

in Locke's *Second Treatise* come in the chapter called "Of Property."<sup>57</sup> He considered, for instance, kings like Powhatan, whose deerskin cloak Locke might well have held in his hands, fingering its snail shells, since the cloak was housed in a museum at Oxford. "The Kings of the Indians in America," Locke wrote, "are little more than Generals of their Armies," and the Indians, having no property, have "no Government at all." Kings like Powhatan had no sovereignty, according to Locke, because they did not cultivate the land; they only lived there. "God gave the World to Men in Common," Locke wrote, but "it can not be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational, (and Labour was to be his Title to it)." People who leave "great Tracts of Ground" to waste—that is, uncultivated—and who owned land in common, have therefore not "joynd with the rest of Mankind." A people who do not believe land can be owned by individuals not only cannot contract to sell it, they cannot be said to have a government, because government only exists to protect property.

It's not that this idea was especially new. In *Utopia* in 1516, Thomas More had written that taking land from a people that "does not use its soil but keeps it idle and waste" was a "most just cause for war."<sup>58</sup> But Locke, spurred both by a growing commitment to religious toleration and by a desire to distinguish English settlement from Spanish conquest, stressed the lack of cultivation as a better justification for taking the natives' land than religious difference, an emphasis with lasting consequences.

In both the Carolina constitution and in his *Two Treatises on Government*, Locke treated both property and slavery. "Slavery" is, in fact, the very first word in the *Two Treatises*, which begins: "Slavery is so vile and miserable an estate of man, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our nation, that it is hardly to be conceived that an Englishman, much less a gentleman, should plead for it." This was an attack on Sir Robert Filmer, who had argued, in a book called *Patriarcha*, that the king's authority derives, divinely, from Adam's rule and cannot be protested. For Locke, to believe that was to believe that the subjects of the king were nothing but his slaves. Locke argued that the king's subjects were, instead, free men, because "the natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule." All men, Locke argued, are born equal, with a natural right to life,

liberty, and property; to protect those rights, they erect governments by consent. Slavery, for Locke, was no part either of a state of nature or of civil society. Slavery was a matter of the law of nations, "nothing else, but the state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive." To introduce slavery in the Carolinas, then, was to establish, as fundamental to the political order, an institution at variance with everything about how Locke understood civil society. "Every Freeman of Carolina, shall have absolute power and Authority over his Negro slaves," Locke's constitution read. That is to say, notwithstanding the vehement assertion of a natural right to liberty and the claim that absolute power is a form of tyranny, the right of one man to own another—impossible to conceive in a state of nature or under a civil government, impossible to imagine under any arrangement except a state of war—was not only possible, but lawful, in America.<sup>59</sup>

The only way to justify this contradiction, the only way to explain how one kind of people are born free while another kind of people are not, would be to sow a new seed, an ideology of race. It would take a long time to grow, and longer to wither.

#### IV.

**THE REVOLUTION IN AMERICA**, when it came, began not with the English colonists but with the people over whom they ruled. Long before shots were fired at Lexington and Concord, long before George Washington crossed the Delaware, long before American independence was thought of, or even thinkable, a revolutionary tradition was forged, not by the English in America, but by Indians waging wars and slaves waging rebellions. They revolted again and again and again. Their revolutions came in waves that lashed the land. They asked the same question, unrelentingly: *By what right are we ruled?*

It often seemed to England's colonists as if these rebellions were part of a conspiracy, especially when they came one after another, as they did in 1675 and 1676, a century before the English began their own struggle for independence. In June of 1675, a federation of New England Algonquians, led by a sachem named Metacom (the English called him "King Philip"), attempted to oust the foreigners from their lands, attacking town after

like before

begin

town. The Indians, one Englishman wrote, had "risen round the country." Before it was over, more than half of all the English towns in New England had been either destroyed or abandoned. Metacom was shot, drawn, quartered, and beheaded, his severed head placed on a pike in Plymouth, a king's punishment. His nine-year-old son was sold as a slave and shipped to the Caribbean, where a slave rebellion had just broken out in Barbados. The English in Barbados believed that the Africans there "intended to Murther all the White People"; their "grand design was to choose them a King." (Panicked, the legislature on the island swiftly passed a law banning the buying of any Indian slaves carried from New England, for fear that they would only add to the rebellion.) New England and Barbados, one New Englander remarked, had "tasted of the same cup."

That cup spilled over. Even as war was raging in New England and rebellion was seizing Barbados, natives began attacking English towns in Maryland and Virginia, leading Virginia governor William Berkeley to declare that "the Infection of the Indianes in New-England" had spread southward. Berkeley's refusal to retaliate against the Indians led to a rebellion incited by a colonist named Nathaniel Bacon, who led a band of five hundred men to Jamestown, which they burned to the ground. More mayhem would have surely followed had not Berkeley lost his governorship and Bacon died of dysentery.<sup>60</sup>

Wars and rebellions and rumors of more filled the pages of colonial letters and newspapers. Word spread wide and far, and invariably had this effect: racial lines hardened. Before King Philip's War, ministers in New England had attempted to convert the natives to Christianity, to teach them English, with the idea that they would eventually live among the English. After the war, these efforts were largely abandoned. Bacon's Rebellion hardened lines between whites and blacks. Before Bacon and his men burned Jamestown, poor Englishmen had very little political power. As many as three out of every four Englishmen and women who sailed to the colonies were either debtors or convicts or indentured servants; they weren't slaves, but neither were they free.<sup>61</sup> Property requirements for voting meant that not all free white men could vote. Meanwhile, the fact that slaves could be manumitted by their masters meant that it was possible to be both black and free and white and unfree. But after Bacon's Rebellion, free white men were granted the right to vote, and it became nearly impossible for black men and women to secure their freedom. By 1680,

one observer could remark that "these two words, Negro and Slave" had grown Homogeneous and convertible": to be black was to be a slave.<sup>62</sup>

Fear of war and rebellion haunted every English colony, lands of terror, and of terrifying political instability and physical vulnerability. In 1692, nineteen women and men were convicted of witchcraft in the Massachusetts town of Salem. What looked like witchcraft, though, appears to have been the aftermath of Indian attacks, the haunting memories of terrible suffering. During the witch trials, when Mercy Short said the Devil had tormented her by burning her, she described the Devil as "a Short and Black Man . . . not of Negro, but of a Tawney, or an Indian colour." Two years before Satan and his witches afflicted Mercy Short, she had been captured by Abenakis, who raided her family's home in a town in New Hampshire, killing her parents and three of her brothers and sisters. Mercy Short had been forced to walk into Canada. Along the way, she witnessed atrocity upon atrocity: a five-year-old boy chopped to pieces, a young girl scalped, and a fellow captive "Barbarously Sacrificed," bound to a stake, and tortured with fire, the Abenakis cutting off his flesh, bit by bit. Witches call the Devil "a Black Man," the Boston minister Cotton Mather observed, "and they generally say he resembles an Indian." Mather took that to mean that blacks and Indians were devils, of a sort, instruments of evil. But what haunted Mercy Short wasn't the working of witchcraft; it was the working of terror.<sup>63</sup>

Even in years and places where there were no attacks, there was news of them, from other places, and, always, there was a terror of them. There were uprisings everywhere, and where there were not uprisings, there was fear of uprisings. Some of the plots that the settlers were forever suspecting, detecting, and suppressing were real, and some were imagined, but they all have this in common: parties of men, slaves or Indian, were planning to topple the government and erect their own. *End*

Wars, rebellions, and rumors: what the colonists feared was revolution. On the Danish island of St. John's in 1733, ninety African slaves seized control of the island and held it for half a year. On Antigua in 1736, a group of black men "formed and resolved to execute a Plot, whereby all the white Inhabitants of the Island were to be murdered, and a new Form of Government to be established by the Slaves among themselves, and they entirely to possess the Island," its leader, a man named Court, having "assumed among his Country Men . . . the Stile of KING."<sup>64</sup> Sometimes,