

The American Bald Eagle and the Bird Woman: Early America's Nation Building and Its Native American Policy

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0. The George Washington Parody and the Bird Image

A series of paintings coproduced by two Russian artists, Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid, and based on a project entitled “American Dreams” (1996–1997), depict parodic images of George Washington and the American bald eagle, which are full of implications for America's hegemony in the late 20th century. For instance, in *The Wings Will Grow*, Washington, standing behind a globe, holds a round-shaped, monstrous baby with a bald eagle head. Another painting, *Air of Superiority*, depicts Washington, shouldering an RPG and sitting astride a huge eagle that holds the American flag in its talon. In *Our Way of Life*, a bald eagle-headed man wearing a white suit holds up the red Russian flag, which overlaps and merges with a portrait of the first American president, encircled with a shield bearing the Stars and Stripes. Under the man's right foot is a sign that reads “100%,” as if to suggest “the American way of life” is perfectly right [Figure 1–3].¹ As presented in these images, Washington and the bald eagle, closely connected to the ethos of the “American Dream,” clearly suggest the performative act of exerting power.

However, the inseparable linkage of these two icons—the first President of the United States and the Great Seal—also reminds us that America exerted its power not only in the late 20th century but even earlier, in the

nation-building period. The symbolism of the bald eagle, adopted in 1782 for the design of the American Great Seal, stemmed not merely from the traditions of the ancient Sumerian civilization and the Roman Republic but also from the wisdom of the Iroquois Confederacy. Just as the American federal system was established by referring to the political system of the 5 Iroquois nations, so the Great Seal of the United States—the spread bald eagle holding thirteen arrows and a banner on which is inscribed the motto “E Pluribus Unum”—was created with an eye to Native American pragmatism and spirituality. Thus, the United States, at the time of its independence and, later, of nation building, drew upon European traditions as well as the wisdom and rationality of a Native American system in its politics. Nevertheless, the United States undertook a violent expansion of the nation and engaged in the extermination of the Native Americans, from whom Colonial America had learned a great deal about the practical construction of a political framework and constitution as a model for the “empire of liberty.”

Interestingly, on the reverse side of the Indian peace medals that Washington gave to Native American chiefs and warriors on the occasions of negotiation with their tribes, the Great Seal was engraved. Just after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark’s Corps of Discovery was organized and ordered to disseminate to Native American leaders the Thomas Jefferson Indian peace medals that also bore the image of a bald eagle as part of its design. When presenting the Jefferson medals to the Native American people, American leaders characterized themselves as the representatives of the “Great White Chief” who would rule the whole of the Native American tribes thereafter. Thus, the early Indian peace medals with the bald eagle served as a device to impress upon the Native Americans

that the white American president was their only great father.

On the occasion of their expedition, Lewis and Clark were accompanied by one of the most famous Native American women, Sacagawea, whose name meant "bird woman" in the Hidatsa-Mandan language. The Corps of Discovery distributed the figure of the American eagle as a diplomatic sign of "peace and friendship" as well as a symbol of American power and dominance, whereas the bird woman, to whom Lewis and Clark greatly owed their achievement of reaching the Pacific, contributed to America's "manifest destiny" to expand. Moreover, even after the Lewis and Clark expedition, she was used first as a symbol of the women's suffrage movement, and then later as an exemplar of multiculturalism. In honor of the great achievement of the bird woman, her imaginary figure was cast in the Sacagawea one dollar gold coin, the equivalent of the George Washington one dollar bill, with the American bald eagle on its reverse side.

In this manner, in the history of the nation building of early America, an interesting connection between the bald eagle and the bird woman was figuratively and practically constructed. The purpose of this paper is to explore how the United States adopted and appropriated the bird image, which closely relates to the Native American political system and also to its cultural traditions. These appropriations became entangled in American nation building and territorial expansion. The following sections will thus examine the colonists' representations of the Native Americans and their building of a new national identity, the process of the formulation of the Great Seal and its relation to the Native American council system, and the Lewis and Clark expedition's Indian peace medal diplomacy, aided by Sacagawea.

1. Native Americans and the American Eagle

Benjamin Franklin, one of the members of the first committee for formulating the Great Seal, opposed the third committee's decision to adopt the bald eagle design. According to Franklin's letter to his daughter, Sarah Birch, he thought that a bald eagle was inadequate for the symbol of a new nation built on principles of honesty and bravery. He regarded the nature of the bald eagle as insidious, because the eagle steals fish that are the prey of other birds, instead of endeavoring to catch the fish itself. A bald eagle, which Franklin called "a Bird of bad moral Character," was also a cowardly bird that could be driven back by even a king bird as small as a sparrow. Franklin's displeasure at the third committee's decision is understandable. The thirteen colonies had achieved independence from Britain by pushing back what Franklin called the "King Birds," so he believed that a sly and timid bald eagle that could be attacked by a king bird should not become the national symbol.² Moreover, the design of the Great Seal was the symbol of the Society of the Cincinnati, an aristocratic and exclusive association established by the officers of General Washington, whose membership was "to be hereditary in the line of the eldest son, like titles of nobility" (qtd. in Olsen 127). It is no wonder that Franklin's disavowal of the bald eagle's image must have intensified, as this bird was, through the actions of the Society, now connected to the notions of primogeniture and a hereditary elite, which clearly was opposed to the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and to Republican idealism.³

The nexus linking the American eagle, the formation of the "noble" Society of the Cincinnati, and Franklin's dissatisfaction with the eagle's predatory image is an interesting example that informs America's

commitment to the contradictions inherent in its republicanism: the coexistence of conflicting pairs of values, such as liberty and slavery, expansion and extinction, nobility and predatoriness. With regards to its nature of “injustice” not to “get his living honestly” (qtd. in Olsen 119), the United States, ironically, properly chose a bald eagle as the representative of the country, for the nation was premised on the republican principles of freedom and equality, and yet by the same token, it justified a policy of the removal and extermination of the Native Americans in the name of “manifest destiny,” subsequently romanticizing the disappearing people as “noble savages.” Therefore, Franklin’s identification of the bald eagle as an emblem of exclusive nobility and predation was quite visionary.

What we have to consider here is, however, not the contradiction within America itself but rather the following questions: how did America struggle to constitute a new nation that had inherited European traditions, on the one hand, and yet was different from conventional feudalism, on the other? In what way did the new nation establish and represent its national identity, and how did the nation’s identity relate to the formulation of the Great Seal as the national symbol? Did America have a specific model?

It is true that Franklin found the Old World’s aristocracy and feudalism in the figure of the bald eagle; however, it is also true that the bald eagle suggests a strong connection to the democratic notion of unionism and to the council system of the 5 Iroquois nations that the Founding Fathers greatly admired. Whereas it recognized what it had inherited from the Old World’s culture and traditions, the United States needed to foreground the uniqueness of the American identity to justify the revolutionary cause and testify to the appropriateness of their new political system. To do so, colonial leaders sought new and uniquely American traits in the Native American culture and

in its constitution. Thus, it is worthwhile to explore the connection between the two and to consider how such consanguinity is reflected in the design of the Great Seal.

While the bald eagle has signified America itself since it first appeared on the Great Seal, the personification of the nation had already been accomplished long before the determination of the national symbol. Since the discovery of the New World, European artists had usually depicted the American continent as a naked Native American woman. The most famous instance is Theodor Galle's *America* (ca. 1580), an engraving based on a drawing by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1575), in which the new continent discovered by Amerigo Vespucci is represented as a nude Indian woman [Figure 4]. *Personification of America* (1765–75), copied by Adrien Collaert II after Marten de Vos, also depicts America as the gallant figure of an Indian Amazon on the back of an armadillo (or is it an alligator?). The background of the etching displays various exotic plants and animals of the New World, together with indigenous people savagely hunting and fighting against the European army [Figure 5]. Moreover, the figure of "America" illustrated on the front page of Sir Ferdinando Gorges's *America Painted to Life* (1659) is, once again, a Native American woman wearing a feather headdress and a skirt. She also holds a bow and a quiver of arrows and a hunk of meat that resembles a human leg [Figure 6]. These examples of the personification of America clearly equate the New World with representations of indigenous females even though they also have European features.

Whereas Europeans connected the New World with its indigenous people, the colonists were conscious that their own traits were different from those of Europeans. Separating themselves from Great Britain, American colonists tried to identify themselves as the Native Americans on the eve

of the revolution. American colonists protested against Great Britain by disguising themselves as the Mohawk Indians during the Boston Tea Party, which supports their creation of a new identity as the Native Americans. As Grinde Jr. and Johansen indicate, “[a]s the imported tea symbolized British tyranny and burdensome taxation, so the image of the Indian represented its antithesis: a ‘trademark’ for an emerging American identity and a revolutionary symbol for liberty in a new land” (112). Grinde Jr. and Johansen also demonstrate that in the revolutionary period, the Native Americans, particularly females, became the symbol of patriotism and liberty, and thus they were often represented in contemporary songs, slogans, pictures, and printings as such.

Let us take a look at some specific examples. In the lower right-hand corner of Paul Revere's chalcography, *A View of Part of the Town of Boston in New-England and British Ships of War Landing Their Troops! 1768* (1770) is depicted, though in little, a Native American female sitting under a palm tree and stomping on a British soldier of the 29th Regiment, which was notorious for the Boston Massacre (Issacson 4–5) [Figure 7]. In the issue of the *Royal American Magazine* published in June 1774, Revere presented his engraving entitled *The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught*, in which members of the House of Lords hold down a half-naked American Indian woman and force her to drink tea. Witnessing her ordeal, Spanish and French bystanders opportunistically consider whether or not to help the colonies (Grinde Jr. and Johansen 125–28) [Figure 8]. Furthermore, in an anonymous engraving, *The Female Combatants* (1776), a British aristocrat says, “I’ll force you to Obedience, you Rebellious Slut,” to which a naked American Indian woman replies, “Liberty, Liberty forever, Mother, while I exist.” America as a “savage squaw” fights against a pompadoured

and gorgeously attired British woman. Here it is apparent that “liberty” is winning over “subjugation.” The British aristocrat’s fist does not reach the Native American Indian, while her daughter is giving her a pinch (Grinde Jr. and Johansen 133–34) [Figure 9].

The more symbolic identification of Americanness with a Native American figure, although not female, is also found on the 1787 Massachusetts copper cent. The obverse bears a Native American wearing a crest and moccasins and holding a bow and an arrow; the reverse shows the spread eagle, almost identical to that of the Great Seal (Issacson 8) [Figure 10].⁴ This Indian-American bald eagle combination reveals that the construction of the American nation state was literally and figuratively closely related to the Native American politics.⁵ Grinde Jr. and Johansen regard it as an example of “the fusion of Native American and European civilizations” (133). A similar instance is also found in the design of the 1824 playing card. Here, the Native American woman as the Goddess of Liberty, holding the Liberty Pole with the Stars and Stripes, is attended by an American bald eagle with olive branch and arrows. Below them, is placed a shield that is designed with stars and stripes (Issacson 5) [Figure 11]. All of these elements are apparently symbols of the republican cause.

Thus, when the American colonists tried to establish the new republic in a different way from the Old World, they intentionally adopted the image of the Native Americans,⁶ and the formation of the integrated identity of the new nation and of the Native Americans was also virtually coupled with the symbolism of the bald eagle. Nevertheless, for the design of the Great Seal, the bald eagle was not originally presented. Rather, a concept based on European cultural traditions arose as the first suggestion. Therefore, attention should be paid to how the committees presented the designs of the

Great Seal and how the Congress selected the one that is used today. The following section will illustrate the process that led to the adoption of the bald eagle for the Great Seal, as well as the significance of the eagle in the Native American Indian culture.

2. The Formulation of the Great Seal and Iroquois Symbolism

On July 4, 1776, the day the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, the Congress also passed a significant resolution: "Dr. Franklin, Mr. J. Adams and Mr. Jefferson, be a committee, to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America" (U.S. Department of State 1). The task was a burdensome responsibility. Following this resolution, it took 6 years and the involvement of 3 committees and 14 men before the design as it is today was finally determined on June 20, 1782. In this long process, the bald eagle was not introduced from the beginning. Actually, the first and second committees presented very different images. To see the transformation of each committee's suggestion is key to understanding the struggle Americans went through in expressing themselves as descendants with European origins, and how their identity mingled with a Native American mentality.⁷

The first committee, organized by three signers of the Declaration of Independence, struggled unsuccessfully with a Biblical theme, and then asked a French portrait artist, who was living in Philadelphia at the time, Pierre Eugene du Simitiere, to be a consultant for the heraldry. Simitiere's drawing for the obverse emphasizes the historical linkage between the European countries and the United States through the embedded structure of the shields. The middle-sized shield in the center bears 6 European symbols

that represent “the Countries from which these [colonial] States have been peopled”—the English rose, the Scottish thistle, the Irish lyre, the French lily, the German eagle, the Dutch lion—and small shields encircle them that bear the initials of the 13 states of the United States. Following the European convention of a supported and embellished escutcheon that was developed in the late medieval period, Simitiere places the figure of Liberty on the right and an American soldier dressed in buckskins and holding a rifle and tomahawk on the left, both of which support the large shield. Above the escutcheon is the eye of Providence in a radiant triangle that was adopted for the final reverse design of the Great Seal. What is noticeable is that the Latin motto “E Pluribus Unum” had already appeared in this drawing [Figure 12]. Then, the first committee, after slightly changing the Simitiere proposal and replacing the American soldier with the Goddess of Justice, presented their final suggestion. As for the reverse, Franklin worked out the design.⁸ The illustration was based upon the Exodus, and the words “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God” apparently informed the typological interpretation of the American Revolution [Figure 13].

Although the first committee presented their final proposal on August 20, 1776, the Congress did not give its approval, and the new committee, composed of James Lovell as its head, John Mortin Scott, and William Churchill Houston, took over the responsibility for the design. They then asked Francis Hopkinson, one of the signers of the Declaration as well as the designer of the American flag and the great seal of the State of New Jersey, to serve as a consultant. Hopkinson made two similar proposals, and the committee’s final design, issued on May 10, 1780, seems to have inherited European traditions, just as the design of the first committee had. Hopkinson’s first design for the obverse had a shield with 13 diagonal red

and white stripes in the center, supported on the right by the Goddess of Peace holding an olive branch, and on the left by a half-naked Indian warrior holding a bow and arrow. Nonetheless, in his second proposal, chosen by the committee to submit to the Congress, the Indian warrior was replaced by a soldier, who looks more like a European soldier than an American. The reverse design represents Liberty; her delicate figure, too, seems to remind the viewer of an aristocratic European lady [Figure 14 (a), (b)]. The design of the second committee also failed to be accepted by the Congress, even though some of their suggestions, such as the 13 stripes on the shield and the constellation of stars, the olive branch and the arrows, were used later.

The third committee, organized by Edward Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, and Elias Boudinot on May 4, 1782, welcomed William Barton as a heraldic expert. Barton's obverse design bears figures on each side of the shield—the Goddess of Moral Justice and an American soldier—that represent the “Genius of the American Confederated Republic.” Within the complicated and meticulous design for the obverse, the figure of the bald eagle first appeared. This time the eagle on the crest holds a very minor position, though. For the reverse design, Barton used a Pyramid of 13 steps that had been designed by Hopkinson, and the Providence Eye, which had been proposed by Simitiere [Figure 15].

Although they acknowledged the great difficulty of Barton's job, the Congress once again did not approve his design, and then they sent to the committee Charles Thomson, the Secretary of the Congress, who dramatically altered the concept. He took small elements that the previous three committees had proposed, and then decided to put a larger spread eagle in the center as the sole supporter of the shield with 13 stripes. The eagle holds an olive branch and 13 arrows in its talons, and in its beak it

holds a scroll with the American motto [Figure 16]. After being modified in detail with cooperation from Barton, Thomson's design was submitted to the Congress on June 20, 1782. For the reverse side, Thomson kept Barton's design of the Pyramid and the all-seeing eye. In this way, combining the best contributions of each committee, the Great Seal was completed, with the result that the Great Seal itself embodies the concept of "E Pluribus Unum" [Figure 17].

Thomson, a significant Founding Father for both the nation and the Great Seal, served as the Secretary of the Congress for 15 years, recording all the proceedings, debates, and decisions related to the legislature's crucial moments. Moreover, except for John Hancock as chair, Thomson was the only signer of the Declaration of Independence who lacked the status of a representative from a colony. He is considered as the chief drafter of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787,⁹ the best political accomplishment under the Articles of Confederation (Grinde Jr. & Johansen 194). Furthermore, as he was also appointed as the Secretary of the Constitutional Assembly, his practical ability in various political pursuits is fully proven. Not only his ability as such but also his integrity, intelligence, fairness, and knowledge are said to have been highly prized.¹⁰ Thomson, in his visionary style, contributed in a most practical way to the establishment and the administration of a nation-state system readied for future territorial expansion.

Most noteworthy is his close relationship with the Native Americans. On account of his righteousness and fair-mindedness at the time of the treaty between the colonists and the Native Americans at Easton in 1757, he was directly appointed by Native American leaders as a conscientious and efficient secretary to record the proceedings for them. A year later, he was

adopted as a member of the Lenapi, the Delaware Indian tribe, and given an Indian name meaning “man who tells the truth” (Heronimus 157; Patterson & Dougal 71). Therefore, the decision making related to the Great Seal emblem greatly depended upon the person who was the closest to the Native Americans and who knew their political and cultural traditions.

Originally, the eagle appeared in the myths of Ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and examples of the eagle design have been found in books about European emblems and on the currencies of many European nations. As for the American bald eagle, the most likely source of inspiration for the bird holding an olive branch and a bundle of arrows (the traditional symbols of peace and war) is found in the emblem book by Joachim Camerarius, a Bavarian physician and botanist, originally published in 1597 [Figure 18]. As Franklin, a member of the first committee and Thomson's friend, actually owned the 1702 edition of Camerarius's book, it has been surmised that Thomson referred to and was influenced by this image (Patterson & Dougal 95–102; Hieronimus 166–67). In fact, as Thomson's design, as well as the Great Seal today, is quite similar to Camerarius's, it is likely that he appropriated it, probably because he attached a high value to the United States-European connection.

Nevertheless, if the colonists tried to identify themselves with the Native Americans at the time of Independence, despite being conscious of their ties to the Old World, it would be reasonable to assume that the same process was undertaken for the approval of the Great Seal. Thomson, as the Secretary of the Congress, must have recognized more than anyone else how profoundly the Founding Fathers such as Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson, were attracted to the advantages of the political system of the Iroquois Confederacy.¹¹ Thomson remarked in March 1788, during the ratification

period of the Constitution, “The Iroquois... [are] like the old Romans in the time of Gaul” (Grinde Jr. & Johansen 246–48; Hieronimus 158). His parallel between the Romans and the Native Americans implies that his knowledge of what the eagle symbolised depended on both Old World traditions and Native American wisdom. Thomson, as an adopted Delaware, must have noticed the significance of the bald eagle in the Native American culture; grafting together European traditions and the Native American spirit, he fused them into the American Great Seal as a figurative substantiation of “E Pluribus Unum.”

Traditionally, for the Native Americans, the bald eagle (as well as the golden eagle) is a supreme bird that represents honesty, truth, majesty, strength, courage, wisdom, power, and freedom. According to a Native American myth, the Great Spirit, at the time of Creation, chose the bald eagle as the master of the sky because this bird could fly higher and closer to the Great Spirit and thus have sharper vision and a much greater degree of vigilance than any other bird. In consequence, the eagle is regarded as sacred even today (“American Eagle & Native American Indian”). Interestingly enough, the spread bald eagle still remains atop “the Great Tree of Peace,” the emblem of the Iroquois Confederacy, whose symbolism represents a peaceful council system instead of fighting and conflict among its tribes. The confederate nations of the Iroquois regarded the huge evergreen white pine tree as their symbol for “the Great Law of Peace,” which signified the upholding of peace, brotherhood, unity, a balance of power, the natural rights of all people, the sharing of natural resources, and provisions for the impeachment of inappropriate leaders. Their system emphasized checks and balances, public debate, and the ideal of consensus. The pine tree, whose widely extended roots and branches invite anyone, without excluding

different tribes and races, represents human relationship within the laws of nature and peace; the eagle perched on top of the tree serves as a lookout against enemies who disturb the peace and abuse power (Grinde Jr. & Johansen, 24–31; Hieronimus 50–57).

The Native American interpretation of the significance of the bundle of arrows that the eagle holds in his talon is different from that of Camerarius's book, and the U.S. Congress preferred to use the former. In Camerarius's design for the emblem, the bundle of arrows represents war; however, in the Native American tradition, it signifies the unity of the tribes. The eagle on the crest of the "Great Tree of Peace" bears 5 arrows, signifying the original 5 nations of the Iroquois. In a Native American anecdote, a bundle of arrows was presented by a dying father to his sons for a lesson in solidarity: even a frangible arrow can maintain its strength when several of them are put together. During the time of the Constitutional Assembly, this story was repeatedly introduced in Philadelphia papers and magazines. For Americans who had been familiar with Franklin's "Join or Die" snake illustration since the French and Indian War, the lesson of unity or death must have been accepted quite naturally. By changing the number of the arrows from 5 to 13, the United States appropriated the confederation system of its indigenous people to avoid the obligatory traditions of the Old World, as well as to establish a framework of government that would allow for democratic rule of the vast continent and of people of various origins.

Furthermore, another interesting incident informs the origin of the rhetorical hybridity of the Great Seal. Thomson presented the Congress with an explanation about the design of the Great Seal. He describes in particular the shield that the eagle bears:

The Escutcheon is composed of the chief [upper part of shield] & pale [perpendicular band], the two most honorable ordinaries [figures of heraldry]. The pieces, paly [alternating pales], represent the several states all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a Chief, which unites the whole & represents Congress. The Motto alludes to this union. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the Chief and the Chief depends on that union & the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America & the preservation of the union through Congress. (U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs 5; underlining mine)

What is noteworthy here is such words as “chief,” “pale(s),” and “paly,” for in the context of race relations, “chief” usually means a sagamore or a sachem (a leader of a North American tribe or confederation) and “pale” a white person. The double entendre of “arms” (heraldic insignia and ammunition) is ironically connected to “pales,” as if it foretells the white violence that would be employed to remove the American Indians from their land. Therefore, the imagery of the Great Seal literally and figuratively testifies that the United States is composed of two different origins, at the same time insinuating that the Native American race is always under the pressure of a “white” force of arms.

Thomson, a father of the Great Seal and of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, is said to have received a Quaker education and to have disliked the violent methods that forcibly deprived the Native Americans of their lands. Although his interpretation of the shield of the Great Seal metaphorically reads the idealistic and unified relationship between the white Americans and the Native Americans, it is also true that his Northwest Ordinance

foregrounded the racial conflict that would arise in the course of territorial expansion. In fact, the United States soon purchased the region of Louisiana, and Jefferson, who had sent Lewis and Clark to the western wilderness, inherited the policy of subduing the Native Americans. On occasions when the Corps of Discovery encountered Native American tribes, the American bald eagle was also symbolically used to advocate U.S. power and supremacy.

3. Indian Peace Medals and the Corps of Discovery

Since the birth of the nation, the issuance of Indian peace medals had played a distinctive role in the United States political agenda regarding the Native Americans. Indian peace medals are the collective term for silver or copper medals of various sizes and shapes that usually bear the portraits of the sovereign king or the first magistrates with heraldic symbols. These medals were presented to the chiefs, leading figures, and notable warriors of many Native American tribes as a token of friendship and loyalty at the time of negotiating and signing treaties between the United States and a tribe or a confederation of tribes. Medals were given as well when Native American representatives visited the U.S. capital, and vice versa. The origin of the Indian peace medal dates back centuries, and the practice of offering the medals, which Jefferson described as “the custom of the Oldest past,” had already been introduced by such European powers as France, Spain, and England before the United States followed the custom (Prucha xiii). In order to gain hegemony on the New Continent, as European nations had shrewdly realized the necessity of establishing ostensibly peaceful and friendly relations with the Native Americans, they distributed peace medals to the

tribes. Meanwhile, for the Native Americans, the possession of a medal was such an important status symbol and evidence of such high esteem that these medals were buried with the recipients or passed on to their descendents when the recipient died. It is ironic that the Native Americans desired to possess these peace medals, which clearly indicated European and American supremacy over an indigenous people. Nevertheless, there are many portraits of Native American chiefs and warriors who were proudly wearing the medal as a necklace [Figure 19].¹²

Of course, the medals themselves had no legal force; they were simply diplomatic and supplemental items intended to establish good terms with the Native Americans. However, Henry Knox, Washington's Secretary of War, who fully knew the medals' effect on the Native Americans, advised the first president as early as 1787 to follow the practice of the European countries and distribute silver medals with a variety of other gifts. For Knox, the cost of striking the medals was trifling, if it meant that then pro-British Native Americans would be converted to supporters of the United States, for most American Indian tribes had taken the side of the British during the Revolutionary War (Prucha 3). Thus, even before the establishment of the U.S. Mint, these Indian peace medals were cast and distributed to the Native Americans throughout the 19th century. After the Lewis and Clark expedition in particular affirmed the importance of offering the medals to the Native Americans during negotiations, guidelines on how to distribute the medals were drawn up. According to the "Regulations for the Government of the Indian Department," which consisted of a simple outline of 5 rules written by Lewis Cass and William Clark in 1829, the medals and flags "will be given to influential persons only," and "[t]he largest medals will be given to the principal village chiefs, those of the second size will be given to the

principal war chief, and those of the third size to the less distinguished chiefs and warriors.” The regulations also advise that when medals and flags were presented, they should be accompanied by “proper formalities, and with an appropriate speech, so as to produce a proper impression upon the Indians.” Most notably, the regulations instructed: “[w]henever a foreign medal is worn, it will be replaced by an American medal, if the Agent should consider the person entitled to a medal” (Prucha xiii). In sum, Indian peace medals played a role in the Americans’ preliminary skirmish against other European nations to secure hegemony over the North American continent. At the same time, the Founding Fathers tactically manipulated the Native Americans’ sense of honor about owning the medals, through which they succeeded in exercising authority over them in the name of “peace and friendship.”

The early Indian peace medals—the George Washington medals and the Thomas Jefferson medals—bear an image of the American bald eagle. The first Washington peace medal was cast in 1789, the year of Washington’s first inauguration. On the obverse of the 1789 oval medal was a rather rough carving in which a Native American man, discarding his tomahawk, receives the peace pipe from a figure of Minerva that represents the United States [Figure 20]. The die of the 1792 medal became more precise, and the figure of Minerva was changed to that of George Washington. Behind the Native American man and the first President was depicted a pastoral agricultural scene, which apparently suggests the contrast between the American civilization and the Native Americans’ primitive hunting customs (Lubbers 83) [Figure 21]. As Prucha indicates, the Indian peace medals were intended “not only as political symbols marking Indian adherence to the United States, but also as rewards for accepting the white man’s ways,”

which included “agricultural and domestic skills” that led them on “the road to American civilization” (8). We must also pay attention to another “white man’s way”: on both medals, the Native American man abandons his weapon, while the figures of Minerva and Washington continue wearing their sabers. The obverse design of both the 1789 and the 1792 medals bears the American bald eagle, suggesting that the United States exerts her power over the subjugated race by compelling the American Indians to lay down their arms, domesticating them and thus utilizing them for the promotion of the American ideology of manifest destiny.

The power of the American bald eagle on the Washington peace medal was particularly emphasized when General Anthony Wayne addressed some Native Americans on August 7, 1795. After the wars with the northwest tribes from 1790 to 1794, and after a long period of council meetings and the distribution of presents for peace and friendship, the Treaty of Greenville between the United States and Native American tribes was finally signed on August 3, 1795. In honor of the treaty, Wayne made a speech in which he persuaded the tribes to be loyal to the United States:

Listen! All you nations present. I have hitherto addressed you as brothers. I now adopt you all, in the name of the President and Fifteen great Fires of America, as their children, and you are so accordingly. The medals which I shall have the honor to deliver you, you will consider as presented by the hands of your father, the Fifteen Fires of America. These you will hand down to your children’s children, in commemoration of this day—a day in which the United States of America gives peace to you and all your nations, and receives you and them under the protecting wings of the eagle. (qtd. in Prucha 9;

underlining mine)

The peace medal presented to the Native Americans on that occasion was a special one engraved with the same design—the Great Seal of the United States—on both sides, as if to doubly demonstrate the nation's power. In this way, the bald eagle, modeled after Native American wisdom and political philosophy, was transformed into a symbol of the United States' violent oppression of the Native Americans, to whom the new nation should have been greatly indebted.

Jefferson's Indian peace medals were round medals of three different sizes, whose design became the standard for the U.S. peace medals during most of the 19th century.¹³ Like the traditional European peace medals, the obverse bears the image of a head of state—the likeness of the third president—with his name; the reverse features the clasped hands of an American soldier and a Native American, with the words “PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP.” The wrist that displays the cuff of a military uniform represents the American government, while the silver wrist band worn by an American Indian bears the American bald eagle, symbolizing the peaceful Indians who pledged allegiance and friendship to the United States (Isaccson 20, 194; Prucha 90–91). Conflicting items that signify peace and war—a peace pipe and a tomahawk—are, strangely, laid across one another. It seems to be a contradiction that “peace and friendship” are achieved by American military force as embodied by the arms of the United States in this image. Given the fact that the silver armband/wristband was another typical gift, the eagle wristband on the Jefferson peace medal doubly signifies the intention of the United States to rule over the Native Americans as if by handcuffing them. Thus, the signification of the eagle on the medal

is twisted on a metalevel: even though an eagle stands for peace and the unity of brotherhood in the Native American culture, the eagle inscribed on the wristband loses its original signification, and yet the wearer is forced to be subjugated to U.S. power in the name of the American way of “peace and friendship” [Figure 22].

The Jefferson peace medals exerted their effect most thoroughly during the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 sparked Jefferson’s interest in expansion to the west coast, and he dispatched Lewis, his personal secretary and a U.S. Army Captain, to find a water route for commerce from the Missouri to the Pacific and to explore the uncharted West to make a report on geographical, biological, and natural historical findings, including an ethnography of Native American tribes. Lewis selected Clark, a Second Lieutenant, as his partner and co-commander, and their “Corps of Discovery” consisted of about 30 members, including Clark’s personal black slave and a Native American woman who accompanied her French Canadian husband as an interpreter. The expedition left St. Louis on May 14, 1804. About 18 months later, they finally reached the Great Ocean, and on September 23, 1806, they returned to their initial point of departure.¹⁴

For 2 years and 4 months (if Lewis’s preparation period is included, 3 years and 3 months), they engaged in the first overland expedition that embodied the “manifest destiny” of U.S. territorial expansion. They nevertheless brought back invaluable information—as it is said that they discovered and reported on 122 species of animals and 178 plants unknown to science, approximately 50 Native American tribes, the Rocky Mountains, and many subsidiary streams. However, their most notable achievement was that in the course of their encountering Native American tribes, they

explained, as representatives of the U.S. government, the conveyance of land ownership that was accompanied by the Louisiana Purchase and made all the tribes understand that now the U.S. President was their new “great Father.” The Jefferson peace medals had a great effect on the tribes. As the territory westward from the Mississippi had been ruled by Spain since 1762 and by France since 1800, many of the Native Americans whom the expedition encountered had earlier received Spanish or French peace medals. The Lewis and Clark expedition led to the tribes replacing the European medals with the Jefferson medals.

As Native American tribes in the region along the Missouri had long been conditioned through so-called the peace-medal diplomacy employed by agents and traders of Spain, France, and Great Britain, the peace medals were considered as an indispensable item to construct a friendly and peaceful relationship with the tribes. In fact, the Americans prepared numerous Washington season medals¹⁵ and Jefferson peace medals of various sizes and types, and distributed them to tribal chiefs and warriors, together with flags and the U. S. emblems, chiefs' coats, gorgets, knives, arm- and wristbands, wampum, tobacco, certificates, and sometimes even munitions to prove the tie of friendship. Such a wide distribution of medals and gifts demonstrated America's extravagance, which might bring the success of the expedition, compared with a relatively limited distribution of the medals by the Spanish (Prucha 24). As such, the United States took advantage of the Native American custom of placing a value on the medals and produced theatrical effects with ceremonial speeches.

The first time the Lewis and Clark expedition presented the medals to the Native Americans was on August 3, 1804, at Council Bluffs, where their corps camped. In his journal, Clark writes of that day that he delivered

a speech “informing thos [sic] Children of ours of the Change which had taken place, the wishes of our government to Cultivate friendship & good understanding, the method of have [sic] good advice & Some Directions,...” (*Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, underlining mine). As Akashi indicates, Clark’s speech in which he called the Otto and the Missouri “Children of ours” then became the model discourse in terms of content and format. After Clark’s speech, the tribal chief and leaders delivered speeches in reply, and they acknowledged “the[i]r approbation to what they had heard and promised to prosue [sic] the good advice and Caustion [sic], they were happy w[ith] new fathers who gave good advice....” In responding to the chief’s request for a little powder and whiskey, Clark gave them “50 balls one Canister of Power” and then Captain Lewis “Shot his air gun a few times which astonished the natives” (*Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*). On their way up the Missouri, Lewis and Clark repeated a similar ceremony: they delivered speeches to tell the Native Americans that the land on which they were living belonged to the United States and to their “Great White Father,” whose power was exemplified both by the American bald eagle and by shotguns and cannons fired from arsenals (Soldiers 132). It should be noted, however, that endowing the peace medals that were inscribed by the hand of the U.S. military, in combination with a demonstration of artillery power seems to be incompatible with “peace and friendship.”

With regards to the transition of the design of the Indian peace medals from Washington’s to Benjamin Harrison’s administration (that is, from 1789 to 1889), Lubbers concludes that the early peace medals’ symmetrical design, intended to represent the equal relationship between the white Americans and the Native Americans, came to be replaced with an

asymmetrical design by the time the Indian removal had been almost completed. In the later medals, especially after the westward movement peaked and the Native Americans became intruders in the white men's territory, the figure of the uncivilized Native American is foregrounded, which suggests that the Native Americans unassimilated to the white civilization were destined to perish. Not only the design of the peace medals but also paintings and sculptures of the late 19th century signify the violent intention that white America posed to the Native Americans as the ultimate choice to either assimilate or be exterminated. In this vein, the term "peace and friendship" is only a sophistry to justify the cause of "manifest destiny" and, consequently, the Native American deference to white dominance (Lubbers 79–94).

Lubbers's indication that the iconographical change in the medals accords with the shift in the U.S. Indian policy from one of coexistence through one of removal to one of assimilation is convincing; however, if the earlier symmetrical medals such as Washington's and Jefferson's had already inscribed the sign of armed force, even if not too overtly, the equitable relationship was, from the very beginning, deconstructed. The notion of the early Republic's Native American policy was not prosperous coexistence but unilateral dominance, which was embodied by the symbolic power of the American bald eagle. At any rate, all Native Americans were required to be children of the "Great White Father." If this was the case, what did the American bald eagle, the image of which had been distributed to the Native Americans on peace medals, take "under [its] protecting wings of" next?

4. Use of the Bird Woman

In Native American folklore, interestingly, a legend persists that one of the members of the Lewis and Clark expedition was also given the Jefferson peace medal (Clark and Edmonds 126–28).¹⁶ That person who so greatly contributed to the success of the expedition as to leave such a plausible legend was the only female Native American participant, called Sacagawea, which means “bird woman” in the Hidatsa language.¹⁷ There may or may not be a genuine connection between Sacagawea, the “bird woman,” and the Jefferson peace medal, which featured, for reasons already explained, a spread eagle; and this “bird connection” may or may not extend to the coin issued in 2000, bearing on one side an image of the “bird woman, and on its reverse, yet another image of the American eagle.¹⁸ But whatever the case, it is certainly clear that Sacagawea and these possible connections have indeed been fairly well manipulated for essentially political ends. The “bird connection” as such clearly testifies to the political usage of the American eagle vis-à-vis the Native Americans, and such folklore also clarifies the extent to which Indian peace medals were effectively used as part of the U.S. strategy for ruling these populations. In fact, just like the legendary Indian princess Pocahontas, Sacagawea was forced to play the altruistic role in contributing to the progress of white civilization as a collaborator on the expedition. What is more, even after her death, she was repeatedly utilized in the development of the American ideology in various ways. If such is the case, we should explore how useful the bird woman has been since the early 19th century. Yet, before exploring the exploitation of Sacagawea, it is worthwhile to review her life.¹⁹

Sacagawea is supposed to have been born around 1788 into the Lehmi

band of the Shoshone Indians (alias dictus, the Snake Indians), who lived in the area of present-day Tendoy, Idaho. She was said to have been betrothed at a young age to an older man in the Shoshone tribe. At around age 12, she was captured and raised by the Hidatsa Indians (alias dictus, the Minnetarre), an enemy of the Shoshone, and taken to their village near Washburn, North Dakota, where she came to be affiliated with the Hidatsa culture and the name meaning "bird woman." Later, she became the second wife of a French Canadian fur trapper, Toussaint Charbonneau, who won her in a gambling game. Meanwhile, Lewis and Clark started the first part of their expedition up the Missouri River, and in October 1804, they reached the Mandan villages where they built a fort at which they would spend the winter. At that time, Charbonneau tried to persuade the captains to hire him as an interpreter. It was decided that Sacagawea, in spite of her pregnancy at that time, would accompany them, probably because Lewis and Clark assumed that her Lehmi-Shoshone origin and her fluency in several languages would help them in negotiating with the Plains Indians later in their journey. In February 1805, Sacagawea gave birth to a son, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau (also known as Pomp), and 2 months later, she joined the expedition to the Pacific, carrying the infant on her back, whose figure was represented later in many statues erected mainly in the Northwest.

Sacagawea's contribution to the expedition was enormous; as many members of the corps admitted, she was far more helpful than her husband. Bravely enduring nature's force, she saved many of the corps' pieces of equipment and supplies when their boat overturned. Then she overcame serious illness and fever. She brought the journey success not only by finding edible plants and roots and taking care of members of the party but also by serving as an efficient interpreter and negotiator. In fact, when the

expedition encountered the Shoshone, whose chief, Cameahwait, turned out to be her brother, the band of explorers was able to obtain the horses and native guides necessary for them to cross over the Rocky Mountains. After a fleeting moment in which the siblings were reunited, the corps proceeded further and finally reached the Pacific in December 1805. After their second over-wintering, their return trip started in March 1806, and they arrived back at the Mandan villages in August of the same year. Despite Clark's offer to come to St. Louis, Charbonneau and Sacagawea decided to remain in the villages.²⁰ The expedition of Lewis and Clark finally returned to St. Louis, the starting point of the trip, in September 1806. The later life of Sacagawea remains obscure. According to the few documents that mention her, Sacagawea died from putrid fever in 1812 at Fort Manuel (in present-day South Dakota) shortly after giving birth to her second female child. She was in her mid-twenties.²¹

In a letter from Lewis to Charbonneau, dated August 20, 1806, Lewis remarks that Sacagawea should have been rewarded much more for her contribution to the expedition. Likewise, other members also wrote in their journals about Sacagawea's proficiency in negotiating with the Indian tribes and her bravery in the face of the fierce forces of nature. Although they admitted that her ability and skills were far better than those of Charbonneau, she was regarded as no more than a "squaw" who accompanied her husband. Because of the popularity of Sacagawea, there has been a tendency to regard her as an employed interpreter, and sometimes even as a leading guide, ahead of Lewis and Clark. However, in reality, she was never hired as a guide nor as an interpreter, even though her childhood memory of geography and the encounter with her Shoshone chief brother did help the corps greatly. Therefore, at the end of their trip, Charbonneau

was paid \$500.33, while Sacagawea, as merely a secondary participant, did not receive any compensation (McBeth, "Sacagawea" 58). What is more, the image of her carrying an infant became a symbol of peace—as the corps with a woman and her baby were regarded as less threatening by the Native Americans—and in this regard, she greatly contributed to the success of the expedition, which on the whole was accepted in a friendly way by the American Indian tribes.²² For all that, however, Sacagawea was simply dismissed and forgotten after the expedition ended.

Yet, at the turn of the 19th century, Sacagawea's greatness was rediscovered, and she was revived. The making of the Sacagawea legend and its appropriation and reception depended upon two historical events: the disappearance of the frontier and the rise of the women's rights movement, both of which occurred around the time of the centennial of the Lewis-Clark expedition. Why and how did a Native American woman who had been obscure for so long suddenly become a heroic and national figure? As Wanda Pillow indicates, Sacagawea became a legendary figure who specifically came to be burdened with the role of reproducing white American ideology through three racializing/colonializing forces: "manifest destiny," the women's suffrage movement, and multiculturalism. Sacagawea's reevaluation, in a more dramatic revival than that of the two captains, relates to the following circumstances.

The year 1890, when the census reported the disappearance of the frontier, was also the time of the end of the so-called bloody Indian Wars, highlighted especially with the massacre at Wounded Knee. With the nation's liberation from the practical fear of the Native American menace, a curious mixture of guilt related to the deliberate brutal conquest of the Native Americans and the justification of manifest destiny arose. The reality of the massacre and

the extermination of the Native Americans must have been replaced with the notion of the inevitability of manifest destiny. Meanwhile, Sacagawea became the integral icon of Native American compliance. Due to a lack of concrete evidence, the image of her that was constructed as a figure pointing the way and leading Lewis and Clark to the Western territories as a guide and interpreter dramatically proliferated. Thus, she became an ideal model of an American cultural heroine whose life and actions signified the progress of civilization (Pillow 5). The more ardently the discourse was woven of a Native American maiden who positively contributed to the success of the expedition to open the way to a higher civilization despite her oppressed and colonized status, the more effectively was the violence that the symbolic American bald eagle had visited upon the Native Americans deluted. For white America, she served a double purpose: even after her death, Sacagawea was utilized in this way, as an emblem of manifest destiny. In the meantime, for the Native Americans, she was considered as a traitor and occasionally labeled as a *Malinche* for cooperating with the white men who had tried to appropriate the territories of her people (McBeth, "Sacagawea" 61). In this way, the creation of the myth of Sacagawea as a guide burdened her with a contradictory status: that of a patriot as well as a traitor.

The seemingly irrelevant relationship between Sacagawea and the suffragist movement is related in a significant way to Eva Emery Dye, an Oregon novelist, who was preparing for the centennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Also, as chair of the Clackamas County Oregon Equal Suffrage Association, she was trying to find a heroine for her second novel, *The Conquest: The True Story of Lewis and Clark* (1902). She "traced down every old book and scrap of paper, but was still without a real heroine." When she came upon the name Sacagawea, she "screamed, 'I

have found my heroine.” Dye thought that Sacagawea, as a “faithful Indian woman with her baby on her back, leading those stalwart mountaineers and explorers through the strange land appealed to the world” (qtd. in McBeth, “Sacagawea” 58). For Dye, Sacagawea exemplified brave deeds and an ability to conquer the West that was unknown even to the white men, while at the same time she retained female traits of motherly affection and domestic skills, which made her the perfect symbol of the suffragist movement.

Moreover, with regards to women's right to vote, Dye had discovered in her another relevant example: Sacagawea was, in all likelihood, the first of her race and gender to be endowed with her franchise to vote. When the expedition party voted on November 24, 1805, on the proper site at which to stay during their second winter near the Columbia River, the right to vote was also given to both York, Clark's black servant, and to Sacagawea, who voted for a place where there seemed to be plenty of edible food (Jensen 75; Thomasama 68). Apart from whether or not it can really be called a political right to vote, this newly discovered episode was now certainly applied to the case of white women. Thus, Sacagawea was transformed into the first Native American female who had exercised her franchise, more than 100 years earlier than her white counterparts.

In order to commemorate this outstanding Native American woman, shortly after the publication of Dye's book, the Woman's Club of Portland established the Sacagawea Statue Association with Dye as president. They raised money by selling Sacagawea spoons and buttons, as well as by publishing a pamphlet, *Dux femina facti*, meaning “A woman led the deed” (Landsman 271). The statue was completed by Alice Cooper of Denver, who executed a figure of Sacagawea carrying Pomp on her back and extending

her right hand to point to the territory ahead [Figure 23]. The influence of this statue was so pervasive that, following its completion, the image of the pointing Sacagawea became something of a cliché. In 1905, Portland hosted the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition and a meeting of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and at that time, an unveiling of the Sacagawea statue was also held. On “Sacagawea Day,” Susan B. Anthony, the prominent 1860 organizer of the National Woman Suffrage Association, gave an opening address: “This is the first time in history that a statue has been erected in memory of a woman who accomplished a patriotic deed.... This recognition of the assistance rendered by a woman in the discovery of this great section of the country is but the beginning of what is due...” (McBeth 58–59; Pillow 5; Landsman 273–74). Consequently, burdened with the ideology of manifest destiny and women’s rights, Sacagawea became a cultural icon appropriated by white women.

What should be added, furthermore, to this event is the connection between Susan B. Anthony and Sacagawea on the one dollar coin. The image of Anthony, who called Sacagawea “a woman who accomplished a patriotic deed” for white America, was adopted for the design of the one dollar coin prior to the selection of this Native American maiden. The Anthony coin was produced from 1979 to 1981, and an additional supply was also made in 1999. When the Sacagawea coin was issued in 2000, it literally followed its white precursor. Coincidentally, the reverse of both coins bears the American spread eagle.

On these coins, the motto of the Great Seal was, again, “E pluribus Unum,” which interestingly also suggested the formation of the Corps of Discovery. Just like the precedent of cultural diversity on the whaling ship in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, the membership of the corps consisted

of people from various cultural backgrounds: officers, enlisted men, trappers and explorers, a black slave man, and a Native American woman, whose diversity is today regarded as the embodiment of the American democratic ideal (Pillow 7). In particular, as a Native American female who had experienced captivity and thus knew different tribes' cultures, and as the wife of a French Canadian and the mother of the mixed-raced Pomp, Sacagawea was easily connected with the integral image of multiculturalism.

The recent trend of considering Sacagawea to be a multicultural figure that is represented as everyone's subject led the PBS program on Lewis and Clark to state: "The expedition forced the people on it to abandon whatever tribal identity they came to the expedition with, and to act for the spirit of the whole." Pillow criticizes such a view and interpretation as "challeng[ing] neither the multicultural narratives of Sacagawea nor the politics, injustices, and violence driving manifest destiny. They offer only a white-centric account that erases white guilt and indigenous genocide" (Pillow 7). Thus, the figure of Sacagawea was transformed from a subjective individual with a Native American identity to an objectively whitened icon to represent the "melting pot" of the American democratic ideal and colonial expansion (Pillow 8).

Sacagawea, as "the white imaginary Indian Princess" who spread white civilization, must be different from other "savage squaws," and therefore in literature she has been whitened, especially in her appearance (Pillow 8–13). This is also the case with other representations of Sacagawea. For instance, in many statues, created by such artists as Alice Cooper, Henry Lion, Leonard Crunelle, Leo Friedlander, and Agnes Vincent Talbot, Sacagawea does not look so much like a Native American "squaw" as a woman with apparently Caucasian features. Similarly, the character of Sacagawea in

the 1955 film of the Lewis and Clark expedition, *The Far Horizon*, was played by Donna Reed, a former beauty queen and an impeccably Caucasian type. Sacagawea was later portrayed again with braided hair and a buckskin costume in the comedy films *Night at the Museum 1 & 2* (2006, 2009) in a role performed by Mizuo Peck, a Caucasian-Japanese actress [Figures 24 (a)–(f)].

Nonetheless, Sacagawea's true exploitation lies in the fact that despite whitening, in other words enlightening, she will never secure her subjectivity as a white; she must not transgress racial boundaries. What Sacagawea is endowed with is a limited accessibility to whiteness: Sacagawea can devote herself to the reproduction and the enhancement of whiteness, but she cannot attain the same status as a white person of authority. Even though she has been whitened, she must still remain within the "inferior" realm.

The whitened and yet limited constructions of Sacagawea as such resonate with the poor circulation of the one dollar coin on which her image appeared; it seems to surrender completely to the Washington one dollar bill in terms of marketing and popularity.²³ The limited use of her coin seems to mirror the politically intended representations of Sacagawea that restrict her role within the boundaries of skin color. Glenna Goodacre designed the likeness of Sacagawea on the 2000 gold one dollar coin after a Shoshone woman. On the coin, two American ideals, "Liberty" and "In God We Trust," are inscribed above and beside the image of Sacagawea, respectively [Figure 25]. Sacagawea, whose true appearance no one knows, and whose liberty must have been suppressed, has been thus depicted and appropriated as white America's production, burdened with the American motto.

5. Bird Woman as a Subversive Visionary

In closing this essay I would like, once again, to consider the following question about Sacagawea: Is Sacagawea actually a mere existence who has been repressed, appropriated, and utilized in order to reproduce and reinforce the superiority of whiteness? Does she fulfill only her assigned role as a patriot/traitor to contribute to manifest destiny, at the same time helping to alleviate white guilt about the Indian Removal Act? What does she accomplish, and what is she deprived of?

First of all, one of the achievements related to Sacagawea is that the richness of Native American folklore culture became better known to the public through the revival of interest in her and the creation of legends about her. It is undeniable that the scarcity of historical documents about Sacagawea clearly demonstrates her minority status. Such historical deficiency about her actually has made this Native American woman into a exploitable object with which white America could justify the removal of the Native Americans and consequently mitigate their guilty consciences. However, it is also true that the lack of written documents has enriched the tradition of Native American folklore and the making of legends, handed down from generation to generation. In fact, on the one hand, some historical documents report that Sacagawea died of disease in 1812, having been left in obscurity. On the other hand, however, according to Shoshone oral legend and second-hand recollection, she returned to her people and lived with her son Pomp and her adopted nephew. She was respected as Porivo, a chief's wife, and died in 1884 at the age of 78. Her body was said to be buried on the Wind River Reservation (Clark and Edmonds 122-145; McBeth, "Memory" 8). Though lacking in historical accuracy, the oral legend as such

has attracted the public, which partly helps the prosperity of local retail businesses and the tourism industry. To sum up, the white manipulation of Sacagawea's image for the progress of American civilization and as part of the Native American legend-making tradition, both of which are based on a scarcity of accurate and authentic historical information about her, are two different sides of the same coin.

Against the whitened construction of Sacagawea, Pillow suggests the most recent representation of her is what she calls the "endarkening" of Sacagawea, as a woman with resistant subjectivity. The "browned" Sacagawea, reinterpreted by critics such as Cynthia Dillard and Dolores Delgado Bernal, is affirmed to reclaim her own voice, life, knowledge, and multispirtedness as a woman of color. Pillow also introduces Paula Gunn Allen's poem about Sacagawea, entitled "The One Who Skins Cats" (1983), in which the American Indian woman is described as a multiple and complex figure: wanderer, speaker, teacher, mother, wife, slave, guide, patriot, chief, and traitor (Pillow 13–17). Mocking Susan B. Anthony and manipulating the mix of the historical and the legendary Sacagawea, Allen offers a counternarrative to challenge the established image of Sacagawea: the once whitened and colonized Sacagawea can also become a multifaceted subject, resisting one-dimensional representations.

However, Sacagawea's silent resistance to her enforced, established image is not only found in the "endarkening" discourse; it is also evident in the example of the Sacagawea coin, which is closely related to the history of the Great Seal and the Indian peace medals, as explored above. Like the ideological appropriation of Sacagawea as a self-sacrificing Indian princess to promote white civilization, the recent tendency of "endarkening" the representation of her also depends on the premise that no one really

knows the true figure of Sacagawea. This historical indeterminacy opens up the space for any possible interpretation of her, and based upon this interpretational diversity, the bird woman has been constructed. If such is the case, the (meta)physical revenge of Sacagawea against the enforced role as a promoter of American ideology must be inscribed on the coin as another example of the possible exploitation of Sacagawea.

The Sacagawea coin functions as subversive resistance in two ways: ostensibly subjugated by the power that the bald eagle represents, Sacagawea on the obverse wields the same authority and value as that of the first American president, attending the national symbol on the reverse; at the same time, the coin also serves as a device to expose the United States' violent history of nation building. The new nation was born to seek a different national identity from that of the Old World, and thus chose to model its federal system after the Iroquois council system. In order to make visible its motto of "E Pluribus Unum," the United States, then, appropriated the Iroquois wisdom of the bald eagle and created the Great Seal. However, once the American bald eagle was adopted for the Great Seal, the bird's original role changed from that of the peacekeeping lookout to that of the conqueror that would suppress violently its benefactors to whom the new nation owed a great debt.

The Sacagawea coin informs the failure of the United States, which extolled the achievement of the bird woman to mitigate its guilty conscience about the extermination of the American Indians. When the United States resurrected the hitherto obscure Sacagawea to enforce upon her the racialized discourse of the justification for the Indian removal, we could not help but realize that the "disappearing Indians" have never disappeared. On the contrary, they have always existed in the shadows of the U.S. Native

American policy. In the memorable year of the millennium, the United States unconsciously deconstructed its authenticated canonical history of WASP origins by issuing the Sacagawea coin.

On the shield that the bald eagle holds on the Great Seal, a “chief” and “pales” are united inseparably. Likewise, the figure of the bird woman and the American eagle on the Sacagawea coin are literally connected. The disappearing bird woman has returned, attended by the national symbol. Accepting a persona that was forced upon her, the likeness of Sacagawea on the coin silently warns us against the manipulation of the past for the benefit of white America. The most subversive revenge of Sacagawea is to make us notice the precariousness of myth-making politics. After all, the likeness is not her true image but merely an imaginative creation by the United States.

Notes

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1 In 1996, inspired by the images of both the Russian and the American revolutions, Komar and Melamid, together with David Soldier, produced an opera treating George Washington, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and Marcel Duchamp, entitled *Naked Revolution*, which later became part of their project, the *American Dream* series (1996–97), a juxtaposition of paintings, sculptures, and collages based on the artists’ collection of George Washington memorabilia. This series also includes other paintings that relate George Washington with Hitler, Stalin, and Lenin, which, in a way, implies America’s sole mastery of the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For more on Komar and Melamid and their works, see (<http://www.komarandmelamid.org>).

2 In a letter to his daughter, Franklin, in a rather mocking tone, asserts that a turkey is much more preferable to a bald eagle for the Great Seal. But his preference for

the turkey is not regarded as representative of his true thinking but rather as a sort of pleasantry to his daughter, based upon the facts that Franklin himself had suggested using the design of the bald eagle for the flag of the Pennsylvania Association in 1747, as well as for the three dollar bill of the Colonies in 1775. As Franklin also decided to print the Great Seal's bald eagle on the front cover of the governmental document in 1783, it is likely that he might have supported the symbol of the bald eagle. However, Olsen indicates that Franklin's adoption of the bald eagle for the cover of the governmental document was not based on his personal liking for this bird but rather his plenipotentiary obligation to show the prestigious power of the Great Seal to foreign nations. Furthermore, Olsen also points out that Franklin's suggestion to use the bald eagle design for the three dollar bill stemmed from his intention to show Britain's abuse of its power and authority in the form of its monarchy and aristocracy, just on the eve of the American Revolution. Therefore, Olsen concludes that Franklin considered a bald eagle as the symbol of feudalism and predation (118–125).

3 The Society of the Cincinnati was an elite and aristocratic association established by General Henry Knox (later, an advocate for the establishment of West Point) and colonial officials who served as aide-de-camps to Washington during the War of Independence. The aim of this society was to maintain an intimate relationship among veterans, as well as to establish a pension system for them and their families. As Peter Charles L'Eenfant appropriated the bald eagle in the Great Seal for the society's emblem, the American bald eagle came to have a close connection with the society's exclusivist heredity system. In this sense, we can say that Franklin showed his distaste for the bald eagle and the Great Seal in order to criticize the Society's vestiges of feudalism as un-American. However, quite ironically, Franklin himself later accepted the title of honorary member of the Society (Hieronymus 170).

4 According to Issacson, the phantom Massachusetts copper cent of 1776 has been considered as an antecedent of the bald eagle on the Great Seal. However, there is no credible evidence that the phantom copper coin actually existed, nor is there any record of the minting of it during the revolution that includes an explanation of why the bald eagle is present (8). In fact, the oldest copper cent that features the spread eagle is the 1786 Massachusetts cent, which is apparently just an imitation, as the Continental Congress had adopted the design of the spread eagle for the Great Seal on June 20, 1782. What is significant here, however, is not the chronological precedents of the bald eagle design that appeared between the issuance of these two

copper cents, but the fact that at least in the early republican period, the American bald eagle design was inseparably connected to the Native American image, just as were the two sides of the same coin.

5 In 1780, three years before the revolution concluded, the provisional government of Massachusetts asked Revere to design the state seal (the design of which was adopted in 1898). The instructions Revere received read, “An Indian dressed in his shirt, [moccasins], belted proper—in his right hand a bow—in his left, an arrow, its point toward the base. . . [O]n the dexter [right] side of [the] Indian’s head, a star for one of the United States of America” (qtd. in Grinde Jr. and Johansen 133). The design of the Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is obviously similar to that of the 1786 copper cent.

6 Grinde Jr. and Johansen remark, “Until the 1750s the word American had been almost always applied exclusively to American Indians. To make a revolution, the colonists first had to recognize themselves as Americans. Beholden to their ancestral lands by culture, history, and tradition, the colonists were able to distinguish their own identities by borrowing from America’s native inhabitants in order to create a new amalgam: this ‘new man,’ ‘the American’ (in the words of Crèvecoeur)—half Indian, half European” (133).

7 For more on the detailed process and transformation of the design, see Hieronimus, Isaacson, Patterson & Dougall, and U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs.

8 Jefferson’s original proposal for the Great Seal design, which was much the same as Franklin’s and was preserved in the records of the Continental Congress, is considered to have been used for the reverse that they presented to the Congress: “Pharaoh sitting in an open chariot, a crown on his head and a sword in his hand passing thro’ the divided waters of the Red Sea in pursuit of the Israelites: rays from a pillar of fire in the cloud, expressive of the divine presence and command, reaching to Moses who stands on the shore and, extending his hand over the Sea, causes it to overwhelm Pharaoh. Motto: Rebellion to tyranny is obed^{ec} to God” (Isaacson 20–22).

9 The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 established the Northwest Territory, the area from the Great Lakes south to the Ohio River, the first official annexation of lands, which stated that the region could be incorporated as a state into the nation when its population reached 60,000. Although this law was likely modeled after the Iroquois system of peaceful expansion of their territory (Heronimus 160), according

- to Grinde Jr. and Johansen, the “American Indian nations were excluded from the process of incorporation and eventful statehood in the westward expansion” (194).
- 10 According to Hieronimus, Thomson’s “upright honesty was a quality also admired by his colleagues of European descent, who had a saying: ‘It’s as true as if Charles Thomson had said it’” (157).
- 11 The League of the Iroquois originally consisted of the Mohawks, the Cayugas, the Onongadas, the Senecas, and the Oneidas. The Tuscarora joined later.
- 12 For more on the history and examples of Indian peace medals, see Hilger, Isaacson, Lubbers, Nude, Prucha.
- 13 Although the obverse likeness changed in accordance with the advent of the new president, the basic design of the reverse, representing “peace and friendship” between Americans and Indians, had been followed during most of the 19th century. Particularly, the design of the clasped hands and the crossed tomahawk and peace pipe was used up until the administration of the 12th president, Zachary Taylor.
- 14 For more on the Lewis and Clark expedition, see Akashi, Holloway. See also <<http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/>>
- 15 At the end of Washington’s administration, the relatively small medals (45 mm in diameter), bearing 3 designs on the obverses—a man sowing grain, domestic animals, and a woman doing spinning and weaving—called Washington season medals were made in England. As a huge number of medals were struck and shipped to the United States after Washington retired from office, they were presented to the Native Americans even during John Adams’s and Jefferson’s administrations. Thus, Adams did not make his own peace medals, and Lewis and Clark still distributed the leftover medals when they encountered the Native Americans on their expedition of discovery (Prucha 16–18).
- 16 Some researchers have reported a second-hand recollection about Sacagawea’s life after the expedition, in which the presentation of her medal is mentioned. According to Clark and Edmonds, Andrew Basil, the grandson of Sacagawea, told the following to Dr. Charles Eastman, a Sioux Indian, who investigated the life and death of Sacagawea in 1924 at the request of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: “I have seen a large medal worn by my father [Bazil, Sacagawea’s nephew, later adopted as her own son] at special gatherings, and sometimes his brother Baptiste [Jean-Baptiste Charbonneau, Sacagawea’s son by Toussaint Charbonneau] would wear the medal, because they thought a great deal of each other. My father also had some papers that he carefully kept in a leather bag, which were given to my grandmother

by some great White chiefs” (126). John McAdams, grandson of Bazil, who was said to be only 12 when his great-grandmother died, said he “remembered the silver medal worn sometimes by his grandfather Bazil and sometimes by his great-uncle Baptiste on special occasions” (126), and he also reported that “Jefferson’s head and his name were on one side of the medal” (128). Concerning “the silver medal” and “papers,” there are several testimonies of the Shoshone informants. Based upon these sources of information and his research, Eastman concluded his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on March 2, 1925, saying that, “I report that Sacajawea, after sixty years of wandering from her own tribe, returned to her people at Fort Bridger and lived the remainder of her life with her sons in peace until she died April 9, 1884, at Fort Washakie, Wyoming. That is her final resting place” (qtd. in Clark and Edmonds 129). However, his report about Sacagawea and the story of the Jefferson peace medal is generally regarded as having relatively little credibility. (Concerning the controversy over Sacagawea’s life story after the expedition and the year of her death, see Summitt, chapter 9.) Nevertheless, what is important here is not the credibility of the report about Sacagawea’s Jefferson medal but rather the strong connection between the Native American legend and the Indian peace medals. America’s Indian peace medal policy and strategy at that time thus prevailed so strongly among the Native Americans that it led such folklore to have an influence for a long time. Therefore, even though Sacagawea did not actually receive the Jefferson peace medal, she is a product of the American ideology about the development of the white civilization.

- 17 The authentic spelling and pronunciation of her name has not yet been established. Some Hidatsa linguists spell out “Tsakakaweish” (tsukaka=bird, wiis=woman), and they say “Sakakawea” is also a possibility. Most generally, the spelling “Sacagawea” is used in the Hidatsa language. Meanwhile, among the Shoshone, from which she is said to have come, “Sacajawea” is used, in which case, however, her name means “boat launcher” or “boat pusher,” which is different from the name of “bird woman” that Lewis and Clark originally used in their journals. The captains did not often write out her name, preferring indirect references in their journals such as “the interpreter’s wife,” “our /the squaw,” “the Indian woman,” and “Charbono’s Snake Indian wife.” Even when they wrote her name, the spelling varied erratically, such as “Sah ca gah weah,” “Sah-kah-gar-wea,” “Sar kah gah We a,” or “Sah-cah-gar-wweah.” Although the spelling is rendered differently even among scholars, I will follow the Hidatsa meaning of bird woman and spell her name as “Sacagawea” in

this essay. For more on this issue, see Fenelon and Defender-Wilson 99; McBeth, "Memory" 3–4.

- 18 The reverse design of the Sacagawea coin was changed in 2009 from an image of the American bald eagle to that of a Native American woman planting seeds in a field of corn, beans, and squash, which was redesigned again only a year later. The 2010 Sacagawea coin reverse features an image of the Hiawatha Belt, with 5 arrows bound together and the additional inscriptions HAUDENOSAUNEE and GREAT LAW OF PEACE. For more on the coin, see, <http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/nativeAmerican/>
- 19 Her biographical information is not infrequently imbued with legend and hearsay, as the documentation concerning her life is incomplete and pretty much limited. For instance, there are several versions of her purported tribal origin, as well as the spelling and meaning of her name. In this essay, I mainly rely on Summitt's *Sacagawea: A Biography*, in which the author emphasizes creating "an accurate account of Sacagawea" (xi).
- 20 At the time of their separation, Clark, who had been quite fond of Sacagawea's child, Pomp, offered to adopt this winsome baby as his own son. Although the child's parents accepted his offer, they were delayed in sending Pomp to Lewis because the infant still required his mother's care. Later, Lewis legally adopted Pomp and sent him to Europe for an education. After his return home, the multilingual Pomp became a trader and an interpreter, and he died in Danner, Oregon, in 1866 (Akashi 206–07; Thomasma 92).
- 21 For more on the life and times of Sacagawea, see Chuinard, Clark and Edmond, Summitt, Thomasma, as well as Lewis and Clark.
- 22 In Clark's journal (Oct. 13, 1805), he writes, "The wife of Shabono our interpertr we find reconciles all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions. [A] woman with a party of men is a token of peace." See, the UNL website of *The Journals of Lewis and Clark Expedition*, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=1805-10-13.xml&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xml> A similar comment also appears in his journal on October 19, 1805: "as Soon as they [the Wallula] Saw the Squar wife of the interpertrers they pointed to her and informed those who continued yet in the Same position I first found them, they imediately all came out and appeared to assume new life, the sight of This Indian woman, wife to one of our interprs [sic]. confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter—." See, the UNL website of *The Journals*

of *Lewis and Clark Expedition*, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=1805-10-19.xml&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xml#noten23101910>

- 23 In January 1999, the United States General Accounting Office issued the report of the survey entitled *New Dollar Coin: Public Prefers Statue of Liberty Over Sacagawea*. As the title of the report clearly indicates, even though Sacagawea's likeness was adopted for the design of the new coin, the American public preferred the white figure to the Native American maiden. Indeed, the Sacagawea coin was/is unpopular. In May 2002, two years after the Sacagawea coin was issued, the United States Senate held a hearing to investigate the reason for the coin's limited circulation, and in September, the United States General Accounting Office reported on a strategy and a campaign to raise public awareness and to promote the coin's circulation. Even now, Americans seldom see the Sacagawea coin, except when they receive change from vending machines.

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1. K&M, *The Wing's Will Grow, from the American Dreams project (1996-97)*



2. K&M, *Air of Superiority, from the American Dreams project (1996-97)*



3. K&M, *Our Way of Life, from the American Dreams project (1996-97)*



4. *America* (ca. 1580) by Theodor Galle after a drawing by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1575).



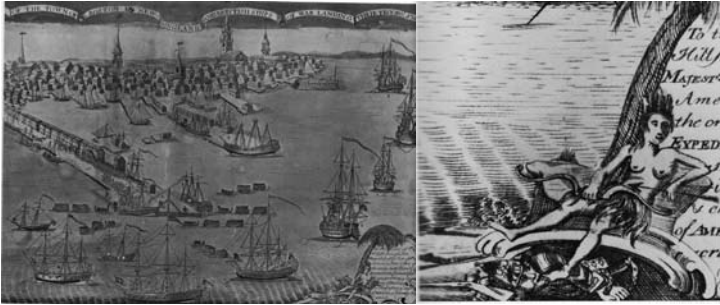
5. *Personification of America*, copy by Adrien Collaert, II of an engraving by Martin de Vos, (1765-75)



6. *America*, engraved frontispiece taken from Ferdinando Gorges's *America Painted to the Life* (1659)



7. Paul Revere's engraving, *A View of Part of the Town of Boston in New-England and British ships of War Landing Their Troops! 1768 (1770)*



8. Paul Revere, *The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught (1774)*



9. Anonymous, *The Female Combatants (1776)*



10. Massachusetts Copper Cent of 1787



11. Playing card by Coughtry & Dougherty, New York (1824)



12. Tracing of Pierre Eugene du Simitiere's design of the obverse of the Great Seal (1776)



13. The first committee's final proposal of the design of the Great Seal (obverse and reverse) submitted to the Congress (1776)



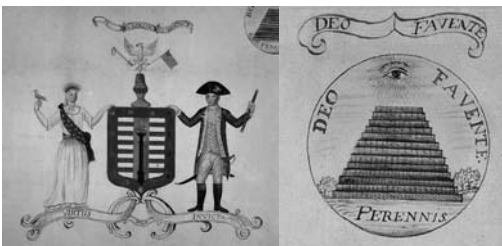
14(a). Tracing of Francis Hopkinson's first design for the second committee (1780)



14 (b). Tracing of Francis Hopkinson's second design, submitted to the Congress by the Second committee (1780)



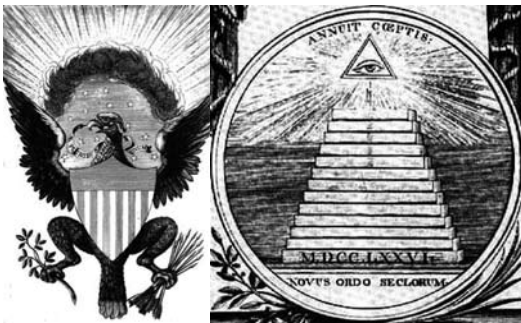
15. Tracing of William Burton's design of the obverse and reverse for the third committee (1782)



16. Tracing of Charles Thompson's design of the obverse (1782)



17. The first realizations of the Great Seal of the United States based on the official 1782 description



18. The heraldic design of eagle from Joachim Camerarius's emblem book originally published in 1597.



19. Red Jacket, the Seneca chief, wearing the silver oval Washington medal dated in 1792.



20. George Washington medal (1789)



21. George Washington medal (1792)



22. The reverse of Jefferson medal (1804) and two arm bands with the arms of the United States



23. Alice Cooper, *Sacagawea* (1905). It stands today in Washington Park, Portland, Oregon.



24.

- (a) Henry Lion, *Lewis and Clark with Sacajawea* (1905), created from a sketch drawn by Charles M. Russell



(b) Leonard Crunelle's statue of Sacagawea (1910) stands on the ground of the North Dakota State Capitol.



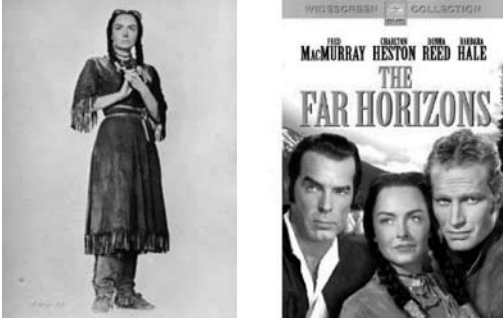
(c) Leo Friedlander, *Lewis and Clark Led by Sacagawea* (1938), a marble relief sculpture at the entrance of the Oregon state capitol building in Salem. Below the sculpture, words "Westward the star of empire takes its way" are inscribed.



(d) Agnes Vincen Talbot, *Sacajewa and Pomp* (2004)



(e) Donna Reed as Sacagawea in the 1955 film *The Far Horizon*



(f) Mizuo Peck as Sacagawea in *The Night at the Museum* (2006) and its sequel, *The Night at the Museum: Battle at the Smithsonian* (2009)



25. The 2000 Sacagawea gold one dollar coin

The obverse is designed by Glenna Goodacre and the reverse, "Eagle in flight," by Thomas D. Rogers.



The reverses of the 2009 coin (left) and the 2010 coin (right)

