Reviews of Books

The Papers of James Madison. Volume 3: 3 March-31 December 1781. Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. JEAN SCHNEIDER, ROBERT L. SCRIBNER, DONALD O. DEWEY, and HAROLD E. KOLLING, Editorial staff. Volume 4: 1 January-31 July 1782. Volume 5: 1 August-31 December 1782. Volume 6: 1 January-30 April 1783. Volume 7: 3 May 1783-20 February 1784. Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. JEAN SCHNEIDER and ROBERT L. SCRIBNER, Editorial staff. Volume 8: 10 March 1784-28 March 1786. Edited by ROBERT A. RUTLAND and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. BARBARA D. RIPEL and FREDERIKA J. TEUTE, Associate Editors. Volume 9: 9 April 1786-24 May 1787 with a supplement 1781-1784. ROBERT A. RUTLAND, Editor-in-chief. WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL, Editor. FREDERIKA J. TEUTE, CHARLES F. HOBSON, and FRANK C. MEVERS, Associate Editors. JEANNE K. SISSON, Editorial Assistant. Volume 10: 27 May 1787-3 March 1788. ROBERT A. RUTLAND, Editor-in-chief. CHARLES F. HOBSON, WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL, and FREDERIKA J. TEUTE, Editors. JEANNE K. SISSON, Editorial Assistant. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977. Pp. xxvi, 381; xxviii, 486; xxx, 520; xxxii, 545; xlii, 479; xxviii, 560; xxvi, 447; xxvi, 572. Vols. 3-8, $20.00 each; Vol. 9, $18.50; Vol. 10, $25.00.)

It is easy to make the case that the federal republic as we know it was James Madison's invention. He maneuvered the Constitutional Convention into being, prepared the draft that set the terms of its debates, and provided in *The Federalist* the most extensive and subtle apologia for the Constitution and the major theoretical discussion of American republicanism. He persuaded the First Congress to add the Bill of Rights; as president he risked all he had built in "Mr. Madison's War." If there is one founder whom we are obliged to know well, it is Madison.

But Madison did not make it easy for his biographers, despite all his careful endorsing of his papers in his retirement. The dimension we know best is the one Madison wished us to know: the abstract intellect wrestling with theoretical questions and resolving them by creating Newtonian machinery for a balanced republic. His notes on the Constitutional Convention, Max Farrand remarked some forty years ago, "were comprehensive, accurate, impartial. Oddly enough, the latter virtues are now our chief cause of complaint: his notes are too impartial and impersonal" ("If James Madison Had Had a Sense of Humor," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXII [1938], 130-139, especially 133). Farrand lamented Madison's lack of humor, not only because it would have made for more interesting reading, but because it would have permitted a more subtle appraisal of the political dynamics of the world in which Madison operated.

Although ten volumes of Madison's papers have been newly published, representing a careful search for materials unknown to Farrand and annotated with enormous care and skill, Madison still conceals himself behind the mask of Lawmaker. The emotional dimension that is so important a part of the Adams letters and has led to fresh interpretations of Adams's character is largely absent from the Madison collection. Madison's private letters are apt to sound bloodless and official. He explains to his father that he cannot come to visit: "Anxious as I am to visit my friends as long as I sustain a public trust, I shall feel a principle which is superior to it" (May 20, 1782: IV, 256). Even references to love are formal, as though he has so long been habituated to a careful style that he cannot help but write that way. Of Kitty Floyd he writes to Jefferson, in code, "Since your departure the affair has been pursued. Most preliminary arrangements although definitive will be postponed" (Apr. 22, 1783: VI, 481). And when Edmund Randolph wrote movingly of Jefferson's desolation at Martha Jefferson's death, Madison could only reply formally, "I conceive very readily the affliction and anguish which our friend at Monticello must experience at his irreparable loss. . . . Perhaps this domestic catastrophe may prove in its operation beneficial to his country by weaning him from those attachments which deprived it of his services" (Sept. 30, 1782: V, 170).

This formality, however, may be an artifact of Madison's circle of correspondents. Many of the usual types of informal, unintentionally revealing letters are absent from his files.. He married late in life; he had no children. Unlike Franklin, he was slow to develop affectionate relationships with young people. The purpose of his mail was rarely to share friendship or purvey gossip; his letters are seldom self-indulgent. Their primary purpose was professional: to transmit information, to link a network of friendly politicians, to provide access to legislative decisions in advance of the newspapers.

When explicitly enjoined to secrecy (as he was during the Constitutional Convention), Madison could be very careful about what he wrote, even to Jefferson (June 6, 1787: X, 29), but when secrecy was not required, he had no hesitation in sending reports of what was underway to political friends back home. The advantages of being part of a political establishment were never greater than in pre-electronic days when those who had friends in Congress could obtain political information weeks in advance of everyone else. One Virginian took this service for granted. "I expect to have the pleasure of seeing you in Philadelphia," John Dawson wrote to Madison on April 15, 1787. "As my object is to gain information of many political points, which I presume will be investigated in the ablest manner, and wh[ich] will be very useful to me in the next assembly, I must renew a request I before made, that if it can be done with propriety, you will permit me to hear the debates—if it can not, I am sure you will give me any information in your power" (LX, 381). The assumption that insiders had a right to inside information was very strong.

One is left to conclude that it was public correspondence that engrossed

Madison's emotional energies. It was in the public world that he and his friends found their true métier; it was in that context that they felt most themselves. Perhaps they needed an emotional correspondence less because they could express themselves so fully in the political one. If Madison's private letters tend to be formal, the public ones sometimes vibrate with emotion: "I am now more proud of the title of American than I have ever been;" he wrote; "the enemy have, without intermission, represented us as a timid and dastardly people . . . they are now undeceived" (with Barbe-Marbois, June 9, 1782: IV, 329). Edmund Randolph came closest to expressing this intense political commitment when, forced to leave political life temporarily, he wrote to Madison: "I return to the law with a species of sorrow. It is not often, that I lament my want of patrimony; but, when obliged to exchange a pursuit, liberal and extensive, like politicks, for reports and entries, I surely do not commit an unpardonable Sin in reprehending my father for not handing down a fortune to me" (Apr. 19, 1782: IV, 160). There is real joy in Madison's working correspondence; one suspects he was one of those lucky few who live so integrated a life that work and recreation become one and the same.

The circle of Madison's correspondents was narrow. It was mostly Virginian until 1786 and, unlike Burr's and Franklin's, was a male circle; the only woman to whom Madison wrote with regularity was Eliza House Trist, the daughter of the woman with whom he boarded in Philadelphia. It was an elite circle; only one letter in all the volumes under review was written by someone who had serious difficulty spelling. And it was a provincial circle in religion. Jews on whom Madison and his friends were economically dependent were referred to with cheap and gratuitous anti-Semitism: Randolph spoke of Haym Solomon as "the little Levite" (to JM, Oct. 18, 1782: V, 205).

Madison, like Jefferson, also did not rise above his generation on the matter of race. His defenders have often sought to defend him by emphasizing his profession that he was unconfortable living on the proceeds of slave labor. That may be, but Madison did not at all mind stacking the cards in favor of slave ownership. For example, after the Revolutionary War, the question arose of how to handle recaptured American property. Madison endorsed the principle that the original owners should pay a 25 percent fee to reimburse the government for the costs of recapturing their property from the British and preserving it—unless the property was slave, in which case he thought no fee at all should be required (Dec. 23, 1782: V, 432-4). Though he was quick to agree that his restless slave Billey ought not to be punished "merely for coveting that liberty for which we have paid the price of so much blood, and have proclaimed so often to be the right of every human" (Sept. 8, 1783: VII, 304), it also seemed important to him that Billey not be returned to Virginia because his mind had been "too thoroughly tainted" with libertarian ideas to set a good example for other slaves. Billey might covet liberty, but Madison made sure that no other slave coveted liberty because of him. Nor did it occur to Madison to set Billey free immediately; Billey was sold in Philadelphia as an indentured servant for seven years.

Many of Madison's contemporaries found the most resonant body of political criticism to be the work of the eighteenth-century British Whig opposition: John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, Catherine Macaulay, Benjamin Hoadley, Charles Rollin. Historians have been able to identify these authors' works in the libraries of such men as Jefferson, John Adams, and Josiah Quincy, and to trace the influence of Whig oppositionists in the development of American political theory. But the task has not yet been carefully performed for Madison, and it will not be an easy one. When, for example, Madison prepared a long list of books which Congress ought to acquire for ready reference (VI, 63-115), many of the primary Commonwealthmen were absent. In 1787, when he prepared furiously for the Constitutional Convention, he read James Burgh, James Harrington, and Robert Molesworth, but used none of them in debate. He did not rely on the British Whigs for his crucial "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies," which he used for guidance throughout the debates and in writing the *Federalist* essays. The most usable authors for him remained those from the mainstream of the Enlightenment like Montesquieu and Mably, and classical writers like Strabo, Emmius, Polybius, and Plutarch. The extent to which Madison was influenced by Whig commonwealth thought needs fuller exploration.

The reader of these volumes cannot help but be impressed by the long period of quasi-war that followed the battle of Yorktown—a period which our Bicentennial celebration, with its emphasis on the grandeur rather than the misery of war, has ignored. Yorktown occurs late in Volume III, but not until the end of Volume VII is the definitive treaty of peace sent to the states. Long after the land battles were over, Madison and his correspondents were seeking ways to resist British pressure. Jefferson could not leave to join the Paris negotiations in 1783 without a British pass (Feb. 7, 1783: VI, 204-205). In the West Indies the naval war continued (VI, 420-21), and British economic maneuvers led Madison to introduce a motion against illicit trade which declared that: "the Enemy, having renounced the hope of accomplishing their designs against the U. States by force alone, are resorting to every expedient which may tend to corrupt the patriotism of their citizens, or to weaken the foundation of the public credit . . . are encouraging to the utmost, a clandestine traffic . . . whereby a market is provided for British Merchandizes, [and] the circulating specie is exported" (June 19, 1782: IV, 352). In this context, peace came as anticlimax; as the editors remark, "there had been little cheering when the end of the war was formally proclaimed" (VIII, 36).

Although Shays's Rebellion has come to epitomize the nationalist vision of the risk of not reconstructing the government, and although Madison certainly saw it as an object lesson, it was the political situation west of the Alleghenies that he judged most dangerous. The disunion he feared was a constant postwar threat in western Pennsylvania and Virginia. The impending separation of Kentucky from Virginia occasioned an intriguing correspondence with his old friend from Princeton, Caleb Wallace, who was obviously turning to Madison as constitution-maker as early as 1785 and who

received letters as thoughtful and as politically resonant as any Madison ever wrote (e.g. Aug. 23, 1785: VIII, 350-58). The possibility of a tyranny of the majority was raised in connection with the Kentucky constitution well before it appeared in the *Federalist* (to Monroe, Oct. 5, 1786: IX, 140). Despite Madison's obvious concern for the implications of Shays's Rebellion, the Mississippi question and the status of the region west of Virginia were more influential in leading him to wish for a government strong enough to resolve such issues.

Finally, one wonders why those who insisted during the Watergate hearings on the narrowest definition of impeachable offenses were not treated to Madison's comments on the subject:

> Mr. Madison thought it indispensable that some provision should be made for defending the Community agst the incapacity, negligence or perfidy of the chief Magistrate. The limitation of the period of his service, was not a sufficient security. He might lose his capacity after his appointment. He might pervert his administration into a scheme of peculation or oppression. He might betray his trust to foreign powers . . . In the case of the Executive Magistracy which was to be administered by a single man, loss of capacity or corruption was more within the compass of probable events, and either of them might be fatal to the Republic (July 20, 1787: X, 108).

Early in the 1950s, the National Historical Publications Commission identified the Madison Papers as a collection deserving fresh and thorough republication. Older editions had included only letters from Madison. The new edition was to publish everything of his hand that could be found, including rough notes, and all that he received. It was also to provide sufficient editorial comment to enable scholars to recognize possible variant readings of the original manuscripts.

These principles affect the structure of the published edition, as it is now appearing, in substantial ways. There are at least two voices of commentary in the footnotes. One is the standard editiorial identification of obscure names, places, and references. The staff of the Madison Papers have attacked this part of their charge with alacrity, and if their enthusiasm occasionally leads them to excess (when Madison's cousin, the Rev. James Madison writes, "Like Cain, I have been a Vagabond," the editors dutifully note, "Genesis 4:12-14" [Mar. (2), 1782: IV, 82]), it usually leads them to track down even the most elliptical of references (such as one by Benjamin Harrison to "the ill behaviour of a French officer" [July 12, 1783: VII, 218-19 n. 5]) and to correcting wrongly decoded material.

The other voice, reflecting the editors' responsibility to comment on the manuscript as artifact, leads to extraordinarily detailed analysis. This service is important to scholars because it makes permanent the perceptions of those who have worked carefully with the manuscripts and saves future researchers from duplicating their work. One example is the observation that "JM wrote

the first sentence of his note in the left hand margin of the page and the second sentence at the bottom of that page. Judging from the handwriting, both sentences postdate his record for 9-10 January [1783] and the second sentence was added in his old age" (VI, 26, n.2). Another is the conclusion regarding a letter that "unless JM predated his letter by one day, he must have waited to seal it until 4 September" (V, 103). But the desire to report all the editors know of the manuscript forces them to very minor matters: "Late in his life, judging from the handwriting, JM interlineated 'Rutledge' above a deleted 'R' but neglected to strike out the period after the initial" (Nov. 8, 1782: V, 255).

The first seven volumes of the Madison Papers were edited by William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. At Volume VIII Hutchinson's place was taken by Robert Rutland, who had just emerged from editing the papers of George Mason, one of the most formidable opponents of the Constitution. Because the Madison Papers eschews lengthy analytical introductions, and because Rachal continued as associate editor, it is difficult to identify the editorial changes that are the result of Rutland's choices. The omission of interpretative introductions can perhaps be defended on the ground of efficiency, and on the assumption that the papers ought to be neutral readings because the more neutral, the less quickly they will become dated. These are, I think, misguided worries. Does any editor really flatter himself that his edition will not in its turn be subject to historiographical reappraisal? Even these insistently neutral editors let slip that their subject has persuaded them: "JM realized that the Constitution, whatever its faults, was preferable to anything proposed by its critics" (X, 260). When all the world is on computer tapes, these volumes may look as arcane as Gaillard Hunt's do now. Our generation need not be so hesitant to stamp its character on its work while it has the chance.

Some important shifts in technique, however, have been made beginning in Volume VIII. Except for the shrinkage of type size in Volume IX, most are to good purpose. Provenance information is now placed in small type at the end of the letter where it belongs, instead of as a headnote, where Hutchinson placed it and where it interfered with the immediate perusal of the letter. A more important change is that Rutland has brought footnote proliferation under control in an intelligent way. The commitment to footnoting everything had led under Hutchinson's editorship to situations such as that in Volume IV, 132, where a one-half-page document is treated to fully three and one-half pages of notes and explanatory text. Rutland is more likely to reserve footnotes for factual identification and to substitute prefaces when documents require substantial explanation. These substantive headnotes (which Hutchinson and Rachal occasionally used) help alleviate the choppiness of a volume in which unlinked documents are further subdivided by footnotes. In Volumes IX and X it is possible to follow an implicit narrative through the volume.

The commitment to print everything that Madison wrote brings with it a substantial philosophical problem: what constitutes authorship? We can

comfortably assume authorship of letters Madison wrote and public statutes for which his draft is extant. But what of statutes for which no manuscript survives but for which there is reason to suspect that Madison had some responsibility? The editors have interpreted their charge very broadly. Jefferson's Act for Religious Freedom is included because Madison guided it to passage in the Virginia General Assembly (Oct. 31, 1785: VIII, 399-402). A resolution to expedite the settlement of Simon Nathan's claims, which exists in a clerk's hand but which bears Madison's name among the endorsements, is included (VIII, 68-69). Even bills drafted in someone else's hand may be republished if there is a hint that Madison participated in their formulation (VIII, 57, 64). Lacking a copy in Madison's hand, the editors will reprint the text from William W. Hening's *Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia* (Richmond, 1821). Virginia delegates to the Continental Congress regularly sent joint reports to the governor of Virginia. Although Madison wrote only some of these letters, and signed others, all are reproduced along with the governor's replies and are meticulously annotated—even one signed only by Edward Carrington (Apr. 2, 1787: IX, 362).

Commitment to complete publication risks duplication. The risk, of course, was not pressing when the project began in the 1950s, since there were few competitors (though Julian P. Boyd's edition of the *Jefferson Papers* was underway and must have signaled trouble). But now that the publication of the papers of a cluster of people who corresponded extensively with each other has reached maturity, the problem of duplication can only increase in severity. In the eight volumes here under review, for example, 118 letters between Jefferson and Madison, have been reprinted in Boyd's edition. Letters between Madison and Hamilton have appeared in Harold Syrett's edition of the Hamilton Papers, and those between Madison and Washington threaten to reappear when the Washington Papers reaches those years. It is certainly time for the editors of Founders projects to reach an agreement under which duplication will be minimized.

Formulating such an agreement will not be easy. Any letter plays a different function in the intellectual lives of author and recipient. Thus, the Jefferson Papers has only a brief note on Madison's letter of March 18, 1782; the Madison editors provide eleven footnotes that cover more than a page of very small type. For Madison's letter of April 16, 1782, Boyd has no footnotes at all; the Madison editors provide one and one-half pages of notes and a long background comment on Virginia land claims. One of the sharpest contrasts in the method of handling is the treatment of Madison's letter to Jefferson of December 10, 1783. Boyd has no comment at all; Hutchinson and Rachal provide a lengthy and clear scientific explanation of a difficult subject (VII, 405; Boyd, VI, 377-9).

The decision to interpret broadly the mandate for full publication has advantages as well as disadvantages. We are provided with unexpectedly revealing sequences of materials, such as the exchange between a wartime governor of Virginia and the congressional representatives, in which we watch the more nationalistic delegates patiently deflect the continued suspi-

cions of local legislators that Congress is playing favorites among the states (25 Feb. 1782: IV, 71). Madison's Notes on Debates in the Continental Congress receives full and fresh annotation. And the editors' habit of careful emendation sensitized them to the problems of the disputed authorship of the North American letters. Even so careful a historian as Marvin Meyers, working alone and admitting that the letters are un-Madisonian in style, accepted Irving Brant's identification and reprinted the first of the letters in his edition of *The Mind of the Founder* (Indianapolis, 1973). Hutchinson and Rachal, sharing Julian Boyd's suspicions, subject the North American essays to a detailed word count and stylistic reappraisal, and argue persuasively that Madison could not possibly have been the author. The editors take more space to explain why they did not print the essays than the essays themselves would have required, but the pedagogical value of elucidating how the appraisal was made justifies the space allotted (VII, 319-46).

Volume X presented a special editorial problem. To annotate fully Madison's voluminous Notes on the convention debates, and to provide a full reconsideration of the *Federalist,* would obviously have taken more than one volume—a commitment not to be lightly made in the face of pressure from critics both within and without editorial and foundation circles. Rutland opted instead for a minimum of annotation in reprinting Madison's *Federalist* essays and his speeches as given in his own Notes. The result is a volume that can be read as a narrative—an intellectual biography in Madison's own words. There is value in reading the *Federalist* essays in conjunction with the frantic letters Madison was receiving, or his correspondence in conjunction with his speeches in the Convention. (George Washington to JM, Dec. 7, 1787, for example, is followed immediately by *Federalist* No. 18 [X, 297-299] and Edmund Randolph to JM, Feb. 29, 1788, by *Federalist* No. 63 [X, 542-550]). But such pairing of items might also have been done with relative ease by a lay reader with access to Jacob E. Cooke's edition of the *Federalist* or Farrand's edition of the Convention debates.

The Papers of James Madison, supported by private foundations and, since 1974, by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, is expensive to develop and to publish. But all editions are inexpensive in comparison to the cost of even a small-scale museum exhibition or a television broadcast—to say nothing of cruise missiles. At a time when humanists mourn the curtailment of jobs, it is good to see the editorial branch of the profession healthy and growing.

But new and imaginative projects, such as the papers of Aaron Burr, the Freedmen's Bureau, or the Women's Trade Union League, operate at a substantially lower level of funding, primarily because they are committed to selective publication in only three or four volumes. The Madison Papers editors will need to justify the large proportion of "papers projects" monies they now absorb by explaining their editorial decisions more fully and by being more restrained in republishing items for which no fresh annotation can be added.

These volumes are so expensive that they are beyond the reach of most

individual scholars to whom they are addressed; even small college libraries must now find it difficult to justify standing orders for all the papers projects. It is clear that American editors have rejected Edmund Wilson's advice to publish minimally edited editions, but that is no reason to reject his advice to publish inexpensive ones. *The Adams Papers* were made availabe in paperback long before the television series provided a mass market. Why have no other papers projects followed suit? (The NHPRC permits publishers to apply for subvention grants of up to $10,000 per volume; if higher support levels are necessary to underwrite paperback production, NHPRC should be encouraged to make them available.) Volume X of the Madison Papers could stand on its own as a paperback. Selections of edited letters might also be prepared, as the Adams Papers editors did in *The Book of Abigail and John*. Historical editing projects—and the Madison Papers in particular—need to address themselves to the problem of enlarging the audience for their work at the same time that they serve so considerately the small one that already exists.

University of Iowa LINDA K. KERBER