The *new world.* Perhaps no phrase in in the lexicon of colonization is at once so significant in its ecological, historical, and biological implications, yet so inaccurate, insulting, and indicative of the hubris running through western culture. It is a hubris that we have seemingly yet to become conscious of; we are not living in a postcolonial world. We have so exploited our planet that we have sent modern-day conquistadors in search of yet another *new world,* armed with a Space Force. How different are we today from the English colonizers that sailed to the Americas in ships—the spacecraft of their time—armed with swords, armor, disease, and bandoleers filled with enough lead to make sure that the *new world* would be *theirs*?[1] I emphasize *theirs* here because it is this notion of land ownership that was so central to the colonization of the *new world* and simultaneously so foreign to the peoples that had inhabited the so-called *new world* for at least 15,000 years.

To colonists, New England was a *new world*, ripe with the commodities and resources that they had exploited to scarcity in their native homeland. To native peoples, it was a nature which they lived inside,[2] in a complex entanglement of mutual respect for the ecosystem they inhabited and the spiritual, gift-giving ritualism that figures so prominently in Native-American legend.[3] Native-Americans and colonists differed fundamentally in the ways that they conceived of land ownership and the ways that they conformed to the ecosystems they inhabited. Native peoples were mobile in order to conform to their ecosystems, occupying multiple ecological niches, and in the process limiting their ecological footprint. The fixed nature of the colonists' settlements sought

[1] Francis Higginson, "A Catalogue of Such Needful Things as Every Planter Doth or Ought to Provide to Go to New England," in *Remarkable Providences: Readings on Early American History*, ed. John Demos, Rev. ed (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991); William Cronon, "A World of Fields and Fences" (Lecture, History 460, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 23, 2020).
[2] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, 1st rev. ed., 20th-anniversary ed (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 15.
[3] William Cronon, "The World That Coyote and Raven Made" (Lecture, History 460, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 9, 2020).

to make their ecosystems conform to them—bringing ecological relationships within the boundaries of their own property—to exercise control over nature's production of the commodities they sought. The Europeans' setting [ecological] foot on American soil would change the New England landscape forever.

The difference in conformation *to* environment and conformation *of* environment is perhaps nowhere most evident than in the kinds of structures that were erected by Native-Americans and European colonists. The general narrative put forward in *Changes in the Land* is that the indigenous peoples of New England lived a largely mobile life; furthermore, the dwellings they lived in, wigwams,[4] were easily transported which lent itself to a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle. But this is only part of the picture. Cronon points out the "inability or refusal by either side [colonists or natives] to observe fully how much each sex was contributing to the total food supply."[5] Indeed, the colonists saw the male natives as lazy, idling their time away "hunting, fishing, and wantonly burning the woods,"[6] and their wives as their slaves who would "set their Corne and doe all their other worke."[7] This English perception of the lazy Indian[8] men and their slave wives was a clouded perception of what was instead a calculated division of labor: a response to the natural bounty that the seasons provided for them, which ensured the long term preservation of the ecosystem through spreading demand over many of its resources. This gender-division of labor brings me to the other large Native-American language grouping in the Northeast, the Haudenosaunee. Haudenosaunee means "people of the longhouse," which refers to another

[4] Also known as *wetu* by the Wampanoag, the people who occupied what would become the Plymouth colony. Note too, that wigwam is the anglicized version of the Abenaki word for the structure, one of many Algonquian languages existing in the New England region.
[5] Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 52.
[6] Cronon, 52.
[7] Francis Higginson, "New-Englands Plantation (1630)," in *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, vol. 62, 1929, 316, quoted in Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 52.
[8] Please note here that I am using the term "Indian" interchangeably with Native-American as done in the book *Changes in the Land* and also so as to connote the views held by English colonists.

structure built by Northeastern Native Americans (Haudenosaunee and Algonquian alike),[9] which uses similar construction to a wigwam, but is much larger and designed to house many people, or an entire clan. One can imagine that these structures were quite *fixed.* It is quite fitting then, that these two structures accompanied the gender-division of labor in northeastern native tribes, with the women often living in these fixed longhouses, tending to permaculture agriculture and the rearing of children, and the men living in the more mobile wigwams as they moved around "according to the richness of the site and the season."[10]

While it is true that Native Americans failed to see the contribution that colonial women made to the workforce, gender roles are not the focus of this short analysis. The larger point is that *nobody* left the colonial homestead, in contrast with native mobility. Indian men were not confused by *why* colonial women weren't working fields so much as they were confused by men not leaving the fields to go hunt.[11] The structures built by colonists reflected this attitude: large, immovable homes constructed out of enough wood to furnish canoes for an entire band of Native-Americans. Spreading demand over multiple natural resources could not have been further from the minds of colonists, who "sought to modify and regulate the seasonal cycles within the boundaries of their homesteads and villages."[12]

The conformations *to* and *of* the landscape also expressed themselves in the kinds of watercraft they constructed. Northeastern Native-Americans constructed either dugout canoes, which were made by felling a tree and hollowing it through careful burning and digging out of the ash, or birchbark canoes, whose construction speaks to the extraordinary resourcefulness of

[9] Please forgive this gross oversimplification of Northeastern Native American identity. If I listed all of the tribes in the Northeast, this paper would be far too long.
[10] Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 53.
[11] Cronon, 53.
[12] Cronon, "A World of Fields and Fences."

indigenous peoples. As the name suggests, birchbark would be used to furnish the body of the canoe. The ribs and gunwales would be carved out of cedar using wood and stone hand tools, and the birchbark would be sewn together (and to the ribs and gunwales) using thread woven from the roots of conifers (usually spruce) and the seams in the birchbark would be sealed using resin from spruce trees. Early on these canoes would be used to paddle and portage about waterways scattered throughout the Northeastern woodlands in the pursuit of whichever species was at its prime abundance, bringing along the necessities of a mobile home.

Sailing across the Atlantic Ocean was a forced endeavor. It could take months, cost several lives on board, and required the construction of a wooden vessel solid enough to withstand the beatings of an ocean, large enough to house all of the colonists and their provisions, and impossible to portage—once colonists arrived, they weren't moving around. Among these provisions were everything that was needed to make the *new world* conform to the production systems of the land they left behind; sheep, cattle, pigs, and European crops, grasses, and the weeds and diseases that accompanied them.[13] Perhaps the most unsavory co-traveler of them all was the commodification of natural resources, which can be seen in the construction of their ships. The construction of a seaworthy vessel consumed several trees and required metal, guns, sails, and maps. All of these "imply outward linkages with the wider markets of the Atlantic world," and once these markets got hold of American soil, it was theirs.[14] Soon, the same birchbark canoes that were used to adapt to ecosystems and move around the landscape were repurposed by natives and voyageurs alike, who were swept up in the fur-trade. The beaver, previously a neighbor to share the ecosystem with, became an "isolated and extractable" commodity, tradeable for wampum and metal.[15] And the

[13] William Cronon, "Co-Invasion: Some Bigger Creatures" (Lecture, History 460, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 16, 2020).
[14] Cronon, "A World of Fields and Fences."
[15] Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, chap. 5: Commodities of the Hunt; Cronon, chap. 2: Landscape and Patchwork.

spruce resin that was so artfully used to construct birchbark canoes? The English had a similar use for it, pitch,[16] one of many commodities responsible for the looting of the forests of New England.[17]

A landscape that was once bounded by the native names describing the species most abundant in those areas of their shared ecosystem soon became a landscape bounded by fences, divided into arbitrary squares of land ownership.[18] No sooner than colonists had extracted nature's bounty of commodities did they commodify the land into European style fields, meadows, and pastures centered around immovable houses. Upon which they placed European animals and crops, which were brought on ships linked to Atlantic markets. A land which had yielded plenty for large populations of Native-Americans for thousands of years in a symbiotic relationship had become *a new world* to own, ripe for the looting of what would soon become not enough, for the people that already had far too much.

[16] *Pitch* is a viscoelastic substance which was used for the sealing of seams between the strips of wood used to construct sailing vessels. Prior to the Industrial Revolution and the advent of coal, pitch was derived entirely from tree resin. Pitch pine is so named because it was praised for its high resin content, and harvested as such.
[17] Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, chap. 6: Taking the Forest.
[18] Cronon, chap. 4: Bounding the Land.

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