

A Class Act: Redefining “Deference” in Early American History

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No matter how much we approach “history from the bottom up,” we always have to come to terms with those at the top. No less than common people in the past, historians in the present have had to consider how – and, in most cases, how successfully -- powerful men exerted economic and political authority over the rest of society, and how the rest of society responded to their assertions of power. Quite often, the explanation has come down to one term: deference, the process by which, as Gordon Wood has put it, prominent men “relied on their own social respectability and private influence to compel the obedience of ordinary people.” Indeed, Wood observes, “We will never comprehend the distinctiveness of that premodern world until we appreciate the extent to which many ordinary people still accepted their own lowliness.”¹ This argument for the acceptance of deference only reflects a more general historical explanation that has over the years gained its own intellectual respectability, so much so that now, we as historians have ourselves accepted the idea of deference almost as a matter of course and have even become obedient to its influence.

But it is high time, I think, that we finally stand up and say “no” to deference. For too long we have tipped our intellectual caps and shuffled our professorial feet before this outmoded notion of apparent peace and social consensus. We have sometimes allowed ourselves to be convinced that this one concept can explain – or perhaps explain away – seemingly collegial class relations in the colonial era. We have too often accepted the

authority, even the authenticity, of this unstated understanding of reciprocal social relationships between colonial elites and the lower sort. We have so easily believed that so many common folk could be so accustomed to being so cowed by the prominence of an elite leader that we have created an implicit impression of common people's static, even passive, acceptance of their inferior status in the social order. Sometimes we cover ourselves by arguing that deference was, for all its benign and placid appearance, ultimately a relationship based on quiet but clear coercion, and that was certainly true: at best, though, doing so only reinforces the notion of common people's compliance with the inequality of colonial society. Only when we get to the era of the American Revolution have we found the scholarly confidence to assert that "the casting off of deference" became a defining moment of personal and political transition for common people throughout American society.² But still, as we look at the almost two centuries up to that time, as we seek some means of defining social relations in the colonial era, we have too often fallen back and bowed to deference. Today, then, I want to argue that "deference" is a deceptive term, and we historians could do well to cast it off ourselves, or at least put it in its place.

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Mike Zuckerman tried to tell us – and he tried to tell us that "Alexis de Tocqueville tried to tell us" and "Frederick Jackson Turner tried to tell us too." Five years ago, in a provocative essay in the Journal of American History, Zuckerman invoked Tocqueville and Turner to assert that among the many ways that colonial Americans departed from the cultural traditions of their European counterparts, one of the main areas

of difference was the failure of deference on this side of the Atlantic. No matter what degree of social respect and political reward American gentlemen might like to think stemmed almost automatically from their elevated station, their neighbors in the lower ranks apparently never failed to disappoint them. True, the wealthy could count on their countrymen to accord them frequent, even recurrent, election to office, but voting and devotion cannot be confused as the same thing. As Zuckerman quite rightly reminded us, “Elections are but a paltry part of politics.” (Otherwise, I’m afraid, historians two hundred years in the future will look back at our electoral behavior now and write of us – or write us off -- as a decidedly “deferential” society apparently indifferent to issues of privilege, inequality, or class. Increasingly, we seem to elect those candidates who not only are wealthy themselves, but who openly represent the interests of the wealthy and who, unlike their counterparts in eighteenth-century Virginia, won’t even stake the rest of us to a free drink.) Zuckerman noted, as the rest of us ought to know, that vote counts alone hardly take into account the wider range of political and social relationships that would be necessary to define the sort of widespread deference supporting a stable and seemingly uncontested social order. Indeed, Zuckerman painted an altogether different picture of early America, in which the British American colonies “endured rampant disorder in their early days . . . [and] remained susceptible to riot and tumult to the time of the Revolution.” Instead of counting on the unquestioning loyalty of the lower ranks, prominent provincial leaders “took for granted that ‘simple folk’ would strike back,” and, to be sure, “lesser folk disciplined greater men who transgressed bounds that the lesser sort set.” Given the prevalence of defiance and resistance that Zuckerman described

throughout the colonies in the pre-Revolutionary era, it was small wonder to find him concluding that “deference was little more than a delusion.”³

Yet despite the power of Zuckerman’s argument and his own prominence as a historian, his article encountered immediate challenge and resistance in the next few pages of the JAH from fellow historians – one of them, John Murrin, a senior colleague at a peer institution, but another, Kathleen Brown, an untenured and apparently undeferential assistant professor in Zuckerman’s own department. While Murrin offered Zuckerman a respectful but politely tepid compliment about his “beautifully crafted essay,” he chided him for a “great weakness in his lack of differentiation across either time or space” -- that is, an ahistorical analysis that “lumps everything and everybody together in one antiauthoritarian stew.”⁴ If Zuckerman had indeed cooked up such a stew, his colleague Kathleen Brown accused him of leaving out some key ingredients. Zuckerman’s exploration of antideferential behavior only among white male laborers may have been “consistent with the limitations of early American sources,” she allowed, but still she noted that the actions and attitudes of white males could not easily be assumed for enslaved African Americans or European women. Indeed, instead of seeing the rise of resistance rooted in the ranks of white men, Brown argued that “feisty white female servants, along with enslaved men and women and recalcitrant wives, may have laid the groundwork for undeferential tendencies in early America.”⁵ If being ahistorical, gender-specific, and racially exclusive were not enough, one might add that, with its opening invocation of Tocqueville and Turner, Zuckerman’s essay also ran the risk of falling into that deepest of historiographical holes, American exceptionalism.

But it is not my purpose here to take sides in the criticism of Mike Zuckerman's essay (an essay, I must admit, that I very much enjoyed and admired). Rather, it is to suggest that both Zuckerman and his critics – and, I think, early American historians in general – have worked within too limited a definition of deference and its alternative, whatever that alternative may be. The framing of the round table of essays in the JAH provides a revealing case in point: “Deference or Defiance in Eighteenth-Century America?” Covering five essays and 85 pages of print, the question asks us to consider only two possibilities – deference and defiance – and the conjunction “or” implies an “either/or” choice. Given those options, then, we apparently must decide that lower-class colonials either accepted the standards of deference, or they stood up to the status quo: either they lived in meek submission to the elite, or they lashed out in assertion of their equality. By extension, colonial America in general thus became defined by either peace or protest: either it remained a reflection of old European social assumptions about hierarchy and stability, or it emerged in rejection of its transatlantic past and became a scene of recurring social unrest, a battleground of bumptious behavior. And then, to complete the contrapuntal options, it follows the American Revolution either undid the shackles of deference, or it simply underscored an antiauthoritarian strain that had been evident all along; in short, either the Revolution “really did matter” as a social revolution, as Murrin put it, or, apparently, it did not.⁶

But are deference and defiance really our only two options? Such limited, bifurcated choices offer us only a false dichotomy between protest and peace; they allow us too little opportunity to consider a wider and, I would argue, a more historically realistic range of human behaviors and social relations: just as people cannot live well in

a condition of submission, they cannot live either well or long in a state of near-constant conflict. Instead, I think we can understand both deference and defiance better by exploring the subtler forms of interaction between elites and the lower classes and, above all, by thinking of those relationships in terms of an ongoing negotiation of power. Where “deference” posits a picture that is essentially static, and “defiance” suggests a situation that is in many respects chaotic, “negotiation” emphasizes a more active and ever-changing image. It leads us to perceive people engaged in a seemingly incessant, if often implicit, effort to redefine the conditions of their lives. Moreover, it helps us understand that, as a tactic of negotiation, the act of behaving in a deferential fashion may take the form of an “act” in another sense – that is, an attempt to create an advantage by artful misdirection, deception, or display, a personal performance that puts on the appearance of acceptance and submission but masks another, more resistant pose altogether. The anthropologist James C. Scott has written extensively about the “hidden transcripts” of resistance behind the appearance of consent among the South Asian people he has studied.⁷ We can make good use of the same perspective in thinking about the North American people we study. Above all, in reconsidering about the notion of deference in the context of this conference, we can call this sort of negotiation by role-playing a “class act.”

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Ralph Ellison tried to tell us. In his now-classic 1952 novel, Invisible Man, Ellison describes his main character’s grandparents, who had been born into slavery and who, after emancipation, had then spent the next eighty-five years living in the

compromised freedom of the segregated South. “They stayed in their place, worked hard, and brought up my father to do the same,” says the novel’s narrator – until one day the narrator’s grandfather, “the meekest of men,” calls his son to the side of his deathbed and gives him startling instructions:

Son, after I’m gone I want you to keep up the good fight.
I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a
traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy’s country
ever since I gave up my gun back in the Reconstruction.
Live with your head in the lion’s mouth. I want you to
overcome ‘em with yeses, undermine ‘em with grins,
agree ‘em to death and destruction, let ‘em swoller you
till they vomit or bust wide open.⁸

Most of the folks in the family think the old man is crazy, but his grandson, the narrator, puzzles over those dying words for years: “he had called himself a traitor and a spy, and he had spoken of his meekness as a dangerous activity.”⁹ Almost five hundred pages later, the grandfather’s dying words come back, when the narrator, the invisible man, vents his anger at all the people, white and black, who have tried to control and manipulate him.

I didn’t know what my grandfather had meant, but I was
ready to test his advice . . . that saying “yes” could destroy
them. Oh, I’d yes them, but wouldn’t I yes them! I’d yes
them till they puked and rolled in it. . . . Yes! Yes! YES!
. . . All right, I’d yea, yea, and oui, oui and si, si and see,

see them too; and I'd walk around in their guts with hobnailed boots.¹⁰

Although the grandfather had given up his gun and stayed in his place and apparently remained the meekest of men, his grandson eventually comes to learn an important political lesson from the former slave's dying words: meekness could indeed be a dangerous activity, deference could be a form of defiance, and "yes" could be a subversive word. In a sense, then, one way to say "no" to deference was to say "yes" to those who expected it.

Even though the grandfather lived in the post-Reconstruction era, he is a familiar figure to those of us who study the pre-Civil War era: he is "Sambo." By "Sambo" I do not refer to the one-dimensional definition that Stanley Elkins gave us over forty years ago – the infantilized, self-effacing, and allegedly "happy" slave, whose demeaning deferential behavior allegedly derived from the harsh social conditions of the "total institution" of slavery.¹¹ Rather, I mean the more complicated character other historians described in response to Elkins's stereotypical Sambo – the multi-faceted, or certainly two-faced, figure with different identities who used the façade of deference as a means of resisting the master's power. As Leslie Owens noted some years ago in the debate over slave behavior, "[p]ast analyses of slave resistance have regularly recognized only a few possible responses to the condition of bondage," especially the either/or choice between the submissive slave (Sambo) and the outright rebel (Nat Turner). "But if we want a fuller explanation of slave behavior we must reach it by raising more questions," Owens observed, and one of those questions was "what roles did [slaves] play in shaping the nature of their own enslavement?"¹² The term "roles" carries a dual meaning here, one

implying simply a task or function, but the other suggesting the conscious use of deception in a dramatic sense. Now, of course, the post-1960s historiography of slavery has led us to appreciate how one of those roles could employ the appearance of obedience and deference in an attempt to extract concessions from the master.¹³ So common is this notion, in fact, that we teach it to our undergraduate students: As one of the newer and more sophisticated U.S. history textbooks explains, some slaves were “[s]killed in the so-called deference ritual . . . [and] hid their true feelings and acted submissively in the presence of white people.” In turn, many whites in the slave-era South knew an act when they saw one, and they “understood that danger could lurk beneath the surface of the most accommodating slave.”¹⁴ Better, then, for the master to make the necessary accommodations to apparent deference than to risk more disruptive, even deadly, forms of resistance.

More recently still, the historiography of another form of intercultural negotiation – the treaty-making encounters between Europeans and Native Americans – has given us an understanding of the ways a different sort of deference ritual and respectful role-playing could become a useful tool of frontier diplomacy. The leading students of these encounters in the colonial era – Alan Gallay, James Merrell, Daniel Richter, and Timothy Shannon come immediately to mind – have emphasized the importance of form as much as content in the diplomatic arena; indeed, they have suggested that form and content could be much the same thing.¹⁵ As Shannon has observed in his recent study of the Albany Congress, the diplomatic participants were “like actors in a play” in which the various players, both Indian and European, “distinguished themselves from each other according to the spaces they occupied on the stage, which provided physical and

symbolic boundaries to reinforce their roles as hosts and guests.”¹⁶ In most instances, in fact, the actual process of formal negotiation followed a pattern in which European emissaries played the role of guests and conformed (or deferred, we might say) to the customs of the native hosts: the diplomatic script called for a round of solemn condolences and generous gift-giving at the beginning, then long periods of polite listening, and, if all went well, eventually a mutually acceptable settlement. Seen in contrast to the broader and more familiar context of bloody conflict and mutual atrocity, such scenes of frontier diplomacy seem remarkably calm expressions of ritualized respect in which it is often difficult to determine who is deferring to whom. But that may be the most revealing point. These diplomatic encounters, Shannon reminds us, “followed a protocol intended to promote at least the appearance of harmony and friendship” -- even when harmony and friendship may have had little to do with the intended outcome.¹⁷ Both parties (or in the more complicated councils, all parties) understood that expressions of respect and deference toward the other could be essential to extraction of gains of one’s own. Using “at least the appearance” of harmony and friendship toward their adversaries, frontier negotiators could, as Ralph Ellison put it, “overcome ‘em with yeses, undermine ‘em with grins, agree ‘em to death and destruction,” perhaps all the while planning to “walk around in their guts with hobnailed boots” – or moccasins, as it were.

It seems so easy to see. In both of these intercultural cases – the harsh, structured inequality of master and slave on the plantation and the more equal but uncertain balance of power between competing cultures on the frontier -- we can discern a common lesson about the ways in which people in the past used and understood an apparent act of

deference: seeing it and truly believing it could be two different things, and only the very gullible would make such a mistake.

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Why, then, should we continue to take deference at face value when we note its apparent practice in Euro-American society before the American Revolution? Why is it that a form of behavior we can perceive so clearly as a useful façade in inter-cultural interactions still seems to carry some credence in intra-cultural -- and inter-class -- relations in the colonial era? Role-playing -- that is, the apparently dutiful acceptance of an assigned role but also the more artful manipulation of that role -- seems ubiquitous in human behavior. As biologist Bernd Heinrich points out, in fact, it may be one of the key features that distinguish us as human beings from our fellow beings in the animal world. “The currently popular explanation of our unique intelligence,” he notes, “is thought to be related to deception in the social context. Deception indeed tweaks capacities for mental visualization, and there is little debate that social interactions involve keeping track of individuals, trading favors, paybacks, and possibly deceiving.”¹⁸ Even if we hesitate to believe that deception is the art that makes us fully human, we can still recognize that Heinrich’s last brief list of social interactions -- “keeping track of individuals, trading favors, paybacks, and possibly deceiving” -- defines some of the essential skills of subtle negotiation that we see people practice repeatedly in our own society. Why should we assume that colonial American society should somehow have been an exception?

. In fact, I think we can see deception and role-playing almost everywhere we look in colonial society. Rhys Isaac has shown us, for instance, the way members of the Virginia gentry relied on a very self-conscious, self-dramatizing display of their power and prowess in order to enhance their standing and prestige among the common people in their colony. In almost every aspect of their lives – their demeanor, their dress, their dwellings, even their dancing – Tidewater gentlemen sought to show the rest of society that they carried, or certainly claimed, authority and deserved respect.¹⁹ In a world where power depended in large part on personal self-assertion and appearance, local elites had to play the part. How that act played among their common neighbors, however, remains another issue. Isaac and other historians have frequently relied on the first-hand (although late-in-life) account of Devereux Jarrett, who recollected retreating in near-terror from any well-mounted man wearing a periwig and lace cuffs. Indeed, the well-known witness offered by Jarrett has become an almost shopworn source for those historians who make a case for the prevalence of deference in colonial society, and deferential Devereux now stands as an early American everyman: as John Murrin has observed, “Devereux Jarratt probably had company in his awe for the gentry.”²⁰ Yet for all the weaknesses that others have found in Jarrett’s memory of deference – its nostalgia for an orderly past, its imagining of an equally orderly future, and even Jarrett’s unspoken deceptions about his own social status – one possibility becomes important in the immediate context of this discussion of deference: perhaps the common man’s response of fear and respect was all an act, if not for Jarrett himself, then at least for others like him. As Robert Gross has suggested in his contribution to the “Deference or Defiance” roundtable, “[T]hese signs of deference – pulling a forelock, doffing a cap – may have

been mere show.” Somewhat like slaves on the plantation, Gross continues, free whites confronted with the presence of power could, in their own way, “put on old Massa.”²¹

The same sort of deceptive deference could also well apply to Massa’s own household, or to the home and hearth of any would-be patriarch in colonial America. It may well be, as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is so frequently quoted on bumper stickers, that “well-behaved women rarely make history,” but her own works show us a more complicated picture of female behavior that can’t be condensed into a single slogan. Married women who seemingly accepted the subservient position of help-meet still managed to claim or carve out a household sphere that was more significant than merely separate, and in many cases they “crossed gender boundaries without challenging the patriarchal order of society.” The colonial period, she argues, cannot be portrayed as a period of deferential darkness preceding a post-Revolutionary progression into the light of greater equality and assertion: the history of colonial women – like, I would argue, the histories of all colonial people in positions of compromised freedom and equality – represented a “convoluted and sometimes entangled embroidery of loss and gain, accommodation and resistance.”²² In some instances, in fact, accommodation and resistance could seem much the same. Even Abigail Adams – who, well-behaved or not, did make history – certainly understood how to nudge her husband with the appearance of wifely deference. In her most famous exchange of letters with John Adams, after noting that John and his congressional colleagues had not been “very generous to the Ladies” despite being politely asked to remember them, Abigail Adams reminded her husband that “Arbitrary power is . . . very liable to be broken.” She then needled him with a couplet that made domestic deference seem almost dangerous:

“Charm by accepting, by submitting sway,
 Yet have our Humour most when we obey.”²³

As Kathleen Brown has rightly observed, Euro-American women, like African American slaves, took significant risks to challenge male authority directly, much less defiantly.²⁴ But if, as Abigail Adams suggested, submitting – or appearing to submit – could be a means of swaying the minds of men who held power over them, then a selective, albeit insincere, “yes” could be a subtler form of resistance in the gender struggles of the colonial era.

Let me offer one last reflection on the ways we might reconsider or “read” the appearance of deference by revisiting one of the very best illustrations we have of both deference and defiance embodied in one colonial American – Al Young’s opening portrait of the humble shoemaker of Boston, George Robert Twelves Hewes. It’s a story we all know well by now: One New Year’s Day in the early 1760s, the young apprentice Hewes accepts an invitation to go to John Hancock’s house, where the wealthy Squire Hancock receives him, gives him some money as a gift, and shares a drink with him, all the while showing the terrified apprentice the greatest generosity and outward honor. It is a classic scene of mutual, or at least ritual, respect between men of very different social status, “a demonstration of what the eighteenth century called deference.” In the following paragraph, though, the next scene shifts ahead fifteen or so years, to the early part of the American Revolution, when Hewes is about to enlist as a sailor on a ship called, of all things, the Hancock; one of the ship’s officers insults his independence and dignity, though, and rather than tip his hat to anyone in authority, Hewes refuses to sign on to the ship and finds another more to his liking – and to his sense of self-respect. The

perfect symmetry of the two scenes, including the coincidental connection between the gentleman Hancock and the ship Hancock, offers us an unmistakable and eminently teachable contrast: no one, not even the student who fails to read past page 4, can fail to discern the meaning of deference and “the casting off of deference.”²⁵ Having taught this book several times, I can testify that there is probably no better, or certainly no briefer, explanation of the concept of deference in all the literature of early American history.

But re-reading and re-teaching this story have also brought me (and some of my students) to realize that these two episodes are, in reality, only two moments in one man’s life – and a very long life at that. The question then emerges: How did Hewes live, how did he behave, the rest of the time? More specifically, having cast off deference, would he ever pick it up again? The answers, of course, are speculative, because the details of Hewes’s subsequent sixty-something years remain sketchy. He moved around geographically, from Massachusetts to upstate New York, but not much socially: he stayed a working man, and a generally impoverished one, for the rest of his life. In a few cases, though, we again see Hewes commingling with his social “betters,” particularly when he received an invitation to go to the house of the already-notable novelist James Fenimore Cooper – a scene that seems almost a biographical bookend to Hewes’s much earlier meeting with John Hancock. Did Hewes again become overawed by the wealth and prominence of his famous host, or did he approach him more or less as an equal and behave, as one account describes him, as “quite a lion at the author’s table”? We might prefer, even expect, to believe the latter. Still, as Young also notes, whatever recognition Hewes received as the famous old veteran of the Boston Tea Party “had a price,” and part of that price was that Hewes “had to play a role.”²⁶ But again, a role can be assigned by

others or assumed by oneself, or perhaps both. If I were to guess (and it must be only a guess) I would suspect that Hewes had become aware, perhaps wily, enough to play a variety of roles – defiant, deferential, self-asserting, self-deprecating -- but play them to his own advantage. And to the extent that he may have played his role by seeming deferential rather than defiant, I would suspect that an occasional act of deference remained for Hewes – as it does for us – an occasionally necessary strategy of life, a means of dealing with the many unequal and asymmetrical relationships one encounters in the near-constant struggle to define, sometimes even defend, one's place in society.

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Despite the Revolution, then, I would suggest that deference never died – because I'm not sure it ever really lived, at least not in the way that some historians have argued. That is, to see the Revolution as a cultural and behavioral watershed between the common assumption of deference and the more ready acceptance of antiauthoritarian defiance is to misread the reality and complexity of human interactions in different historical contexts on both sides of this alleged divide. As we know from our study of crowd action in the early modern era (and beyond), acts of defiance are hard enough to read: Who took part in the unrest? Who instigated or directed it? What were its goals? How much did it really challenge the status quo? How much did it ultimately matter? Expressions of deference, either political or personal, can be harder still to decipher: Does a vote for a prominent politician really mean support, either for the person or for his policies? Does a show of respect really mean respect? Does acknowledging one

person's power really mean surrendering one's own? And as Ralph Ellison might add, does "yes" really mean "yes"?

I raise these questions about deference fully aware of the inherent dangers they involve -- not just of ahistoricism (a sin for which I may join my fellow panelist Zuckerman at the pyre), but of cynicism. I remind myself, as I always remind my students, that skepticism -- the suspicion that things may not always be as they at first glance appear -- can be a very useful perspective for historians; cynicism, however -- the assumption that things are never as they appear -- is simply a loss of perspective altogether. I do not, then, want to argue that deference -- whenever we see it, either before or after the Revolution -- is necessarily a deception or a delusion. There may indeed have been people in the colonial era who, as Gordon Wood would have us believe, "still accepted their own lowliness." How we count their numbers, much less how we measure the depths of their acceptance of lowliness, is a matter I will happily leave to other scholars. In the meantime, I will equally happily assume that human beings, no matter what their social station or historical context, are more complex than a one-dimensional definition based on self-effacing sense of inferiority would allow. That being the case, I do want to suggest that when we detect what appears to be deferential behavior -- either individual or collective, either at the ballot box or in the streets -- we think about the various ways the behavior might be used by those who display it, the ways a particular act of deference might be an "act" indeed.

It may be, as the organizers of this conference have dourly observed in the initial call for papers, that "as a mode of historical analysis of the early modern era, class is moribund." But at the same time, they are also correct to point out that historians of

gender and race – and, I would add, of intercultural encounters between Native Americans and Euro-Americans – have come creatively to the fore. Almost wherever we look in those areas – in the household, on the plantation, on the frontier – we see that various forms of authority – patriarchal, racial, and imperial – are always subject to subtle and often specific acts of negotiation, even (and perhaps especially) when we see little or no evidence of overt conflict and defiance. I think we can discover a similar sort of negotiation in almost all relationships in the early modern era, including relations among people of similar cultural, ethnic, and gender identities but of different social status. At the very least, I think a decent appreciation of the kinds of roles people play in dealing with other people in power will help us move beyond the deadening limitations of deference and defiance as two poles of historical explanation. Doing so may then help us revitalize the analysis of subtler, even more subversive, class relations in the colonial era – which I take to be at least one goal of this gathering. To achieve that, though, I will defer to the general wisdom of the conference participants, my fellow panelists, and our commentator.

¹ Gordon Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York, 1991), pp. 85, 30 ; Wood develops a more fully elaborated explanation of deference and dependence in the first section of the book, “Monarchy,” pp. 11-92.

² The phrase comes from Alfred F. Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party (Boston, 1999), p. 4, the implications of which I discuss in greater detail below.

³ Michael Zuckerman, “Tocqueville, Turner, and Turds: Four Stories of Manners in Early America,” in “Deference or Defiance in Eighteenth-Century America? A Round Table,” Journal of American History 85, no. 1 (June 1998), pp. 13-42. The quotations are from pp. 15, 19, 18, and 24, respectively.

⁴ John M. Murrin, “In the Land of the Free and the Home of the Slave, Maybe There Was Room Even for Deference,” in “Deference or Defiance in Eighteenth-Century America? A Round Table,” Journal of American History 85, no. 1 (June 1998), pp. 86-91; the quotations are from p. 87.

⁵ Kathleen M. Brown, “Antiauthoritarianism and Freedom in Early America,” in “Deference or Defiance in Eighteenth-Century America? A Round Table,” Journal of American History 85, no. 1 (June 1998), pp. 77-85; the quotations are from pp. 79 and 84, respectively.

⁶ Murrin, “In the Land of the Free,” p 91.

⁷ See, for instance, James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven, 1990); I am grateful to my colleague Steven Vallas for drawing my attention to Scott’s work.

⁸ Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York, 1952), pp. 15-16.

⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 508-509.

¹¹ Stanley Elkins, Slavery, esp. pp. 81-139.

¹² Leslie H. Owens, This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South (New York, 1976), p. 70.

¹³ See, for instance, Philip D. Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry (Chapel Hill, 1998), esp. pp. 183-187. For an insightful essay on the ways deceptively deferential behaviors in the African American work culture continued into twentieth century, see Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” Journal of American History 80, no. 1 (June 1993), pp. 75-111.

¹⁴ Jacqueline Jones, Peter Wood, et al., Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States (New York, 2003), vol. I, p. 354.

¹⁵ Alan Galloway, The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717 (New Haven, 2002); James Merrell, Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier (New York, 1999) Daniel Richter, Looking East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America (Cambridge and London, 2001); and Timothy Shannon, Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754 (Ithaca and London, 2000).

¹⁶ Shannon, Indians and Colonists, pp. 117-140; the quotations are from pp. 139-140.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 139-140

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- ¹⁸ Bernd Heinrich, Why We Run: A Natural History (New York, 2001), p. 178.
- ¹⁹ Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill, 1982).
- ²⁰ Murrin, "In the Land of the Free," p. 90.
- ²¹ Robert Gross, "The Impudent Historian: Challenging Deference in Early America," in "Deference or Defiance in Eighteenth-Century America? A Round Table," Journal of American History 85, no. 1 (June 1998), pp. 92-97; the quotation is from p. 96.
- ²² Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (Oxford and New York, 1982), esp. pp. 237-241.
- ²³ Abigail Adams to John Adams, May 7, 1776, in L. H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender, and Mary Jo Kline, eds., The Book of Abigail and John: Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784 (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), p. 127.
- ²⁴ Brown, "Antiauthoritarianism and Freedom," p. 78.
- ²⁵ Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, pp. 3-4.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 75.