

June 7

Fuckin' A, New Yawk!

An academic paper, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," writ by geographer William Denevan of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, finds its way onto your desk. Far too long to present in its entirety, you take some threads from it and fashion them into an open weave:

The myth persists that in 1492 the Americas were a sparsely populated wilderness, a world of barely perceptible human disturbance. ...A good argument can be made that the human presence was less visible in 1750 than in 1492....

Las Casas wrote that the Indies are "full of people, like a hive of bees, so that it seems as though God had placed all, or the greater part of the entire part of the human race in these countries."...

Fra Bartolomé believed that more than 40 million Indians had died by the year 1560. Did he exaggerate?...

I have recently suggested a New World total of 53.9 million. This divides into 3.8 million for North America, 17.2 million for Mexico, 5.6 million for Central America, 3.0 million for the Caribbean, 15.7 million for the Andes, and 8.6 million for lowland South America....

The decline of native American populations was rapid and severe, probably the greatest demographic disaster ever. Old world diseases were the primary killer. In many regions, particularly the tropical lowlands, populations fell by 90 percent or more in the first century after contact....

The replacement of Indians by Europeans and Africans was initially a slow process. By 1638 there were only about 30,000 English in North America, and by 1750 there were only 1.3 million Europeans and slaves....

Thus the overall hemispheric population in 1750 was about 30 percent of what it had been in 1492....

The forests of New England, the Midwest and the Southeast had been disturbed to varying degrees by Indian activity prior to European occupation. Agricultural clearing and burning had converted much of the forest into successional (fallow) growth and into semi-permanent grassy openings (meadows, barrens, plains, glades, savannas, prairies), often of considerable size. Much of the mature forest was characterized by an open, herbaceous understory, reflecting frequent

ground fires.

"The de Soto expedition, consisting of many people, a large horse herd, and many swine, passed through ten states without difficulty of movement" (Sauer 1971)....

"Fire created conditions favorable to strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and other gatherable foods" (Cronon 1983)....

Balboa's first view of the Pacific was from a "treeless ridge," now probably forested.

"Indeed in much of Amazonia, it is difficult to find soils that are not studded with charcoal" (Uhl, et al. 1990)....

The economic botanist William Balée speaks of "cultural" or "anthropogenic" forests in Amazonia in which species have been manipulated, often without a reduction in natural diversity....

There are no virgin tropical forests today, nor were there in 1492....

"Indians created ideal habitats for a host of wildlife species... exactly those species whose abundance so impressed English colonists: elk deer, beaver, hare, porcupine, turkey, quail, ruffed grouse..." (Cronon 1983)....

[Vis à vis agriculture] Hernando de Soto's army passed through numerous fields of maize, beans and squash, their main source of provisions in one sector [wrote a contemporary chronicler] "great fields were spread out as far as the eye could see..."

There were about 19,000 ha of visible raised fields in just the sustaining area of Tiwanaku at Lake Titicaca and there were about 12,000 ha of chimampas (raised fields) around the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. Complex canal systems on the north coast of Peru and in the Salt River Valley in Arizona irrigated more land in prehistory than is cultivated today...

...Earth moving, landscape engineering on a grand scale runs as a thread through much of New World prehistory. Large quantities of both earth and stone were transferred to create various raised and sunken features, such as agricultural landforms, settlement and ritual mounds, and causeways....

Some prehistoric footpaths were so intensively used for so long that they were incised into the ground and are still detectable, as has recently been described in Costa Rica....

Improved roads, at time stone-lined and drained, were constructed over

great distances in the realms of the high civilizations. The Inca road network is estimated to have measured about 40,000 km, extending from southern Colombia to central Chile....

[A late 16th century observer cited] "waies as much beaten as those betwixt Salamanca and Valladolid."

[It has been argued that] the New England forests of 1633 were more open, more park-like, with more berries and more wildlife, than Thoreau observed in 1855....

On the Pacific side in the eighteenth century, savannas were seldom mentioned; the main economic activity was the logging of tropical cedar, a tree that grows on the sites of abandoned fields and other disturbances....

[It has been estimated that] the Maya had modified 75 percent of the environment by A.D. 800, and that following the Mayan collapse, forest recovery in the central lowlands was nearly complete when the Spaniards arrived....

The pace of forest regeneration, however, varied across the New World.... The tangled brush that ensnared the Wilderness Campaign of 1864 in Virginia occupied the same land as did John Smith's "open groves with much good ground between without any shrubs," in 1624....

The degree to which settlement features were swallowed up by vegetation, sediment and erosion is indicated by the difficulty of finding them today. Machu Picchu, a late prehistoric site, was not rediscovered until 1911....

While he [Columbus] spoke of "Paradise," his was clearly a humanized paradise... he described Hispaniola and Tortuga as densely populated and "completely cultivated like the countryside around Cordoba..."

"Paradoxical as it may seem, there was undoubtedly much more 'forest primeval' in 1850 than in 1650." (Rostlund 1957)....

Is it possible that the thousands of years of human activity before Columbus created more change in the visible landscape than has occurred subsequently with European settlement and resource exploitation? The answer is probably yes for most regions [until 1750] or so, and for some regions right up to the present time. American flora, fauna and landscape were slowly Europeanized after 1492, but before that they had already been Indianized....

So nu?

Well, if our mythic operating system is that of pristine continent – no conquest hence no invasion – then one ramification these hundreds of years out, is that America has established such legitimacy as it claims by invading – colonizing – *itself*. We've subjected and subjugated ourselves to self-made systems of exploitation and ever-more elaborate modes of self-oppression: the whole sorry gamut from “right to work” to no meaningful health care to the united colors of terrorist alert.

Being actors-in, we cannot own to being actors-out. Imperialists, who, us? All those coups, interventions and black ops? Those hundreds of military bases in other folks' lands? Just a gift to the world of our superabundant freedom. And we mean it sincerely. Drone right we do.

Again, we're twinned with modern Israel – another land claimed in denial of conquest. In our case the awesome microbe scrubbed the New World new ahead of settlement. With the Zionist state, no conquest – only return.

Whatever we tell ourselves, all workers are migrant.

Water, water... and not a drop to...

The parched man que viene.

Dry slabs of sidewalk, aka parchment. Incise your heart out. Andor to your heart's content. Content being also the stuff within a vessel.

Or work in chalk, a species of bone.

Pommes d'amour, mon joie.

Reckoning time by incense.

And gie's a hand o' thine!

And we'll tak a right gude-willy waught...



Empty storefront, ancient signage come to light, Madison near 79th.

Full strawberry moon, heart of the New World.

Amarna, mon amour.

June 8

Sez BBC: **Military spending sets new record**



The value of military hardware manufacturers has soared. [*Ah, sunflower!*]

Global military spending rose 4% in 2008 to a record \$1,464bn (£914bn) - up 45% since 1999, according to the Stockholm-based peace institute Sipri.

In contrast with civilian aerospace and airlines, the defence industry remains healthy.

"The global financial crisis has yet to have an impact on major arms companies' revenues, profits and order backlogs," Sipri said.

Peace-keeping operations - which also benefit defence firms - [!] rose 11%.

Missions were launched in trouble spots such as Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"Another record was set, with the total of international peace operation personnel reaching 187,586," said Sipri, or Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Growth industry

As the world's aerospace and defence industry prepares for next week's Paris air show centenary, it seems much of the focus is set to shift away from troubled civilian aircraft makers, which are struggling with reduced orders from recession-hit airlines, towards the companies that make fighter jets and other military hardware....

It's axi(y)o(!)matic: whatcha press down there pops up here...



Natural History, mon amour.

Sujete siempre los pasamanos del autobús para evitar resbalones, tropezones y caídas.

Always hold the hand grips of the bus to avoid slides, stumbles and falls.

And then that line: We're serious about safety. Your safety. Which slogan in the Spanish version uses the word *seguridad*, hence carries a double meaning...

Tomamos en serio la seguridad – su seguridad.

Y Quantánamo también, such strange physics as these...

While supplies last...

ARTICLE ONE

We do hereby renounce all fear-based systems of authority.