

# Trees, Guilt, and Civilization

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## Trees, Guilt, and Civilization

Neil Forsyth

In the Cachimbo region near the centre of Brazil in 1968 the British journalist Adrian Cowell made his moving film *The Tribe that Hides from Man*, but by 1987 not a single member of the tribe, the Kreen-Akrore, remained. Nor did most of the forest they inhabited. Two new roads had brought gold prospectors in, and a flu epidemic and starvation forced the Indians out. "The region where the vast forest had stood was now populated by the cattle of ranchers and land speculators" (Maxwell 28) – and by a vast military base that supplied rocket technology to Saddam Hussein and, it was revealed last year, an underground pit for testing nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup>

This is just one of the stories that daily feed our sense of impending ecological disaster as we watch the destruction of the tropical rain-forests and register the various consequences such as global warming.<sup>2</sup> Nearer home we have become alert to the diseases that development inflicts on the mountain trees that have protected Swiss villages from avalanches and that have been protected by legislation since the middle ages (in Andermatt for example a law was passed in 1397). Deforestation here seems to have

<sup>1</sup> The Amazon forest of Brazil sustained perhaps 3.5 million people in 1500, but no more than 200,000 descendants of those millions survive. Even this number is rapidly diminishing, and many have already been moved to reservations. See Hecht and Cockburn 1989, and Mendes 1989. A good general survey of the relevant issues is PULP! published by Common Ground, 45 Shelton St., London, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> As a footnote to Suzanne Romaine's paper in this volume on "Literacy as Cargo in Papua-New Guinea" we should realize that the "cargo" ideology which seeks the acquisition of Western wealth also promotes slash and burn agriculture in what is one of the largest remaining tropical forests. See Markham (1990).

slowed down as publicity has been turned on the issue, but that did not stop Pascal Ruedin, local secretary of the World Wildlife Fund and a student here in Lausanne where I teach, being savagely attacked in the Valais recently when he opposed further development.<sup>3</sup> The world's conscience has also been activated about the Amazon forests. But that did not stop the assassination in 1988 of Chico Mendes, a powerful voice who emerged briefly from the Amazon region to defend the forest and its peoples.

I take these stories as exemplary both of the passions that surround the struggle to save the forests and of the deeply rooted ideology which these passions manifest. The stories of Pascal Ruedin and Chico Mendes are already placed within what we call history, but they share a simple narrative structure with other stories belonging to other traditional categories: myth, legend, folktale or epic. My main project for this essay is to explore these parallels and thus to put back into the history that generates them some of these narratives about the violation of trees and those who would protect them: in some cases that history is clear, but in others I shall try to disclose the history that is occluded by the narratives. I shall try to avoid a superficial "culture-reflector" approach, linking bits of the tales to items in the furniture of the society that tells them, for these narratives also stage the fantasies of their cultures, and so their relations with social history are complex.

Furthermore, the foundations of "history" have shifted in the theoretical advances of our time. We now know that we perceive the past and its stories in the terms that concern us. History is not a given that we simply find out about and come to know, it is what we make of it – not that we can simply make it up, but we make it as we ourselves are made. It is not waiting there in our computer, a text for us to retrieve whenever we want to consult it; rather history will look different every time we open the file. Thus publicity surrounding the destruction of the forests, and of forest people like the Yanomami,<sup>4</sup> makes us aware of the issue, and the resulting

<sup>3</sup> See the frightening background account about smouldering violence in the Valais in *L'Hebdo* for 14 February 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Primary credit for keeping the focus of recent publicity on the plight of the Yanomami and so helping (so far) to save them should go to *Survival International*, whose various publications are available from 310 Edgeware Road, London W2 1DY, England. For a fuller discussion see Good (1991): the sympathetic

concern enables us to spot antecedents for such behaviour in the founding legends of our civilizations. In those legends a pattern is established that repeats itself: it is so deeply ingrained that it validates in a hidden but pervasive way the devastation that "development" has come to mean.

In all the narratives I am going to discuss here, the destruction of trees is accompanied by violence against people, and in some cases is also a focus of collective guilt — as for many of us — a guilt at the basis of what we call "civilization."<sup>5</sup> That is a tricky term. I do not quite mean what the Englishman had in mind when he asked Gandhi what he thought of Western Civilization (Gandhi replied he thought it would be a good idea). Rather I mean the historical sense of the word, living in cities, within a surrounding agricultural community, and the tendency towards imperialist expansion of that economic system over larger and larger areas of what used to be forest territory.

But forests, after all, do have something spooky about them: our tradition is full of that. H. M. Stanley tells in his book *In Darkest Africa* how the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition crossed the eastern portion of the Central African rain-forest (quoted in Oliver 1991:6). When they at last emerged into open country, the members of the expeditions turned and shook their clenched hands at the forest with gestures of defiance and hate.

They compared it to Hell. They accused it of the murder of one hundred of their companions. They called it the wilderness of fungi and woodbeans. But the great forest which lay vast as a continent before them . . . answered not a word, but rested in its infinite sullenness, remorseless and implacable as ever."<sup>6</sup>

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review by Henley shows how much more complex are relations with the flesh and blood "other" than my schematic presentation can suggest here.

<sup>5</sup> As one example among many, take the following: "The main focus of concern must be on the remaining tribal people for whom the tropical forest has been home for many generations. Their story . . . is one of which we must all be profoundly ashamed." H. R. H. the Prince of Wales in his "Rainforest Lecture" delivered at Kew gardens on 6 February 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Vansina (1991) argues that a long continuity lasting several thousand years, marked the Bantu speakers who inhabit this forest. The main terms of cognitive



And to go further back in time, Tacitus, in the *Germania*, mentions his fear of Swiss mountain forests: no doubt he preferred the milder Italian hillsides, in fact those very hillsides that had been denuded of their trees to construct the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup> Tacitus' context, we recall, is the story of the invasion and conquest of the rest of Europe by the expanding Roman imperium.

And we can take this complex of ideas even further back. In my book *The Old Enemy* I interpreted one of the Sumerian Gilgamesh narratives as the earliest story we know that dramatizes the need for land and for timber by situating a monster enemy in the forest and having the hero kill him and cut down his trees. Some of the wood acquired in these expeditions was used to build temples to the same tree gods in the city of Uruk, and some of the ritual texts that accompany these activities I read as processing the resulting guilt — for those great trees, the cedars of Lebanon, were not seen just as timber: they embodied the sacred life that needed to

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validity and much of the ancestral vocabulary remained constant until the violent impact of colonialism over the forty years from 1880–1920. Even the social institutions, such as "the role of big men — often more institutionalized than it had been earlier, but with the same basic ideology of supernatural *luck* — continued to co-exist with the egalitarian ideals implied in witchcraft beliefs." (One sign of the strength of this traditional people to adapt and survive was its successful organization of the slave trade, from the late sixteenth century and into the nineteenth, within the African continent.) But the forest region suffered more severely than any other in Africa during the early years of colonial rule, because its only tangible wealth was wild rubber and ivory, which could best be obtained by forcing the agricultural peoples who lived along the rivers to move into the forest and gather its products. The forest population was reduced by half during this period.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in SOS Forêts, *Revue Panda* (1984:10). Meiggs (1982) is sceptical about the extent of ancient deforestation, but he offers little evidence to contravert the common view: "Every fleet needed for its construction/ the razing of an entire forest-/lost forests meeting on the tilting hills/of the Caspian, the Baltic, the Black sea, over the mountains of water the file of forests/comes", lines from a recent poem by Don Coles, "Forests of the Medieval World" published in the *London Review of Books*.

be preserved and worshipped even as it was being put to use. Indeed the story moves toward a rather tragic climax, and the punishment of the adventurous heroes.

So the various narratives I am grouping together here all show, to put it simply, that our civilization is founded upon the violation of the forest trees. It is perhaps significant that there seems to be a progressive elimination of the associated guilt. But what is mainly different in the present is simply the speed with which the forests are being destroyed, and the extra urgency with which we need to oppose this process. Previously the earth had to bear the consequences of the agricultural revolution, but it cannot cope with the industrial and technological revolutions as well.

### *Christian and Classical Origins*

Christendom takes as its founding myth the violation of a prohibited tree, the resulting death of those who lived nearby and the destruction of the entire Paradise in which the tree stood — and around that initial violation has been constructed a very elaborate narrative of sin and redemption. The crucifixion of another tree has frequently been understood as compensation for the initial violation, and just as the man-made tree, the cross, replaces the one that grew in the earthly garden, so the story of those heroic sufferings on the cross moves the whole narrative to another level and makes available the spiritual possibilities of the newly founded religion.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The destruction of Paradise, with all its fine trees, at the end of the Genesis episode finds compensation in other aspects of the tree imagery of the biblical narrative, more especially by the two visions of Daniel (ii. 35—44 and iv. 10—12) about the great trees that grow and overspread all the earth, echoed in the parable of the mustard-seed which became a great tree "so that the birds of the air come and rest in the branches thereof." (Matt.xiii.35—37) In Daniel's vision, however, an angel orders the tree destroyed (iv. 14). It represents the king-adversary of God: in the same way the famous gloating over the fall of the king of Babylon, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Shining one, Son of the Dawn, how are you felled to earth!" (Isa. xiv.13) also uses the image of a tree cut down. Note the argument of Stolz (1972) about an ancient myth associating Lebanon and Eden. Butterworth

Independently, but with that odd and unmistakable quality of doubling the Christian story which hangs over his work, Virgil placed two imitations of Homeric tree similes at strategic moments in his story of the foundation of Rome. One is for the comprehensive destruction of Troy. At the climactic moment, Aeneas is granted a special vision in which he sees the gods themselves participating in the sack of Troy. Telling the story afterwards to Dido, he compares Troy to a great rowan-tree, repeatedly hacked by farmers, which slowly falls, torn up ("avulsa") and tumbling to ruin:

Then I saw all Ilium collapse in the fires;  
 the Troy that Neptune built overturned:  
 even as when farmers strive with each other  
 to root out an ancient ash high in the mountains  
 hacking with frequent blows of iron and axe;  
 it keeps threatening to fall, swaying from the top;  
 the leaves tremble, and then slowly, overcome

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(1970:12–15 and *passim*) interprets these and many other stories as signs of the conscious rejection of an original and widespread shamanism, involving ecstatic visions and paralleled in the practices of *kundalini* yoga. I am sceptical of those rather grand claims, as of the revival of such arguments in Ginzburg (1989). The same poem of Isaiah also imagines the trees rejoicing at the death of the Babylonian tyrant: "The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying, "Since you were felled, no hewer comes up against us," (xiv.8) which surely puts paid to the idea that Yahweh is the sole enemy of the trees. See Nielsen (1989). See also Burkert (1979:136–37), who denies Mannhardt's (and Frazer's) tree cult, but does allow a connection with the Magna Mater cults, and also equates the sequence of hunting and agriculture with the opposition of tree and city. Compare the myth of Erysichthon, punished by Demeter with insatiable hunger for cutting down her sacred trees, fully documented in the recent *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae*, Vol.4. He could almost be an allegory of the neolithic revolution and the expansion of empires. A recent but superficial survey is Brosse (1989). On these tree images, which have no *a priori* historical meaning, see Forsyth (1989:192–97).

by its wounds, it groans and falls, torn up,  
And spreads destruction along the height.<sup>9</sup>

Homeric tree similes were used for the fall of individual warriors in battle, but Virgil's imitation here bears a much heavier load of meaning. It represents through the fall of this grand tree the death of an entire culture — and yet it is not so much the objective event that is the focus of interest as the hero's state of mind. It signals the moment at which he realizes his intention to quit the defense of the doomed Troy and begin his new career as the founder of the Roman imperium.

This simile anticipates and is paired by another magnificent tree simile. This time it is for Aeneas himself, who stands firm in his determination to abandon Dido, despite the pleas and tears of her sister Anna. Aeneas stands not like a tree we might see in a forest, but like the mythical *axis mundi*, the cosmic tree of European and Asian myth that marks and supports the center of the world, and which is often invoked for a new foundation. The ordinary profane trees represent Troy, and are destroyed, like the old city, but the new and spiritual culture that is Rome derives from and replaces the old: it is represented by this special tree of myth, whose

crown thrusts upward to the heavens as far  
As the roots stretch down to Tartarus.  
So the hero, battered on this side and that  
By insistent words, feels care in his mighty chest,  
But his mind stands unmoved, and the tears fall  
Useless.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Aeneid* II 624–33, my translation.

Tum vero omne mihi visum considerare in ignis  
Ilium et ex imo verti Neptunia Troia;  
ac veluti summis antiquam in montibus ornum  
cum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant  
*eruer* agricolae *cetratim*; illa usque minatur  
et tremefacta comam *concusso vertice* nutat  
vulneribus donec paulatim evicta supremum  
congemuit traxitque iugis avulsa ruinam.

<sup>10</sup> *Aeneid* IV, 443–47, my translation; echoes between the two similes are in italics.

ac velut annoso validam cum robore quercum

The last and famous line, "*mens immota manet, lacrimae volvuntur inanes*" iterates a common theme of this tragic poem, the cost in human suffering of the single-mindedness that led to the foundation of Rome. This simile both echoes and contrasts with the earlier tree: the fall of Troy is to be compensated in the Roman future. The image of the *axis mundi* represents the goal of a spiritual quest that is "fraught with perils, because it is in fact a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred. . . . Whatever is founded has its foundations at the centre of the world" (Eliade 1969:44).

Once again, as in the Christian myth, the narrative is presumed to move to a different level with this spiritual tree, and from this new level the destruction of the earlier tree can be seen to take on a fresh meaning. The Roman gods themselves participated in the destruction of Troy, to prepare the way for the new Rome. In each case a new perspective justifies, and even hallows, the violation or destruction of those old and ordinary trees. In the Roman context, further justification for this historical process is incorporated into the *Aeneid* with the famous story about the Golden Age that Evander tells Aeneas when he visits the future site of Rome: When Saturn had been overthrown by Jupiter, he made his way to Italy (just as Aeneas now has) and established a golden age of peaceful agricultural settlement. Before this, the primitive inhabitants of the sacred grove were nymphs and fauns and "a race of men born from the trunks of hard oak trees" (8.315) or those who lived scattered in high mountains (321). Saturn

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Alpini Boreae nunc hinc nunc flatibus illinc  
*eruerē inter se certant*; it stridor, et altae  
 consternunt terram *concusso stipite* frondes;  
 ipsa haeret scopulis et quantum vertice ad auras  
 aetherias, tatum radice in Tartara tendit:  
 haud secus adsiduis hinc atque hinc vocibus heros  
 tunditur, et magno persentit pectore curas;  
 mens immota manet, lacrimae volvuntur inanes.

For more detail, see Forsyth (1986:199–214). Compare Horace, *Odes* IV.iv, 50–60. These state-tree comparisons have a long afterlife: in one of Julian the Apostate's letters, the collapsing empire is figured as an uprooted tree, *Oeuvres Complètes* I(2).21, and occasionally in Gibbon. See Warmersley (1988:206–7; I am grateful to Paul Cartledge for this reference).



brought them together, gave them laws, and taught them to yoke the oxen and the plough. In the same way Aeneas has come to move Italy toward a higher civilization. For the moment the violence is displaced elsewhere, onto the destruction of Troy figured as the great mountain ash tree and then onto the war for Italy between Aeneas and Turnus. But the violence in that simile is severe: unlike Homer's woodcutters, the farmers in Virgil's simile actually compete with each other in their eagerness to fell the tree; Homer gives his woodcutters a purpose, to make a chariot wheel or build a ship, but Virgil omits any such information and so creates an image of pure destruction suggesting that the ruin Aeneas is witnessing exists beyond purpose, and so beyond comprehension — a frequent aspect of history in Virgil.

I am not quite sure what to make of this eery parallelism between the Roman and Christian charter myths, to borrow Malinowski's still useful term. Indeed the parallelism itself may simply be a function of our angle of vision, our ecological preoccupation. But I suspect that it represents the self-understanding through myth and legend of the dominant cultures of the ancient world and their socio-economic circumstances. Within a few generations the two traditions were blended by the Christianization of the Roman Empire. But the effect of this parallelism, if we allow it to be a genuine perception, is to validate, again in a Malinowskian way, the destruction of trees in the name of a higher cause. There is an obscure pastoral sense that one is not supposed to violate or destroy those trees, hence the prohibitions, the attendant guilt, the pathos. But all comes right in the end, and the guilt is assuaged, by the intervention of a higher Providential purpose.

Virgil's contrast between primitive forest dwellers, so much identified with the trees that they are said to be born from them, and the civilized settlement produced by agriculture and the clearing away of the trees, a contrast that was ancient already by Virgil's time, has been a formative presence in the western imagination ever since, and the rest of this essay documents some of its ramifications in the American context.

### *Hawthorne and the American Land*

These founding images reproduce themselves at subsequent stages in the tradition. At the heart of an important foundational text for American

civilization, Hawthorne placed the destruction of another symbolic tree, the Maypole of Merry Mount. In Hawthorne's source, Thomas Morton's *The New English Canaan*, as in William Bradford's very different version, the maypole is brought to the place and set up. Hawthorne suppresses this detail, so that the maypole against which Puritan wrath is directed is apparently a living pine tree "which had preserved the slender grace of youth while it equalled the loftiest height of the old wood monarchs" (Arvin 1946:24) and in this combination of youth and age, as in all other respects, the tree is symbolic of the American land.<sup>11</sup> It is decked with banners and flowers, a "venerated emblem," the focus of ancient worship in England, but here a part of the living American forest.

The story has its origin in the episode of Thomas Morton at Mount Wollaston.<sup>12</sup> Hawthorne presents the celebrations around the maypole as traditional revels brought from England and constantly indulged (at least once a month) by the town residents. He links the revellers instantly with the fauns and nymphs of the ancient world, as if "when driven from their classic groves and homes of ancient fable, [they] had sought refuge, as all the persecuted did, in the fresh woods of the West," but really, he says, "these were Gothic monsters" with heads of stags, wolves and goats. The likeness of bears, even real bears from the forest, dance hand in hand with the masked figures, and some of the masks represent "the Salvage Man, well known in heraldry, hairy as a baboon, and girdled with green leaves," others the noble figure of "an Indian Hunter, with feathery crest and wampum belt." In Morton's account, these revellers also mixed easily (and on equal footing, as it were) with the native Indians, although in Hawthorne's tale, this is suggested only by their efforts "to communicate their mirth to the grave Indian." (30)<sup>13</sup>

Hawthorne's narrator is curiously ambivalent about the whole episode,

<sup>11</sup> Morton is the source of the pine-tree detail: he describes the maypole as "a goodly pine tree of 80 foot longe."

<sup>12</sup> The occasion of the celebration, suppressed by Hawthorne, was the confirmation of the new name of the settlement as Mare Mount, rather than its "ancient Salvage name" of Pasonagessit.

<sup>13</sup> But Morton has the Indians help to set up the Maypole, "that came thether to see the manner of our Revels." Bradford's account, sympathetic to the Puritans, denounces the settlers in particular for "inviting the Indian women for their consorts, dancing and frisking together (like so many fairies, or furies rather) and



and at various moments adopts the language of both sides in the struggle. Though he clearly disapproves of John Endicott "Puritan of Puritans" and "the severest Puritan of all who laid the rock foundation of New England," yet he withholds full endorsement of what the final words of the story call "the vanities of Merry Mount." The colonists of Merry Mount have "imagined a wild philosophy of pleasure, and came hither to act out their latest daydream," many "had been maddened by their previous troubles into a gay despair" and the elder spirits among them, "if they knew that mirth was but the counterfeit of happiness, yet followed the false shadow wilfully, because at least her garments glittered brightest. Sworn triflers of a lifetime, they would not venture among the sober truths of life not even to be truly blest." (28) But the main mood of the story is in sympathy with the young couple who act as Lord and Lady of the May and whose wedding is sternly and shockingly disrupted by the "black shadows . . . in human shape," a more historically powerful disguise. The reader too experiences a violation when, in a significant detail, the bridegroom's hair is cut by the Puritan scissors. The climax in particular, the destruction of the symbolic tree itself, has the ring of Hawthorne's passionate guilt about his New England tradition.

"Stand off, priest of Baal!" said [Endicott] with a grim frown. ". . . Now it shall be seen that the Lord hath sanctified this wilderness for his peculiar people. Woe unto them that would defile it! And first, for this flower-decked abomination, the altar of thy worship!"

And with his keen sword Endicott assaulted the hallowed Maypole. Nor did it long resist his arm. It groaned with a dismal sound; it showered leaves and rosebuds upon the remorseless enthusiast; and finally with all its green boughs and ribbons and flowers, symbolic of departed pleasures, down fell the banner staff of Merry Mount. As it sank, tradition says, the evening sky grew darker, and the woods threw forth a more sombre shadow.

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worse practices. As if they had anew revived and celebrated the feasts of the Roman Goddess Flora, or the beastly practises of the madd Bacchinalians." Both are quoted by William Carlos Williams (1956:79; I am grateful to Rölöf Overmeer for this reference). Williams comments on the episode that the Puritans "countered with fantastic violence — and some duplicity — having the beaver trade in view."

What has ended here is another Eden, a pagan one, an American Golden Age, when the main work of agriculture (husbandry) "was to raise flowers," (24) and when the persecuted nymphs and fauns of the old world could find a brief refuge. The Puritans, by contrast, represent the Iron age that followed: each has "a horseload of iron armor to burden his footsteps," (30) and Endicott himself is so stern "that the whole man, visage, frame, and soul, seemed wrought of iron, gifted with life and thought, yet all of one substance with his headpiece and breastplate." (31) For such people the American land itself held no sacred power. It became divisible into separate holdings, and the great forests fell before the advance of agriculture.<sup>14</sup>

Characteristically Hawthorne complicates this idea, however, since he introduces other images, both mythical and biblical, to enlarge the meaning of this historical watershed. One of Hawthorne's typically insubstantial observers of "the wild throng," a mouthpiece invented for the moment to take the burden of comment and then dropped, "might have fancied them the crew of Comus, some already transformed to brutes, some midway between man and beast, and the others rioting in the flow of tipsy jollity that foreran the change." (25) The observer has adopted the mythological language of Milton here, for it is in Milton's mask that Comus is the child of Circe and Bacchus, who lives in an "ominous wood,/ And in thick shelter of black shades embowered,/ Excells his mother at her mighty art."<sup>15</sup> And the image of Comus recurs for the leader of the revellers, who is presented as an Anglican (English) priest "canonically dressed, yet decked with flowers, in heathen fashion, and wearing a chaplet of the native vine leaves. By the riot of his rolling eye, and the pagan

<sup>14</sup> Paul Taylor's paper at the SAUTE conference, included in this volume, neatly points to the parallel between the American settlers' attitude to the land as private property and the process by which the medieval church emptied out the sacred power of the land from pagan European belief structures.

<sup>15</sup> Milton, *Comus* 61–63. That *Comus* was very much in Hawthorne's mind is clear also from the masque his revellers adopt, drawn straight from Milton's lines describing the effects of Comus' potion: "Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,/ The express resemblance of the gods, is changed/ Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,/ Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat." (68–71) See Liebman (1972:345–51).

decorations of his holy garb, he seemed the wildest monster there, and the very Comus of the crew." (26) The biblical language, commonplace for the Puritans and indeed all the early settlers, links these defeated merrymakers to those worshippers of Baal, the native inhabitants of Canaan before the incursions of the Israelites<sup>16</sup>: not only does Endicott address their Anglican leader as "priest of Baal" at the moment when he cuts down the tree, he also speaks of this new world as "our Israel" at the moment when he orders "the lovelock and the long glossy curls of the young man" to be cut. "Crop it forthwith, and that in the true pumpkin-shell fashion." So the sword that cuts down a pine-tree is placed in parallel with the scissors that cut the young bridegroom's hair.

But for Hawthorne's Puritans, it is not only the sportive if fearful image of misrule that they see in the masques but "those devils and ruined souls with whom their superstition peopled the black wilderness." (26) Quite explicitly in this passage their hostility to the celebration of Merry Mount ceases to be the conventional antagonism of Puritan for Anglican, with its associations of the English struggle between traditional aristocracy and the emerging middle-class; it becomes instead fear and hostility toward the untamed American land and its people. The settlers often thought of the Indians who dwelt in those forests as in league with the devil, as the seed of serpents or as fiends incarnate. In the oldest American news ballad to survive, pithily titled "Some Meditations Concerning our Honourable

<sup>16</sup> But whereas Thomas Morton's book, *The New English Canaan* has proposed that America be based on the model of the land flowing with milk and honey, America's first epic poem, John Dwight's *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785), aligns America with the cause of ancient Israel and makes George Washington the new Joshua triumphing over fiendish wolflike Canaanites. See also Pribek (1985:345–54), who notes that the Canaanite goddess Asherah, one meaning of which is "grove," was symbolically represented as a tree or pole. But the destruction of trees is widespread in the Old Testament, such as the stirring language of Psalm 29:5 about the great achievements of the voice of the Lord; among many other things God is presented as being so powerful that "the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon." This is the same Lord who can cut down the mighty world-tree of myth in the visions of both Ezekiel and Daniel, where the great tree represents the enemies of Israel, Egyptians, Assyrians, the Babylonian king Nabuchadnezzar. See Forsyth (1989:192–183).

Gentlement and Fellow-Souldiers, In Pursuit of those Barbarous Natives in the Narragansit-Country; and Their Service there," (1675)<sup>17</sup> occur the following verses:

19

O Lord arise, open the eyes, of this our English nation,  
And let them see, and also be, saved with thy salvation.

20

Call thou a dread, and make afraid these Indians strong and stout,  
And make 'em feel the Sword of Steel, that so they may give out.

21

Lest they do boast of their great Host, and praise their god the Devil,  
From whom indeed this doth proceed the Author of all Evil.

In his account of the founding of New England called *Wonder-Working Providence* (1653) Edward Johnson says of the Pequot War that the quarrel was "as antient as Adams time" and was "propagated from that old enmity betweene the Seede of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent, who was the grand signor of this war in hand." (Drinnon 1980:35)

If you think the inhabitants of forests are devils, that makes it hard to persevere with the Virgilian image of aborigines as living in a golden age sympathetically preserved by the new ruler even when the old ways are destroyed. Unlike Aeneas, Hawthorne's Endicott has no relation to the trees except destruction. Rather he is a man of iron who cuts down even the symbolic tree preserved by the first settlers, the Maypole. In the next and final story I want to consider, this demonization of the forest people has gone even further by assimilation of them to a conventional enemy of folktale — and the accompanying guilt has thus been virtually but not entirely eliminated.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Drinnon (1980:54). Even Thomas Morton appears to have held this belief, attributing the use of native remedies from the woods as a sign of "the correspondency they have with the devil": also quoted in Drinnon (18).

*An Appalachian Mountain "Jack Tale"*

"The Jack tales" are the only cycle of magical and trickster tales to have survived in the English-speaking American oral tradition, and indeed are one of the most elaborate tale cycles in the United States.<sup>18</sup> The tale I am concerned with here, "Jack in the Giants New Ground," is a variant adapted to local circumstances of the widespread folktale, usually classified as "The Brave Tailor," (AT 1640) but parallel to the English tale "Jack the Giant-Killer." (AT 328A) It is also akin to "Jack and the Beanstalk," AT 328B).<sup>19</sup> In order to provide a point of reference for the

<sup>18</sup> A sampling of the Jack Tales was first published in Carter 1925. A fuller collection was published in 1943 by Richard Chase, but in somewhat recast versions, with valuable notes by Herbert Halpert. The September 1978 issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* (Vol. 26.2) was devoted to examples and some analyses of the tales. For a related tradition in which the Giantkiller and the Beanstalk stories, but not the other Jack Tales, are told, see Roberts (1986:100–105), a fine account of tracking down oral tale-tellers in eastern Kentucky.

<sup>19</sup> The standard reference works in the field, from which these notations derive, are Aarne and Thompson (AT) 1964, often called "The Tale-Type Index," and Thompson's 6-volume *Motif Index to Folk Literature*. Baughman 1966 lists this tale under Type 1640, cross-referenced to separate tales also combined in the whole elaborate tale (in their order of occurrence in the tale) 1088 "Eating Contest," 1060 "Squeezing the Stone," 1045 "Pulling the Lake Together," 1121 "Ogre's Wife Burned in own Oven." He makes no reference to either of the Type 328 Giantkiller tales, but in fact several ogre-defeated motifs are shared by the two plots (K62, "Squeezing the Stone," followed by G520, "Ogre deceived into Self-injury"). And G610.2, "Stealing from ogre to help friendly king," which Baughman lists as part of AT 328, is one of the leading motifs of this story. It is true that none of the magic objects remain, and the hero is no prince, as in some versions of the giantkiller tale, but motifs G514.1 "Ogre trapped in box" and K335.0.1 "Owner frightened from goods by report of approaching enemy" both occur, as in 328, and in that order. The opening, which is paralleled in other Jack tales, is much closer to the "Giantkiller" tale than to the "Brave Tailor." And in the version published by Isobel Carter in 1925, the cloak of invisibility, D1361.12, survives as something Jack gets from the defeated giant at the end of the story. There is even a vestige of the magic sword



American tale, I here summarize the English giant-killer tale. In some versions Jack is rewarded by a seat at the Round Table, but usually he is not the rather dull prince of fairy-tale: he is the unscrupulous folk hero, lazy, unpromising, but with phenomenal luck. He is a brave lad who lures the giant Cormoran into a hole he has dug. He then chops off the giant's head and presents it to the king or a grateful people who reward him with a sword or belt. He sets off again to kill Blunderbore, another giant, but is captured and put in a prison. He still manages to drop a noose over the giants' heads and strangle them (two giants, or one giant with two heads). Off to visit a Welsh giant he puts a log in his bed and the giant clubs to death what he thinks is Jack. At breakfast next day, Jack complains of flea-bites during the night. He empties his porridge into his concealed bag, challenging the giant to an eating contest. Then he slits open the bag, which looks like his distended stomach, and invites the giant to do the same. He dies. So the story continues with other incidents typical of the stupid ogre cycle: Type 1060 "Squeezing the Stone" and then Motif K335 in which he frightens off the giant by locking him away and then pretending there is an army approaching.<sup>20</sup>

This summary, together with the fact that the various incidents of the story are so widespread in the world's folklore, gives us a fairly good basis for isolating the features of the tale that have been adapted to the local culture of North Carolina. I shall use the first episode of the story to

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with which he kills the giant at the end and gets the silver, a detail that links with the Norwegian version published by Dasent. I conclude that Halpert (in his notes to the Jack tales, 192) and Baughman should have cross-listed the tale under Type 328A also. The tale is not especially unusual in combining one tale with another: the Brave Tailor type, AT 1640, frequently borrows incidents from the stupid ogre tales (1000 – 1115) and the Jack story may be combined with types 327, or occasionally 531 or 1525. In any case, the structures of all these tales show the strong similarity that formed the basis of Vladimir Propp's insights.

<sup>20</sup> See Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach, 535–36, from which this summary is adapted. Our evidence about the English form of this tale goes back to the nineteenth century. It was published by Tennyson's son Hallam in 1886 in a hexameter version, and the version from oral tradition was first printed in 1890 by E. S. Hartland and by Joseph Jacobs, who claimed to have heard it as a boy in Australia.

illustrate my argument. It goes as follows, in the version told by Marshall Ward and published in Chase (1943:1–7).<sup>21</sup>

One time away back years ago there was a boy named Jack. He and his folks lived way off in the mountains somewhere and they were awful poor, just didn't have a thing. . . . Well, Jack decided he'd pull out from there and try his luck in some other section of the country. So his mother fixed him up a little snack of dinner, and he put on his old raggedy hat and lit out. . . .

He came to a fine smooth road directly, decided he'd take that, see where it went, what kind of folks lived on it. He went on, went on, and pretty soon he came to a big fine stone house up above the road. Jack stopped. He never had seen such a big house before. — Then he looked at the gate and saw it was made out of gold. Well, Jack 'lowed some well-doin folks must live there, wondered whether or no they'd give him his dinner. Stepped back from the gate and hollered, "Hello!"

A man came to the door, says, "Hello, Stranger. What'll ye have?" "I'm a-lookin' for a job of work."

"Don't know as I need to hire anybody right now. What's your name?"

"Name's Jack."

"Come on . . . up on the porch and cool off. You're not in no hurry, are ye?"

Jack says, "Well, I'll stop a little while, I reckon."

Shoved back that gold gate and marched on in. The man reached in the door and pulled out a couple a chairs. Jack took one and they leaned back, commenced smokin'. Directly Jack says to that man, "What did you say your name was, mister?"

"Why, Jack, I'm the King."

"Well, now, King," says Jack, "hit looks like you'd be a-needin somebody with all your land. I bet you got a heap of land to work. . . ."

"Can ye clear newground?"

"Why that's all I ever done back home."

"Can you kill giants?"

"Huh?" says Jack, and he dropped his pipe. Picked it up, says, "Well, I reckon I could try."

The old King sort of looked at Jack and how little he was, says, "Well,

<sup>21</sup> See also Guttierrez (1978:111–26). Many of the tellers of Jack tales, including Marshall Ward, trace their tradition back to an ancestor, Council Harmon, who lived in these mountains from 1803–1896.



now, Jack, I have got a little piece of new ground I been tryin' for the longest to get cleared. The trouble is there's a gang of giants live over in the next holler, been disputin' with me about the claim. They kill ever' Englishman goes up there, kill 'em and eat' em. I reckon I've done hired about a dozen men claimed to be giantkillers, but the giants killed them, ever' last one."

Jack takes on the job and stays for dinner. The king's wife feeds him so much food, and he doesn't want to seem puny, so "he reached down and took hold of the old leather apron he had on and doubled that up under his coat. Then he'd make like he was taking a bite, but he'd slip it down in that leather apron. He poured about four glasses of milk down there too." The King then tells Jack he'll get a thousand dollars for every giant's head he brings back, and "good wages for getting that patch cleared: ten cents a hour."

Jack sets out equipped not with an axe from the woodpile but with "a little old Tommy hatchet." He climbs to the top of the tallest tree he can find, and as soon as he starts cutting, he sees an old giant "about thirty foot high comin' a-stompin' up the mountain . . . Jack was so scared he like to slipped his hold." He pretends to stop cutting when the giant claims "this patch o'land is ours and we don't aim to have it cleared. We done told the king so." The giant says "Come on down, Jack. I'll take you home for supper," thinking Jack won't understand the real meaning. He climbs down the tree toward the giant, but he stops and claims he can squeeze milk out of a flint rock (stone). The giant throws him up a rock, and he pushes down with the stone on his apron, making the milk drip out. The giant wants to try it, but can't. So then Jack claims he can cut himself open and sew it back up again. He cuts open his apron and then sews it up again. The giant wants to try too, "cut himself wide open, staggered around a little and fin'ly querled over on the ground dead. Well, Jack, he scaled down the tree and cut off the old giant's heads with that Tommy hatchet, took em on back to the King's house." The king paid him two thousand dollars "like he said he would" and the next day Jack starts all over again with the other giants and different tricks.

That is enough detail for the flavour of the story to come across, I hope. It tells a series of incidents typical of the Giant-Killer/Brave Tailor type of how giants or an ogre are outwitted by Jack's superior and subtle intelligence, standard tales when the hero is conceived as small and clever, as a kind of trickster. Typically the Brave Tailor story is episodic, allowing

for considerable expansion of incident. But however expanded, and this is potentially a long tale (in one version it takes 35 minutes)<sup>22</sup> the structure of the tale resembles more closely "Jack and the Beanstalk" since the point of the tale is to steal the giant's treasure and make Jack himself, and/or his mother, rich. Each tale begins with a shiftless Jack who must get out of his mother's way, leads the boy into the land of the giant where he steals various goods from him, and moves towards a conclusion in which Jack earns a lot of money as a giant-killer and tree chopper.

But there are two most unusual features about this tale, both of which derive from the local situation in which the tale was told. One is the idea of the land itself, the ground the tale persistently calls "new." The axe, even that characteristic little Tommy-hatchet (clearly a corruption of the Indian word "tomahawk"<sup>23</sup>), has been a key to the manner in which, from the early days, Americans have related to their land. The primitive forests that once covered so much of the country were ruthlessly cleared to make land for planting, a typical move wherever hunting and gathering communities have been superseded by agriculture, but practised on a much larger scale, and over a shorter time span (relative to the size) in North America than ever before. As John Adams put it only half facetiously, looking back on this process from a personal point of view: "My family I believe have cut down more trees in America than any other name. What a family distinction!" (Letter to Benjamin Rush of July 19, 1812, in Adams 1966) In the story, though, the land belongs to the king, as of course it once did — and I take this as a sign that the historical situation of the pioneer is partially occluded in the story.

But what chiefly interests me are those giants. The lore about giants in children's tales has often been thought to originate in the size of an adult viewed from a child's perspective. The frequently obvious tension between child and parent, especially boy and father, is only thinly disguised in folktales. One could hardly wish for a more obvious castration symbol than a child cutting off a giant's head. But folktales are not exclusively children's

<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Maud Long of Hot Springs, NC, on a recording in the Library of Congress: Duncan Emrich, ed., *Jack Tales*, AFS L 47 and L 48. She is a fine performer, another descendant of Council Harmon like Marshall Ward, although she has clearly been influenced by the printed version.

<sup>23</sup> In the 1925 version, the story-teller explains it this way.

tales, and although the context for the telling of the Jack tales has lately been restricted to adults story-telling for children, we need to remember the broader and older context, the most common in the world, in which a predominantly oral culture tells itself to itself, and so renews itself in its children. And from this point of view, what can we make of those giants?

We need to be careful here. Too many amateur interpreters of folklore irritate the professional folklorist by missing an obvious step in the process of interpretation. In the present case giants are very widespread in the folklore of many lands, and so is the giantkiller story, though in this version it is clearly British. Giants' heads, we may assume, are cut off in symbolic castrations throughout the known world. Well, curiously enough this particular way of dealing with giants is not at all widespread outside this particular tale: even here the synopsis of the tale in the tale-type index, whether the giantkiller or the brave tailor version, includes no reference to the motif.<sup>24</sup> But in our Appalachian mountain version all the giants except the last two have their heads cut off. So it may well be legitimate to interpret the variation in this detail in terms of the local conditions of telling — just as in the title "clearing the new ground" refers to the pioneering work of the settlers: cutting down ancient trees.

One other detail is worth noting before I "explain" the giants: there is a curious discrepancy in the cash values of the story. A thousand dollars for a giant's head, and only 10 cents for the hard work of tree cutting. Jack is satisfied, however (although he never actually starts the job), and in fact the tale calls the sum a good wage. I don't think we can just explain this as the wildly unrealistic commerce of the child's tale. In fact working for money is highly unusual in most such tales, but it does fit the local context here and is one of many signs that these Appalachian Jack Tales change the European originals and eliminate most of the magic and the systems of exchange: they substitute realistic detail from the ordinary world of the mountain people. In the Appalachian version of the Beanstalk story, which becomes a *Beantree* to account for its size and strength, there is no exchange of a cow for the bean: instead the mother sweeps it up one day while cleaning and tells Jack to plant it to get him out from under her feet. The magic harp becomes a bed coverlet with bells on it. And instead of the

<sup>24</sup> According to the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, "Decapitation" G 512.1.2 in general is not very widespread: in fact the Index suggests only India as a context,

moneybags and the hen that lays golden eggs, this Jack steals a gun and a knife. So rather than passively acquire his riches, the American Jack takes tools with which actively to make his fortune.<sup>25</sup> The ten cents a day is a realistic wage within the recent history of the tale's development.

But what, then, of the thousand dollars? We might argue that it is so manifestly out of alignment with the ten cents a day that it places the giants and their heads squarely back in the world of marvels from which the realistic detail of much of the rest of the tale tries to separate itself. Certainly that is true of the king himself, like the golden gate that contrasts so curiously with the localized porch or the chairs the king reaches round to find. Such vestiges of the European origins of the tales create a series of discrepancies, like the delightfully and deliberately comic deflation of the king (in Maud Long's version, not in Marshall Ward's) with Jack's polite "Mr. King." In another of the tales in the same cycle, "Jack and the Varmints" Jack gets known as "little man Jack, killed seven at a whack"<sup>26</sup> and is paid a thousand dollars each time he kills a wild animal: in fact what he kills (after the initial and realistic wild hog) are a unicorn and a lion, those fabulous beasts from the royal coat of arms and nursery rhymes. And so no doubt there is something in the argument that would put the giants in the same fabulous world.

But there is more to it, I think. Consider how human those supposed giants seem at several moments in the story. In the episodic English giant-

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although this is probably too restricted a range. Cutting off giants' heads is also rather a limited motif: K 912 restricts it to the moment when the giant comes back to his house and a knife falls on him, and then there is an Irish legend, found also in North America, in which the heads of the fallen enemies are piled up after battle (F 531.1.1.-2). And there are a few other instances from the Motif Index.

<sup>25</sup> Wolfenstein (1965:110-13). See also Gutierrez (1978:Sub-Genre:102), who contests this judgment mildly.

<sup>26</sup> This detail is the opening motif in the Brave Tailor tale, but it was Richard Chase, the editor of the tales, not the teller, who put it there. Marshall Ward's original tale had the obscene "Old stiff dick, killed seven at a lick": see Isabel G. Carter, "Mountain White Folklore: Tales from the Southern Blue Ridge," *Journal of American Folklore* (1925:355). Fortunately there is not much of this bowdlerization in Chase's collection.

killer tale, Jack ranges far and wide round the British isles to kill many unrelated giants, beheading only two or three of them. But in the North Carolina tale, the giants all live in one place and constitute an ordinary family. They talk the same homely language as the settlers, they live "over in the other holler," they invite strangers in for a bite o' supper, and what is more they don't want to give up their land to be cleared: they claim it belongs to them. This is presented as an unreasonable claim in the story, which takes the point of view of the land-hungry white settler, but the story is so well adapted to local conditions that it cannot entirely eliminate the connection between the forests and its inhabitants. Instead it converts them into the classic enemy figure of the male child's tale, the giant, and so authorizes the attack on their land and its trees. For what is truly original about this Appalachian mountain version of Jack the Giantkiller is the link of the giants and the trees. There are precedents for this — the single troll in a Norwegian variant, for example, also protests at the tree-cutting,<sup>27</sup> but the intimacy of the connection, that is found in no other version.

And once we think on these lines, we realize for whom a bounty was paid (if not quite a thousand dollars) within the cultural and historical memory of all these Appalachian farmers. Yes, for that hapless victim of European imperialist history the Native Americans, or Indians as they

<sup>27</sup> Dasent (1910:36–38), "Boots who Ate a Match with a Troll." The wood in this tale already belongs to the farmer and his three sons, but the troll is preventing them from cutting it. (The usual form for this motif is that tree-cutting figures as a contest between the hero and the giant, as in a Brittany version of the Brave Tailor published in *Folktales of France*, 17.) If we check the motif-index for examples of this connection, a few interesting things come to light. The mainly mythological motif H 1333.6 "Quest for branches of tree guarded by dragon" has an obvious relation to this story, but at one or more removes, and it does not occur in the Anglo-American tradition studied by Baughmann. The motif of friendly spirits who live in woods and trees (F441.2), like Dryads, which also conceivably influenced the tale in some remote way, is confined either to mythology, whether Norse, classical or Indian, or to the oral traditions directly derived from those mythological sources. The same is true for the motif of gods of trees and forests (A 435) — a subject thoroughly explored by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* but not relevant to this tale. Otherwise we find ogres in trees in Melanesian and Indonesian tradition, and the only other motif that might have influenced our tale is G 303.15.4 Devils haunt trees.



used to be known. Bounties were paid for Indian scalps by colonial and post-colonial administrations.<sup>28</sup> Before the end of the seventeenth century, ten pounds was the bounty paid for Indian scalps, the practice was widely publicized and exploited,<sup>29</sup> and the price went steadily upwards. But it doesn't reach a thousand dollars, and in any case the discrepancy with the ten cents would still need to be explained. That discrepancy puts the thousand dollars into the realm of the fabulous, as I proposed before, but this time I suggest the fantasy world functions as a cover for the repressed guilt.

The practice of scalping Indians continued of course in the eighteenth

<sup>28</sup> The practice of decimating local natives probably began in 1622 when the whites on Chesapeake Bay established open hunting season on Indians after the Powhatan Confederacy attacked. It was confirmed by the Pequod massacres in 1638, when that same John Endicott, the Puritan leader who figures in the Merry Mount story, spent two days hunting every man alive on Block Island to kill or capture: the contemporary account of John Underhill shows that the only reason everyone was not killed was because "they would not stand up and fight, the Indians being retired into swamps, so as we could not find them. We burnt and spoiled both houses and corn in great abundance; but they kept themselves in obscurity. The next day we spent in burning and spoiling their island. . . . [a few days later] we spent the day burning and spoiling the countryside." (Drinnon 1980:36-37) That the people and the countryside were both burned shows how closely related were these two impulses: the new ground needed clearing. Presumably there is also some overlap with the practice of paying a bounty for runaway slaves: my colleague Elizabeth Kaspar in an unpublished paper cites an advertisement from the June issue of *The South Carolina Gazette* for 1745 which announces that "Tomey is an obstreperous sawcey Fellow, and if he should be kill'd in taking, I am willing to allow any Man that will bring me his Head *Ten Pounds*."

<sup>29</sup> Hannah Duston in 1697 chopped up her sleeping captors and their children and returned with the bits in the hopes of claiming the bounty: see Fiedler 1968:98-108. The practice continued and spread. In 1901 General Frederick Funston paid \$600 for the head David Fagen, the Afro-American "mad dog" who had gone over to the Filipino side. The price kept going up. By 1962, an American government official could propose spending \$5000 for killing or delivering alive Cuban Communists, and up to \$100,000 for "government officials" — i.e. Fidel Castro and those around him. See Drinnon (435).

and nineteenth centuries, when the Jack Tales of the Appalachian mountains assumed the form in which we know them.<sup>30</sup> In the year in which Hawthorne published "The Maypole of Merry Mount," 1837, President Andrew Jackson urged that Seminole women and children be tracked down and "captured or destroyed." A character in Robert Montgomery Bird's enormously popular Indian-hating romance *Nick of the Woods*, also published in 1837, was widely admired because he had taken the scalp of a full-grown Shawnee "before he war fourteen year old." (The story is that of Indian-hating Nathan Slaughter, set in the context of the settlers wars against the Shawnee: the climax is the revenge he takes on Chief Wenonga's brain with a tomahawk while he sleeps. He rejoins his friends with Wenonga's scalp "yet reeking with blood" at his belt and the chief's axe still dangling from his bloodstained hand.) And in his own story Hawthorne wrote that the Puritans, "most dismal wretches" as he calls them, had "their weapons . . . always at hand to shoot down the straggling savage." When they "met in conclave, it was never to keep up the old English mirth, but to hear sermons three hours long, or to proclaim bounties on the heads of wolves and the scalps of Indians." (29)<sup>31</sup> Just as the Puritans demonized the wilderness and its inhabitants, placing wolves and Indians on the same level, so the pioneers' Jack tales correlate fabulous enemies like giants and unicorns with the animals and people who need to be killed or moved out to free the forest for cultivation.

To clinch the case with a telling contrast, I cite a variant of this tale told among the people of French-Canadian stock living in the upper Michigan peninsula, but in this version, the hero has a *friend* who is a giant, so the story proceeds very differently. The giant simply gives his friend five dollars

<sup>30</sup> Glassie (1964:88–89) suggests that "the borrowing and meshing of elements of Scots-Irish and German Folk Cultures" during the earliest mountain and valley settlement, from around 1732–1790, provide the basis for the development of much Appalachian culture and in particular the development of the Jack tale genre. For the importance of Council Harmon (1803–1896) in the tradition, see notes 22 and 23.

<sup>31</sup> Since 1627 was the date of the original incident at Mare Mount, as the settlement was to be called henceforth, these scalps in Hawthorne's tale are probably one of its several anachronisms.



every time he is outwitted. No scalps, and no trees, are cut.<sup>32</sup> The reason for the contrast is simple enough. The idea of the Indian as noble savage was much more common among French than among English settlers — and not simply through the impact of Montaigne or the different methods of the Jesuits from the Puritans. What conditioned the hostile English attitude was largely absent from the French contexts: "the competitive pressure of the larger English population, of both sexes, mostly engaged in farming, for whom the lands of the Indians were a prime need and objective" (Washburn 1983:62). It was a Frenchman in fact, Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, who wrote to Jefferson in 1801 (letter of December 17, quoted in Drinnon 1980:78) that "the inhabitants of your country districts regard Indians and forests as natural enemies which must be exterminated by fire and the sword and brandy, in order that they may seize their territory."

Now that we have placed our tale broadly in its American and cultural context, can we say something about the history of the tale? So far we have simply compared the tale with other versions in the broad folktale tradition — Jack and the Beanstalk and the Brave Tailor/Giantkiller blended in the unique combination that is the New Ground story. But although there are parallels elsewhere, such as the Norse and French variants I mentioned before, folklorists have actually traced the Jack tales more precisely, back to the Scots-Irish settlers of these mountain areas of the Carolinas and Kentucky (Glassie 88–89). Indeed, similar tales can still be found today in Ulster and Scotland . . .<sup>33</sup> These Scots-Irish were traditionally land-hungry.

<sup>32</sup> Dorson (1952:95–99). Another interesting variant, in fact an inversion of this tale, is the Disney Chip 'n' Dale cartoon "Up a Tree" in which Donald Duck tries to cut down the tree the chipmunks live in and they trick him and turn the tables every time. The animation gives, as it were, the trees' point of view through the diminutive creatures who live in it.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Robertson, who filleted fish in Aberdeen until the recent oil boom and even after, has a fine ballad repertoire in broad dialect and he also tells Jack tales. An unpublished article on him by Barbara McDermitt is cited in Crum (1986:151), with reference on p. 359 to another unpublished article by Dr Alan Gailey on "The Scots Element in North Irish Popular Culture." A variant of 1640 was collected in Aberdeen and published as "John Glaick, The Brave Tailor" *Folk-Lore Journal* 7, (1889), 163–65. A Miss Dempster published a tale in "The Folklore of

James I had settled wealthy planters in Ulster to break the power of the native Celtic chiefs, and their new tenants were these poor Scots — 200,000 eventually in total, who transformed Ulster from what the books call backward to the most prosperous part of Ireland — but only after the brutal colonizing that we all know about and still suffer from. Their descendants were the Scots-Irish immigrants — half of Ulster went to America in the 18th century — and many pushed on down into the mountains of North Carolina or through the Cumberland gap into Kentucky. These men, Daniel Boones and Davy Crocketts, quickly established reputations as fierce Indian fighters.<sup>34</sup> And these men and their descendants were the carriers and tellers of the Jack tales. The wild frontier was wild largely because of the hostile native inhabitants who had to be eradicated.

Does this mean that everyone really knew, as a part of their family history, who those giants really were? Perhaps among some of the adults who had taken part in the slaughter, but by the time of our recording of the tale, this historical context had receded. And a sign that the recognition was suppressed, or interrupted, is that discrepancy between the living wage of ten cents and the fantasy of a thousand dollars a head.

One final point. Those trees that they cut down at the same time as the Indians who lived there, they made not into temples to the tree gods, but into one of the most distinctive features of the pioneer landscape, and they gave it their own word derived from Irish usage, *cabin*. The new coinage *log-cabin* is first recorded in 1770 and though they borrowed the design from German Americans, it was Scots-Irish who spread the name and the building method throughout the region. In one of the Jack tales the hero

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Sutherlandshire," *Folk-Lore Journal* 6 (1888), 181–2, which Baughmann lists as combining types 1088 and 1060, with Motif K18, the deceptive throwing contest. 1088, "Eating Contest," is found widely throughout England, but combined with 1060 and K18 only in Scotland and North Carolina. On the other hand, Type 1115, "Attempted Murder with Hatchett," common to the English tale of "Jack the Giant Killer" and some versions of 1640, "The Brave Tailor," is not found in the North Carolina Jack tales.

<sup>34</sup> For those who do not know the area, I might mention that the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* is published by the English Department of Appalachian State University at a place called Boone, NC.

builds a cabin for his mother from a single giant log,<sup>35</sup> so converting trees to timber and then to items of culture, just like the ancient Sumerian tellers of the Gilgamesh cycle — but this time with only a trace of the attendant guilt. Indeed the only sign of guilt at the destruction of the trees and the native inhabitants who tried, like Chico Mendes, to defend them, is the discrepancy in the cash values, and between those homely giants and their violent end. The homeliness, the way they live as a family, almost suggests that rivalry with other settlers has come to substitute for, or to supplement, the original equation of Indians and giants.<sup>36</sup> But not all the giants are beheaded, I said: Jack allows the last one left, the father of the family, to flee over the mountain, presumably in the same direction that the pioneers forced the native tribes, like the Cherokee or the Choctaw, to uproot themselves and move West.

<sup>35</sup> Guttierrez (1978:Style 121), reporting a tale told in her presence by Marshall Ward.

<sup>36</sup> I am grateful to James Boon, a descendant, for this observation.

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