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REVIEW ESSAY

## Jefferson's Spaces

*"A Rich Spot of Earth": Thomas Jefferson's  
Revolutionary Garden at Monticello*

PETER HATCH

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012  
263 pp.

*Jefferson in His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle  
of His Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews,  
and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*

KEVIN J. HAYES

Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012  
210 pp.

*Martha Jefferson Randolph, Daughter of Monticello*

CYNTHIA A. KIERNER

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012  
360 pp.

Thomas Jefferson presents daunting obstacles to biographers. Historian Merrill Peterson famously called Jefferson "impenetrable," echoing the complaints of visitors to Monticello who were denied access to the great man's private suite, or "sanctum sanctorum" (*Thomas Jefferson* viii). Jefferson customarily diverted his guests' attention away from himself, inviting them to enjoy the magnificent views, imagine what Monticello might look like if construction were ever completed, and contemplate the statues, paintings, prints, maps, Indian artifacts, and other conversation pieces that filled the house to overflowing. Granddaughter Ellen Randolph called life at her childhood home a "feast of reason," but there were limits to the feast. Jefferson usually declined to participate in contentious and divisive arguments about politics or other topics that might lead him to express controversial opinions or principles; his manner undoubtedly discourag-

ing others from doing so. Nor did he bare his soul, even to family members or close friends. “To a disposition ardent, affectionate and communicative,” reported Margaret Bayard Smith, who adored him, “he joins manners timid, even to bashfulness and reserved even to coldness” (Hayes, *Jefferson* 60). Jefferson’s perceived chilliness was “unfavorable to that free interchange of thoughts and feelings which constitute the greatest charm of social life” (Hunt 386). Surely the “greatest charm” of a modern biography is the secrets it betrays, and modern subjects seem all too eager to tell all. But Jefferson had a gift for turning the conversation away from himself, Smith concluded, “so as to draw forth the powers and talents of each guest” (Bayard Smith). Jefferson has a similar gift with modern biographers, often turning efforts to penetrate their subject’s defenses into righteous self-posturing.

The temptation to knock Jefferson off his pedestal and so reveal the hypocrisy of a slaveholder who wrote the script for our democratic creed has been nearly irresistible. The “real” Jefferson must have been a moral monster: his penchant for privacy a mere device to hide a flawed “character” that cannot bear scrutiny. Instead of being his claim to eternal esteem, the eloquent language of the Declaration of Independence—“all men are created equal”—constitutes an everlasting indictment of him. The books under review here suggest that the time is ripe for a less moralistic—and self-congratulatory—approach to Jefferson’s life. Such an approach cannot evade the harsh realities of chattel slavery and white supremacy: no truthful portrait of the master of Monticello can ever successfully extricate him from the slave society that sustained his wealth and influence and made his career as a revolutionary patriot and republican statesman possible. Indeed taking Jefferson seriously on his own terms requires acknowledging the ways in which all aspects of his life made him who he was, and shaped how he presented himself to others, including his family, the people he enslaved, and visitors to his mountain.

Jefferson’s family and the enslaved knew all about life in a slave society, of course, understanding that the master had to develop a persona that allowed him to play his designated role. And the visitors to Monticello whose testimony is included in Kevin J. Hayes’s engaging *Jefferson in His Own Time* were of course well aware that Jefferson exploited large numbers of his fellow human beings.<sup>1</sup> They might have wondered whether (and how) the author of *Notes on the State of Virginia*, with its trenchant denunciations

of slavery, could sustain his faith in the imminence—or at least inevitability—of emancipation, and the topic was occasionally broached in parlor or dining room conversations. But they could have no doubts that, in the meantime, Jefferson lived easily with slavery, or that slave labor was essential to the comfortable way of life family and guests enjoyed on the mountaintop. They also had no reason to believe that when Jefferson retreated to the sanctum sanctorum of his private quarters he agonized about his own moral failings, or that he secretly repudiated his antislavery convictions. He certainly would never have revealed any self-doubt or inner conflict to those who came to see him and enjoy his hospitality. If acting true to form, he more likely rebuffed overtures to intimacy that would have revealed any turmoil, and instead concentrated on orchestrating edifying conversations that made visitors feel good about themselves. “Above all men,” Mrs. Smith wrote, Jefferson had “the art of pleasing, by making each pleased with himself” (Hayes, *Jefferson* 60).

The pilgrimage to Monticello was memorable. Eulogist William Wirt offered an extravagant, idealized version of a visitor's encounter with the “philosopher” and “patriot” that nonetheless epitomized what countless others experienced. The visitor would “be met by the tall, and animated, and stately figure of the patriot himself—his countenance beaming with intelligence and benignity, and his outstretched hand, with its strong and cordial pressure, confirming the courteous welcome of his lips.” Jefferson's manner was “so free, and easy, and frank, and kind, and gay—that even the young, and overawed, and embarrassed visiter at once forgot his fears, and felt himself by the side of an old and familiar friend” (421).

We more cynical and irony-prone moderns are apt to discount the encomia of Wirt and fellow visitors to the “Sage of Monticello.” Where Jefferson seemed friendly and familiar, “as simple and unpretending as nature itself,” we detect artifice, the designs of a masterful conversationalist. Jefferson the builder engaged in a massive self-fashioning project, making spaces that enabled him to stage harmonious encounters with others and facilitate the efficient operation of his plantation household, if not of its agricultural operations. The challenge is to reconstruct the relationships—with visitors, neighbors, family members, and free and enslaved workers—that made Jefferson's self-fashioning project possible. We can “penetrate” Jefferson's defenses when we begin to understand that they are at the same time buttresses of his hard-won sense of self and of the social life that he so

carefully orchestrated at Monticello, the White House, and other homes as the crucial arena for the performance of self.

Jefferson's ingratiating manner may seem artful to us, but it would be a mistake to dismiss Wirt's reference to "nature." Nature and the ideas he associated with it were extremely important to Jefferson. He embraced the image of the natural, "simple and unpretending," man—hence his plain and unadorned style of dress upon his return from his time among the aristocrats of prerevolutionary France. They had turned excess and artificiality in fad and fashion into an art form. Jefferson recoiled, and the plain and unassuming republican—shoes down at the heel, heedless of the comb, riding about without servants—was born. This is the Jefferson who would greet Wirt's prototypical visitor.

The pull toward nature and the natural can be seen in more than Jefferson's outward presentation. Nature, at its most elemental—land, and what could be done with it—was central to his identity. It is not altogether surprising, then, that Peter Hatch's focus on the garden Jefferson created at Monticello would yield one of the most compelling and insightful looks into his personality ever presented. If one could speak of Jefferson, or anyone for that matter, as having a "true self," Jefferson-as-gardener, perhaps, comes the closest to touching the inner man. All aspects of his life came together in this one spot: his personal traits—curiosity, inventiveness, Epicurean sensibility, scientific bent, will to order and categorizing—and his connections to others, to family, enslaved people, neighbors.

Playfulness is not a trait that one typically associates with Jefferson. But Hatch's Jefferson, the self-described "young gardener,"<sup>2</sup> exhibits it in spirit, word, and deed. Here is Hatch on Jefferson's overall approach to an activity that interested him from his youth, and captivated him in his old age: "Jefferson's horticultural experiments displayed an innocent sense of adventure. He reveled in the promiscuous cross-fertilization resulting from planting Cucurbit varieties and species alongside each other to form new types of Squash, cucumbers, and melons. He delighted in odd-colored vegetables, many-headed cabbages, and other curiosities of the vegetables" (10). That this was playfulness to a purpose takes nothing away from the joy that appears to have been at the heart of Jefferson's engagement with his garden and gardening in general. Madison Hemings very astutely observed that Jefferson "had but little taste or care for agricultural pursuits"

(Gordon-Reed 247). But Hemings was speaking of Jefferson's attitude toward the agricultural enterprises at Monticello and Poplar Forest, growing staple crops for the market. The garden was something different, more personal, more revealing of Jefferson's character.

Jefferson did not create and tend his garden alone. Enslaved people—hired from other plantations—performed the arduous task of digging its terraces. When completed, Monticello slaves, called variously “veteran aides” and the “senile corps,” worked under the direction of whatever enslaved man was acting as head gardener at the time to keep things in order. Jefferson's granddaughters participated as well, as did Jefferson on occasion. According to Isaac (Granger) Jefferson, “for amusement he work sometimes in the garden for half an hour at a time in right good earnest in the cool of the evening” (Hatch 13). “Half an hour at a time” does not sound like much. But for a man pegged as the “cerebral” philosopher, Jefferson was very much enamored of working with his hands, and was good at it. In addition to sowing “seeds in the garden,” harvesting “fruit with his grandchildren,” and staking “out garden beds with a transit and chain,” he made “keys and locks and small chains, iron and brass” (13). He was also a woodworker, with several items of furniture attributed to him. The performance of these tasks provided more limited occasions for artifice or restraint. They also worked to blur the boundaries of the vast gulf of power that existed between him and those under his nominal and legal control. The “Great Man” planting a seed in the ground was “gambling”<sup>3</sup> as surely as a common neighbor down the road or, indeed, as surely as the enslaved men and women who planted their own gardens at Monticello and often sold their vegetables to the Jefferson household. They could plan and hope, but all were at the mercy of the vagaries of nature. The combination of this natural leveling, and Jefferson's creativity and will to experiment, justifies Hatch's equation of Jefferson the revolutionary patriot with Jefferson the revolutionary gardener.

Jefferson's garden was an important medium for making and keeping connections to neighbors and friends. His daily work habits, even in retirement, left little time for communion with others. Madison Hemings recalled that Jefferson “occupied much of the time in his office engaged in correspondence and reading and writing,” a report confirmed by Jefferson himself and a number of guests who, at times, expressed frustration with their phantom host who materialized only at set times during the

day (Gordon-Reed 247). Through sending seeds, exchanging gardening tips, and engaging in the annual “spring pea competition,” Jefferson created a community where he could try out new ideas, boast a little, and tease others—all as he pursued his goal of enriching “the United States by the introduction of new and useful vegetables.” For one whose life after public service was not untroubled, “the Monticello vegetable garden was one of the great success stories of his life” (Hatch 13).

By all accounts, Jefferson was a great conversationalist, with a gift for putting visitors at ease and cultivating friendships. Most of the commentaries in Kevin Hayes’s collection date from Jefferson’s second retirement, when the former president was struggling to complete the redesigned and now iconic “second Monticello.” The few earlier accounts include the Marquis de Chastellux’s famous visit to the first Monticello, shortly after Jefferson stepped down as Virginia’s governor and shortly before his wife, Martha, died in 1782, when “a spark of electricity . . . passed rapidly” between the two enthusiastic readers of the Celtic bard “Ossian”—the invention of his supposed “translator,” the Scot James McPherson (Hayes, *Jefferson* 4). Young Abigail (“Nabby”) Adams (later Smith) subsequently encountered the widower and his eldest daughter, Martha (“Patsy”), in Paris, finding him a “man of great sensibility, and parental affection” (13). Many years later, in 1799, another Frenchman, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, visited the retired statesman and improving farmer as he launched his rebuilding project. There were no further reports of “electricity,” but Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and later writers were impressed by Jefferson’s vast stock of knowledge as well as his conversational gifts. The many visitors to Monticello who dominate Hayes’s collection commented extensively on the house, its contents, the clocklike daily routine, and the harmonious exchanges that Jefferson orchestrated with such “intelligence and benignity.”

Hayes chides biographers for failing to recognize Jefferson’s sense of humor, enlisting an impressive list of witnesses to the contrary (Hayes, *Jefferson* ix–xii). Certainly, the “large stories,” witticisms, and flights of fancy that John Quincy Adams and other informants reported were important conversational resources for Jefferson (37–38). Yet Jeffersonian humor did not unleash gales of helpless laughter—or electric charges—that would dissolve distances and connect Jefferson with his interlocutors. Instead he

kept his distance, Wirt wrote, “pouring out instruction, like light from an inexhaustible solar fountain” (421). The “pleasing” but “restrained” conversationalist enlightened, amused, and engaged visitors, but he never gave himself away. It is this self-conscious sense of control that led some visitors to call him “cold,” and that biographers might describe as humorless. If he withheld himself from visitors—and even from friends and family members who could claim a more intimate connection—the ways in which he did so also reveal an acute consciousness of the self Jefferson presented to the world. Jefferson himself, like Monticello, was a work in progress. Not coincidentally, when he retreated to his private study he worked hard at burnishing his legacy for posterity, managing his archive, corresponding with historians, and sketching out a tell-nothing autobiography that chronicled his early public career.<sup>4</sup>

That Jefferson's house was intended to be a kind of self-portrait, as Jack McLaughlin shows in his wonderful *Jefferson and Monticello*, was clear to contemporary visitors. Monticello's site was itself a statement: why would Jefferson build his house on an isolated hilltop, far from the rivers and roads that linked Virginians to the world? Why would visitors have to struggle over rough terrain, in round-about fashion, in order to see Jefferson? Monticello emphatically was *not* going to be a big plantation house, sited to dominate its neighborhood and built to communicate the planter's exalted wealth, status, and power. Chastellux explained Jefferson's choice. His new friend was rich enough to build where he wanted, in defiance of market rationality or conventional status considerations. The “philosopher” and “man of taste” instead found “a spot, where he might best study and enjoy . . . Nature” (Hayes, *Jefferson* 2). Jefferson was truly a *rara avis* in this new country, simultaneously presenting himself as a philosophical gentleman—the epitome of Old World civility, and a match for his elite French visitors—and as a keen student of New World nature, a gardener and scientist.

In Wirt's eulogy, a beaming Jefferson would greet his visitors at the east portico. They came to see the great man, and *he* was what they would see, not the imposing façade of a great house. Monticello drew attention to the architect and his elegant, comfortable, human-scaled design for living. The house was ostentatiously modest, with window treatments that disguised its upper stories, thus creating the illusion of a single-story building. Jefferson encouraged visitors to look away from the house, to enjoy the view and



thus share his perspective on the country and its prospects. The orientation process would continue when they entered the “Indian Hall,” with its artful and edifying array of curiosities. Maps and clocks, Indian artifacts, natural history specimens, busts and portraits of heroes and villains situated attentive visitors in time and place, inviting them into Jefferson’s world. The hall also served as a filter. Through Jefferson’s retirement years, growing numbers of self-invited visitors—foreigners and fellow citizens who believed they knew him, or had a right to know him—ascended the mountain. If Jefferson turned many of them away, the ascent of the mountain, the unfolding landscape, the house and the hall would constitute a memorable pilgrimage: they would have “seen” him. After his death, there was still an aura about the place, the son of the great architect Benjamin Latrobe recalled, despite “the utter ruin and desolation of everything.” When Jefferson’s “spirit took flight from . . . this noble spot which he had selected and improved . . . , there remained a halo lingering around it, which has made it a monument to his memory” (Semmes 120–23).

Those visitors who were admitted into the house effectively became, for the duration of their stays, members of the family. Domesticity did not necessarily connote intimacy, however, for visitors and family members alike were subject to Jefferson’s daily routines and rituals and their movement in the house was strictly regulated. The “public” spaces where domestic life was staged and performed—the parlor, dining room, and tea room—were designed to facilitate agreeable interactions, musical and conversational, or even silent reading. As Wirt’s “solar” imagery suggests, Jefferson was the central figure in these domestic ensembles (though a wrist injury he suffered in Paris kept him on the musical sidelines). But the maestro had a gift for flattering his “familiar friends” and beloved family members, acknowledging and respecting their equality and autonomy.

Jefferson eschewed the hierarchical organization of great aristocratic homes, with the status of a visitor signified by progressive access, through a succession of rooms, to the semisacred person of the great man himself (see McKeon). The public rooms were all on a level: there was no grand staircase to stage ceremonial enactments of condescension and deference, and the intimate scale of these rooms and their openness to each other encouraged familiar conversation. At the same time, thanks to fenestration that maximized natural light and the generous distribution of artificial lighting, the company could withdraw into silent reading and other

more solitary pursuits without withdrawing from each other. Being alone together was a hallmark of the new regime of bourgeois "comfort" that Jack Crowley has so brilliantly delineated.

The conspicuous absence of slaves in visitors' accounts was also comforting: the "servants" were offstage, in the wings, as the players in these domestic scenes well knew. Dumb waiters and revolving service doors spared visitors the experience of dissonant rituals of rank and servility. In his famous indictment of Virginians' "manners" in his *Notes*, Jefferson condemned the "perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions" that characterized "the whole commerce between master and slave" (162). But Jefferson was sensitive to more subtle, less passionate, though nonetheless dissonant manifestations of mastery and servility in the rituals of domestic life. One of the few comments by visitors on the way Jefferson dealt with his slaves testifies to the apparent success of his domestication project. "How gentle, how humble, how kind," were the master's "manners," Margaret Bayard Smith exclaimed: "His meanest slave must feel; as if it were a father instead of a master who addressed him, when he speaks."<sup>5</sup> For modern readers, Smith's conflation of "father" and "master" points toward proslavery paternalism; for Smith, it was comforting to imagine that Jefferson's mastery was predicated on the same good—and far from boisterous—manners that governed domestic life at Monticello, and to which she and other friends and family members so willingly submitted.

In Monticello, all were equally accessible to each other in shared domestic spaces; in his *sanctum sanctorum*, Jefferson was accessible to no one. Daughter Martha used the first room to the left of the Indian Hall, in the private wing of the house, as a schoolroom and office, buffering Jefferson's library, study, and bedroom from family as well as guests. His privacy was not perfect: louvered blinds and ornamental "porticles" on the promenade outside his windows were not completely successful in blocking the view of curious interlopers, slaves discreetly went about their housekeeping, and urgent business might bring a family member or overseer into his bedroom or study. And though the library was generally off limits, Jefferson occasionally invited honored guests to join him there in examining choice volumes. But it was universally understood that he was not to be disturbed.

Retreating behind his "wall of separation," Jefferson refreshed his mind and spirit through reading, writing, and reflection. The space he reserved for himself was critical to the personal privacy he cherished after the death

of his wife, Martha: this is where the independent, autonomous, self-governing individual cultivated his faculties and defined himself against and apart from the world. Yet, paradoxically, if contemporaries could not penetrate this space and know Jefferson intimately, modern students enjoy privileged access to the books he read and the vast correspondence that connected him to the “republic of letters.” This is where he fabricated the cut-and-paste “Jefferson Bible” and fashioned his idiosyncratic synthesis of Christian ethics and Scottish moral philosophy. It was as if the freedom of conscience that was foundational to republican government could be defined as a kind of inviolably sacred space, where the weary and beleaguered statesman could find a sanctuary.

Privacy was not an end in itself for Jefferson, but rather the threshold of the enlightened sociability routinely performed in Monticello’s public spaces. Jefferson crossed that threshold, returning to his company, according to the dictates of the clock: breakfast at 10 a.m., dinner at 3 or 4 p.m., walking in the gardens and grounds culminating in convivial moments in the parlor at the end of the day. This was the Monticello Jefferson imagined when he was away: “I now see our fireside formed into a groupe, no one member of which has a fibre in their composition which can ever produce any jarring or jealousies among us.”<sup>6</sup> And it was the Monticello that daughter Martha, the grandchildren and other family relations, a never-ending stream of visitors, and a large supporting cast of slaves worked hard to make real for the beloved patriarch. Jefferson’s self-fashioning and sociability were themselves social constructs, depending on the more or less willing efforts of others. In late 1793, when he contemplated his first retirement and liberation “from the hated occupations of politics,” Jefferson longed to remain at Monticello, “in the bosom of my family.” “I have my house to build,” he told Angelica Schuyler Church, “my fields to farm, and to watch for the happiness of those who labor for mine.” Securing the “happiness” of “the most blessed of the patriarchs” and his dependents depended on orchestrating the labors of everyone in the “family.”<sup>7</sup> Self-fashioning was all about social relationships.

By their very nature, social relationships require the participation of others. Jefferson lived in a particular type of society that placed him at the top of the social pyramid, in charge of what he would have called his “dependents.” From that position he could command people at various points

on the continuum of power to help along his project of self-fashioning. Because he deals with Jefferson's literary and epistolary record, Hayes's works on Jefferson tend to ignore slavery, a central fact of Jefferson's existence.<sup>8</sup> For obvious reasons, there are not as many up close and personal accounts of Jefferson from enslaved people. Indeed, the recollections of Peter Fossett are the only views of Jefferson given by a person enslaved at Monticello in Hayes's current volume. Whatever one makes of the Hemings paternity question, Madison Hemings's observations about Jefferson are among the most insightful that we have. Jefferson's manners, work habits, personality, and tastes are laid out in a matter of fact fashion by one who was clearly watching Jefferson closely. While Fossett's somewhat nostalgic reminiscence of his time in slavery contributes to an essentially feel-good portrait of Jefferson—he claims not to have known he was a slave during his childhood—Hemings's account, while respectful, eschews sentimentality. He is adamant that he and his siblings knew what slavery meant even when they were children who lived a favored existence on the mountain.

How Jefferson fashioned himself as a slaveholder can come into view mainly from how he chose to deploy his work force in the fields and in the house. It was with the enslaved who served his family personally, many of them blood relatives of his deceased wife, that Jefferson was able to satisfy himself that he was a "good master." His special solicitude toward the Hemings family is well known. He allowed the men of the family to travel freely, hire their own time, and keep their money. The women were exempted from fieldwork, and required to do domestic chores that did not signal their enslaved status. Given that he knew and expressed concern about women toiling in the fields—he once thought of a plan to grow olive trees because picking olives would be less arduous for women—his treatment of the Hemings women, no doubt, helped him maintain his image of himself as a benevolent owner of people.

If Jefferson had any qualms about his relationship to the enslaved, there is little reason to think he was at all discomfited by his relationship to his daughters. Given the plethora of books about Jefferson, and the seemingly inexhaustible interest in life at Monticello, it is something of a surprise that no one before Cynthia Kierner has published a full-length biography of Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha Randolph, the most important person in his life. For many years, the Jefferson family letters were left to stand as the story of the family's life together. This, despite the fact that historians

are typically—and wisely—skeptical of taking any family’s view of itself at face value.

On the surface, the Jefferson-Randolph family letters present to the world a closely knit clan—an adoring father, a doting grandfather who inspired undying devotion and affection from his children and grandchildren. Until the 1970s, biographers of Jefferson accepted that vision uncritically. It took Fawn Brodie’s *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* to complicate the picture. Where others saw Jefferson’s utter devotion to his daughters, she saw not so subtle attempts to manipulate and control them. Where others cast Martha’s intense loyalty to her father as an unalloyed good, Brodie saw it as a more problematic attachment that interfered with, and ultimately helped destroy, her marital happiness. Of course, Brodie also very famously introduced into the mix the “shadow family” that Jefferson had with Sally Hemings. The secrecy that enveloped this circumstance means that we will never really know the specific dynamics of family life at Monticello. But there is simply no way that the existence of Hemings and her children did not shape the contours of Jefferson’s life with his legal white family. As Kierner puts it, “from Martha’s perspective . . . whether Jefferson was truly the father of Hemings’s children probably mattered less than the fact that so many people believed he was” (12).

In addition to playing the role of wife and mother, Martha had to actively participate in the effort to shape her father’s reputation and the outside perception of life at Monticello. Read Kierner on Lafayette’s visit: “Martha, her father, and their supporting cast staged quite a show when Lafayette came to visit, providing their guests with a pleasing meal as they flawlessly performed their respective domestic roles. Martha’s ‘perfect temper’ was part of a persona that, while neither fake nor insincere, sometimes masked the realities of a troubled and complicated life” (6). Brodie’s introduction of more than a hint of pathology into the Jefferson-Randolph family freed others to reconsider the generally treacly presentations of Jefferson’s relationship with Martha and Maria. It also raised questions about Jefferson’s relationships with women in general, and a new generation of scholars began to apply the tools used in gender studies to ask deeper and more pointed questions about Jefferson, the patriarch. One could argue that the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction, casting Jefferson as an irredeemable misogynist who single-handedly ruined the marriage of one daughter, Martha, and would have ruined Maria’s had she not made

her escape in marriage to a man with plantation almost one hundred miles away. Kierner continues in this tradition, but seeks to rescue Randolph from the status of "victim" of Thomas Jefferson, as she often appears in current presentations of life at Monticello.

That Jefferson lost his wife when he was thirty-nine years old, and became a single father to young girls—and that he chose to remain single—is central to the Jefferson family story. By declining to take a new wife, Jefferson left his daughters without a steady female counterpart in their household. For a time, the girls' aunt, Elizabeth Eppes, served as a substitute, but only in her own home, with her own husband, Francis. From 1782 on, Jefferson had to be father and mother to Martha and her younger sister, Maria. The pattern shifted somewhat when Jefferson assumed the presidency and after Jefferson's retirement. President Jefferson had no "First Lady." On occasion, Martha served in that role when she visited her father. When Jefferson retired in 1809, she moved her family into Monticello permanently, taking on the role of "mistress" of the house. Kierner points out that "even in Martha's time, Americans organized their families and households in many ways, only one of which was the idealized nuclear family composed of two parents and their offspring. Neither Martha nor her children spent much of their lives in such supposedly normative households" (11). After his turn in Paris, where he was able to observe firsthand the different approach to family life among the French, Jefferson thought it necessary to champion domesticity of a particular type. His critique of French family life centered exclusively on the role of the woman, whose job it was to attend to her home. In his daughter Martha's case, as the years unfolded, the question was, *whose* home: her husband's or her father's?

In varying degrees, the people in Jefferson's life were enormously affected by his construction of himself as a great man. There were benefits and burdens. Kierner's poignant account of how Martha Jefferson sought to reconcile her devotion to her father with the demands of her own growing family and increasingly estranged husband, Thomas Mann Randolph, underscores the price the patriarch's dependents played in his self-fashioning project. Of course, the blighted lives of the enslaved people who labored for Jefferson's happiness constituted the greatest price—and the one modern observers find most difficult to understand, or forgive. But Peter Fossett's rosy retrospective, and even Madison Hemings's more pointed and revealing memoir, suggest that those closest to Jefferson

basked (or wished they could have basked) in his aura. And for all its sacrifices, the love Martha felt for her father was the central fact of her life story, a family story that tied successive generations to the idealized, seemingly magical place to which Jefferson invited William Wirt and the legion of visitors who have ascended Monticello, up to the present day. This is where biographers can begin to penetrate their subject's defenses, and begin to grasp the dimensions of a self-fashioning project that so profoundly affected so many of his fellow citizens as well as his dependents, for better and for worse.

#### NOTES

1. For another excellent compendium, see Peterson, *Visitors to Monticello*.
2. Jefferson to Charles W. Peale, Aug. 20, 1811, qtd. in Hatch 3.
3. Jefferson to James Monroe, June 19, 1813, qtd. in Hatch 34.
4. The definitive study is Cogliano.
5. "Margaret Bayard Smith's Account of a Visit to Monticello, Monticello—August 1st [29 July–2 Aug.] 1809," in Oberg and Looney, canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-03-01-02-0315>, Jan. 16, 2012, original source: Retirement Series, vol. 1 (Mar. 4, 1809–Nov. 15, 1809).
6. "To Martha Randolph Jefferson," June 8, 1797, in Oberg and Looney, canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-01-29-02-0333>, Jan. 12, 2012, original source: Main Series, vol. 29 (Mar. 1, 1796–Dec. 31, 1797).
7. "To Angelica Schuyler Church," Nov. 27, 1793, in Oberg and Looney, canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-01-27-02-0416>, Mar. 16, 2013, original source: Main Series, vol. 27 (Sept. 1–Dec. 31, 1793).
8. Hayes's earlier work was *The Road to Monticello*.

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