

The Pamphlet War Over the Paxton Boys

IN THE WINTER OF 1763–64 a group of Pennsylvania frontiersmen known as the “Paxton Boys” marched toward the city of Philadelphia to capture a handful of Indians the colony’s Quaker leaders had supposedly brought there for protection following an earlier Paxtonian attempt on their lives. The “march” was soon called off, but in its aftermath both the Paxtonian supporters and their Quaker opponents took their cases to the press. The occasion prompted Philadelphia printers to pour out a truly astonishing amount of pamphlet literature, unprecedented in quantity and variety. Sixty-three pamphlets appeared, along with, or included in them, ten political cartoons, the earliest of their kind in the colonies. A number of pamphlets went through several editions, with some reprinted at a variety of different shops and at least one, *An Address to the Inhabitants Conniving at the Massacre of the Indians*, going through four editions. All told, more pamphlets were generated by the Paxton Boys’ activities than by any previous Pennsylvania issue, including the 1755–56 crisis over Quaker reluctance to participate in the French and Indian War, or the controversial Sugar Act enacted the same year the march occurred. The Paxton polemics, pro and con, made up a fifth of the 335 publications (including government documents) printed in Pennsylvania in 1764 and were largely responsible for a 40 percent growth over the previous year’s total, enough to move Philadelphia ahead of Boston in the number of items published annually.¹ The forms the printed pieces took were remarkable for their style and variety. Ranging from gentle nips to vitriolic bludgeoning, from biting satire to deadly doggerel, they employed countless formats, songs and plays, essays,

¹ For the growth of the Philadelphia press at this time, see G. Thomas Tanselle, “Some Statistics on American Printing, 1764–1783” in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester, Mass., 1980), esp. 324, table 1A, and 353–54, tables 7a–c; and John R. Dunbar, ed., *The Paxton Papers* (The Hague, 1957), intro.

mock epitaphs, parodied speeches and prayers, caricatures and satirical drawings.

One must be careful not to draw too fine a comparison between the Paxton controversy and the revolutionary polemics that followed. The Paxton writers and their opponents divided inconsistently on revolutionary issues, while the newspaper press, which blossomed during the prerevolutionary crisis, failed to cover the Paxton episode at all. Nevertheless, in its probable market size, its experimentation with style and form, and even indirectly in some of the issues it introduced, the Paxton literature anticipated the prerevolutionary writing that appeared in the years immediately following.²

Two questions should be asked: first, how could such a short-lived riot, one that was very soon called off, produce so much literary combat? and secondly, why did the writers on the Quaker side—seemingly possessed of greater talent and experience—get the worst of the encounter judging both from the Quakers' defeat in the subsequent election and from the quality of the writing produced?

The answer to the first question lies in the larger issues to which the Paxton controversy was tied, as well as with the effective methods used to market the pamphlets, and the availability and appeal of the new techniques of English satire adopted by writers on both sides. The answer to the second—the larger focus of this paper—lies in the failure of the Quaker sympathizers to utilize satire as effectively as their opponents.

The events of the Paxton episode began in the summer of 1763 when the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania Assembly refused to send help to beleaguered frontiersmen fighting the Indians in Pontiac's War. After a fragile peace was negotiated with the Indians, reports circulated along the frontiers that one of the hostile Indians was being protected in a Moravian settlement at Conestoga; on December 14 about fifty men entered Conestoga and slaughtered six unarmed Indians there. Fourteen Indians survived; the frontiersmen were so sure these Indians were spies, or that at least one of the Indians had murdered their colleagues, the westerners tracked the fourteen Indians down to Lancaster where they had been moved

² Bruce Ingham Granger, *Political Satire in the American Revolution, 1763–1783* (Ithaca, N Y, 1960), 8–9, 19

by sympathetic Pennsylvanians and killed them. When still other Indians were moved to Philadelphia for their protection, the "Paxton Men" marched toward Philadelphia with the intention of catching these Indians, too, and on Sunday, February 5, the Paxtons reached Germantown where a delegation sent by the governor and council came out to meet them. After brief negotiations, the westerners agreed to return home, leaving two of their number to draw up a Declaration of Grievances. When the government later refused to act on the declaration, the frontiersmen's bitterness festered, although the earlier marchers remained at home and the danger of rebellion subsided.³

As the sullen fury of the frontiersmen hung on, however, the arena of conflict shifted from the streets to the press, with the partisan pamphleteers becoming the combatants. The issue proved a compelling one for large numbers of Pennsylvanians. The number of observer/readers grew from a few hundred to a substantial portion of the colony's populace, and pamphlet sales were huge.

One reason for the long-running intensity of the conflict was of course because the Paxton episode was associated with issues far more fundamental than this particular remonstrance against the colonial government. Of greatest immediacy was the issue of defense. In the eyes of frontiersmen, Quakers used pacifism simply as an excuse to leave the frontier undefended. The issue of defense was in turn inseparable from the question of frontier representation in the legislature. The Paxton writers argued that had the western counties been adequately represented in the first place the legislature would not have been able to ignore frontier demands for protection. Moreover, they claimed, the West's underrepresentation became more pronounced as the years went by and frontier settlements grew. To westerners "the Quaker Way" of politics was suspect; Quakers gerrymandered districts and exploited patronage, while the Friends' claim to have earlier withdrawn from government because they could not support a

³ For the fullest narrative of events, see Brooke Hindle, "The March of the Paxton Boys," *William and Mary Quarterly* 2 (1946), 461-86, but see also James E. Crowley, "The Paxton Disturbance and Ideas of Order in Pennsylvania Politics," *Pennsylvania History* 37 (1970), 317-39, and the brief accounts in Alan W. Tully's "Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in Early America," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (1983), 512-21, and James Hutson's *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746-1770: The Movement for Royal Government and its Consequences* (Princeton, 1971), chap. 2. George W. Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Back-country* (N.Y., 1989) discusses the "ad hoc" community that had developed in Paxton at the time of the march.

military effort in the Seven Years War was deceptive and insincere. If Quakers were actually serious about their pacifism, there was no hope for frontier protection in a government under their domination. More likely, thought many Paxtonians, the Quakers were not serious about pacifism and were only using pacifism as they would use any other ruse to keep the frontiersmen from having a voice in their own government. Quakers responded that problems in government rested not with the legislature but with the proprietor, who should be removed because he would not allow his lands to be taxed to support the government (and defense). Paralleling the political issues were disputes at the newly created College of Philadelphia where Presbyterian and Anglican tutors, several of whom contributed pamphlets to the Paxton controversy, were at odds over college governance.⁴

All these related issues—defense, representation, Quaker political methods, the role of the proprietor in provincial politics, the governance of the college—inflamed the Paxton rhetoric and readership and increased sales of pamphlets. Sales were also abetted by effective marketing. Seven Philadelphia printers—most of whom willingly printed pamphlets on either side of the controversy⁵—produced the bulk of the Paxton prints, and most sold their own publications or had arrangements with bookstores. The most successful printers (such as Andrew Stewart who printed fourteen of the pamphlets) had their own stores in provincial towns like Germantown and also sold prints through all the pamphlet sellers in Philadelphia. Peddlers marketed pamphlets in the interior towns, and were probably able to arrange for some ministers to sell or distribute particular pamphlets among their congregations.⁶

⁴ Note here that the writers on the Quaker side were by and large not Quakers themselves. Many attended the Anglican church. On the underlying, divisive issues see especially Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics, Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1994), 182–96, 287–96. See also William S. Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, 1964), 149, 152–53. James Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746–1770* (Princeton, 1972), 109–12, Robert L. D. Davidson, *War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania, 1682–1756* (New York, 1957) chap. 1, and Joseph Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania, A History* (New York, 1976), chap. 9.

⁵ For the importance and the rarity of printers willing to publish on both sides of a controversy, see Stephen Botein, “Printers and the American Revolution” in Bailyn and Hench, eds., *Press and Revolution*, 11–55, esp. p. 22.

⁶ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen, Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin* (New York, 1962), 72–84, Richardson Wright, *Hawkers and Walkers in Early America* (New York, 1976), 50–54, 92, “James Gilreath, American Book Distributor,” in David D. Hall and John B. Hench, eds., *Needs and*

Taverns also were a market for the prints. Literate patrons could buy copies in the taverns and coffeeshops, and illiterate patrons could hear the pamphlets read aloud. Since Philadelphia had one tavern for every two hundred residents (or one for every fifty adult males), we may assume most men stopped in the taverns daily or the owners would have gone out of business. William Bradford, one of the busiest printers, owned the London Coffee House which was next door to his shop and served as "a general clearinghouse for business news and gossip" for hundreds of patrons.⁷ Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, Andrew Stewart, and Anthony Armbruster all listed addresses within a block or so of Market and Second Streets, the geographical center point for taverns and coffee shops. Edward Merefield was a block away on Arch Street; John Morris a block in the other direction on Third Street "opposite the Three Reapers."⁸

Publishers and writers alike targeted a broad audience, but some pamphlets were clearly directed to specific social ranks. Pamphlets selling at six pence or a shilling, or those noting with some disdain that "the lower sort of people are very imitative of their Superiors,"⁹ or that "three Parts of the City seem to approve of it [the Paxtonians] if their Minds don't change with the next Wind that blows,"¹⁰ were doubtlessly pitched to the Philadelphia elite. Pamphlets written for readers "in the know" who would recognize the references to people or things that required difficult identification, or pamphlets that responded to others with point-by-point refutations or included cross references that required familiarity with clusters of other works would also have been aimed at an informed elite. The same probably

Opportunities in the History of the Book America, 1639-1876 (Worcester, Mass., 1987), 130

⁷ David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 55-65.

⁸ The addresses were (sometimes) given on the title page of the pamphlet. *A Battle! A Battle!*, for example, gave Merefield's address; *Remarks on the Quaker Unmask'd, Or Plain Truth Found to be Plain Falsehood* gave Morris's address. Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 173, 223.

⁹ *A Serious Address, to such of the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania, as have cannived at, or do approve of, the late Massacre of the Indians at Lancaster, or the Design of killing those who are now in the Barracks at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1764); reprinted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 91-97; quote, 97.

¹⁰ *A Dialogue, Containing some Reflections on the late Declaration and Remonstrance, of the Back Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764); reprinted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 111-23, quote, 113.

holds true for cartoons that were funny only to the viewer familiar with the physical features of the individuals caricatured. James Dove's *Counter-Medley* which depicts fifteen different characters in Pennsylvania politics, one of whom is Franklin egged on by the Devil, would fit in this category, as would an untitled picture of four Quakers sitting at a table discussing the upcoming election while Franklin stands in the foreground expressing concern only for his own return to office (figs. 1 and 2).¹¹ Probably the clearest example of in-group appeal was a Quaker cartoon of Dove himself, featuring a grotesque exaggeration of his large, aquiline nose and the lines,

A miracle! A miracle! Without Dispute
A tame Dove metamorphos'd into a Brute.¹²

The message would have registered only to a reader familiar with an anti-Quaker cartoon, possibly by Dove himself, which is combined with a pamphlet entitled

A Battle! A Battle!
A Battle of Squirt
Where no man is kill'd
And no man is hurt!¹³

Other pamphlets, however, like those selling at twopence apiece with doggerel verses elaborating or accompanying a cartoon, or with a political message in the form of a tavern song or a droll for the theatre, were probably designed for the lower ranks. Many of these were aimed at the lower orders in Philadelphia where mobs of the disenfranchised, "disorderly crowds"

¹¹ William Murrell, *A History of American Graphic Humor* (2 vols., New York, 1933-38), 1 nos 12, 13

¹² Murrell, *History*, no 11 For a fascinating discussion of the elite appeal, see David Hall, *Cultures of Print, Essays on the History of the Book* (Amherst, Mass 1996), 153-54

¹³ Philadelphia, 1764 Reprinted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 173

gathered at election sites attempting with some success to intimidate voters and influence elections.¹⁴

Both sides in the controversy appealed to a broad audience by locating the Paxton march in the context of larger issues, both marketed their products to diverse segments of the population, and the best writers on both sides solicited a wide readership by working within an emerging English style of literary/political humor. But here the parallels ended since the Paxtonians exhibited greater ease in adapting that style to the needs of their own popular appeal.

Writers on both sides assumed that their audience, no matter how rustic its background, had some knowledge of contemporary English satire. English satirical writings had circulated quickly throughout the colony: Pope's *Dunciad* appeared there just a few months after coming off the press in England, while the works of Swift, Fielding, Defoe, and Gay were all available in colonial bookstores and were read aloud in coffeehouses and taverns in British America almost as soon as they were read in London. Hogarth's prints were pirated within a few months, put up on the walls of Philadelphia taverns, and collected in booklets for coffeehouse patrons to view. The frontispieces of the Paxton pamphlets, if they did not quote Shakespeare or the classics, quoted Pope, Swift, Gay, Defoe, or Fielding instead. The *Paxtoniade* even assumed its readers knew Samuel Butler, the ancestor and model for many of the eighteenth-century satirists; thus the frontier leaders were portrayed as

Descendant of that self same Ass,
That bore his Grandsire Hudebras.¹⁵

Pennsylvanians had already produced their own literary craftsmen working under English influence. Franklin's writings were of course the best known, but as early as 1726 James Logan, friend and secretary to William Penn, had

¹⁴ Albert Edward McKinley, *The Suffrage Franchise in the Thirteen English Colonies in America* (Philadelphia, 1905), 284

¹⁵ *The Paxtoniade* (Philadelphia, 1764) Reprinted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 165–71, quote, 169 "Hudebras" refers to the subject of Samuel Butler's mock epic written between 1663 and 1678. The frontier insurgents were largely Scots-Irish Presbyterians, hence, the association with "Hudibras, the true blue Presbyterian knight."

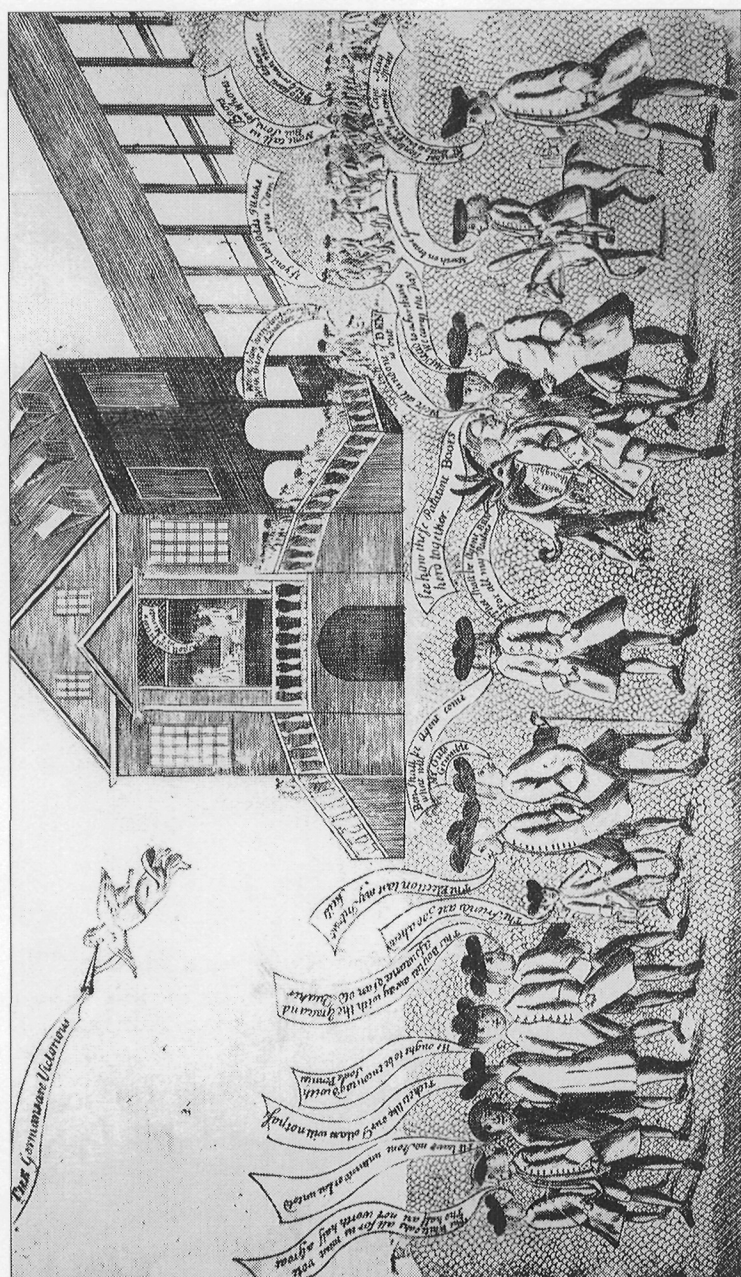


Fig. 1. "The Counter-Medley, being a proper Answer to all the Dunces of the Medley and their Abettors." Four long columns of verse and a song are printed below the caption. Engraving on paper. Philadelphia, 1764. (Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)



published a biting satiric attack on William Keith, the former governor who allied himself with the Quaker party in the assembly. Thirty years later Nicholas Scull had written *Karwanio Che Keeteru*, an allegory about Quakers giving money for a cause they did not name but which even they knew was a war.¹⁶

Both English and colonial satiric stylists shared the assumption that the intent of satire is to make the object it targets ridiculous by revealing it to be a fraud, an imposter claiming to be something it is not. Most often the target is a person, but it can also be a group of people—a party, a government, a church, any institution, in fact, that claims to be functioning in a way the satirist thinks it is not. Satire exposes the democratic institution that doesn't function democratically, the quack doctor whose bank account is healthier than his patients, the parvenue whose manners give away the fact that he is not the aristocrat he claims to be.

In the satirist's thinking we are all shams of one sort or another; it is human nature to wear a mask so other people will not see our failings. But the satirist goes after only the most egregious public cases by ridiculing them, holding them up to laughter, and humiliating them before public opinion. Laughters unite in deriding the object of the satire; they are in on the joke. The targeted person temporarily becomes the outsider against whom the laughing group solidifies.¹⁷ The exposure and isolation bring shame, but since they are handled with humor ("judicial laughter" is Joseph Addison's term)¹⁸ the victim can be reintegrated into society.

¹⁶ Philadelphia, 1756 Charles Evans, *American Bibliography*, no 7789

¹⁷ See J D Browning, ed., *Satire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1985), 23, and Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic, Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 57

¹⁸ See quote and P K Elkin's comment on Addison in *The Augustan Defense of Satire* (Oxford, 1973), 79 For Addison's changes of mind concerning satire, see Allan Ingram, *Intricate Laughter in the Satire of Swift and Pope* (New York, 1986), 32–33

. . . I point the pen
To brand the bold font of shameless guilty men¹⁹

wrote Pope. Compare this with Swift, "Satyr was first introduc'd into the world; whereby those whom neither religion, nor natural virtue, nor fear of punishment were able to keep within the bounds of their duty, might be withheld by the shame of having their crimes expos'd to open view in the strongest colours."²⁰

The colonists followed suit. William Barton, one of the Paxton writers, introduced his *A Battle! A Battle!* with

Tis safe and common, in a Friend's disguise
To mask hypocrisy, Deceit, and Lies.²¹

The author of *An Answer to a Pamphlet entitled The Conduct of the Paxton Men* gave as his intention:

I'll send abroad a satyr with a Scourge
That to their shame for this abuse shall strip them
And being naked in their vices whip them.²²

In some of the Paxton tracts on both sides the titles alone suggest the theme of exposing sham: *The Cheat Unmask'd*, *The Quaker Unmask'd or Plain Truth*, *The Author of Quaker Unmask'd Strip'd Start [sic] Naked, Clothes for a Stark Naked Author, A Looking Glass for Presbyterians*.

If Pennsylvania's literary leaders shared the general objective of English satirists, the exposure of pretense, they also picked up their techniques. In particular, they followed the advice to make their attacks oblique, framing

¹⁹ "Imitations of Horace," lines 105–6. Quoted in Howard D. Weinbrot, *Eighteenth Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge, 1988), 140.

²⁰ Jonathan Swift, *The Examiner*, Apr. 26, 1711, no. 39. Quoted in Ian A. Bell, *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (London, 1991), 179.

²¹ Quoted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 173.

²² From Horace. See Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 317.

them in such a way that most readers would be able to recognize the target easily, although the victim himself could not absolutely prove the identification in a court of law and thereby succeed in suing the writer for defamation of character (if the victim was a private individual) or seditious libel (if he was a government official). This was mainly for the writer's self-defense, of course, but it also served another purpose: readers were flattered if based on their own knowledge they were able to share a joke with the satirist. As Dryden said, the public must think of itself as "a penetrating judge."²³ Satire worked best when it was directed against a person or a group whose foibles were so well known that the targets could be recognized without formal identification.

Wrap up your poison well

advised the English satirist,

To hide your whole design, make some pretense
And spare no pains to keep us in suspense.²⁴

Swift gave the best advice for actually doing this: "First, never to print man's name out at length; but as I do that of Mr. St— — le; Secondly, by putting cases; thirdly by insinuation; fourthly by celebrating the actions of others, who acted directly contrary to the persons we would reflect on; fifthly, by nicknames, which everybody can tell how to apply."²⁵ The Paxton pamphlets followed these rules, especially Swift's first principle, and used only first and last letters: Q— — s (Quakers), Pr— — ns (Presbyterians), P— — r (Proprietor), P— — a (Pennsylvania), former governor H— — — n

²³ The term is used in Jean Baptiste de Billegarde, "Reflections Upon Ridicule," quoted in K J H Burland, "Satire and the Via Media, Anglican Dialogue in Joseph Andrews" in Browning, *Satire in the Eighteenth Century*, 84

²⁴ James Miller, *A Collection of Scarce, Curious, and Valuable Pieces Both in Verse and Prose* (Edinburgh, 1785), 84

²⁵ Swift's advice is from "The Importance of the Guardian Considered" in Temple Scott, ed., *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, D B* (12 vols., London, 1897–1908), 5:297. See also Robert Spector, *Political Controversy, A Study in Eighteenth Century Propaganda* (New York, 1992), 6–7, and Lawrence Hanson, *Government and the Press, 1695–1763* (Oxford, 1967), 7–35

(Hamilton). "To be govern'd is absolutely repugnant to the avowed principles of Pr — — ns."²⁶ "Now F — — — n [Franklin] for a man to lye . . . does not shew a Christian disposition." "Now, F — — — n, however artfully you may carry on this infamous Practice for a while . . ."²⁷ There were nicknames, too, (Hugh Williamson was Hughy), and insinuations ("Whether the affection which some members of that sect [Quakers] have shewn to Indians. . . can possibly be owing. . . to the Charms of their Squaws, . . . or perhaps rather from the Use they have made of them to asperse the Proprietaries. . . may be consid'r'd as a vain Question.")²⁸ There were exaltations of behavior contrary to that of the satirist's targets: the Paxton men, wrote an enemy of the Quakers,

. . . always chose
T'engage these King's and Country's Foes.²⁹

Another device the Pennsylvanians adapted for obscuring their subject was the allegory, the imagined story with a moral, the fable that made perfectly clear which real life characters were being alluded to. Only a few of the Paxton writings fell into this category; of these, Isaac Hunt's attack on the implied collusion between Paxtonians and the proprietor was the least heavy-handed. *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transylvania* was a story of the "Waymode of Transylvania" who made a disgraceful peace with a Turkish sect called the "Piss-brutarians" and encouraged them to attack the provincial delegates who then had no alternative but to seek help from their emperor.³⁰ The lack of any subtlety in the allegories suggests that satirical fable was not perhaps the writers' best weapon. Far better were their efforts at parody. *The Quaker's Grace* was a concocted Quaker prayer "[f]or their late

²⁶ *Remarks on the Quaker Unmask'd, or Plain Truth found to be Plain Falshood Humbly Address'd to the Candid*, in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 227.

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ [David James Dove] *The Quaker Unmask'd, or Plain Truth* (2d. ed, Philadelphia, 1764), 6. Reprinted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 178.

²⁹ *A Battle! A Battle!* in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 178.

³⁰ Isaac Hunt, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764), 4.

victory over the Rebels in their Province of Quylsylvania in electing Lawmakers for the same.”³¹ Similarly a Presbyterian prayer was supposed to run “Do thou turn the Hearts of the ignorant Dutch from King George to serve the P — — — r in such a manner as will enable us to establish our religion upon the neck of both.”³² A letter written as straightforward correspondence between a Presbyterian minister in the city and a country friend was actually Quaker parody;³³ an “Epitaph” for Benjamin Franklin, addressed to his “esteemed memory” was a Presbyterian one.³⁴

It is here, in the adaptation of both the specific techniques and the general objectives of English political satire, that we need to hunt for more clues to the Paxtonians’ success in the pamphlet war of 1764. In general, the Paxton side started out better positioned to use the approaches of English literary humor even though it lacked a well-known writer like Franklin. For one thing, satire works best when it pokes fun at those in power, not at those in opposition. While the Quakers might try to identify the governor with proprietary power, it was widely assumed that the proprietor was actually in a weak position viz-a-viz the Quaker-led assembly, and it was the powerful assembly that had consistently refused to vote adequate appropriations for frontier defense. By 1764 the English experiences of Sir Robert Walpole, the duke of Newcastle, and more recently the earl of Bute, had shown clearly that people perceived to be in power almost never succeeded in ridiculing political opponents. People out of power look vulnerable anyway; satire works best against people who do not seem vulnerable to any other kinds of attack.³⁵

Satire also works best when the satirist goes after a well-known target, and in Benjamin Franklin the pro-Paxton writers had an easy mark. He was

³¹ *The Quakers’ Grace, Prayer, and Thanksgiving on Sunday, 6th 10th Mo 1765* (Philadelphia, 1765).

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Hugh Williamson, *What is Sauce for the Goose is Sauce for the Gander* (Philadelphia, 1764), 8.

³⁵ See Karl Schweizer, *Lord Bute, Essays on Re-interpretations* (Leicester, England, 1988), 86; John Cannon, *The Fox-North Coalition* (Cambridge, 1969), 221; Bertrand A. Goldgar, *Walpole and the Wits, The Relations of Politics to Literature, 1722–1742* (Lincoln, Neb., 1976), esp. chaps. 3 and 4, and Robert Harris, *A Patriot Press* (Oxford, 1993), esp. chaps. 6 and 7.



Fig. 3. "An Indian Squaw King Wampum spies/Which makes his lustful passions rise . . .
 //When Dangers threaten 'tis mere Nonsense/To talk of such a thing as Conscience . . .
 //Fight Dog! Fight Bear! You're all my Friends/By you I shall attain my Ends . . .
 Engraving on paper. Attributed to Henry Dawkins. Philadelphia, 1764. (Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

the most recognizable figure in Pennsylvania politics, known for his ambition as well as his achievements. The Paxton writers found in Franklin the quintessential fraud, the would-be statesman, Quaker leader, Indian sympathizer, and the greedy political operator interested in nothing but obtaining political office for himself. In two different cartoons he is pictured saying,

Fight Dog, Fight Bear, You're all my Friends
 By you I shall attain my ends
 For I can never be content
 Till I have got the government. (fig. 3)

In one cartoon he is made to repeat the mocking rhyme beginning,

When dangers threaten, tis mere nonsense
To talk of such a thing as conscience (fig. 3)

if conscience could stand in the way of getting himself office (fig. 3). In another, Franklin looks on approvingly as a Quaker rides one of the Scots like a horse (fig. 4). Indeed, Franklin was the butt of the bulk of the cartoons, shown often as an onlooker, willing to condone any Quaker practices that would win the election yet willing also to betray the Quaker leaders, or anybody else, for the chance to gain office himself.³⁶

The Quakers, by contrast, did not have such a highly visible target. The



Fig. 4. "The German bleats & bears ye Furs/of Quaker Lords & Savage Airs//The Hibernian frets with new Disaster/And kicks to fling his broad brim'd Master//But help at hand Resolves to hold down/The Hibernian's Head or tumble all down." Engraving on paper. Attributed to Henry Dawkins. Philadelphia, 1764. (Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

³⁶ The cartoons are all reproduced in Murrell, *American Graphic Humor*, 1:nos. 12, 14, and 15.

proprietary governor had not been in the colony long enough to be widely recognized when the Paxton episode occurred, and his personal foibles would not have been generally known. Two Quaker writers seized on the schoolmaster James Dove for their attacks, but he certainly was not as well known as Franklin, and few of the Presbyterian ministers, whom the Quakers targeted as a group, were known by name outside their congregations.

Beyond the advantages of being, presumably, in the underdog's position and having a recognizable lead target, the Paxtonians also had greater success portraying their opponents as frauds. As the Paxtonians pointed out again and again, the Quakers placed themselves in an awkward position by holding firmly to their pacifist commitments when frontier farms were at stake but conveniently forgetting them when their own safety was thought to be at risk.

The Quakers

. . . have forever careful been,
Not to be often caught in Sin,
And still kept up in our Society
A great appearance of true Piety.³⁷

Or, as they were characterized in another verse, which was repeated in several poems,

For Feuds and Quarrels they abhor 'em
The Lord will fight their Battles for 'em.

Yet when the Paxtonians, not the Indians, threatened,

But now the case is alter'd quite
And what was wrong, is chang'd to Right.³⁸

³⁷ *The Quaker's Address, and the School-boys Answer to an Insolent Fellow*. See Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 180.

³⁸ *A Battle! A Battle!* In Dunbar's *Paxton Papers*, 175. The verse also appears in *The Quakers Address*, *ibid.*, 179.

And what, the Paxtonians asked, were the *real* reasons behind the Quakers' friendship for the Indians? Could the affection which some members of that sect have shewn to Indians "possibly be owing to the Charms of their Squaws, or to any particular Advantages that may arise from their Trade . . . ?"³⁹ Could they possibly be motivated to protect the Indians rather than the frontiersmen because the Indians couldn't run against them in a provincial election and a qualified frontiersman could? In one of the best-known cartoons a Quaker and a squaw appear to be embracing (fig. 2); in another a Quaker has his arm around a squaw (fig. 3) while

She dives her hand into his Fob
And thence conveys as we are told
His watch whose cases are of Gold.⁴⁰

The Quakers, on the other hand, had considerably more difficulty poking fun at their opponents, although a good part of their problem was actually of their own making since the various Quaker pamphleteers worked at cross purposes. For one thing, the satirist's laughter at swaggering Paxton buffoons, buoyed by whiskey and devoid of any intelligent thought, was grossly undercut by other writers' straightforward attacks on the Presbyterians as dangerous rebels who knew exactly what they were doing.

Some of the writers took comfortably to the English satirical style and delighted in emphasizing Paxton "deeds of more than Cervantesque Heroism"⁴¹ and the Paxton men as besotted buffoons kidding themselves that they were brave warriors. The satirists saw the Paxton march as farcical; they aimed to laugh the frontiersmen out of acceptable society, claiming the Paxtonians were nerved up by drink

To leave their houses, their wives and Peas-porridge,
And give a remarkable proof of their Courage,⁴²

³⁹ *The Quaker Unmask'd*, 6; Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 211.

⁴⁰ Murrell, *American Graphic Humor*, 1:nos. 13, 14.

⁴¹ "Christopher Gymnast," *The Paxtonade*, preface. Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 167.

⁴² *Paxtonade*, 4. Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 167.

and had no sense of political reality. As one Paxtonian supposedly explained the march “. . . the Schurch Minister said it Wask about the Proprietaries, and somedthing dhat he called government.”⁴³ Having no idea what they were doing, the Paxton Boys were fortified when one of the leaders

. . . from his pocket quick produc'd
A friendly Vase well stor'd and fill'd
With good old whisky, twice distill'd.⁴⁴

They then marched bravely to Conestoga in the name of frontier rights and “roasted three Indians and a wee ane; and three and a wee ane we gave to the Hogs.” Were they “frechtened to facht so many Indians?”⁴⁵ No, because the Indians were not armed.

But exposing Paxton bravado as a sham and ridiculing their crusade for frontier rights as a hoax and their frontier “spirit” as alcohol was not, to say the least, very compatible with portraying Scots and Scots Irish as inveterate rebels against established authority. There was little room for portraying them as all bluster, as objects of humor who should gently and briefly be laughed out of society if one argued that “the whole Body of Presbyterians are actuated by the same rebellious Principles since the *Revolution*, they were before, and that not even the Establishment of their Profession in *Scotland* can make them in Love with *Monarchy*.”⁴⁶

What could a satirist do with

Men, Women, Children, all did dye,
By cruel Hands oh! Presbyty.⁴⁷

⁴³ *A Scene in the first Act of the New Farce, “Scoto Hibernicus Semper Idem” Printed up the first Year of the New Hegira Secundus, The Paxton Expedition.* (Philadelphia, 1964), 4.

⁴⁴ *Paxtoniade*, 5. Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 169–70.

⁴⁵ *Dialogue Between Andrew Trueman and Thomas Zealout, about the killing the Indians at Cannestogoe [sic] and Lancaster* (n.d., n.p.). Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 89.

⁴⁶ *A Looking-Glass, etc Numb II* (n.d. n.p.); Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 313.

⁴⁷ *A Touch on the Times, A New Song To the Tune of Nancy Dawson* (Philadelphia, 1764). Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 219.

or with the acknowledgements that “. . . owing to the Effect their Principles have, . . . they are, and always have been (tho’ under the mildest of Governments) a Sett of uneasy, discontented, and innovating People,”⁴⁸ or [t]hey are “. . . a bigotted, stiff-necked, rebellious, pedantick Crew . . . if a firm attachment to the King and the Laws of our Country, be necessary Ingredients in a representative of the People, a *Presbyterian* can lay no claim to them.”⁴⁹ Such comments suggest that the writers on the Quaker side did not think the Paxton Boys were frauds at all; indeed, they disliked them for being exactly what many of the Paxtonians claimed to be.

Another disadvantage facing the Quaker authors became clear soon after the pamphlet war began. Both sides were divided internally when the decade of the 1760s opened, but the Paxton literature had the effect of dividing the Quakers further while bringing the Germans and Scots Irish together. Even before the Paxton incident occurred, Pennsylvania Quakers had been divided over the issue of frontier defense. Despite the importance of pacifism among Friends’ beliefs, a few Quakers sympathized with the frontier demands for defense and found plausible the Paxton claims that some of the “friendly” Indians the Quakers were protecting were in fact not so friendly and had killed some of the westerners the summer before. Once the Paxton “march” began, about two hundred younger Quakers were alarmed enough to take up arms against the marchers.

Satire works best when a single person or group is satirized. Paxton writers therefore identified the whole Quaker sect with the two hundred militants and implied that all Friends were willing to abandon their pacifist principles when it suited them. They tarred the entire group with the foibles of the few (remember the author of *A Battle, A Battle*, who laughed that “what was wrong is changed to right”). This had the effect of alarming the Quakers who had not taken arms and accentuating the division between them and the militant sinners.

The Presbyterians and the various German sects had also divided before 1763, but their divisions had been largely (though by no means entirely) unrelated to the Paxton events. In the Great Awakening, Presbyterians had split along New Light (evangelical) and Old Light (conservative) lines, and

⁴⁸ *Remarks on the Quaker Unmask’d; or Plain Truth found to be Plain Falshood* (Philadelphia, 1764); Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 225.

⁴⁹ *A Looking Glass for Presbyterians*. Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 249, 246.

Germans were already divided among Moravians, Pietists, and Lutherans. Conceivably the pro-Quaker writers could have accentuated these divisions, too, since the frontier was largely New Light country and since the Paxtonians were particularly aggrieved by the Moravians whom they accused of harboring the very Indians who had earlier terrified the frontier. But they did not.

Some of the polemicists did try to appeal separately to the Germans for support, but they were frustrated by Paxton attacks on Benjamin Franklin that reminded readers of Franklin's ill-judged criticism of Germans some decades before. In one cartoon, for example, Franklin is shown repeating an earlier statement he had made about Palatine boors herding together;⁵⁰ in another Franklin looks on as a Quaker and an Indian ride a Scot and a German (fig. 4):

The German bleats and bears ye Furs
Of Quaker Lords and Savage Curs
The Hibernian frets with new Disaster
and kicks to fling his broad brim'd Master.⁵¹

Most writers on the Quaker side, however, lumped all the Scots, Scots Irish, and Germans together, and the Paxton cartoonists quickly came up with their own drawings which stressed the Quakers' failure to discriminate. In Quaker pamphlets Presbyterian ministers (whether New or Old Light was never made clear) preached sedition to their congregations, most of whose members, it was suggested, never quite understood what they were rebelling about but docilely followed the Kirk. Presbyterian elders joined the ministers in plotting insurrection. "That I had the Pencil of a Hogarth for a few hours to paint this Group of Impish Figures," wished the Quaker *Scribbler*.⁵² Presbyterian worship services circulated political petitions: "What King has ever reign'd in Great-Britain, whose government has not been disturb'd with *Presbyterian Rebellions*, since ever they were a People?" "Four different Sorts of *Presbyterians* have all in the name of the *blessed Spirit*

⁵⁰ *The Counter Medley*, Murrell, *American Graphic Humor*, 1:no. 2.

⁵¹ *The German Bleeds and Bears Ye Furs*. Murrell, *Graphic Humor*, 1:no. 15.

⁵² *The Scribbler* (Philadelphia, 1764), 17.

damn'd each other in *Pennsylvania*. Must not each Party have belied the *blessed Spirit* . . . ?"⁵³

If all Presbyterian leaders were traitorous in Quaker writings, all their Scots and Scots Irish followers were peasant simpletons, best worked on with a fiery sermon and a pint of whiskey. The Germans were their fit companions: docile, poor, ignorant, "boorish," however one interpreted the word. The Scots were "clannish"; the Germans "herded"; neither group thought for themselves. And the Paxtonian writers and cartoonists made the most of this lumping together, this Quaker failure to discriminate properly. Only one Quaker pamphlet, and an especially bad one at that, *A Letter from a Clergyman in Town*, attempted to distinguish among Scots and Scots Irish Presbyterians or among Germans of any faith.⁵⁴ In viewing all settlers of non-English origin as threats to English cultural hegemony, the Quakers managed to unite them against that hegemony.

The success of the satirists' humor was also undercut by the efforts of a rather large cluster of Quaker writers trying to demolish David Dove's *The Quaker Unmasked, or Plain Truth, Humbly Address'd to the Consideration of all the Freemen of Pennsylvania*. One or two of the early replies tried the satirical approach, but others got bogged down in point-by-point rejoinders. The criticisms did not always stand by themselves, and they tended to degenerate into narrow in-group arguments running counter to the broadbrush comic efforts of the satirists.

The Quaker Unmask'd began dispassionately enough, with an admission that the Paxton men had perhaps acted rashly; but it went on to argue that the frontiersmen were driven to their acts by Quaker neglect of their defense, and then devolved into the venomous satirical question about Quaker love of Indian squaws. The tract focused on the amazing hypocrisy of Quakers who were pacifists where Indians were concerned but militant against the Paxtonians; "They must either confess that they have hitherto resisted the Holy Spirit, or imperiously assert that the Spirit has changed his Mind."⁵⁵

Dove's pamphlet mired the Quakers in at least half a dozen rejoinders. *A*

⁵³ *A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians* (Philadelphia 1764) Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 246, 255

⁵⁴ The pamphlet is discussed in Peter A. Butzin's "Politics, Presbyterians and the Paxton Riots, 1763-4," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (1973), 78 For pamphlet, see Evans, no 9716

⁵⁵ [Dove], *The Quaker Unmask'd*, Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 212

Touch on the Times tried a little satire. It praised Dove, tongue in cheek, as “a gentle humane man,” and then commented:

The *Unmask'd Quaker* was his Topic,
So vastly false and stuff'd so thick,
That t'would Puzzle *Tom* and *Harry* both,
To find in it a Word of Truth.⁵⁶

A Touch of the Times did try to be a satirical ballad. Other pamphlets were largely straightforward attacks on the original pamphlet, using a few satirical techniques but mainly becoming mired in the minutiae of Dove's statements. *Remarks on the Quaker Unmask'd; or Plain Truth found to be Plain Falshood; The Quaker Vindicated, or Observations on . . . the Quaker Unmask'd; A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians. . . with some Animadversions on the Quaker Unmask'd; The Author of Quaker Unmask'd, Stript Start [sic] Naked* were generally straightforward attacks on Dove's pamphlet, referring back and forth to each other. The effect of such clustering on total sales is, as we have mentioned, unclear. But certainly the appearance of so many tracts responding to each other in a short space of time—possibly within a few weeks—indicated that they were produced in haste, likely with other authors in mind as much as the reading public. The quality of the pamphlets suggests as much.

The Quakers fell into the same quagmire again, and with the same results, when several of them were drawn to attack Hugh Williamson's vicious “epitaph” for Benjamin Franklin, “An Epitaph on a Certain Great Man, written by a Departed Spirit” in *What is Sauce for a Goose is Sauce for a Gander*. The epitaph ended

Remember then, o Friends and Freeman
That . . . when we would guard ourselves against
 . . . The Stinging Snakes of the Mountains
 Our Maxim should be
 Beware of taking them to our
 Bosoms.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *A Touch on the Times*, Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, 222.

⁵⁷ *Sauce for the Goose* (Philadelphia, 1764), 8.

It inspired a handful of rejoinders, such as *Observations on a Late Epitaph* or *The Addition to the Epitaph*, all equally vitriolic.

The Paxtonians fell into this clustering, too, as when replying to the weak *Letter from a Clergyman in Town*. The Quaker side produced no single pamphlet controversial enough to provoke many rejoinders. Franklin hoped his *Narrative of the Late Massacres, in Lancaster County* might be such a foil, but it did not have the effect of Dove's *Quaker Unmask'd*.⁵⁸ Possibly the *Narrative* was written too early; it came out on January 30, six days before the confrontation of Paxtonians and provincial representatives at Germantown. Possibly also the Paxtonians decided that the more effective way of opposing it was to attack Franklin personally, publicizing harsh words Franklin had written in earlier times about the Germans with whom he now sought to ally. His bitter words against Palatine Boors "herding together," along with his opposition to Germans sitting in the assembly of an English government, were used against him. He himself, not his pamphlet, took most of the hits—on balance probably a good strategy for the Paxtonians.

Thus in the pamphlet war over the Paxton march, the leading writers on both sides attempted to adapt techniques of English political satire to their own arguments with varying success. Satire was designed to correct the vices of society or individuals by exposing them to ridicule. It assumed that its readers shared basic assumptions and values. The satirist simply called attention to inconsistencies of behavior—actions that did not reflect the common values, or people who claimed to reflect the values but really did not. In the aftermath of the Paxton march, Quakers could be made to appear more unrepresentative, more inconsistent, and more insincere than the Paxtonians who opposed them. The Paxton literature settled nothing. It raised anew the suspicions that eastern and western Pennsylvanians had of

⁵⁸ Franklin's *Narrative* seems to have received more credit than it deserves. Melvin Buxbaum, in *Benjamin Franklin and the Zealous Presbyterians*, 200, calls the *Narrative* "one of the most influential of the Paxton pamphlets." Carla Mulford thinks the *Narrative* showed Franklin's accurate expectation of his audience, "Caritas and Capital: Franklin's Narrative of the Late Massacres," J. A. Leo Lemay, ed., *Reappearing Benjamin Franklin: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Newark, Del., 1993), 351, no. 16. The *Narrative* is generally either the lead writing or the only one on the Paxton affair singled out in anthologies of early American literature. But the *Narrative* attracted almost no rejoinders at the time in Pennsylvania and seems to have attracted little attention in England.

each other and brought into question the appropriateness of using English literary techniques in defending the actions of each side.

*University of Maryland,
College Park*

ALISON OLSON

