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# Violence, Genocide, and Captivity: Exploring Cultural Representations of Sacajawea as a Universal Mother of Conquest

*Chris Finley*

*Dedicated to Sacajawea, 1786–1884 whoever she may have been; and to all the unnamed women who share her story.*

—Monique Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*

*Consequently, it is not surprising that control over the reproductive abilities of women of color has come to be seen as a “national security” issue for the U.S.*

—Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*

Who was Sacajawea?<sup>1</sup> Did she really love white men? Was she a captive or willing guide to conquest? What were her motivations? Did she like venison? These questions will not be answered in this article. This article is not about the actual Sacajawea who was born 225 years ago. Sacajawea left no written accounts. The oral history of her gathered by white anthropologists is suspect and, even more offensive, boring.<sup>2</sup> Because we only speculate and make up stories about her, she cannot be known as a real person nor do I intend to “discover” her or tell you about the actual Sacajawea. I want to refuse to serve as an agent of history and anthropology by not excavating new knowledge or truth about the actual Sacajawea in order to receive my doctorate. This desire

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to “know” and write about Natives before our cultures “disappear” into modernity naturalizes conquest and the vanishing Native, which historically has been the project of anthropology. In these formulations, Native peoples who change and adapt to historical conditions are no longer historically recognizable Natives.<sup>3</sup> The racialization of Native peoples relies on viewing them as “living” only in dead archival sources and as past victims of progress.<sup>4</sup> Native peoples who have politically adjusted to modernity and to living in the present do not fit into the small perimeters of Native racialization in the United States. These remaining Native peoples cannot be read as Native because they do not conform to stereotypes and normative representations of Native peoples in popular culture. Because many cultural representations of Native peoples are Native women, cultural representations of Native peoples are feminized. Most of the creation narratives documenting the birth of the United States that involve Native peoples include Native women like Sacajawea and Pocahontas. Native people need to be represented as feminized in order to justify the presence of the white masculine heteropatriarchal nation-state instituting the “normalizing” presence of heteropatriarchy in Native America. In the case of Pocahontas, her father plays a role in the narrative by being a character who wants to bash John Smith’s brains out and was convinced by Pocahontas not to kill Smith. Having a powerful chief have his mind changed by a child undermines his ability to be an effective patriarch. Representations of Native men are also feminized or seen as hypermasculine and dangerous to the US body politic.

Visual representations of Native peoples are widely circulated throughout the world. Shari Huhndorf argues for more visual cultural intellectual work in Native studies: “Although the political dimensions of literature have garnered much critical attention, less notice has been paid to visual expressions in indigenous contexts. This is true despite the increasing importance of images in colonial studies more broadly and the fact that Natives are among the most commonly represented people in the world, their images circulated in museums, photographs, films, ethnographic displays, and national monuments.”<sup>5</sup> The fact that Native peoples are the “most commonly represented people in the world” gives validity to the importance of unpacking these images to see what work these images serve because the gaze is often directed toward these images of Native peoples in many different visual and political contexts. My intention here is to produce work that critiques colonialism in history and museums and to return the focus of the colonial gaze back to the colonizer. In this article, I will be talking about how colonial narratives of Sacajawea in popular culture justify conquest, heteropatriarchy, and the expansion of the United States while supporting the continued colonial management of Native peoples, erasure of Native national identities, and theft of Native lands.

Currently, many of the visual representations of Native peoples are in films. Specifically, I want to focus on representations of Sacajawea in the film *Night at the Museum* (2006) in order to deconstruct how Native peoples, and Native women in particular, are represented in modernity as Denise da Silva's affectable subjects facing obliteration by the horizon of death. When I say "affectable subject," I mean da Silva's conception of a racialized subject that acts on "natural" instincts exterior to the mind (what she calls "exteriority") rather than the rational and reasonable interior mind (what she terms the transparency thesis, and the subjectivity is called "transparent I's") to consider things and ideas reasonably. Both affectable subjects and transparent "I's" face the horizon of death. Affectable subjects are closer to the horizon of death because they do not have interior reason to protect them against the affects of nature like transparent "I's," and transparent "I's" have the power to affect the affectable subjects and take their lives.<sup>6</sup>

The transparency thesis is solidified in the writing of history and narratives of history, which are apparent in the film. I focus on popular culture because of the large audiences and often uncritical way these representations reify structures of power. Importantly, the target audience of *Night at the Museum* is children and families. Because most people "know" Natives through stereotypical representations in popular culture, these representations are especially damaging. At first glance, *Night at the Museum* and the American Museum of Natural History seem to contain harmless, educational, and possibly even helpful and respectful representations of Sacajawea. Yet representations of Sacajawea and her vanishing children are an important part of the narratives of genocide portrayed in this film and in the American Museum of Natural History. I will end this article with a play written by Monique Mojica that counters these negative representations of Sacajawea as a means of offering a critique of colonial representations and narratives of Sacajawea.

The film stars Ben Stiller as Larry and co-stars Dick Van Dyke and Mickey Rooney. Larry, the main character of the film, is a screwup, a single father who cannot hold down a career or an apartment. He wants to look successful and stable for his son Nikki, which for him means having an income and keeping his apartment in New York City. Larry gets a job as a night guard at the American Museum of Natural History in order to make his son proud. To his surprise, all the displays at the museum come alive at night because of a magical tablet stolen from Egypt and brought to the museum during the 1950s. (And yes, this movie is also filled with Orientalist representations of Genghis Khan and Egyptian pharaohs.) Through many trials and errors, Larry learns to manage all of the characters and animals in the museum, which makes him a better man. Rebecca, the docent for the museum, is a historian working on her thesis about Sacajawea. She and Larry have a G-rated love connection in

this film, which prompts Larry to introduce Rebecca to Sacajawea, so Rebecca can tell Sacajawea's story to the rest of the world. In the end, Larry becomes a disciplined authority figure who gains the respect of his son and the characters at the museum. The overarching narrative of the film is that even an ordinary white man can manage powerful racialized historical figures because of the cunningness of the superior white mind and through hard work.

Mieke Bal, who writes about colonial narratives, argues, "Narrativization is a highly efficient way of inserting myth models into the stories of everyday life."<sup>7</sup> Colonial narratives of Sacajawea are significant because in these narratives there are stories of "everyday life." We understand Sacajawea as a mother and a guide because of the myth that Native women selflessly helped white men conquer Native America. Because the story of Sacajawea involves her assisting Lewis and Clark, it tells a story we already know and understand. This story is not always the same but always implicates Native women as a willing part of conquest. Importantly, in the colonial narrative/myth, Sacajawea's role as a mother is changeable. In cinematic representations of Sacajawea, the character of Sacajawea is not a mother if she has a white male love interest.<sup>8</sup> Sacajawea in the film *Night at the Museum* is not represented as a mother in the museum, yet the narrative of her in the film discusses how Sacajawea as a historical figure gave birth on the Lewis and Clark expedition. The taking away of Sacajawea's child and Native motherhood becomes a violent act of genocide in cinematic representations when the continued practice of Native children captivity is put into a historical context of the colonial occupation of Native America.

A long colonial history exists of different bureaucratic agencies taking Native children away from their mothers, families, and Native communities as a means of attempting to assimilate Native people systematically into the US heteropatriarchal body politic. Hundreds of years of colonial assault on Native peoples have failed to destroy Native sovereignty and the self-determination of Native peoples completely. Many Native communities have survived boarding schools, the kidnapping of Native children from their families under the guise of child protective services, prisons, military service, and insane asylums. This is not to say that Native communities are unharmed or even functioning as a result of these various institutionalizations. Despite all this, Native peoples continue to reproduce and live in modernity.

Native mothers and the physical reproduction of Native peoples are seen as a biological threat to the United States. Andrea Smith argues, "In particular, Native women, whose ability to reproduce continues to stand in the way of the continuing conquest of Native lands, endanger the continued success of colonization."<sup>9</sup> If there are further generations of Native peoples, Native lands will continue to be occupied by the Native people who own that land. The connection between Native women and Native lands is so important that the

US government sponsored a sterilization program, which was federally funded through Indian Health Services (IHS) during the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Between 1973 and 1976, it is estimated that 5 percent of Native women who were of the age to have children were sterilized through IHS.<sup>11</sup> Because the IHS is a government-sponsored agency, this is a conservative estimate. The Native activists cited by Smith estimate that between 25 and 50 percent of Native women of childbearing age who used IHS were sterilized during this time. One of the many disturbing aspects of the sterilizations was the targeting of full-blooded Native women mothers. The use of sterilization as a tool of genocide exemplifies the threat of Native motherhood to the US nation-state and the actions that the United States will take in order to eliminate Native peoples. These ideologies are reflected in cultural representations and colonial narratives of Sacajawea's motherhood.

## FILM AS A TECHNOLOGY OF CONQUEST

For almost one hundred years, depictions of Native women in film have been used to support the conquest of Native America.<sup>12</sup> From the beginning, the film industry has been a technology of violence by producing justifications and images of the "successful" conquest of Native America. Yet the Native gaze reflects a different interpretation of Native images in films. Michelle Raheja argues,

Stemming from a long tradition of staged performances such as the Wild West shows that were themselves informed by American literature's obsession with Native American plots and subplots, film and visual culture have provided the primary representational field on which Native American images have been displayed to dominant culture audiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. But these representations have also been key to formulating Indigenous people's own self images.<sup>13</sup>

Raheja discusses how Native peoples interpret these images and does not focus on the perspective of the colonizers. She shows how indigenous people use these often-negative representations to create positive meaning for themselves. By focusing on Native peoples interacting with modern representations of Native peoples, this disrupts the idea that Indians do not exist in the present. In this way, Native peoples return the colonial gaze because making Native peoples hypervisible produces the possibility that these images could serve multiple purposes to Native people. Raheja argues that film scholarship "provides a useful framework of analysis for considering how Native Americans have responded to change and persisted in keeping and improvising traditions from the silent film era to the present."<sup>14</sup>

M. Elise Marubbio uses the term *Celluloid Maiden* in her book *Killing the Indian Maiden* to discuss how Native women are represented in films as the princess, sexualized maiden, or a hybrid of these in different historical contexts. The princess is beautiful, childlike, and a helper to the white male hero, and the sexualized maiden is a femme fatale whose lust destroys both her and the white male hero. These Celluloid Maiden films enjoy critical and large audiences because Hollywood uses first-rate directors, producers, and actors to make high-end productions out of films with the Celluloid Maiden. The Celluloid Maiden films are not B pictures. The artistry and cinematic beauty of the Celluloid Maiden films produce a truthful and seamless appearance due to the technological sophistication and money deployed to make the underlining colonial narratives of the film seem right and just. *Avatar* (2009), the most expensive and technologically advanced movie in history, is a startling example of a Celluloid Maiden film. I chose *Night at the Museum* because it brings together representations of Native women in film, museums, and statues that dispossess them of their Native children and land.

## MUSEUMS AS SITES OF PRESERVATION AND DISPOSSESSION OF NATIVE LANDS

In *Night at the Museum*, the statue of Sacajawea is one of the many characters that support the narrative of conquest. Bal argues that the American Museum of Natural History is “monumental” and that this “monumentality suggests that the primary meaning of the museum is inherited from its history: comprehensive collecting as an activity within colonialism.”<sup>15</sup> The American Museum of Natural History is a place of history and science, where time and space are the analytics of raciality. Importantly for Native peoples, the conquest of Native America continues and museums attempt to contain and reproduce the idea that Native culture and peoples existed in the past but cannot exist in modernity. The American Museum of Natural History thus serves as a cultural reservation where Native culture is saved and preserved for the satisfaction and maintenance of the settler colonial nation-state. Raheja argues that Indian reservations have been sites where tourists go to see “living dioramas” of Indian people performing their “disappearing” culture.<sup>16</sup>

Because natural history museums go to great lengths to show Natives in the past, they erase and destroy the idea of Indians living on reservations or having any ties to any land base. Smith argues in “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing” that one way to combat white supremacy is to disrupt the logic of genocide. The logic of genocide is anchored by colonialism and the fact that Native

peoples are constantly “disappearing” in order to make room for non-Native people to settle indigenous lands. Under this logic, non-Native people appropriate Native culture because they believe they are the rightful inheritors of Native lands and culture.<sup>17</sup> One way the appropriation of Native culture occurs is through natural history museums. The museum takes the place of the reservation as spectacle, which further dispossesses Native peoples of land and life in the US colonial imagination. Now, non-Natives do not have to travel to Indian reservations to see Indian culture and recognize that Indian peoples still exist and possess land and sovereignty. Instead, settlers can visit museums and see Indian artifacts disconnected from Indian communities and land bases. This plays out to great effect in *Night at the Museum* because the only Native person in the film is a statue of Sacajawea that will turn to dust if she leaves the museum in the light of day.

Because it is a children’s movie, it portrays a gentle version of white heteropatriarchal colonial domination and manifest destiny. Sacajawea is one of the only figures—along with Lewis and Clark—that are behind glass. Lewis and Clark do not have one line in the film. Even though Sacajawea is in a display case with them, she never talks to them and they ignore her too. In the museum case Sacajawea does not have a child, nor is she a mother. Her child is a presence/absence because the audience is told that Sacajawea had a baby on the Lewis and Clark trail. Rebecca tells Larry that Sacajawea led Lewis and Clark across the country with a baby on her back, yet she does not explain why Sacajawea does not have a baby in the museum. Nor is Toussaint Charbonneau, Sacajawea’s husband, mentioned during Rebecca’s background information session with Larry. The absence of Sacajawea’s baby is significant for several reasons. For Sacajawea, and by extension the Native women that the character of Sacajawea represents in the film, the future of Native America is lost with the theft of her child, which also challenges Native women’s reproductive freedom. The loss of her baby and her motherhood makes Sacajawea appear unattached and sexually available to Teddy Roosevelt. Yet the absence of the baby in the museum display case also provides a break in the legitimacy of the colonial narrative. Rebecca does not comment on Sacajawea’s loss of her child in the museum. This points to the reality that the museum selectively chooses what it represents, and it excludes parts of history. Colonialism, despite what the historical truth may be, can dictate that Native children can be taken from their Native mothers. Museum displays do not show the whole picture and have nothing to do with the actual life of Sacajawea.

In this narrative, Sacajawea is represented as the guide. When Larry needs help finding the bandits, he does not turn to any of the other explorers for help. Even though Lewis and Clark and Christopher Columbus are characters in the museum, Larry breaks Sacajawea out of her glass case. Lewis and Clark



are not invited to come along and help track the thieves. Once outside of her glass case, she easily adapts to New York City and falls in love with a white man. Not just any white man: Roosevelt is her love interest.

This pairing is a colonial fantasy and an attempt to erase Roosevelt's participation in conquest and his beliefs regarding eugenics. Roosevelt was a proud imperialist and expansionist who warned Americans against committing "race suicide," which is white men or women having children with nonwhite people.<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt's connection to the eugenics movement is not mentioned in the film. He also was a Rough Rider and actively participated in military conquests and expansion of the United States, which is why the American Museum of Natural History is dedicated to him. Roosevelt represents an ideal narrative of American masculinity. He also stole a great deal of Native land held in "trust" and turned these Native lands into US national parks. Much of the racism of the actual statue of Roosevelt at the American Museum of Natural History is erased from the film. Donna Haraway writes, "To enter the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial [located in the main entrance to the museum], the visitor must pass by a James Earle Fraser equestrian statue of Teddy majestically mounted as a father and protector between two 'primitive' men, an American Indian and an African, both standing and dressed as 'savages.'"<sup>19</sup> In the film, the statue of Roosevelt is located inside the museum instead of directly outside the museum. The Indian and African men are erased, and Roosevelt sits on his horse across from the docent's desk. A skeleton of a dinosaur is the main attraction in the cinematic American Museum of Natural History. The overt representations and narratives of colonialism in this film are erased. The cinematic museum tries to be a place of multicultural harmony and love instead of a solidification of racial hierarchies.

The "romance" between Roosevelt and Sacajawea in *Night at the Museum* does not actually threaten Roosevelt's idea of race suicide because their relationship—like the relationships all of the characters in the museum—are contained to the museum. Because Roosevelt admits he is a wax statue, his sexual union with Sacajawea cannot produce a child. This also means that there is no possibility for Sacajawea to become a Native mother. Robin Williams plays Roosevelt, and a beautiful and much younger Japanese American actress named Mizuo Peck plays Sacajawea. Because of this casting, it is doubtful that, of all of the characters in the American Museum of Natural History, Sacajawea would choose Roosevelt. But the Sacajawea in *A Night at the Museum* is a Celluloid Maiden character that loves white men and aids in conquest.

Roosevelt saves Sacajawea's life by pushing her out of the way of the stagecoach driven by Dick Van Dyke. After Roosevelt rescues her, Sacajawea melts Roosevelt together after he is cut in half by the stagecoach. Instead of going inside the museum where she would have access to modern technology to heat

Roosevelt's wax, she uses two rocks to start a fire in the middle of the snow with some bark to melt him back together. Roosevelt's sacrifice and Sacajawea's efforts to put him back together bind them together romantically. Roosevelt's ability to be put back together and taken apart is a very telling part of the difference between him and Sacajawea. It is not clear whether she would survive getting cut in half. In the film, Roosevelt admits to being a statue made in Poughkeepsie, but Sacajawea never makes a similar claim. This shows how Sacajawea faces the horizon of death more directly than her white male counterpart because this constitutes her as the "real" Sacajawea and vulnerable to actual annihilation and death. Roosevelt's interiority is assured through his ability to rationalize his position as a wax statue and a reproduction of President Roosevelt. The Roosevelt character in the film does not have the memories or life experience of the real Roosevelt. Haraway argues that representations and narratives of Roosevelt in the American Museum of Natural History transcend his body and focus on his ability to master and control his body and mind. For Haraway, this is goal of what she calls "manhood" and da Silva calls the "transparent I": that "The joining of life and death in these icons of Roosevelt's journeys and in the architecture of his stony memorial . . . is the effective truth of manhood. . . . The body can be transcended."<sup>20</sup>

Sacajawea is represented as possessing the interiority of the real Sacajawea with her memories and experiences. Her Native body is closely related to nature and cannot be transcended. Sacajawea is wearing a short-sleeved, beaded buckskin dress that does not go below her knees, and yet she is not cold in the New York winter. This is an example of how Sacajawea is close to nature and less than human. If she were a real person and not a statue/Indian, she would be susceptible to the cold snow. Sacajawea is so close to nature and the earth that she, like the other animals of nature, is only vulnerable to death while humans feel cold in the snow as a means of self-preservation and an example of intelligence and interiority.

The audience is led to believe that this Sacajawea is the actual Sacajawea. At the end of the film, Sacajawea is going to help Rebecca finish her "thesis" by telling Rebecca things that are not in the archives. Now Rebecca will get to tell the world about Sacajawea without crediting Sacajawea. The "truth" about Sacajawea will be told through Rebecca's voice. It is not only Sacajawea's body that is the object of conquest by white men; white women participate in conquest through the reproduction of knowledge of Native women by speaking for Native women. In this way, Sacajawea gives her body and mind to colonial institutions. Her child is not recovered, and the future of Native America is bequeathed to a white woman.

Through Sacajawea's confession, Rebecca inherits the future of Native America through her ability to tell the story of Sacajawea to people outside the

museum. Earlier in the film, Rebecca stared longingly at the Sacajawea statue and told Larry she wanted to know who Sacajawea really was. If Sacajawea were a statue like Roosevelt, she would not have truths to tell Rebecca. Unlike Rebecca, a nice white woman, Sacajawea is a dead statue that comes alive at night and cannot leave the museum without turning into dust. Rebecca's own name, the name Pocahontas adopts when she converts to Christianity, is also symbolic. Pocahontas and Sacajawea are seen as traitorous Native women who sacrificed themselves and their communities in order to aid in the conquest of Native America. Rebecca takes the place of a Native mother in the origin story of conquest by using their narrative to replace the Native mother and the Native child with white and Native ancestry. What does this say about conquest? If the actual Sacajawea willingly stands in a museum and does not complain about losing her son or being kidnapped by Lewis and Clark, and then dates Roosevelt, it silences the violence of conquest while producing more colonial violence. Simultaneously, Larry gets to become a good dad to his son. This reifies white heteropatriarchy and presents a more family-friendly white masculinity while disavowing a future for Native America.

One of the most violent and powerful narratives of the film is that the plot device stipulating that the characters of the museum will turn into dust if they do not return to the museum before sunrise. If history comes alive at night, then it must be dead during the day for the representations of history in the museum. The historical characters are literally the walking dead that have already been engulfed by the horizon of death—a violent narrative of containment. During the night, the characters can fight and dance with other characters. But these characters must be segregated from the general population. This is the limit of their existence. It is like a magical reservation system except the inhabitants do not possess any land. Although the characters of the museum can leave during the night, they must return to their place in the museum or they die. One of Larry's responsibilities is keeping the characters in the museum and making sure that if they do leave, they return by sundown. On the second night that Larry is managing the museum, a caveman escapes because he is fascinated with the fire he sees outside. He jumps out of the museum, and Larry notices his absence too late. From Larry's perspective in the museum, a long shot shows the caveman running up the street before the break of dawn. The next shot is a close-up of Larry trying to get out of the museum doors, and the camera shows Larry looking on helplessly. Importantly, this shows that Larry can go outside of the museum without being engulfed by the horizon of death. The viewer sees a shot of the sun coming up over the trees of Central Park, the sun shining toward the museum, and then the unfortunate caveman who does not belong outside of the museum during the day. We see a full frame of the caveman as the sun touches him, and he literally

turns to dust and disappears. The next frame is the street cleaner erasing every trace of this body from the streets of New York City. This scene is meant to be a cautionary tale to other characters in the museum and a moment of awakening for Larry. The narrative of containment and confinement has no mercy in this film. Not even a caveman can escape the colonizing narrative of segregation. The narrative of containment and segregation are juxtaposed with the pluralist idea of multiculturalism that exists in the museum at night because Larry's leadership reifies white supremacy. The gentle violence of this film comes through the multicultural idea of the "let all the historical actors of the world get along" narrative of conquest. Native women feminists have led the critique of these silencing narratives of multiculturalism by showing how the particular histories of violence directed at Native women need to be addressed and acknowledged in order for positive political change to occur for Native peoples.

## FREEZE FRAMES: STAKING THE CLAIM OF US OWNERSHIP OF NATIVE LANDS THROUGH SACAJAWEA STATUES

*Night at the Museum* shows how statues of Sacajawea differ from cinematic representations of Sacajawea because the film depicts Sacajawea as a character who is a statue during the day. The frightening part of this cinematic representation of Sacajawea is that the statue and the character of Sacajawea secure a nonviolent past, present, and future for white America while ignoring the existence of a Native America beyond the doors of the museum. Because statues fill in for Native peoples, actual Native peoples and current Native politics are not overtly a part of the film. In the film, the statue of Sacajawea stands in front of a painted mountain and a stream that does not even try to look realistic. Some sad little bushes and trees surround the statue. Because Sacajawea is in a glass case that reaches from the floor to the ceiling, she is physically untouchable by the other characters and unable to speak and be heard or to listen to what is going on other than Lewis and Clark arguing about what direction they should take. Sacajawea does not come to the aid of Lewis and Clark in the film. She does not give them directions or willingly listen to them. Yet, in the film, she falls in love with Teddy Roosevelt, who is represented as a "real" man compared to the bickering Lewis and Clark.

When Sacajawea comes alive at night, Roosevelt has her under surveillance. She does not see him because he is hiding in some fake trees and bushes. Roosevelt's panoptic surveillance of Sacajawea is a privileged position because he can escape the gaze of the one he wants to see, but Sacajawea cannot avoid this gaze. Yet the film audience has everyone under surveillance.

The Sacajawea exhibit in the movie version of the American Museum of Natural History looks like a stage to which the audience's gaze is drawn. This makes the Sacajawea exhibit the main exhibit in a room that holds other important American historical scenes such as the Civil War. The scene in the film is staged for the audience's gaze in the museum and in the film. Yet Roosevelt, the museum audience, and Sacajawea's gaze are further complicated by the film audience's gaze of the panoptic seer doing the one-directional looking. Can the audience have a panoptic view when every frame of the film is staged with the intention of being seen by an audience? The audience has a panoptic view of Roosevelt and Larry looking at Sacajawea while the audience looks at both characters looking at Sacajawea. The audience is supposed to see through the perspective of Roosevelt, whose gaze the camera follows. The beautiful Native woman is the main target on the stage and in the film's staging of Sacajawea in the American Museum of Natural History. The path of the gaze becomes especially telling when Sacajawea is in her statue form (in the film and in statues of Sacajawea located all over the United States) because Sacajawea cannot gaze back at the audience. Sacajawea is to be seen but not heard, nor is the audience to see from her perspective.

One major difference between representations of Sacajawea in film and statues is a metaphysical conception of time. Statues, although they can be moved to different locations, appear timeless and are objects to be seen without the threat of the return of a gaze. Films do not possess a timeless quality. The technology of films is constantly developing, and films from a century ago look very different than films made now. Statues can be more than a century old or a year old and look similar to one another. Yet both film and statues support colonial narratives. They are commemorations of colonial violence and domination of Native peoples and Native lands that are now owned by someone else. The erasure of the violence of conquest exists outside of time because these narratives are constantly produced and reproduced throughout time. However, as I have argued, Native politics and the history of colonialism is writ large in the film *Night at the Museum* and on statues of Sacajawea outside of this film because the desire to erase the violence of conquest leaves a bloody residue that cannot be seen by every viewer. The absence of colonial violence reproduces the idea that Native peoples no longer struggle to maintain Native lands (or that Native peoples resisted conquest).

Sacajawea, as a sexualized cultural image, might help us to think of what role Native women have played in the history of US citizenship. Even though Sacajawea is Shoshone, she does not have a national designation as a cultural image. Baptiste, the son she gave birth to while on the Oregon Trail, is not given a nationality either. Sacajawea is an important cultural symbol of US conquest, so this is significant. More statues of Sacajawea exist in the United

States than of any other woman. On these statues, she is not considered a US citizen and, in most cases, a member of her Shoshone Nation.<sup>21</sup> She is held captive without a nation as a symbol of conquest in statues, coins, and representations of her image in US popular culture. Because this is a denial of Sacajawea's Indianness, her role as a Native mother, and her ability to reproduce future generations of Shoshones, it is an act of genocide. Her captivity is not questioned or disputed. Instead, it is held sacred, and there is no desire to rescue or protect Sacajawea.

*Night at the Museum* is a good example of Sacajawea held captive from her Shoshone identity through representations of her as a statue and a living character. In this film, she is not represented as a Shoshone Indian. Although other statues claim not to be the person they represent, the Sacajawea statue does claim to be Sacajawea. If she tries to exist outside of the museum, the threat of annihilation for Sacajawea would be actual and not symbolic. Once again, Sacajawea is represented as a real person only as a symbol of conquest and the justification of the expansion of US lands. She only gets to be a nationless American legend. Not even her body is her own. By erasing her Shoshone citizenship and her role as a Native mother, her personhood is dismembered. Her ability to give birth to a future generation of Shoshones is also erased by the representation of her without children and without a Native nation in this film. In representations of Sacajawea as a statue, she is not seen as an American citizen, but this does not allow her to exist outside of the bounded narrative of US nation building. Being locked into a nation-building narrative structure that represents your race as dead and you as exceptional is an act of captivity in a US genocidal narrative structure. It is an act of violence both to Sacajawea and Shoshones specifically and to Native peoples generally. The colonial narratives I have discussed attempt to justify the theft of land and the erasure of Native peoples from the US body politic and they dehumanize Native peoples, which in turn ideologically legitimizes the genocide of indigenous peoples and the formation of the US nation-state.

The Sacajawea statue made by Glenna Goodacre is located in the middle of the Lewis and Clark Community College campus in Godfrey, Illinois. Goodacre is the white woman who made the Sacajawea dollar coin to commemorate the new millennium and who was commissioned by the college to make this statue in 2004. Across the Missouri River from Godfrey is St. Louis, Missouri, where Lewis and Clark began their journey. More than 7,750 students attend Lewis and Clark Community College. The buildings form an empty center where the statue of Sacajawea and her child stands by the "main complex" of the campus. The only other artworks are some abstract iron sculptures located on the other side of the courtyard titled "The New Heritage Sculptures." No statues of



Lewis and Clark exist on this campus to commemorate the namesake of the community college.

Sacajawea is with her child, Jean Baptiste, in this beautiful sculpture. The statue is made of bronze, and great attention to detail was made to get the racial features correct. Goodacre used the same Shoshone-Bannock woman, Randy L'Teton, as a model for the statue that she used for the Sacajawea dollar. Strangely, the statue looks as though it could have been there for hundreds of years even though I know it has been there only since 2004. Monique Mojica critiques Sacajawea statues and the legends surrounding Sacajawea by stating:

Captured again!  
Frozen! Cast in bronze,  
this hollow form with my name—  
Tsakakawea!  
Who are these strange sisters?  
and what mountains are they climbing?<sup>22</sup>

Mojica frames Sacajawea as a captive of Lewis, Clark, and Charbonneau and as a survivor of conquest rather than a willful participant in the conquest of the United States. Mojica also criticizes the use of Sacajawea to open the land to conquest.

The multiplication of Sacajawea statues in the United States in an effort to embody the conquest of Native women, Native land, and the obliteration of Native peoples has a queer reproductive element. The sheer number of Sacajawea statues is an interesting fact considering that the existence of Native mothers counters the narrative of the extinction of Native peoples. Or does it? Sacajawea stands alone or her child is hidden behind her and can only be viewed at side angles. Sometimes Sacajawea is portrayed with her child, yet often she is on her own in communion with nature. Because Sacajawea statues are located in built, manipulated, controlled, and modern spaces of nature such as parks, her communion with a transformed and colonized version of nature becomes more symbolic of her position as a dominated, submissive, and complicit subject of the colonization of this land now called the United States. Placing a Sacajawea statue in these carefully managed parks naturalizes conquest by making Sacajawea at one with nature because Native peoples are seen as a part of nature and not quite human. Sacajawea loses her birthright and her claim and future claims to the lands of Native America when her motherhood is taken away from her by artworks or statues that depict her as childless. Ironically, the erasure of Sacajawea's motherhood in colonial narratives goes against nature but not the nature of colonialism as a form of heteropatriarchy.

The changing narratives of Sacajawea statues show how her body can be contorted to fit the different narrative that colonialism wants to tell in a

particular moment. Statues, frozen in time, share many different histories. Alice Cooper and Goodacre's Sacajawea statues were made one hundred years apart in order to commemorate the Lewis and Clark centennial and bicentennial. Like the Sacajawea character in the film, these Sacajawea statues cannot speak. The actual Sacajawea did not leave any written accounts or memoirs entitled, for example, *Why I Hate Lewis, Clark, Charbonneau and Now Love Women*. In the spirit and power of satire to make a meaningful critique, I will discuss an important playwright who criticizes colonial narratives and makes her own.

Mojica's work satires history and the idea that white feminism and Native women have been involved in the same battles for equality and inclusion into the US nation-state. Her play *Birdwoman and the Suffragettes: A Story of Sacajawea* retells the story of Sacajawea while critiquing how white suffragettes used narratives of Sacajawea as a guide and mother in order to promote the white feminist project during the Lewis and Clark centennial of the early twentieth century. *The Suffragettes* is a group of women singers who sing praises for Sacajawea. The play moves between the singing of the Suffragettes and the elders on the Shoshone Wind River Reservation where Sacajawea went to live and die after the Lewis and Clark trail.

During Sacajawea's first monologue she exclaims,

Captured! Slave girl, hush, keep quiet! No tears for the slave girl  
earth houses, skin boats  
slave girl of the Mandan.  
Mother!—Silence  
but for the little ones  
crying in the night.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Mojica presents an alternative to dominant colonial narratives about Sacajawea by claiming her as a captive, mother, and therefore, an unwilling participant in conquest who was sold by Native people to Lewis and Clark. It also expresses the pain and suffering Sacajawea and her child might have endured during the Lewis and Clark trail, which is never explored in the colonial narrative. Mojica furthers this critique of representations of Sacajawea by showing how white suffragettes played a major role in the production of the colonial narrative of Sacajawea as a guide and helper to Lewis and Clark. Suffragette #1 states, "Yes. I then hunted up every fact I could find about Sacajawea. Out of a few dry bones I created Sacajawea and made her a living entity. For months I dug and scraped for accurate information about this wonderful Indian maid."<sup>24</sup> Mojica shows how the colonial narrative of Sacajawea that we know today was produced from archival research and imagination one hundred years after the Lewis and Clark trail. White



women's participation in the colonial project exposes their access to the transparency thesis that Sacajawea and other Native peoples cannot occupy. White women can become transparent Is by engaging in colonial violence through writing themselves into history by using the colonial narratives of affectable others. Rebecca is another example of this desire and execution of the colonial knowledge/power project through the telling and writing about Native women.

This article is not about speaking for Sacajawea or trying to figure out who she really was. This cannot be known and, unlike Rebecca and the Suffragettes, I do not want to dig up any archival truths about her. However, I did. The violence and horizon of death loom large in the archives, and I bring this death and violence to my work without being engulfed or obliterated by the colonial violence of the archives and the telling and knowing that comes from the archives. The ability of the colonial narratives of Sacajawea to adapt to a specific national crisis shows how representations of Sacajawea are affectable by exterior forces. Major details, like Sacajawea's motherhood, can be excluded or exploited by anyone. Marubbio argues that "cinema, as a white male-dominated industry, and film, as a voyeuristic medium, offer a lens through which to analyze the psychological and sociological structures created through representations of subservient, simplistic, self-destructive Others."<sup>25</sup> Colonizers desire to portray Native peoples as "self-destructive" instead of accounting for the continued colonial violence and occupation of Native America. We may be broken; but we are not dead. I want to conclude this article with the words of Mojica's Sacajawea:

If you remember me,  
remember a child fighting to stay alive  
remember a slave girl gambled away  
remember a mother protecting her child  
remember a wife defying the whip  
remember an old one who loved her people  
remember I died at home on my land.<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES

1. Monique Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), 65; Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 79. Many different spellings of Sacajawea's name exist. In this article I will use the "Sacajawea" spelling because it is the most common spelling of her name and because I am interested in discussing "mainstream" representations of Sacajawea.

2. James Willard Schultz, *Bird Woman (Sacajawea): The Guide of Lewis and Clark. Her Own Story Now First Given to the World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918); Grace Raymond Hebard, *Sacajawea: A Guide and Interpreter of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with an Account of the Travels of Toussaint Charbonneau, and of Jean Baptiste, the Expedition Papoose* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1933). I found both of these sources in the Newberry Library's Avery collection in Chicago.

3. Phil Deloria's work in *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2004) discusses how Indians doing unexpected things in modernity, such as acting like Indians in movies, getting manicures, and driving cars, disrupts the idea that Indians are primitive and culturally unable to interact with technology. He argues that Indians interacting with modernity are seen as an anomaly.

4. The conquest of Native America is not widely seen as an ongoing process, and I want to argue that conquest and land theft continue through narratives of progress and racializing Native peoples as dead and gone. This neat little narrative leaves white America as the natural inheritors of Native lands.

5. Shari Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 20.

6. Da Silva shows how Georg Hegel's formulation of "Spirit" writes the transparent subject into time and space through global narratives of world history. Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 79.

7. Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 5.

8. White male heroes dating a Native single mom and/or a Native woman who already has a white husband would create competing white male patriarchies. This would disrupt colonial narratives of a few brave white men coming together against the savage affectable Others of nature.

9. Smith, *Conquest*, 79.

10. *Ibid.*, 81.

11. *Ibid.*, 82.

12. M. Elise Marubio's chapter "Death, Gratitude, and the Squaw Man's Wife: The Celluloid Princess from 1908–1931" in her book *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006) gives a good account of the early history of Indians in film through a gendered lens while the whole book discusses the long historical trajectory and changes in Native American women's representations in film from 1908 through the 1990s.

13. Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), ix.

14. *Ibid.*, ix–x.

15. Bal, *Double Exposures*, 17 (emphasis added by author).

16. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 43.

17. Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing," in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Boston: South End Press, 2006), 68.

18. Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text* 11 (Winter 1984–85): 59.

19. *Ibid.*, 21.

20. *Ibid.*, 23.

21. Alice Cooper's statue plaque reads: "Erected by the women of the United States in memory of Sacajawea, the only woman in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and in honor of the pioneer mother of old Oregon." On this plaque, there is no reference to Sacajawea's identity as a Shoshone and it attempts to make her the "mother of old Oregon." Although positioning her as the "mother of old Oregon" would seem to make her a part of the US nation, Native women are often put in the position of mother in national settler colonial narratives. By marking Sacajawea as the symbolic mother of the

settler colonial state, the settlers become the inheritors of the land of the new nation while Sacajawea and other Native peoples disappear not only from possessing a national status and sovereignty but also into obliteration.

22. Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, 83.
23. *Ibid.*, 69.
24. *Ibid.*, 76.
25. Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, x.
26. Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, 84.