

The Papers of James Madison. Volume 10: 27 May 1787–3 March 1788.

Edited by Robert A. Rutland and others. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977. Pp. xxvi, 572. \$25.00.)

In this volume the editors of *The Papers of James Madison* confront the problem of producing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. In Philadelphia and New York between May 1787 and March 1788 Madison took a principal part in and recorded the debates of the Federal Convention and wrote his portion of *The Federalist*. These actions, perhaps the most

important and best known of his career, are enmeshed, however, in editorial ambiguity. Most of what we know of the debates is preserved in Madison's own hand—does that make it a “Madison document”? Furthermore, the debates have been printed many times. What contribution, if any, is made by printing them again, in full or in part? Does it make sense to include Madison's participation without the give-and-take necessary to understand his contributions? Finally, since Madison's part of *The Federalist* has been printed dozens, perhaps hundreds of times, and is best understood within the whole work, is there any reason to take space reprinting only his numbers? To print the whole debates or the entire *Federalist* would seem unwarranted, but to omit from Madison's papers his role in the convention debates and in *The Federalist* would seem to gut his writings.

On the whole the editors have done well in keeping their eye on Madison himself. They have printed only Madison's speeches, including many only a short paragraph in length, but have introduced them when necessary with succinct notes indicating what motions or previous arguments they respond to. Thus, the reader can find all Madison's important contributions, understand their context, and even get a fair sense of the movement of the convention as a whole. In 165 pages the editors manage to print Madison's speeches and letters to and from him during the convention.

The 300 pages covering the months his *Federalist Papers* appeared in New York newspapers are less rewarding. More than half that space is consumed in merely reprinting with very little editorial comment Madison's twenty-nine “Publius” articles. Without the editorial aids that make reprinting some documents worthwhile, they are actually less useful than when printed with the complete *Federalist*. Leaving out these essays, which are easily available in *their* context (the complete *Federalist*), would have made a handy volume of some 350 or 400 pages.

The editors have handled judiciously and economically two major controversies over the authenticity of documents included in this volume. On the convention debates, preserved in Madison's hands for fifty years before they were printed and therefore available for tampering by him, the editors conclude that “taking . . . revisions into account, . . . the manuscript of the Federal Convention Debates remains essentially as JM wrote it in 1787 and . . . the changes he made after that date were motivated by an earnest desire for completeness and honesty” (p. 9). So much for charges that Madison revised the debates to suit his later sectional, personal, or party prejudices. On *The Federalist*, the editors verify the by-now incontestable conclusions that Madison wrote the twenty-nine essays of which he claimed authorship in 1818. The editors have also superbly presented Madison's often overlooked “Additional Memorandums on Ancient and Modern Confederacies.”

The editors overinterpret, however, when they argue that the convention's rejection of two of Madison's pet ideas, that both houses of the

national legislature rest on representation by population and that it have a veto over state laws, so upset him that he lacked any deep enthusiasm for the new Constitution. He was indeed disappointed, especially at the time of his defeats in the convention, but instead of sulking or even working with a sense of resignation, he moved creatively, both in the convention and in his own mind, to see the Constitution as an effective republican government. To balance the flawed Congress, Madison sought to strengthen the executive, which he thought increasingly could be the upholder of the public interest against the faction-ridden legislature. Then, beginning in his convention speeches and more brilliantly in *The Federalist*, he accepted the argument that federal law enacted by the consent of the governed, executed by a strong, independent President, interpreted by federal courts, and made supreme in all the states would be a juster and more effective "cement" for the Union than a negative of state laws. This intellectual growth is apparent in the documents, and we can be grateful to the editors and publishers for making them available to us in what is likely to be the highlight volume in this entire series.

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