

# “EQUIPPED FOR MURDER”: THE PAXTON BOYS AND “THE SPIRIT OF KILLING ALL INDIANS” IN PENNSYLVANIA, 1763–1764

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*In the winter of 1763, dozens of Western Pennsylvanians calling themselves the Paxton Boys murdered 21 Native Americans, a politically charged action that nearly embroiled the colony in civil war and altered the colony's election in 1764. This essay examines the Paxton Boys' justifications and also the failed rhetorical strategies developed by Quakers for defending Native Americans. . . As the Paxton Boys demonstrated the interrelationship between colonial violence and rhetoric, they set the precedent for future violence targeting Native Americans in Pennsylvania and beyond.*

I saw a number of people running down street towards the gaol, which enticed me and other lads to follow them. At about sixty or eighty yards from the gaol, we met from twenty-five to thirty men, well mounted on horses, and with rifles, tomahawks, and scalping knives, equipped for murder. I ran into the prison yard, and there, O what a horrid sight presented itself to my view!- Near the back door of the prison, lay an old Indian and his squaw (wife), particularly well known and esteemed by the people of the town, on account of his placid and friendly conduct. His name was Will Sock; across him and his squaw lay two children, of about the age of three years, whose heads were split with the tomahawk, and their scalps all taken off. Towards the middle of the gaol yard, along the west side of the wall, lay a stout Indian, whom I particularly noticed to have been shot in the breast, his legs were chopped with the tomahawk, his hands cut off, and finally a rifle ball discharged in his mouth; so that his head was blown to atoms, and the brains were splashed against, and yet hanging to the wall, for three or four feet around. This man's hands and feet had also been chopped off

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with a tomahawk. In this manner lay the whole of them, men, women and children, spread about the prison yard: shot-scalped-hacked-and cut to pieces.

—William Henry of Lancaster<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of December 14, 1763, dozens of men “equipped for murder” from the towns of Paxton, Donegal, and Hempfield on the Pennsylvania frontier rode to Conestoga, a small hamlet 60 miles west of Philadelphia, murdered six sleeping Native Americans, and burned the town to the ground, thus coloring the snow-covered Pennsylvania hills blood red. The 14 survivors were moved by the government to nearby Lancaster, but on December 27 a second mob from Paxton broke into the workhouse where these Native Americans had been sheltered and hacked them to pieces. These broken and mangled bodies suggested to settlers that Native Americans, thought to be unnaturally strong, were no longer a threat to resist colonial violence. For the Paxton Boys, as they were known, this massacre was both an effort to gain political power on the frontier by ridding it of Native Americans and a play for political authority via violence. As one Paxton Boy bragged, “tell me not of Cassius, Brutus, Caesar, Pompey, or even Alexander the Great! We! we Paxton Boys have done more than all, or any of them! We have, and it gives me Pleasure to think on’t, Slaughter’d, kill’d and cut off a whole Tribe! a Nation at once!”<sup>2</sup>

In the aftermath of the murders at Conestoga and Lancaster, the colonial governor, John Penn, issued proclamations offering a £200 reward for the capture of the criminals, but no one was caught. At the same time, the Paxton Boys claimed that a criminal Indian, John Papunhank (or Will Soc, a man murdered during the first massacre), was being protected by the government in Philadelphia’s smallpox quarantine at Province Island near the Delaware River. The Paxton Boys were also angered that the government had sheltered about 150 Delawares of the Moravian faith. In early February 1764 the Paxton Boys thus marched on Philadelphia, causing Governor Penn to read the Riot Act and the town to ready to defend itself and the Native Americans sheltered in the town. In fact, many Quakers took up arms against the Paxton Boys, who desired to kill Indians and achieve “[r]evenge for the Butcheries committed by the Barbarians.” Prompted by the march on Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was embroiled in a battle of words to decide the fate of Native Americans, the boundaries of political violence, and the legitimacy of the rule of law in the colony.<sup>3</sup>

Discussions of Indians and revenge lead us into the realm of rhetoric, because *the Indian* was a rhetorical invention, and *revenge* was a rhetorical redescription of colonial violence. Indeed, creating “the Indian” was a rhetorical maneuver whereby the many Native American nations in North America were collapsed into a singular category of “Indians,” a move that facilitated

brutality and violence. Though "Indians" were fictional, this category became an integral part of America; more than 90 years after the Conestoga murders, in 1857 Herman Melville wrote that the fiction of the savage "Indian" remained integral to frontier education: "if in youth the backwoodsman incline to knowledge, as is generally the case, he hears little from his schoolmasters, the old chroniclers of the forest, but histories of Indian lying, Indian theft, Indian double-dealing, Indian fraud and perfidy, Indian want of conscience, Indian blood-thirstiness, Indian diabolism." These "histories" of "Indians" taught men and women on the expanding frontier that violence against Native Americans was justified; if "Indians" were blood-thirsty, double-dealing liars, then aggression could be repackaged as revenge and thereby persuasively advocated. However, what the Paxton Boys called revenge, the Conestogas would have called murder. Rhetorical justifications for violence almost always accompany violence itself; thus, because of its violent potential, literary critic Tzvetan Todorov writes that "[l]anguage has always been the companion of empire."<sup>4</sup>

Murdering Native Americans, the Paxton Boys exhibited the worst of America's colonial past. Indeed, these killers ignored arguments to the contrary and convinced themselves and others that killing friendly Native Americans was justified as revenge against lying, blood-thirsty "Indians." Sadly, colonial violence like this, which was already too familiar, would repeat itself countless times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as American politicians failed to control the violent aggression of frontier settlers against Native Americans. During the Revolutionary War, misguided settlers, who were unable to distinguish between allies and enemies because they experienced only "the Indian," killed many of America's most influential Native American allies, including White Eyes of the Delawares and Cornstalk of the Shawnees. Benjamin Franklin was all too correct, then, when he diagnosed the cultural temperament in Pennsylvania following the Paxton Boys' murder of the Native Americans at Conestoga: "the Spirit of killing all Indians, Friends and Foes, [has] spread amazingly thro' the whole Country."<sup>5</sup>

The "spirit of killing all Indians" and the Paxton Boys' calls for revenge were interrelated and warrant investigation by a rhetorical historian. Well into the 1990s, most histories of North America were written from the perspective of the colonizers; postcolonial scholars have since called for historians to reconsider Native American history from the perspective of Native Americans. This reassessment is important because history is necessarily written from the perspective of the victors. As Walter Benjamin argues, "[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." Until recently, American historians have had the luxury of writing barbarism out of their narratives; resuscitating the perspective of the colonized ensures that the

barbarities committed in the name of “civilization” or “progress” will be investigated as an integral component of the American national experience. Over the past three decades, postcolonial scholars have done an admirable job of reclaiming the perspective of the *colonized*; to continue their postcolonial project, it is necessary to understand the *colonizers’* perspectives rhetorically, meaning, to understand the rhetorical maneuvers employed to justify colonial violence. In “By Any Other Name: Rhetorical Colonialism in North America,” rhetorical critics Mary Stuckey and John Murphy argue that by considering the rhetoric of entitlement, “the colonial project itself and its expression through language can be better understood.” Stuckey and Murphy are interested in “rhetorical colonialism,” or how language is used to prepare lands for colonization and peoples for colonial violence. Taking the work of Stuckey and Murphy as both my inspiration and exemplar, this essay examines the rhetorical function of “the Indian” in justifying colonial violence in Pennsylvania during 1763–64.<sup>6</sup>

To investigate what it means to be equipped for murder, this essay engages in three maneuvers. First, I provide a brief overview of the literature discussing the relationship between violence, nation-building, rhetorical invention, and the colonization of Native Americans. Second, I investigate the lines of argument deployed by the Paxton Boys to justify the murder of Native Americans, thus delineating the role of rhetoric in justifying colonial violence. Third, I consider how Philadelphia responded to the Paxton Boys’ violence. The months following the Paxton Boys’ march on Philadelphia were critical for the future of Pennsylvania politics, because they witnessed a popular election in which a deadly alliance between the Paxton Boys and the colony’s Proprietary government developed. The Proprietary’s need to consolidate political power at the expense of the colony’s Quakers made it necessary to oblige the Paxton Boys, including passing favorable legislation that condemned Native Americans to suffer future atrocities. Indeed, the Pennsylvania government’s actions positively reinforced the Paxton Boys’ hatred for Native Americans, ensuring that they would be the victims of colonial violence in Pennsylvania for years to come.

### INVENTING THE INDIAN: AN OVERVIEW

In 1776, South Carolina General William Henry Drayton gave the following orders to his men: “cut up every Indian cornfield and burn every Indian town and every Indian taken shall be the slave and property of the taker and . . . the nation be extirpated and the lands become the property of the public.” In the midst of a particularly violent instantiation of the American Revolution, Drayton’s words were frighteningly to the point; he knew that Americans wanted land, and to have it, they would have to kill.<sup>7</sup>

Drayton's call for brutality was not abnormal because Americans built their nation on expansion and the expropriation of land. Thus, America's nation-building project mimicked the British empire, for what set that empire apart from the Spanish and French empires was the British policy of permanent long-term settlement. As Anthony Padgen demonstrates in *Lords of All the World*, the goal of the Spanish empire was wealth and therefore the empire exploited the minerals of South America and destroyed the natives; the goal of the French empire was trade and therefore the French empire was more accommodating of Native Americans in North America because they desired to exploit their trading partners. The British empire, however, was founded on the acquisition and exploitation of colonial land. In fact, as legal scholars David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima suggest, the goal of the British was "to replace tribes with white colonists," thereby making North America both profitable and safe for settlement.<sup>8</sup>

Though many British colonists saw North America as a chance for a new start or as a place on which to establish a redemptive, religious utopia, most British merchants saw their empire as a means to profit. Money would be made in North America, political scientist Ellen Meiksins Wood argues in *Empire of Capital*, by persuading colonists to expropriate the land from Native Americans and then forcing them to produce items of value for the mother country. This expropriation had to be justified rhetorically, and, as Meiksins Wood suggests, "[e]conomic justifications of Empire would never, of course, be enough." Handily for them, British imperialists and colonists had a wealth of philosophical arguments to draw on for justifying their empire.<sup>9</sup>

One such justification was the doctrine of *res nullius*, which "decreed that any 'empty thing' such as unoccupied land was common property until it was put to use—in the case of land, especially agricultural use." Empty, unoccupied, untended land was therefore up for grabs; philosophically, Native Americans could be pushed aside, as the influential philosopher Emerich de Vattel wrote in *The Law of Nations* (1758):

The earth, as we have already observed, belongs to mankind in general, and was designed to furnish them with subsistence: if each nation had from the beginning resolved to appropriate to itself a vast country, that the people might live only by hunting, fishing, and wild fruits, our globe would not be sufficient to maintain a tenth part of its present inhabitants. We do not therefore deviate from the views of nature in confining the Indians within narrower limits.

Employing the authority of both Enlightenment political economy and nature itself, Vattel argued that the nation-building project was necessarily opposed

to Native Americans. Similarly, John Locke argued in the *Second Treatise of Government* (1689) that Native Americans did not cultivate the land and hence did not own it. In the “wild woods and uncultivated waste of America,” Locke wrote, the “vacant places” would necessarily be consumed by settlers following “the rule of propriety,” which stated “that every man should have as much as he could make use of.” Locke’s theory of government was particularly well suited to empire because it would be England’s economic standards that would determine if land was being wasted; indeed, anyone not cultivating land to English standards could be displaced.<sup>10</sup>

John Adams’s words were thus colored by Locke’s *Second Treatise*: “Shall we say that a few handfuls of scattering tribes of savages have a right of dominion and property over a quarter of this globe capable of nourishing hundreds of millions of happy human beings?” According to *res nullius*, a “few handfuls” of “savages” had no right to the land because they did not cultivate it to American standards. Though the doctrine of *res nullius* was necessary for justifying empire, it was not sufficient, as historian Alexander Saxton argues, because “[n]atural law required that bearers of advanced civilization replace or dominate primitive or savage peoples. It also required . . . that such people be dealt with justly.” Natural law might decree that Native Americans had no right to the lands of North America, but it required, at the same time, that Native American nations be paid for the seizure of their lands. Legal historian Robert Williams Jr. argues that following the Proclamation of 1763, which closed the lands west of the Appalachians to American settlers, just treatment of Native Americans was legally demanded of colonists. This law put settlers in a rhetorical bind, because on the one hand, they desired Native Americans’ land, but on the other, they were legally prohibited from taking it.<sup>11</sup>

This situation necessitated the invention of persuasive lines of argument to justify land grabbing, and Americans, both before their Revolutionary War and following it, were adept at rhetorical invention. Stuckey and Murphy discuss the role of naming in justifying colonial violence and nation building. For them, naming matters because “[t]he imposition of a particular linguistic world” on a landscape is a way of carving that territory up and preparing it to be colonized. Indeed, by reducing Native American nations to “tribes,” Native Americans were stripped of political sovereignty. Further, by refusing to acknowledge Native American nations’ own names, but instead labeling them according to European prerogatives—which resulted in misnomers like the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people becoming the “Sioux,” which was an Algonquin word for “snakes” or “enemies”—Native Americas were stripped of respect and the right of self-determination. Here, by carving up the landscape

and labeling the people according to European dictates, rhetoric was used to prepare Native Americans for annihilation.<sup>12</sup>

Rhetoric was also deployed to justify the expropriation of Native Americans' land. Many lines of argument were developed for this purpose. One such line of argument, exposed by literary critic Roy Harvey Pearce, claimed that a troubling schism existed between white civilization and Native American "savagery," and therefore it was the destiny of civilization to destroy savagery if civilization were to survive. A second related argument, exposed by historian Brian W. Dippie, claimed that it was the destiny of "Indians" to wither away, a doom that in turn validated cheating, murdering, and robbing these "vanishing Americans" because this violence assisted nature. A third argument, exposed by historians Reginald Horsman and Ronald Takaki, labeled "Indians" pests ("wolves" and "bears") threatening America's progress; thus, Americans justified murdering "Indians" by deploying language similar to that used by farmers to exterminate the pests feeding on their crops.<sup>13</sup>

Each of these arguments was useful for justifying colonial violence, yet each rested on a more fundamental act of rhetorical colonialism exposed by historian Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. in *The White Man's Indian: the invention of "the Indian."* Berkhofer writes, "Native Americans were and are real, but the *Indian* was a White invention and still remains largely a White image, if not stereotype." Inventing "the Indian" entailed collapsing all Native Americans into a single undifferentiated category, a maneuver that served multiple, at times contradictory purposes. On the one hand, as historian Philip Deloria suggests, colonists were able to "play Indian," thereby anointing themselves the protectors of North America and also creating for themselves an identity unique from Britain. Further, as rhetorical critic Lester Olson argues, representing themselves as "Indians" helped colonists to imagine a long history in, and special connection with, North America. On the other hand, the stereotypical "Indian"—savage, bloodthirsty, warlike, cruel—obscured the tragedy and resistance that Native Americans experienced following the European invasion of North America. But even more than that, "the Indian" made rhetorical colonialism possible. Arguments that "Indians" were savages or pests or that they were destined to vanish required a category of beings called "Indians." "The Indian" was a powerful way of justifying colonial violence. Indeed, the lines of argument advanced by the Paxton Boys against the Conestogas rested on deploying the category of "the Indian" to redescribe murder as revenge; thus, investigating this particularly violent case study advances our understanding of rhetorical colonialism and also the relationship between rhetoric and violence in early America.<sup>14</sup>

### **“WE HAVE NOT BETTER EVIDENCE”: THE PAXTON BOYS’ JUSTIFICATIONS OF MURDER**

Though the British colonial frontier was often marred by violence, when settlers were not stealing their land Native Americans coexisted with colonists in the period leading up to the Revolutionary War. For example, Native Americans and Europeans coexisted in “the middle ground”—a realm of diplomacy between French (and later, British) settlers and Algonquian Indians—for decades, and, until the Seven Years War, Pennsylvania itself was a place where Native Americans negotiated a common space with British colonists. Thus, as postcolonial historian Susan Sleeper-Smith argues, when writing about Native Americans historians have been “too fond of telling war stories.” In legal historian Robert A. Williams Jr.’s diagnosis, “[w]e are too habituated to the images of violent and brutal race wars and cutthroat competition for territory between Indians and whites in our history. We have difficulty conceiving of these two different groups of people sharing the identity of interests necessary to make any sort of intercultural cooperation possible.” Though it would be counterproductive to write Native American history without highlighting the violence of colonialism, it is important to remember that Native Americans did exist in peace with their neighbors. One of the most uplifting examples of peace, diplomacy, and coexistence, and hence one of the most tragic examples of violence, treachery, and murder, was the case of the Native Americans living at Conestoga, Pennsylvania.<sup>15</sup>

Nestled east of the Susquehanna River, Conestoga was symbolic of peace because treaties between Pennsylvania’s government and nearby Native American nations were signed there. Sheehays, the leader of the Conestoga nation that in 1763 consisted of approximately 40 individuals descended from the Susquehannocks, Senecas, and Delawares, suggested that Conestoga was a safe place for his nation because “a fire was kindled at Conestoga that had burnt a long while.” He referred to a 1701 peace treaty with William Penn, in which the Conestogas and Penn’s colonists promised “that they shall forever hereafter be as one Head & One Heart, & live in true ffriendship & Amity as one People.” This document closed with Penn’s promise, “for himself, his heirs and Successors, [that] he and they will at all times show themselves true ffriends & Brothers to all & every of ye Said Indians.” If their neighbors’ assessments are correct, the Conestogas were little threat to Pennsylvanians. Moravian missionary John Heckewelder referred to them as “peaceable and inoffensive Indians,” and another neighbor wrote, “these Indians have lived all their Lives . . . in Peace and Quietness with their Neighbors, and I do not believe were ever concerned against us.” These “domestic” Conestogas had taken up farming, housing, and European dress. Likely posing no threat, and

therefore feeling safe, they remained at Conestoga; yet the peace treaty was one of the few items found in Conestoga's ashes, surviving the massacre but failing to do its job of protecting Native Americans from colonial violence.<sup>16</sup>

Following the Seven Years War, which was an imperial battle in Europe and in North America between the British and the French for control of the Ohio Valley, many Native American nations were left in a difficult position. With the French officially expelled from Canada, England was granted control of most of North America east of the Mississippi, leaving Native Americans with no allies if they were abused by the British. Further, Native Americans were already being turned into enemies by historians. More widely known as "The French and Indian War," the Seven Years War is a good example of the power of rhetoric to infuse history with subtle but nevertheless powerful value judgments. As historian Francis Jennings explains, the French and Indian War is a misnomer suggesting that all Indians were allied with the French in a battle against the British when in fact many Native American tribes fought alongside the British against the French. Labeling it the French and Indian War, however, created the appearance that all Native Americans were England's enemies, a move that in turn justified violence. Even though Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, Potawatomes, and Chippewas fought alongside the British in the Seven Years War in hopes of securing their independence from European powers, they were afterward subjected to the construction of British forts on their land and the invasion of British troops into their homes; thus, these Native American nations had little recourse outside of open rebellion. With no European allies remaining, from 1763 to 1765 many Native American nations rallied behind the Ottawa prophet Pontiac and the Delaware prophet Neolin to resist British colonialism and fight for their own political, social, and cultural independence in an event now known as Pontiac's War.<sup>17</sup>

For Pennsylvania's frontier settlers who had fought in the Seven Years War, all Native Americans, whether peaceful or not, became enemies; during Pontiac's War Native Americans living within the colony became targets for threats and violence, and this was in spite of the fact that the war claimed no victims in western Pennsylvania. The spiritual leader of the area, Presbyterian minister John Elder, called for the removal of Native Americans from Pennsylvania, and Governor John Penn agreed, publishing an order on December 8, 1763, for all domestic Native Americans to be removed to Philadelphia for protection. Many Delaware Moravians heeded this warning, traveling to Philadelphia for refuge. The Conestogas remained, and on November 30, 1763, Sheehays sent a letter to John Penn reminding him that "[w]e were settled at this place by an Agreement of Peace and Amity established between your Grandfathers & ours." Sheehays called for "favour and protection," because "we have always lived in Peace and Quietness with our

Brethren & Neighbors round us during the last & present Indian Wars.” There would be no peace in Pennsylvania, though, because the Conestogas, along with all Native Americans, had been turned into enemies.<sup>18</sup>

On Pennsylvania’s frontier in 1763, many settlers endured difficult lives, but in spite of their descriptions peace with Native Americans was always a possibility. Indeed, the French attained a peace that the British never did because the primary goal of the French was not the expropriation of land but trade. Life on the borders between British colonies and Native American lands after 1756 was not peaceful; in fact, historian Elizabeth A. Perkins argues that “border warfare governed the rhythms of daily life” on the frontier. Though settlers experienced violence, we should not forget that the settlers often provoked this violence. Indeed, Arthur St. Clair, who would lead one of two failed wars into the Ohio Territory during the 1790s and was thus no friend of Native Americans, reported from western Pennsylvania: “[i]t is the most astonishing thing in the world the disposition of the common people of this country; actuated by the most savage cruelty, they wantonly perpetuate crimes that are a disgrace to humanity.” According to St. Clair, “common people” living on the frontier were prone to cruelty, and their violence, St. Clair believed, prevented peace with Native Americans: “Our settlements are extending themselves so fast on every quarter where they can be extended; our pretensions to the country they inhabit have been made known to them in so unequivocal a manner, and the consequences are so certain and so dreadful to them, that there is little probability of there ever being any cordiality between us.” Significantly, St. Clair realized that it was the American lust for land, “our pretensions to the country they inhabit,” that caused the violence between settlers and Native Americans.<sup>19</sup>

The Paxton Boys provoked their own share of violence; indeed, they had tasted blood during the Seven Years War, and took up arms again when rumors of an Indian uprising circulated in 1763. Rather than waiting for Pontiac’s War to come to their doorstep, the Paxton militia marched up the Susquehanna River twice in 1763 looking for battles. On the first trip, they were ambushed, losing four men; on the second, they stumbled upon a group of murdered settlers from the Susquehanna Company of Connecticut who had taken possession of Iroquois land illegally. As it was later described, the settlers were “most cruelly butchered; the Woman was roasted, and had two Hinges in her Hands—supposed to be put in red hot; and several of the Men had Awls thrust in their Eyes, and Spears, Arrows, Pitchforks, &c. sticking in their Bodies.” The blame for this atrocity was placed on Indian aggression rather than on resistance to fraudulent land grabbing, and news of the massacre aroused fright in Paxton and provoked calls for removing Native Americans from the Pennsylvania frontier.<sup>20</sup>

The Paxton Boys' animosity centered specifically on the peaceful Native Americans living at Conestoga, one of whom, Will Soc, they charged with providing information and harboring enemies during the Seven Years War. The result was the badly mangled bodies of the Native Americans, an act justified by participants as revenge. As one Paxton Boy argued, "[k]nowing that the little Commonwealth of Indians at Conestoga that pretended to be our Friends, had done us much Mischief, & were in Reality our most dangerous Enemies, a Number of Persons living amongst us, who had seen their Houses in Flames, their Parents & Relatives butchered in the most in human Manner determined to root out this Nest of perfidious Enemies; & accordingly cut them off." Here, the Paxton Boys collapsed all Native Americans into a fictional category of savage "Indians," and within this framework's logic, violence committed by one nation of Native Americans could be revenged against any other.<sup>21</sup>

Queried about their evidence of the perfidy of the Conestogas, one pro-Paxton writer argued, "[w]e have not better Evidence that any particular Tribe or Nation of Indians have been at War with us, than that all the Indians that lived amongst us were also our Enemies." This rhetorical move, from one "guilty" Native American to all "Indians" as enemies, supported their violence. Here the importance of the invention of "the Indian" becomes clear; the conflation of all Native American nations into a universal category of "Indians" provided a blanket justification for colonial violence. Indeed, if an "Indian" in the Ohio Territory killed an American, the Paxton Boys argued that this justified their violence against the Conestogas because one "Indian" was just as guilty as any other; thus, because there was always violence on the frontier, then all "Indians" were guilty and violence against them was justified. For example, the Paxton Boys murdered because "[d]uring the late and present *Indian Wars*, the Frontiers of this Province have been repeatedly attacked and ravaged by Skulking parties of the Indians, who have with the most savage Cruelty, murdered Men, Women and Children, without distinction; and have reduced near a Thousand Families to the most extream Distress." Not only did the Paxton Boys demonstrate no understanding of the political causes for the Seven Years War, they did not care that the Conestogas were not involved. "The Indians" had committed previous crimes, and thus "the Indians" deserved to die.<sup>22</sup>

Writing from Philadelphia, Ben Franklin exposed the logical difficulties with the Paxton Boys' position in one of the most eloquent and most trenchant pamphlets composed about the murders, *A Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County*:

If an *Indian* injures me, does it follow that I may revenge that Injury on all *Indians*? It is well known that *Indians* are of different Tribes, Nations, and

Languages, as well as the White People. In *Europe*, if the *French*, who are White People, should injure the *Dutch*, are they to revenge it on the *English*, because they too are White People? The only Crime of these poor Wretches seems to have been, that they had a reddish brown Skin, and black Hair; and some People of that Sort, it seems, had murdered some of our Relations. If it be right to kill Men for such a Reason, then, should any Man, with a freckled Face and red Hair, kill a Wife or Child of mine, it would be right for me to revenge it, by killing all the freckled red-haired Men, Women and Children, I could afterwards any where meet with.<sup>23</sup>

By foregrounding one of the core values of American colonial life, the insistence on being considered as individuals and not as members of universal classes, and then demonstrating that the Paxton Boys contradicted this logic when dealing with Native Americans, Franklin poked a damaging hole in the Paxton Boys' arguments for murder. Though Franklin forwarded a sound logical argument, the Paxton Boys' feelings on the subject trumped logic; for them, "Indians" were always already guilty because the cruelties committed during the Seven Years War turned all Native Americans into outlaws of humanity, and it was against these political enemies that the Paxton Boys exerted their vengeance.<sup>24</sup>

As a pamphleteer criticizing their actions suggested, the Paxton Boys invented "perfidious Indians" to justify murder: "When the treachery of the Indians is represented, Circumstances bad in themselves may be exaggerated . . . I beg you will guard your Neighbors against taking up Tales they may hear of these Indians, which when enquired into, may be found without any Foundation." The Paxton Boys' violence against the Native Americans at Conestoga thus had a flawed rhetorical foundation; even if Will Soc was an "enemy," massacring the Conestogas was justified by a conflation of all Native Americans into a category of "Indians," and then the wrongs of one Native American justified violence against any others. As Franklin pointed out, Sheehays and his family were slaughtered at Conestoga; thus, even if Will Soc had been "guilty," there was no justification for wiping out his nation: "if Will Soc was a bad Man, what had poor old Shehaes done? what could he or the other poor old Men and Women do? What had little Boys and Girls done; what could Children of a Year old, Babes at the Breast, what could they do, that they too must be shot and hatcheted?—Horrid to relate!—and in their Parents Arms!" The peaceful leadership of the Conestogas and their neighbors' lack of concern discredit the Paxton Boys' attempts to package all Native Americans as traitors and enemies. Nevertheless, the Paxton Boys' rhetorical maneuvers were powerful, as we will see by considering how Philadelphia responded to the Paxton Boys' violence and rhetoric.<sup>25</sup>

## THE ILLOGIC OF VIOLENCE: PHILADELPHIA RESPONDS

Responding to calls for their arrests, the Paxton Boys marched to Philadelphia in early February 1764 to voice their grievances. To counter them, Benjamin Franklin and a committee met the Paxton Boys outside the city at Germantown and convinced them to advance no further. Instead of rushing into the city, then, two of the Paxton Boys, Matthew Smith and James Gibson, drew up a list of grievances titled *A Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania*, which touched off a fiery debate that altered the outcome of the colonial election. In anticipation of the Paxton Boys' arrival at Philadelphia, the city devised several defense strategies, and in this section I will investigate two: violence and logical refutation. In order to understand these strategies, however, it is first important to understand the volatile political situation in Philadelphia. Indeed, there were at least three political and religious groups in Philadelphia that interpreted the Paxton massacres differently. First were the Quakers, who, allied with non-Quakers including Franklin, controlled the colony's popular Assembly. Second was the Proprietary party, managed by William Penn's descendent John Penn, who possessed the power to make judicial and executive appointments including lieutenant governor and mayor of Philadelphia. Third were the colony's Scotch and Irish Presbyterians, including the Paxton Boys, who disliked the colony's Quaker government and wished to see it overturned. These three groups existed in a tense equilibrium throughout the Seven Years War, but the Paxton murders shattered the peace and almost embroiled the colony in civil war.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to their desire to murder the Moravians and other Native American "traitors" sheltered in Philadelphia, the Paxton Boys argued that their march was necessary to secure political representation in the Quaker Assembly. Indeed, one of the Paxton Boys' grievances was a lack of political power. Though Pennsylvania's unicameral Assembly was popularly elected, voting boundaries were gerrymandered so the three Quaker-dominated counties surrounding Philadelphia had 24 of the Assembly's 36 seats and the five frontier counties populated by Presbyterians had only ten seats. This Assembly failed to apportion defense money for frontier towns like Paxton during the Seven Years War. This issue was complicated, because though the Quakers argued that members of the Proprietary party, who owned much of the colony's land, had repeatedly vetoed Quaker-sponsored bills for land-taxes that would have raised money for frontier defense, these bills were often political maneuvers that targeted the Proprietor's tax-free lands. The Paxton Boys managed this complex situation by blaming the Quakers for their losses during the Seven Years War and for the lack of funds for frontier defenses. During

this war, one frontiersman wrote, “[t]his night we expect an attack, truly alarming is our situation. The people exclaim against the Quakers, & some are scarce restrained from burning the Houses of those few who are in This Town. Oh my Country! my bleeding Country!” Anxious over the potential for violence, this writer eased his mind by scapegoating Quakers. The Paxton Boys thus attacked the Quaker Assembly in 1764 because, as a particularly acidic pamphlet, *The Quaker Unmask’d*, related, “TERRIBLE! indeed beyond Description, are the Cruelties daily practised by those Savages on our Fellow Subjects, while Prisoners amongst them!” Announcing that the frontier was populated by a “war-like people” that was out of sync with the pacifist Quakers, this author argued, “Nay, is it not an inexpressible Absurdity that a war-like People should be governed by Persons of Quaker Principles, and especially in Time of War.” The Paxton Boys lumped the Quakers together with Native Americans as scapegoats for the difficulties of frontier life.<sup>27</sup>

Following the December massacres, and prompted by the frontiersmen’s march on Philadelphia, a battle of words, a *Logomachy*, ensued between the Paxton Boys and their opponents in Philadelphia that resulted in 63 pamphlets. Seventeen sixty-four was the year of a popular election, and the various parties used the Paxton riots to advance their own causes; for instance, an alliance developed between members of the Proprietary gentry, seeking to discredit Quakers and seize the Assembly, and angry Presbyterians like the Paxton Boys, who supported the massacre and desired to overturn the Quaker-dominated Assembly. On the other side, the Quakers, along with Franklin, attacked the Proprietary party and Pennsylvania Presbyterians, arguing, in the words of one pamphleteer, “I believe they [the killers of the Conestogas] were *Presbyterians*: Was it not *Presbyterians* that Murdered the *Indians* at *Lancaster*. Was it not Presbyterians, that came down with an intent, to murder the *Indians* in the *Barraks*?” The stakes of the election were high for those involved, but even higher for Native Americans because their safety depended on which party controlled the Assembly.<sup>28</sup>

Tellingly, the Paxton Boys and their Proprietary and Presbyterian allies in Philadelphia rejected every argument that conflicted with the Paxton Boys’ position, which Samuel Foulke, a member of the Assembly, summarized:

[The Paxton Boys] frankly Confess’d they had set out, with full purpose to kill Every Indian in ye Barracks, having been invited & Encouraged by many Considerable persons in Philada., & that they Shou’d meet with no Opposition in ye Execution of their Design, but now being inform’d the Indians were under ye protection of ye Kings troops they profess’d So much Loyalty to his Majesty that they wou’d not lift a hand against them.<sup>29</sup>

Though Foulke's words put a clear pro-Quaker slant on the Paxton Boys' agenda, there is evidence to suggest that he was accurate. The Paxton Boys' *Declaration and Remonstrance* contained a list of nine grievances that were all directly or indirectly related to Native Americans, from a demand that the government remove the Moravian Indians from Philadelphia to a request that Fort Augusta be retrooled for frontier defense. This pamphlet attacked the government's refusal to pay for Native Americans' scalps, a policy that frustrated the recruitment of "Indian" hunters:

though it was impossible to obtain thro' the Summer or even yet any Premium for *Indian* Scalps or Encouragement to excite Volunteers to go forth against them, yet when a few of them known to be the fast Friends of our Enemies, and some of them Murderers themselves; when these have been struck by a distressed, bereft, injured Frontier, a liberal Reward is offered for apprehending the Perpetrators of that horrible Crime of killing his Majesty's cloaked Enemies: And their Conduct painted in the most atrocious Colours, while the horrid Ravages, cruel Murders and most shocking Barbarities committed by *Indians* on His Majesty's Subjects are covered over and excused under the charitable Term of this being their Method of making War.<sup>30</sup>

The refusal to pay for Native Americans' scalps—seized in retaliation for "murder"—while offering a £200 reward for capturing the Paxton Boys struck the pro-Paxton pamphleteers as hypocritical. For them, "the Hands that were closely shut . . . against a Savage Foe, have been liberally opened, and the public Money lavishly prostituted . . . to protect his Majesty's worst of Enemies, those falsly pretended *Indian* Friends, while at the same Time hundreds of poor distressed Families of his Majesty's Subjects . . . were left to starve neglected." Clearly, the Paxton Boys disliked and distrusted the Philadelphia Quakers, and it would be difficult for the latter to persuade the Paxton Boys of their wrongs. The Quakers and other outraged Philadelphians tried, however, responding to the Paxton Boys' illogic with two differing strategies, by threatening violence and by deploying logic.<sup>31</sup>

The first defense strategy was to match violence with violence, for as rumors of the Paxton Boys' march on Philadelphia circulated many young Quakers took up arms for defense. These Quakers, like the Paxton Boys, thus understood the rhetorical possibilities of violence. One prominent church member in Philadelphia described the spectacle: "[i]t seemed almost incredible that sundry young and old Quakers formed companies, and took up arms, particularly so to the boys in the streets: for a whole crowd of boys followed a distinguished Quaker, and in astonishment cried out, look here! a Quaker with a musket on his shoulder." These Quakers suggested that they had an equal

right to use violence to defend the Moravian Delawares sheltered at Province Island as the Paxton Boys had to kill them. Others disagreed, including members of their own religion. Indeed, though the founder of Quakerism, George Fox, did not object to his followers taking up arms in the period of persecution leading up to the 1660 Restoration in England, hence suggesting that violence was tolerable if used in self-defense, the Quaker church in Philadelphia denounced the young Quakers. The Paxton Boys did as well by mocking the sight: “[t]he Q—s so peaceable as you will Find: / Who never before to Arm’s were Inclind. / To kill the Paxtonians, they then did Advance, / With Guns on their Shoulder’s, but how did they Prance.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus the Quakers’ attempt to deploy violence as a rhetorical means of persuasion failed. Displaying convenient amnesia to the murders just committed, the Paxton Boys flayed the Quakers and other Philadelphians for choosing to resolve the conflict through violence instead of resolving it “gently,” that is, by hearing out their grievances at the courthouse. Indeed, the pro-Paxton literature suggested that the Quakers took up violence in self-defense but refused to sanction colonial violence against Native Americans, and therefore the Paxton Boys charged the state with hypocrisy:

And is it not certain, that when their King and Country call them to Arms, they plead Conscience, and will tell thee, with a pious Air, and meek Countenance, “they would rather perish by the Sword than use it against the Enemies of the State.—But if any of their Fellow Subjects become obnoxious to their mild and peaceful Rage, by opposing any of their arbitrary Measures, we then see the Quaker unmask’d, with his Gun upon his Shoulder, and other warlike Habiliments, eagerly desiring the Combat, and thirsting for the Blood of those his Opponents.

For the Paxton Boys, the Quaker unmasked was a powerful man who exhibited pro-Indian, anti-frontiersman “rage” and hence had to be defeated.<sup>33</sup>

A second response to the Paxton Boys’ violence was to deploy logic to demonstrate that because the Paxton Boys’ arguments held “little or no grounds” they had no right to violence against Native Americans. Indeed, pamphlets argued that the Paxton Boys needed to change their psychologies as well as their behaviors. We can see this response by closely reading three pamphlets written by Quakers or authors sympathetic to Quakers: *A Dialogue, Containing some Reflections on the late Declaration and Remonstrance, of the Back-Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania; The Quaker Vindicated; and The Author of Quaker Unmask’d, Strip’d Stark Naked*.

The interlocutor named Lovell in *A Dialogue* exemplified the strategy of logical refutation, announcing, “Sir, I am a man that loves the Truth; and I

humbly think, that it is always the best Side of the Question," and then proceeding to identify the fallacies in the pro-Paxton rhetoric. Significantly, for Lovell, Truth was the "best Side of the Question." "Best" connoted "correct," and if we read Lovell's argument in terms of class, as many Paxton Boys read the Quakers' arguments, then logic was the domain of the best, that is, of the Quakers in Philadelphia's Assembly. Lovell confirmed this scholarly schism between Philadelphia and its frontier by excluding frontiersmen and Philadelphia's Presbyterians from his audience: "setting aside the common People of the Town, and those many Readers, who judge of Books and Things like old Wives, for the sake of pretty Glosses, and fabulous Stories; I say setting aside these two Classes of People, there are three to one who say 'tis a weak and wicked Thing, and only serves to make your very bad Cause still worse." This was a peculiar argumentative strategy, for Lovell argued that the majority of Pennsylvanians were against the Paxton Boys by excluding the classes of people that supported them. For Lovell, if the lower classes were excluded, three out of four elites considered the Paxton case "wicked" and "weak"; yet this argument was suspect because a colonist, William Logan, reported upon traveling to the frontier that he fell "into Company of Some who took the Rioters parts, as 3/4th of all the Countrey do." If three-fourths of the population in Pennsylvania supported the Paxton Boys, then bandwagon appeals for the rights of Native Americans were misguided.<sup>34</sup>

Curiously, arguments like Lovell's were written in a scholarly lexicon that Philadelphia elites could understand but frontiersmen likely could not, but were nevertheless addressed to the Paxtonians, hence suggesting that logic was a tool of power utilized for disciplining frontiersmen. It does not appear that the author of *A Dialogue* desired to gain the Paxton Boys' approbation and persuade them of their wrongs because he deliberately excluded the Paxton Boys from the audience of colonists who could understand his reasoning. Rather, it seems likely that because the Paxton Boys were excluded from the language but included in the pamphlet's audience, logic was therefore intended to force the Paxton Boys to assent to Lovell's viewpoint. Lovell thus used reason not to refute but to overwhelm his illogical opponents. This argumentative strategy would ultimately fail.

The reasons for this failure are suggested by two further pamphlets. *The Quaker Vindicated* diagrammed the pro-Paxton arguments in order to highlight their fallacies:

Let us reduce the sense of this to the scholastick way of reasoning, and see what a pretty syllogism it will make. If *some* called Quakers would have fought the Paxton People, had they come to Philadelphia, it means the *meek, peaceful, inspired* Quakers would. But *some* called Quakers would have fought, had they

come to Philadelphia. Ergo, the “*meek, peaceful, inspired* Quakers wanted to shed the blood of their Fellow-Subjects.” What a curious Logic is here!<sup>35</sup>

By breaking the argument down into its syllogistic components, major premise, minor premise, and conclusion, and then demonstrating that the conclusion was non sequitur, this author hoped to demonstrate that the Paxton Boys’ attacks on Quakers and their march on Philadelphia were logically unjustifiable.

Another pamphlet, *The Author of Quaker Unmask’d, Strip’d Stark Naked*, which was designed to refute the pro-Paxton pamphlet *The Quaker Unmask’d*, performed similar work. The author diagnosed pro-Paxton reasoning in the following harsh terms: “I have carefully examined it, and find in it no less than 17 Possitive L—s [Lies], and 10 false Insinuations contain’d in 15 Pages.” For this author, pro-Paxton reasoning was based on lies, false insinuations, untruths, and fallacies: “Nay the more plausibly you may have conducted your Fallacies, the more severely you will be censur’d hereafter from that Moment you loose all Truth, all Confidence, all Credit, and all Society, for all men avoid a L—r as a common Thief, Truth itself in his Mouth looses its Dignity, being always suspect, and always disbelieved.” By pointing out the fallacies in the Paxton Boys’ reasoning, these two authors placed hope in the logical operator, “ergo.” These pamphlets attempted to force the Paxton Boys to alter their behavior because their logic was fallacious.<sup>36</sup>

Wilbur Samuel Howell argues that Aristotelian rhetoric, based on the rules of formal logic, was popular in the eighteenth century and influential on how rhetoric was practiced. Here, we see that though this influence was likely true, logic failed when pitted against the resources for colonial violence in Pennsylvania. One rhetorical exchange in particular symbolized this failure. In the conversation between Lovell and Mr. Positive in *A Dialogue*, Lovell argued that pro-Paxton rhetoric was “contrary to Reason” because it was premised on “thin Glosses and mean Sophistry.” In a flurry of logical investigations, he then dissected the main lines of argument the Paxton Boys deployed to justify their colonial violence. Mr. Positive, representing the Paxton Boys and their supporters, refused to recognize the validity of these attacks, responding: “I swear it can’t be true; nor shall this, or any Thing you can advance in their Favour, alter my fix’d Opinion of them; nay, if I tho’t that any of their Colour was to be admitted into the Heavenly World, I would not desire to go there myself.” Mr. Positive’s recalcitrance indicated logic’s failure; past a certain point of fixed opinions about “them,” about “Indians,” he refused to engage Lovell’s arguments. Many Paxton Boys fantasized about a frontier without Native Americans, and this interlocutor suggested that he would turn down a chance to go to heaven if Native Americans were admitted. These were strong, hateful

sentiments, and though a widely published letter damning the murder of Native Americans argued that “[t]hings will, I think, clearly appear in this Light to any Person who will coolly and deliberately consider the Matter devoid of Passion or of Prejudice,” this emotional disengagement was exactly what the Paxton Boys could not perform.<sup>37</sup>

In this instance, logical arguments failed because the Paxton Boys’ arguments were based on an emotional reaction to “the Indian.” Indeed, pro-Paxton propaganda expressed hatred for “Indian,” and, as Jean-Paul Sartre suggests, hatred is one of the strongest emotions and often overwhelms logic; therefore, the Paxton Boys’ hatred of “Indians” trumped sound logical arguments against murdering Native Americans. The author of *The Quaker Vindicated* was perceptive because he addressed the frontiersmen’s hatred in his trenchant critique of pro-Paxton rhetoric, arguing that it was premised on anger, “*bitterest rancour and ill will*,” and “low invectives.” Stringing together a barrage of logical refutations, he wrote, “The Unmasker now opens a paragraph as angry as it is grossely fallacious”; “What a strange contradiction is here! But this will always be the case, when men under the Veil of Truth, endeavour to hide *the bitterest Rancour and Ill-Will*”; “The rest of this paragraph contains some *low invectives*, quite foreign to PLAIN TRUTH, and are too *mean* to deserve any further notice.” It appears that just as this anti-Paxton pamphleteer suggested, the Paxton Boys were unsusceptible to the *therefores* and *ergos* of logic.<sup>38</sup>

### CONCLUSION: SELLING OUT PENNSYLVANIA’S NATIVE AMERICANS

On February 7, 1764, the Paxton Boys agreed to return to the frontier, and on that evening Governor Penn called together Philadelphians and demanded that they return to their homes. According to a member of Penn’s Proprietary Party, there had been a misunderstanding, and therefore he “thanked them for their zeal, and assured them there was no farther occasion for their services; since the Paxton men, though falsely represented as enemies of government, were in fact its friends, entertaining no worse design than that of gaining relief to their sufferings, without injury to the city or its inhabitants.” In this speech, the phrase “no worse design” glossed over the Paxton Boys’ violence, which became acceptable for the Proprietary Party so long as the frontiersmen did not cause trouble in Philadelphia. Indeed, by allying themselves with the Paxton Boys and frontiersmen who supported the Paxton Boys, the Proprietary Party made huge electoral gains in the colonial election of 1764, winning eight seats from the Quakers in the Assembly.<sup>39</sup>

These gains were had for three interrelated reasons. First, a critical misjudgment by Franklin and his friend and fellow Assembly member Joseph

Galloway opened space for dissent. On March 24, 1764, Galloway introduced a series of resolutions that the Assembly adopted against the Proprietors, urging the British government to revoke Penn's Pennsylvania charter in favor of royal government. Following the Proclamation of 1763, however, and other British abuses on colonial liberties, Franklin and Galloway's move to weaken the Proprietary Party's influence by giving it to the Crown outraged Philadelphians. Second, the Proprietary Party exploited anti-Franklin sentiment in the town's sizeable German population by placing Germans on their ticket. As Olson demonstrates, the Proprietary Party waged an effective propaganda campaign against Franklin by widely reprinting his comments that Germans were "BOORS *herding* together" who "swarm into our Settlements." This ethnic slur was effectively deployed to damage Franklin's credibility with German voters. And third, the Quakers' attacks on the Paxton Boys helped to channel anti-Quaker sentiments on the frontier into a political campaign to undermine Quaker control of the Assembly. Hence, Franklin suffered his only loss in a public election in 1764. As he noted:

The Proprietary Party have taken true Pains, as it behov'd them, to represent the Change [to Royal Government] as dangerous to our Privileges, and made the Assembly odious for proposing it. The Irish Presbyterians, too, piqu'd at the Reflections thrown on them by the Quakers for the late Riots and Murders, have join'd the Proprietary Party, by which they hope to acquire the Predominancy in the Assembly, and subdue the Quakers.<sup>40</sup>

Tensions ran high, and one of the chief Proprietary rhetoricians, the eloquent John Dickinson, even challenged Galloway to a duel. The combination of Franklin's support of the Crown and his attacks on the Paxton Boys caused public opinion to turn against him. As he noted about his *A Narrative of the Late Massacres*: "You cannot conceive the Number of bitter Enemies that little Piece has rais'd me among the Irish Presbyterians."<sup>41</sup>

Significantly, after the Proprietary Party dominated the 1764 election, they, along with John Penn, sold out Pennsylvania's Native Americans in an effort to placate frontier Presbyterians. In the end, no one faced charges for killing the Indians at Conestoga and Lancaster. In addition, John Pitt placed a bounty on enemy Indians' heads, and this July 7, 1764, proclamation stated, "[w]hereas, it is necessary for the better carrying on Offensive Operations against our Indian Enemies, and bringing the unhappy war with them [Pontiac's War] to a speedy issue, that the greatest Encouragements should be given to all his Majesty's Subjects to exert and use their utmost Endeavours to pursue, attack, take, and destroy our said Enemy Indians." Unfortunately, "our Indian Enemies" deployed "the Indian" and thus was a sufficiently broad

description to justify “revenge” against all Native Americans on the Pennsylvania frontier. Furthermore, in 1764, troops under British General Thomas Gage were sent to fortify the frontier, and by late 1764 the Pennsylvania government began a policy of “Indian” removal. But disease intervened; indeed, smallpox broke out at Province Island, killing 56 of the 140 Native Americans sequestered there. Thus, the Paxton Boys’ grievances were satisfied, and they were rewarded for their colonial violence and passionate hatred of Native Americans.<sup>42</sup>

This de facto arrangement, whereby the Proprietary government tacitly assented to the murder of Native Americans, was advantageous to both them and the Paxton Boys. Indeed, the Paxton Boys posed a significant threat to any Pennsylvania government that oppressed them, for they demonstrated that they would turn to violence to secure political power from a pro-Native American Quaker government. As John Heckewelder reported, “Although at first it was believed, that the only object of the rioters was the destruction of all the Indians . . . it soon became evident that they aimed at nothing short of overturning the whole form of government. Their design appearing now to be; first, to cause a general consternation, thereby spreading devastation and misery over the country, and then to take the reigns [*sic*] of government into their own hands.” Marauding mobs with pitchforks and muskets were a definite threat to the Quaker Assembly, and if not satisfied, they would be a threat to the Proprietary government as well. Thus, if the Proprietary wanted to wrestle control of the Assembly from the Quakers, it was necessary to secure the support of frontier citizens, and this implied not only coming to peace with colonial violence but also encouraging it. To sanction the murder of Native Americans was to deflect the Paxton Boys’ violence away from the government toward the frontier, thereby securing domestic peace with the high cost of Native American blood.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, instead of attempting, as the Quakers did, to discipline the Paxton Boys, or even taking up arms to punish the flagrant murder of Native Americans, the Proprietary government appeased and encouraged them, thereby positively reinforcing the murder of Native Americans and discrediting past and future treaties between Pennsylvania’s government and Native American nations. Of course, these policies were devastating for Native Americans in Pennsylvania because the Paxton Boys’ rhetoric openly proclaimed a political agenda of ceaseless aggression against Indians. In their *Declaration and Remonstrance*, the Paxton Boys wrote themselves a blank check for future violence by justifying the massacres at Conestoga, Lancaster, and “any others of those like Nature, which may hereafter happen.” Gazing into their crystal balls, the Paxton Boys portended the violence that would sully Pennsylvania’s frontier through the Revolutionary War. A particularly

brutal example of this violence was Frederick Stump's massacre of ten Native Americans in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1768, a slaughter made even more symbolic because Stump, like the Paxton Boys before him, scalped his victims.<sup>44</sup>

After the Paxton affair, Franklin was saddened by the manners of frontiersmen: "It grieves me to hear that our Frontier People are yet greater Barbarians than the Indians, and continue to murder them in time of Peace." Later, in 1766, Sir William Johnson, the English Agent of Indian Affairs in North America, argued: "Sending Murders to be tried within the Governments, as from the present disposition of our People we can expect little Justice for the Indians. . . . neither our Laws, nor our People are much Calculated for redressing Indians, and we are in the utmost want of some method for doing them effectual Justice." The marauding, riotous Paxton Boys were Johnson's immediate concern in this letter to General Gage. Also in 1766, Gage, who had been ordered to defend the frontier, expressed his anger "to find that the lawless Banditti on your Frontiers continue giving you fresh trouble. The Robberies and disturbance they have been guilty of with Impunity, emboldens them to every Act of Violence, whilst they flatter themselves that they are secure from Punishment." Following the Paxton Boys' example, murders continued apace in Pennsylvania, making peace treaties and peaceful days long forgotten memories. By encouraging colonial violence, then, in a very real way the Proprietary government equipped the Paxton Boys for murder and also undermined the rule of law in Pennsylvania by demonstrating that, in spite of rhetoric attacking murder, violence against Native Americans had become the political norm in the colony. Of course, it was not only the success of their violence, but also the success of their rhetoric that emboldened the Paxton Boys' every act of violence. By deploying "the Indian" to redescribe their violence as revenge, the Paxton Boys were successful at influencing colonial politics; thus, "the Indian" facilitated violence against Native Americans in Pennsylvania and would continue to do so in the formative years of the United States.<sup>45</sup>

## NOTES

1. This quotation provides a firsthand description from a letter from William Henry of Lancaster to John Heckewelder, a Moravian missionary and extensive traveler in early America. It is reprinted in Heckewelder's *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians, from Its Commencement, in the Year 1740, to the Close of the Year 1808* (Philadelphia, 1820), which in turn is reprinted in *The Travels of John Heckewelder in Frontier America*, ed. Paul A. W. Wallace (1958; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 77.
2. *A Dialogue, Containing some Reflections on the late Declaration and Remonstrance, of the Back-Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764), reprinted in *The*

*Paxton Papers*, ed. John R. Dunbar (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957), 114. For the names of the victims, see Lancaster Sheriff John Hay to John Penn, December 27, 1763, in Samuel Hazard, ed., *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government* (Harrisburg, PA: T. Fern, 1851–52), 9:103–4; on the symbolism of mutilating Native American bodies, see Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500–1676* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 243–79.

Friedrich Nietzsche called violence like this “punishment as a festival, namely the rape and mockery of a finally desecrated enemy,” and Garry Wills calls murder like this “killing as total degradation,” where “humiliating deaths are contrived to deprive a person of humanity as such.” See Nietzsche’s head-turning discussion of punishment in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufman (1966; New York: Modern Library, 1992), 509–18 (quote, 516), and Wills’s excellent thoughts on Nietzsche in “The Dramaturgy of Death,” *New York Review of Books*, June 21, 2001, 6.

3. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 15, 1763.
4. Herman Melville, “Containing the Metaphysics of Indian-hating, According to the Views of One Evidently not so Prepossessed as Rousseau in Favor of Savages,” in *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*, ed. H. Bruce Franklin (1857; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 206; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (1982; New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), 221. For the remainder of this essay, when I am speaking of the natives of North America they will be Native Americans, and when I am highlighting the stereotypes used to justify colonial violence they will be “Indians” or “the Indian.” Because the word “Indian” is tinged with colonialism, and was from its first widespread use, I will place it in quotation marks to designate its constructedness.
5. Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, February 11, 1764, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959–99), 11:77. On settler violence against Native Americans during the Revolutionary War, see Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 129–91; Colin Calloway, *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (Boston: Bedford, 1994), 146–69; and *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in North American Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–64.
6. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), thesis 7, 256; Mary E. Stuckey and John M. Murphy, “By Any Other Name: Rhetorical Colonialism in North America,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, no. 4 (2001): 75.
7. Drayton quoted in Edward J. Cashin, “‘But Brothers, It Is Our Land We Are Talking About’: Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry,” in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution*, ed. Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 251–52.
8. Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France c. 1500–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 63–102; David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 32–33. For discussions of the United States’ basis in land, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American*

- Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 81–115; Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987); and Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 3–27.
9. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso, 2003), 100. This is not to argue that religious motivations and profit motivations were antithetical; on the contrary, Max Weber argues that the desire to demonstrate religious salvation led to profit, especially in America: see Weber's description of Franklin in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1904–5; Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 1998); and "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 302–22.
  10. Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital*, 72, 99–101; Emerich de Vattel, *The Law of Nations, or, Principles of the Law of Nature Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (1758), quoted in Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990; repr., New York: Verso, 2003), 28; John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. Richard H. Cox (1689; Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1982), Book 5, "Of Property," sections 36, 37, pages 23–24.
  11. John Adams to Judge William Todor, September 23, 1818, in *The Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850–6), 10:359–62; Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, 42; Robert A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 227–323.
  12. Stuckey and Murphy, "By Any Other Name," 76.
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