau, that bears "... little resemblance to either actual women of the historic Plains or Mississippi Valley...or to the seamless metaphors of kinship and intermarriage that knit together First Nations women, and Spanish, French and English colonizers, Hispanic and Anglo emigrants and European immigrants" (Garceau, 2001, p. 122; also see Christian, 2004, p. 86).

This flat conception of feminine identity is also evident in the Journals when Clark (November 22, 1804) calls Sacagawea "the squar of the interpreter" (Moulton, 2003, p. 70). It is also present when he says (October 121, 1804) that the Souix have a curious custom "...to give handsome Squars to those whome they wish to show some acknowledgements" (Moulton, 2003, p. 57).

Scene Four: Miscegenation:

Voice 10: Sex in Big Sky

Boone's squaw lifted her gown and...lay back...lay waiting, thinking about the scarlet cloth her man had bargained for...She wasn't bad – straight and young and so light-colored a man might take her for white in the dusk (Guthrie, 1947, pp. 125-126, paraphrase).

Voice 11: Reading Sexual Politics: Childbirth and Mixed Breeds:

The racial politics and miscegenation message are clear. The races cannot successfully mix.

Voice 12: Shirley Christian (paraphrase):

Hold on here. Lewis and Clark and Guthrie were operating with only one model of racial and sexual politics. There was another model, the one the French followed. Based on strictures of the Roman Catholic Church, children born from sexual relations between First Nations Women and French trappers and French businessmen where christened and treated as French (Christian, 2004, p. 86), not as outcastes or half breeds.

Voice 13: Lewis and Whitehouse[15]

(in The Lewis and Clark Journals, Moulton, 2003, pp. 198, 228):

The ease with which the women of the aborigines of North America bring forth their children is rather a gift of nature...Indian women who are pregnant by whitemen experience more difficulty in childbirth than when pregnant by an Indian...We saw also a Child among them, which was a mix'd breed, between a White Man & Indian Women. The fairness of its Skin, & rosey colour, convinced us that it must have been the case.

Voice 14: Back to Sexual Politics and the Sacagawea Problem:

White men, like Boone, who fall in love with Indian women have no place in white or Native American society. Native American women, like Teal Eye, or perhaps Sacagawea, who fall in love with white men will be trivialized, abandoned, or killed. *This is the message buried deep inside the Sacagawea Problem.*

But there is another side to Janey's problem. The gender and sexuality system that operates in the Journals allows Lewis and Clark (and their co-authors) to write as if they were the first to witness or write about First Nations women and their place in a political and sexual economy. By ignoring what had come before

them, they, like Guthrie, were able to freely deploy the Euro-American tropes of whore, virgin, and prostitute.

Voice 15: Lewis: On What makes Sacagawea Happy:

"If she has enough
to eat and
a few trinkets
I believe she
would
be
perfectly content
anywhere" (Ronda, 1988, p. 259).

Voice 16: Narrator: Back to our main storyline:

In continuing to mythologize this woman, by minting coins, by naming her Janey, by printing stamps and in erecting new statues in her honor, contemporary culture keeps a mythic, feminized west alive. In this version of the west women such as Sacagawea and Teal Eye helped white men do the civilizing work of American capitalism. But the Native American woman has no space of her own in this territory and in folding her presence into myth and statues, the contradictions that surround her sexuality and her status in the white community are erased. Thus in myth she is stripped of her sexuality, turned into an 'earth mother.'

Scene Four: Sex and a Little Tenderness on the Trail with Lewis and Clark:

Voice 17: Narrator:

But back to Sacagawea. Her silent presence is contrasted to the sexually aggressive Native American women who engage in sexual exchanges with the men in the Corps. The presence of these two images in the journals – the proper princess and the sexually aggressive squaw – reinforces the white, masculine nationalism of Lewis and Clark. Indeed, the sexual conduct of the squaw can be read as justifying white conquest, sexual exploitation, rape, smugness, aggression, deceit, ridicule, capture, violence, murder, genocide.

Voice 18: Cynic:

Can you be more specific?

Voice 19: Narrator:

Just listen to Clark:

Chorus Voice 1: William Clark: Just a Little Tenderness:

The Indian woman verry sick. I blead her which appeared to be of great Service to her…(June 12) I moved her to the back part of the Covered part of the Perogue which is cool, her own situation being verry hot one in the bottom of the Perogue

exposed to the sun...(June 17) [She] is much better today...there is every rational hope of her recovery (Clark, 11 June, 1805, pp. 128, 137 in Moulton, 2003).

Chorus Voice 2: William Clark: Sex and the Medicine Dance:

We Sent a man to this Medisan Dance last night, they gave him four girls all this to cause the buffalow to Come near So that They may kill him (Clark, 5 January 1805, p. 77 in Moulton, 2003).

Chorus Voice 3: Patrick Gass and others:

we ought to give some account of the *fair sex* of the Missouri; and entertain [readers] with narratives of feats of love...It may be observed generally that chastity is not very highly esteemed...The fact is...the women are generally considered an article of traffic...for an old tobacco box one of our men was granted the honour of passing a night with the daughter of the headchief of the Mandan nation" (Gass, 5 April, 1805, Moulton, 2003, p. 90).

Chorus Voice 4: Lewis on Tawny Damsels and Shoshone female sexuality:

The chastity of their women is not held in high estimation...I have requested the men to...have no connection with their women... [but] I know it is impossible to effect, particularly on the part of our young men whom some months of abstinence have made very polite to these tawney damsels (19 August 1805, p. 190 in Moulton, 2003).

Chorus Voice 5: Lewis and Clark on Chinnook female sexuality:

Among these people, as indeed among all Indians the prostitution of unmarried women is far from being criminal or improper, that the females themselves solicit the favours of the other sex, with the entire approbation of friends...In most cases ...the female is farmed out for hire... [with] regular prices...among all the tribes a man will lend his wife or daughter for a fish-hook, or a strand of beads. to decline an offer of this sort is indeed to disparage the charms of the lady, and therefore gives such offence...that...nothing seemed to irritate both sexes more than our refusal to accept the favours of the females...The little intercourse which the men have had with these women is...sufficient to apprise us of the prevalence of... venereal disease (Lewis, 21 January 1806, in Biddle, Vol. 2, 1814, pp. 369-370) ...The women were very found of carressing our men...The young women sport openly with our men (Clark, quoted in Ronda, 1984, pp. 64, 209).

Voice 20: Narrator as interpreter:

Clearly Lewis and Clark place Sacagawea, who was Shoshone, outside their discussion of Shoshone sexuality. She may be tawney, but she is not a damsel, and she is not farmed out for favors by her husband. She is a woman who requires a little tenderness and protection from the sun when she is ill.

Voice 21: Clark: Christmas presents (December 25, 1805):

I recved a present of...two dozen white weazils tails of the Indian woman (Moulton, 2003, p. 251).

Voice 22: Bernard DeVoto: Clark's Christmas with Sacagawea:

And the warm heart of Sacajawea, whose ailments he had treated…whose child he had nursed and doctored, whom he had several time snatched from death, whom he had come to think of not as Indian squaw but as a woman of extraordinary fineness…and whose gratitude and loyalty were his. She had but inadequate words to give him on Christmas…but accepting the custom she could not comprehend, knowing that he had been kind to her and that this was a day of kindness, she gave him what she had. History will remember William Clark as one of the greatest captains, and, remembering him, it will not forget the twenty-four white weasel tails that Janey gave him on Christmas day (DeVoto, 1936, p. 28, reprinted in Ronda 1998).

Voice 23: Narrator as interpreter:

Indeed! And did Clark give her a gift?

Scene Four: Guys Talk About Sex in *Big Sky*

Chorus Voice 6: Mountain Men (in unison):

They're sweet pumpkins, them Ree squaws,
best outside a Taos woman…Light-colored
and tall and long-legged and purty as a
young filly, and nigh everyone of 'em willin',
for beads and vermillion…A man got calluses,
handling the price to the bucks the squaws belong to…And nigh every squaw with the clap and every man catchin' it (Summers to Boone,
Guthrie, 1947, p. 87).

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Boone to Summers: "It's fair country up there, I reckon."
Summers: "Wild. Wild and purty, like a virgin woman. Whatever a man does he feels like he's the first one done it" (Guthrie, 1947, p. 67).

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A squaw in a blue dress…kept watching (p. 102) … putting one forefinger on top of the other…making a sign…She pointed between her legs and looked up while she made the sign again, her little eyes asking a question…Underneath the old skin dress that was pulled in at the middle Boone could see the fat of her breasts jiggle (p. 103).

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In the open grass behind the clay huts the boatmen and the squaws made moving heaps, the men writhing over the squaws, rising and pushing and writhing and sometimes groaning like a stud horse as the stuff of them pumped out. Once in a while you heard a giggle from a squaw (Guthrie, 1947, p. 125, paraphrase).

Voice 24: Narrator as Interpreter:

Guthrie's fictional sexual accounts could have been written by Lewis or Clark…
sex for hire,
soft ethnographic pornography,
fish-hooks and beads,
tawny virgin damsels,
venereal disease, wild women, the wild west 'purty' like a virgin,
boatman writhing over squars, moving heaps of
flesh, stud horses pumping out sperm,
giggling squars
young men too long without a woman
the women sport openly with them!

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ACT FOUR

Scene One: Sexual Voyeurs, Dress Codes, and Tawny Damsels:

Voice 25: Narrator as Interpreter:

It seems that Lewis and Clark were preoccupied with what they defined as the indecent appearance of Native American women. They write in vivid and graphic detail about garments, leather breech cloths, robes, exposed breasts, openly visible groin-areas, hips and necklines.

Voice 26: Lewis the Observer (paraphrased):

Their women…wear a kind of leather breech clout about the width of a common pocket handkerchief…the two corners are…confined over the hips and the other end is brought between the legs…and tucked at the groin…the leather truss or breech-clout constitutes the whole of their apparel. This is a much more indecent article than the tissue of bark, and bearly covers the mons vens to which it is drawn so closely that the whole shape is plainly perceived (29 March, 1806, Moulton, 2003, pp. 290-91).

Voice 27: Clark the Observer (paraphrased):

(of Snake women): The women are more particular than any other nations which I have passed in Secreting the parts (10 October, 1805, Moulton, 2003, p. 217). (of Nez Perce women): The women are more inclined to Copulency then any we have yet seen (17 October, 1805, Moulton, 2003, p. 221)…The women have only a tiny piece of leather about the waste, the breasts are huge and hang down verry low lilly Shaped (19 October, 1805, Moulton, 2003, p. 224).

Voice 28: Cynic:

Secret parts exposed groins, breasts shaped like Lilly's! What were these ethnographers, these great explorers doing? This was not a project focused on female dress, sexual codes, and the female body. Nowhere in the journals (by my reading) do they report in such graphic detail on male dress, and the norms organizing male sexuality. This is sexual voyeurism, plain and simple. The bodies of Native American women have been turned into the object of the male sexual gaze. This gendered sexual gaze introduces and exposes the erotic, political sides of everyday life under patriarchy. The active, aggressive gaze of Lewis and Clark is harsh, and masochistic. It affirms their power over Native American women. At the same time it suggests that sexual gazing was commonplace in the Expedition, and sexuality was never far below the surface.

In blurring the investigative
with the sexual gaze
Lewis and Clark's
story crosses
over into the pornographic,
a sexual tale of domination
disguised as scientific
discovery.

Scene Two: Medical Voyeurs, Venereal Diseases, and Prostitutes:

Voice 29: Cynic:

Lewis and Clark understood that "sexual relations would be part of the expedition's experience. They included in their supplies … remedies believed effective against venereal diseases. Symptoms of the disease were first recorded in mid-January 1805 (Ronda, 1984, pp. 106-07, paraphrased). Lewis and Clark looked for native cures and gave close attention to whether or not the women [and men] in a particular tribe appeared to have one or more forms of a sexually transmitted disease (see Bears, 2005; Lowry, 2005).

Voice 30: Lewis: Sexual Illness Narrative One:

Goodrich has recovered from the Louis veneri which he contracted from an amorous contact with a Chinnook damsel. I cured him as I did Gibson last winter by the use of murcury. I cannot learn that the Indians have any simples which are sovereign specifics in the cure of this disease; and indeed I doubt very much whether any of them have any means of effecting a perfect cure … [but] many support this disorder with but little inconvenience … this disorder doe exist among the Indians on the Columbia but it is witnessed in but few individuals, at least the males who are always sufficiently exposed to the observations of inspection of the phisician … in my whole rout down this river I did not see more than two or three with the gonnaera and about double that number with the pox (Lewis, 27 January, 1806, Moulton, 2003, pp. 269-270).

Lewis: Sexual Illness Narrative Two:

I was anxious to learn whether these people (Shoshone) had the venerial and made the enquiry through the interpreter and his wife. The information was they sometimes had it but I could not learn their remedy; they most usually die with it's effects. this seems a strong proof that these disorders bothe gonaroehah and Louis venerae are native disorders of America…[but] perhaps they might have been contracted from other indian tribes who by a round of communication might have obtained them from Europeans (19 August 1805, Moulton, 2003, pp. 269, 191-92).

Voice 32: Gass: Carnal Desire and Prostitution Narratives:

The women are much inclined to venery, and like those on the Missouri are sold to prostitution at an easy rate. An old Chin-ook squaw frequently visited our quarters, with nine girls which she kept as prostitutes. To the honour of the Flatheads, who live on the west side of the Rocky Mountains… we must mention them as an exception; as they do not exhibit those loose feelings of carnal desire, nor appear addicted to the common customs of prostitution: and they are the only nation on the whole route where anything like chastity is regarded (21 March 1806, Moulton, 2003, pp. 286-87).

Voice 33: Clark: Chinnook Prostitutes:

An old woman & wife to the Cheif of the Chinnoks came and made a Camp near ours. She brought with here 6 young squars I believe for the purpose of gratifying the passions of the men of our party and receving for these indulgiences Such Small as She thought proper to accept of. These people appear to view Sensuality as a Necessary State (21 November 1805, Moulton, 2003, pp. 241-42).

Voice 34: Lewis: Clatsop and Chinnook Prostitutes:

We were visited this afternoon by Delashshelwilt, a Chinnook Chief his wife and six women of his nation… this was the same party that had communicated the venerial to many of our party in November last… The Clatsop's do not hold the virtue of their women in high estimation, and will even prostitute their wives or daughters for a fishinghook or a stran of beads (6 January, 1806, Moulton, 2003, pp. 283, 258-59).

Voice 35: Rhonda on Sex with the Men in Expedition (paraphrase):

Of course, as previously noted, Native Americans had a complex gendered theory of political economy and sexuality. They exchanged sexual favors for European goods. They believed that sexual conduct was a way of transferring spiritual power from the European male to the Native American women. She in turn transmitted this power to her husband.

This was not a secret theory. The Corps chose to ignore it, in favor of a moralistic evaluation of Native American women which defined them as whores and prostitutes.

Scene Three: Narrator (off stage): As She Is Remembered:
Twenty-Four White Weasel Tails

At the age of 12 Sacagawea
was captured by Hidatsas
in a raid.
She was then
sold to
Toussaint Charbonneau,
a Sioux-French Canadian
fur trader,
who was hired by Lewis and Clark
on 4 November 1804 as a translator.
Lewis and Clark needed
a guide who could
speak
Shoshoni,
and Charbonneau
said his wife could
speak Shoshoni.
On February 9 1805 Sacagawea gave birth to a son in the Mandan village.
Clark named the little boy Pomp,
or Pompy, but
he was also called
Jean Baptiste Charbonneau (Tinling, 2001, p. 2).
The Captains felt that
traveling
with a young
mother
and her baby
would help them in
their encounters with the different
Indian nations they would be meeting.
Mother and child would
show
that
they were not a war party!

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She distinguished herself
on the journey.

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On May 14 1805
she catches and preserves light articles
indispensable for the success of the expedition
which are washed
overboard when
the canoe she and her
husband are riding in
is struck by a sudden
squall of wind (Coues, 1893, Vol, 1, p. 310).

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On 20 May, six days later, perhaps as a reward, Lewis names a river after her, "About five miles above the mouth of the Mussel Shell river a handsome river of about fifty yards in width discharge itself into the Shell river...this stream we called Sah-ca-gee-me ah or bird woman's river after our interpreter the Snake woman" (Coues, 1893, Vol. 1, p. 317).

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On August 11, 1805
the Expedition encounters
Shoshone tribesmen.
Sacagawea serves as a translator,
helping the Corps obtain horses for
the trip through the mountains.
She meets her brother, Cameahwait
who welcomes her back into the tribe.

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When the Corps builds its winter camp
along the Columbia river,
The Captains allow
Sacagawea,
Charbonneau
and York, Clark's slave,
to vote on where the camp will be constructed.

Democracy on the edge of civilization!

When a whale is sighted on the ocean beach
the Captains say
she cannot go to see it,
but she convinces them
that she should be allowed to go,
and they give in to her wishes.

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On Christmas Day
she gives Clark
the tails of
twenty-four
white weasels
to ornament his clothing,
as befitted a leader (Hunsaker, 2001, p. 49).

On August 17, 1806 Clark writes;

we settled accounts
with "Chabono [Charbonneau]...
and took our leave of...
his Snake wife and their
Son Child
who had accompanied us on our rout to the pacific Ocean" (Moulton, 2003, p. 366).

I did offer to educate their son (paraphrase):

If you will bring your son to me I will educate him and treat him as my own child (Moulton, 2003, p. 366; Tinling, 2001, pp. 19-20).

And his father and mother agreed to do so:

Provided he has been weened, and sufficiently old to leave his mother (Moulton, 2003, p. 366).

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And thus ends Sacagawea's presence in the journals.

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Historians disagree on her contributions. Moulton, for example, (2003) argues that

"despite her limited but
useful contributions,
to the expedition,
geographic landmarks have been
named for her;
markers,
monuments,
and memorials
have been placed in her honor;
and numerous literary
and artistic works have given her a prominence that competes even with that of the captains" (p. 380).

***

Indeed! And twenty-four white weasel tails, now what did Clark give her?

Clark:

We paid Charbonneau wages of $500.33.

His wife deserved a greater reward then we had in our power to give her. We paid her no wages (Clark, paraphrased, in Clark and Edmonds, 1979, p. 82; also Tinling, 2001, pp. 19-20).

***

CODA: THE SACAGAWEA PROBLEM

In giving her the nickname Janey, or rather in recording her name as Janey, Clark, like Guthrie and the woman he names Teal Eye (AKA Bird Woman), engages in a form of cultural politics that trivializes, while it westernizes Native American women. Ironically, Sacagawea is named Janey in that moment when the expedition members are asked to vote on where they should construct their winter camp. In recording Janey's vote "a place where there is plenty of Potas", along with York's, instant suffrage is granted to a Native American woman and a black servant (Moulton, 2003, p. 243).[16] The name Janey functions in this context as a proxy for this one time when the black man and the Indian women are given the power to vote.

These names, Janey, Teal Eye, are conferred by white male narrators. The act of naming strips the women of their subjectivity even as it relocates them within a fraudulent participatory democracy where males control the right to vote. The act of naming erases their sense of personal agency. It places them in a linguistic, sexual and cultural borderland somewhere between princess and sexual slave. Paraphrasing Kessler (1996), in this hinterland, which includes the frontier West, Native female compliance functions as a metaphor for a feminized territory awaiting male exploration and domination (Kessler, 1996, p. 180).

Herein lies Sacagawea's problem. She can only be recognized from within this white male mythology and its signifying apparatuses. This mythology celebrates conquest, and submission. It requires a Native Indian princess who is willing to be complicit with America's sacred male narratives concerning the frontier, democracy and the inevitable march of civilization across the virginal, violent west. Sadly, there are few, if any Native American signifiers which would allow her to be recognized differently. This is the other side of her problem. She is only known from within this racist mythology where she performs her obligatory service to the dominant culture.[17] She is earth mother embedded in a timeless western landscape (Green, 1975 , p. 714; also Kessler, 1996, p. 178).[18]

Still, untangling Sacagawea from the Lewis and Clark and *Big Sky* legends seems impossible.

***

To return to the beginning, Janey, Pocahontas, Lewis and Clark on the Edge of America (Vollman, 2005, p. 121):

The East is where
the United States Began
John Smith...Pocahontas...
Where we became Americans
The West, the Pacific shore,
"Ocean in View!
O! the joy!"
The Pacific Ocean,
the beginning of the end,
the end of the beginning
and Janey casts her vote
what kind
of a beginning for
her?

1 I take this title from McMurtry (2001, p. 157) who observes that Sacagawea's nickname, Janey, is used only once in the journals, on November 23, 1805, when Clark records the votes concerning where to construct a winter camp: "Janey in favour of a place where there is plenty of Potas" (Clark in Moulton, 2003, p. 243; also note 17 below).

2 THE CAMERA EYE and the NEWSREEL are Dos Passos's terms, The NEWSREEL is his method for incorporating current events, stories, advertisements and newsworthy items into his text. It could also be called NEWS, or MEDIA STORY/EVENT. The camera eye is his method of referencing a third-person perspective or interpretation of the events at hand. As in previous chapters, I am using the camera' eye to reference both first- and third-person interpretations.

3 An expanded and revised version of this essay will appear in *Qualitative Research,* 6, 1, 2006.

4 This play can be performed on a simple set, around a seminar table, or from a stage in front of an audience. A series of images, and photographs, accompanied by period music, should be projected against a full-size screen, necessitating the presence of audio and video equipment. To the side of the stage, stands a large roving spot-light, called the "Camera Eye" which moves from speaker to speaker, returning always to the narrator. THE CAMERA EYE is Dos Passos's term, referencing a third-person perspective or interpretation of the events at hand. I am using the camera eye to reference both first- and third-person interpretations. When connected to the narrator it is first-person.

5 In 1950 Guthrie received the Pulitzer Prize for *The Way West,* the second novel in his historical series about the West. Guthrie also wrote the screenplay for *Shane,* a classic film about the Old West (Blew, 1988, p. 685).

6 Guthrie also drew from the diaries and journals of nineteenth-century trappers (Garceau, 2001, p. 151).

7 Stegner's "most Americans" should be qualified, to read "Most White American Males".

8 Her presence as a statue is also noteworthy, the three most prominent statues being Cooper's dedicated in Portland in 1905, Crunelle's "Bird Woman", dedicated in Bismarck, North Dakota, 1910, and Jackson's 1980 "Sacagawea" which stands in the courtyard of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center of Cody, Wyoming. Jackson's "...sculpture depicts a native woman who is connected to the

earth" (Kessler, 1996, p. 179), while Crunelle's presents her as "a native mother...[with] a sleeping baby on her back" (Kessler, 1996, p. 94). These statues celebrate the mythic west, a feminized, indigenous frontier where native women helped white males "...achieve the colonists covenant to convert wilderness to sacred spaces" (Kessler, 1996, p. 185; Kammen, 1993, p. 28).

9 *Sacagawea Speaks Beyond the Shining Mountains with Lewis & Clark* (Hunsaker, 2001), for example, was present in the bookstores in Yellowstone Park, Billings, Cody and Red Lodge, as were posters of her looking west, toward the mountains, holding her son, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau -- Little Pompy.

10 This allows me to modify Benjamin's advice concerning history (1983, p. 24); that is to write history means to locate one's biography within the history that will then be quoted back to itself. In this way the fissures and contradictions of the past are given a presence in the life of the writer. Starting with my place in this history, I want to invent a new version of the gendered past.

11 There are five original journals/diaries that form the basis of the so-called "Lewis and Clark Journals": those written by Lewis, Clark, Gass, Ordway and Whitehouse. There are at least seven edited versions of these combined texts, those of Biddle (1814) Coues (1893); Thwaites (1904-05); De Voto (1953); Jackson (1962); and Moulton (1986-2003).

12 This is Slaughter's (2003, p. 102) count. Kessler's total (1996, p. 49) is 193. Of those he counts, Slaughter states that "...only 11 are by name – ten times by one of the variant spellings of Sacajawea, and once as Janey. Only Lewis and Clark...ever name her. Lewis names her six times, Clark names her four times, plus once by the nickname Janey" (Slaughter 2003, p. 102). Kessler (1996, p. 48) notes that Clark comments on her more than forty-eight times, Lewis more than thirty-eight times, while other journal writers (Ordway, Gass, Whitehouse) refer to her 19, 9, 8 times respectively

13 Like the Lewis and Clark story, Guthrie's story essentially begins as a mountain man, fur trader Missouri River narrative, starting in St. Louis and progressing up-river, through Native American territory to the Yellowstone River in Montana. Guthrie drew on the journals in writing *The Big Sky* (Garceau. 2001, p. 123). Guthrie' major works (*Big Sky, The Way West, These Thousand Hills)*, were turned into Hollywood films (*Big Sky,* 1952; *These Thousand Hills*; 1959; *The Way West,* 1967). He worked on other films as well, including *Shane* (1953), and *The Kentuckian* (1955), but not on *Far Horizon* (1955), a film loosely based on Lewis and Clark's expedition, starring Donna Reed as Sacagawea, vying for the love of Charlton Heston and Fred MacMurray (D'Arc, 2001, p. 86).

14 Teal Eye reappears in *Fair Land, Fair Land* (1982) the sixth book in Guthrie's saga. She has married Dick Summers.

15 Original spellings and punctuations are maintained in all quotations from the journals.

16 Of course this democratic gesture is only symbolic. York and Janey are only granted this power once. They are quickly returned to their servant identities in the expedition narrative.

17 Kessler (1996, pp. 191-208) discusses counter-hegemonic narratives that challenge this mythology, including Paula Gunn Allen's lengthy poem, "The One Who Skins Cats", a poetic-rereading of the Sacagawea legend.

18 In contrast, Native American males are present under the foundational trope of Indian/White violence (Dickenson, Ott, and Aoki, 2005, pp. 97-98; also Slotkin, 1992; Bartlett, 1992).

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Norman K Denzin is Distinguished Professor of Communications, College of Communications Scholar, and Research Professor of Communications, Sociology and Humanities, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the author, editor, or co-editor of numerous books, including *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture, Screening Race: Hollywood and a Cinema of Racial Violence; Performing Ethnography*; and *9/11 in American Culture*. He is past editor of *The Sociological Quarterly*, co-editor of *The Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2/e*, co-editor of *Qualitative Inquiry*, editor of *Cultural Studies–Critical Methodologies*, editor of *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, and founding President of the International Association of Qualitative Inquiry.