Notes Toward a Psychoanalytic Perspective on Three Virginia “Founding Fathers”

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The New Republic: A Psychopolitical Anomaly

The pattern of events that marked American politics from the start of the Revolution in 1775 to the end of the presidency of James Monroe a half century later has been noted as a case of American “exceptionalism” by those who shaped it, by later historians, and by psychoanalysts.

The founders of the new republic were familiar with the tendency of revolutionary war leaders to impose authoritarian controls on those who had helped put them in power once the battle was won. They had studied the history of ancient Greek and Roman republics “with sensations of horror … at the rapid succession of revolutions by which they were kept in a state of perpetual vibration between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy” (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, 1788, p. 312).

Those who led the American Revolution resolved to break from this pattern. A French traveler to the young confederacy hailed their success: “The American Revolution has nothing in common with all those which preceded it … not the same origin nor the same aims nor the same outcome … not even the same men: their manner of thinking is different” (Mandrillon, 1784, pp. 18-19).

What inspired admiration in observers of the American scene was the unusual duality of the roles played by the revolutionary leaders—first as anti-authoritarian rebels, zealously supporting or actually wielding violence, and next as republican nation-builders, defining, establishing, and then self-consciously conforming to legal and political restraints on their powers.

A psychoanalytical model for the expected cycle of tyranny-revolution-parricide-tyranny was implicit in Freud’s (1913) exploration of certain myths and fetishistic practices in prehistory and in tribal societies. His speculations were extended to psychopolitical theory by Ernest Jones (1951) who sought to explain the destructive proclivities so often characteristic of revolutionary leaders.
The “tragic feature of revolutions,” Jones wrote, is that their leaders “tend to reproduce just the attributes of their predecessors against which they had most vehemently inveighed.” The overturned authority represents the father whom one wishes to replace “with the object of reigning in his stead in the same fashion … and with his same attributes” (p. 261). Once the father has been destroyed, the angry son rules in his place. Thus it often happens, as Charles Brenner concludes, that “yesterday's foe of tyranny becomes today's tyrant.” Usually, in this interpretation, revolutionists “are motivated by an unconscious wish to become like the very rulers they consciously detest” (Brenner, 1974, pp. 225-228). This pattern is exemplified by the sequence of events that unfolded in France after 1789, as former champions of the people became their oppressors, reenacting the classical scenario of a parricidal family tragedy in so many details that it may have provided the prototype for Freud's reflections, as it did generations later for the historian Lynn Hunt (1992).

Yet this model confronts a serious challenge in the American case, where events did not follow the expected path. Thus Brenner's argument that early American political history presents a psychological anomaly as well as an historical one, “something out of the ordinary that deserves special study” (Brenner, 1974, 225-226, 228). This “special study,” however, is still largely lacking.

Freudian theory has inspired a number of studies of revolutionary political elites. Harold Lasswell pointed the way to fellow political scientists in groundbreaking works (1930, 1936). E. V. Wolfenstein (1967) was one of those who followed, interpreting different modes of action shown by Lenin, Trotsky, and Gandhi in the light of their differing early father-son relationships. His findings suggested that the better resolved these relationships had been, the less destructive were the consequences of the leader's revolutionary success. Lewis Feuer (1969) offered psychopolitical hypotheses about the consequences of different life experiences in the leadership of revolutionary student movements in various national contexts. Mazlish (1976) sought common patterns of “revolutionary ascetism” in the developmental histories of recent heads of state. A dimension of revolutionary motivation, “moral masochism,” was examined by William Blanchard (1984) in a study of a dozen revolutionary leaders.

Yet, little about the American revolutionary elite has been explained by these models. One historian, for example, has presented evidence that relations between the Patriot leaders and their fathers were actually less conflictive than those of their counterparts on the Loyalist side (Lynn, 1977).

An obstacle to more fruitful analysis of American revolutionaries has been their heterogeneous social and cultural attributes. The behaviors shown by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson, for example, may have been ego-syntonic in many ways, while the motives and personality of each differed greatly from those of any of the others. Without
being able to distinguish the effects of distinctive individual experience from those owed to the particular milieu in which the individual was reared, a psychoanalytical approach to the motivations of the group as a whole is apt to be inconclusive.

This gives importance to the fact that a handful of Virginian neighbors of similar origins and status, raised in remarkably similar circumstances, played a part out of all proportion to their numbers in the revolutionary movement, in founding the new republic, and in managing it during its first critical decades. Of six Virginian revolutionary leaders—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Marshall, Edmund Randolph, and James Monroe—two played prime roles in framing and adopting the Constitution of 1787, four were presidents of the United States, five secretaries of state, two of war, one attorney general, and one a chief justice. One also was vice president, and three filled terms in Congress.

The combination of common cultural and social formation, shared political aims, and like political roles that is found in this small group of leaders seems to offer an almost experimentally controlled background for analyzing individual developmental and psychodynamic components of the collective behavior pattern that Brenner (1974) and so many others found extraordinary. It offers a unique opportunity to understand better the psychological anomaly presented by the course of early American political history.

Mandrillon (1784) identified what he thought was the distinctive character of American revolutionary leaders: “Fanaticism which almost always has been the cause of … [such] wars was absent” (p. 19). Converting this lack of fanaticism into positive terms, one might characterize these leaders' temperaments as “flexible” and “moderate,” terms actually applied by Carl Binger to what he calls Thomas Jefferson's “well-tempered mind” (Binger, 1970). Jefferson showed, says Binger, “a significant absence of irrational and unconscious guilt and … of … neurotic, masochistic traits that lead to self-damaging behavior” (Binger and Butterfield, 1969, p. 1098-1100). Looking to etiology, this “absence” suggests a low level of repressed rage against the father. It also raises the possibility of a low residue of exclusive, passionate attachment to the primitive mother. Binger's characterization may be used as a paradigm for considering some of the Virginian founders.

A Shared Background

All six of the most nationally prominent Virginian elite shared a heritage: they were descended from mid-seventeenth-century British royalist immigrants. Their families of origin were all of “middling” socioeconomic status holding rather modest plantations where slaves outnumbered the planter's white family in a ratio that varied between three and 15 to one. Unlike many members of the
Virginian social elite of more substantial planters, all six of the national leaders had in common a wholly American education. All were raised in the Church of England, a denomination that made comparatively “soft” demands on its members.

Turning to family structure, all six were the eldest sons of their mothers. (Only Washington was not the eldest son of his father as well.) All had younger siblings, including at least one sister. The mothers of all equalled or surpassed the fathers in social status.

In view of the plantation situation in which these six Virginian leaders grew up, it is highly probable that black slave women participated in their early care. The suckling of young “masters” by such women was a common practice in the Virginia of that time, though one that often went unmentioned to outsiders. The significance of such nurture, as Ainsworth (1967) reported, is that the infant's primary cathexis of the biological mother, commonly so exclusive in today's middle-class Western society, may be diffused among “multiple mothers.” Benedict (1949) also observed that where “there is constant use of wet nurses and nyanyas, older women who … care for the baby,” there is a “much more diffuse relationship [with nurturing figures] during the first year of life than in societies where the child's contact is more limited to that with its own mother” (p. 345).

Direct evidence is lacking on whether these particular Virginian leaders were wetnursed by slave household help, or whether this function was shared with the biological mother or other female members of the white family. In the cases of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Marshall, only the short birth intervals between the many children of Marshall's mother (in every case less than fifteen months), makes such nurture almost certain. For Washington and Jefferson, the evidence (between 16 and 18 months) is inconclusive. In Madison's case the regular interval of about 24 months between his and his 11 siblings' births makes it probable that his mother personally nursed all her children, however many other women may have shared their care.

Besides the use of slave caretakers for small children, the practice of “giving” a very young slave child to a white one as his servant was common on the Virginian plantation. George Washington, who apparently had such a childhood companion, commented on the custom (Marvick, 2000, p. 87). Jefferson too had a youthful servant in attendance from early childhood long past his college days (Stanton, 1993). A boy slave 8 years younger than he was bequeathed to the 9-year-old Madison and became his servant for the next 23 years (Hagan, 1944). These planters' children were thus rarely alone: in a sense, they were constantly “shadowed” by subservient near-age mates.

Morgan (1998) comments that “the intimacy of black nurse and white child had far-reaching effects” (p. 325). He does not expand on the nature of these effects, but one possibility may be mentioned here: Each white child raised in
the setting just described confronted a distinctive psychic task in the course of maturation beyond the familiar one of progressive separation from the nurturing figure. These children were required, as they matured, to transform feelings toward some of those with whom they had lived in symbiosis into attitudes and affects allowing them to treat their former nurses and companions as chattel. The progress of such a child toward adulthood must have been highly colored by such a psychic demand. Identifying the ego-adaptations and the defensive structures that each individual constructed to meet this challenge is a task for the psychohistorian.

Significant evidence of the importance of black presence in the formation of white identity is discovered only in scattered contexts, for, as each generation of the master class neared adulthood, its members had obvious public reasons as well as unconscious motives to deny or conceal their infantile relations with the group they dominated and upon whose services they were dependent.

Yet these relations are likely to have been important for political performance. For example, a certain imagery distinguished our leaders from some of the Virginian elite that never sought roles in national politics: Each showed a sense of a vast public opinion observing their actions and judging them—as though each were on stage. When these particular leaders began to feel the powerful lure of politics, they learned to adapt their ambitions to the national arena and to the personae and styles it called for. In a sense, they had been rehearsing those roles, with the help of a large supporting cast, since early childhood.

Three Virginian Presidents

George Washington was born in 1732, separated by almost a generation from the third Virginian president, James Madison, but linked to him, as to Thomas Jefferson, born in 1743, by common experience and multiple kinship, business and institutional ties.

Both Washington and Jefferson had fathers who traveled widely over long stretches of time and thus were little present in the home during their children's early childhood. Augustine Washington died when his son George was eleven years old. This son would later exaggerate the paternal absence, telling a biographer that he had been only ten when his father died (Marvick, 2000, p. 87). Jefferson's father died when Thomas was fourteen. He too stresses this deprivation; in a short autobiography he pictures himself as left utterly dependent on his own resources after the death of his father, whereas actually he was under the protection of his mother and an influential set of male guardians. In both cases, however, the early loss was a powerful stimulus to ambition and achievement, although the psychodynamic mechanisms that marked this successful striving were very different in the two cases (Marvick and Guiton, 1989; Marvick, 1997a).

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The sibling relationships of the two boys also had similarities. At birth, George Washington acquired two half brothers and a half sister, more privileged children his father had sired with his first wife. While Thomas Jefferson was the eldest son of both his parents (he too had an older sister), when he was just over two years old his father moved the family from their own farm in order to become resident manager of a greater plantation by terms of the will of a friend. As a result, young Jefferson found himself transplanted to a home in which several older children, including two boys, were “lords of the manor.”

In contrast with these family histories, James Madison’s father was very much present in his firstborn’s early life and a “hands on” patriarch for his first 50 years. Thus, while the absent, short-lived fathers of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson could be, to some extent, “reconstructed” in the imagination of their sons to fit their needs and wishes, James Madison’s father remained a constant, formidable presence.

**Washington**

Those who might have wished to apply the discoveries of Freud and his followers to the study of George Washington may have been discouraged by his iconic status. To approach Washington analytically is to take more than the usual risk of being charged with reductionism. Bruce Mazlish (1974) is one of the few who have braved the barricades, albeit fragmentally and as an admitted amateur in the early American field. For him the central problem in approaching Washington was to understand how this little-educated, profoundly conservative, aristocratically disposed Virginian became first a revolutionary leader and then a single-minded champion and skillful director of the republican cause.

Mazlish identifies one of the spurs to Washington’s revolutionary ambitions in the resistance the English military establishment made to his claims for recognition and equal treatment as a heroic young officer. He further suggests, however, that this rejection was given added force in that it repeated his mother’s earlier “lack of confirming love,” an idea which I believe is not supported by other facts.

This is not to say that Washington’s affect toward his mother and her responses may not have been restricted or diffused in infancy. Yet Washington’s personal history gives no indication of unconscious conflict in dealing with his mother, or of unresolved infantile difficulties in separating from her or from any other nurturing figure. Instead, there is evidence that Washington early included his mother in his “team”—the “B” Team, so to speak—of slighted younger siblings (Marvick, 2000). He had been made captain of that team upon his father’s death, and upon his shoulders rested the responsibility to make good its claims for equality and justice. Related to these claims was Washington’s passionate quest for self-validation from his idealized father, a quest repeatedly acted out in
youthful, daring military expeditions in which he rashly tested his mortality, each time triumphing over fate by making narrow escapes from risky assaults on the enemy. With every survival he became more convinced, as he wrote, that “Providence” had extended its guiding hand to preserve him (Marvick, 2000). In this he evokes the gambler who “dares to compel the gods to make a decision about him, hoping for their forgiveness,” seeking “compensation or approval from the father who had abandoned him” (Fenichel, 1945, p. 372).

As Providence continued to give Washington abundant evidence of such approval he became more and more convinced that he possessed the paternal blessing. Mazlish (1974) perceptively notes that by 1775, when Washington accepted command of the Revolutionary army, he had had “an unusual kind of Eriksonian “moratorium” of seventeen years in which he came successfully to terms with himself … [and] was able to return maturely and independently” to a role of responsible leadership (p. 131). In this role he welcomed the high risks of rebellion, confidently taking the place of Father for his soldiers and for his country.

Jefferson

In contrast with Washington, the study of Thomas Jefferson has benefited from too many psychoanalytically informed inquiries to review here. Collectively, they have variously stressed Jefferson's dread of dependency, his feminine identifications, his striving for control of others by indirect means, his antipathy to various forms of authority, and the “ambivalence and contradictions” of so many of his policies and statements (Marvick, 1999, pp. 155-156). In seeking the sources of these characteristics, several writers have cited Jefferson's apparent hostility to his mother (Brodie, 1974; Lockridge, 1992). Barnes (1921) persuasively postulated a special dread of his formidable father to account for his inability to tolerate the authority of older men and his preference for using indirect methods of leadership. But few have attempted a developmental account that would help to construct a psychodynamic picture of Jefferson's complex personality (Marvick, 2001). An essay by Erik Erikson (1974) is a notable exception.

In approaching Jefferson's unique personality, Erikson was apparently unaware of a documented report that the statesman's earliest memory was of the commencement of the family move described earlier. Jefferson, just over two years old at the time, said he remembered “being handed up and carried on a pillow by a mounted slave, as the train [of wagons and horses] set off down the river” (Randall, 1858, Vol. 1, p. 11). It testifies to Erikson's intuition that he identifies Jefferson's response to the experience of heights as of special significance, connecting it with a crisis that occurred during the phase of the child's developmental struggles to achieve and sustain erectness.
Erikson also makes a convincing interpretation of Jefferson' perpetual preoccupation with the building and rebuilding of Monticello, his beloved hilltop refuge, as a quest to recreate for himself the mother's embrace. Noting what he saw as a “lifelong” and “deep nostalgia” in the third president, Erikson (1974) asks, “was it for that mysterious mother about whom, partially because he kept her from us, we as yet know so little?” (p. 56). He assumes that the mother in question was the mother whose letters to himself Jefferson destroyed—the mother in whose home he lived unwillingly for many years and upon reporting whose death he leaves us no sign of affection.

However, both Jefferson's own scant recollections of his childhood and studies of his personality as an adult do point to the loss of an important nurturing figure—very likely a slave—who may have been left behind, as was customary, on his native plantation when he was transplanted to another family's home. Such a rupture, for a two year old, would account for deeply buried feelings of rage and longing, as well as for his lifelong efforts to recreate and regain the supplies represented by the maternal embrace (Marvick, 1997b).

Whatever were the origins of Jefferson's sense of loss, the narcissistic needs it engendered help explain patterns of behavior for which he became known as a politician. Erikson (1974) notes that Jefferson's narcissism was used “artfully and competently” to answer the call for leadership—“to see himself mirrored in the imagery” of the people (pp. 55-56). It was also “used” in many other Jefferson relationships to win the “feedback” he craved, even by means of grossly misrepresenting himself or the outside world. The form taken by this craving also helps understand the dynamics of his forty-year uninterrupted friendship and political collaboration with James Madison.

Madison

As the principal architect of an innovative system of government and a leader in the early struggle to shape it, James Madison's importance ranks as high as either of his Virginian predecessors in the view of many historians. Yet he has not attracted the analytical eye that has been fixed upon Jefferson, or even upon Washington.

Reasons for this are not far to seek. Washington and Jefferson were both tall, strong, impressive figures, endowed by mass followings with charismatic attributes. They had varied lives beyond those of political leader and Virginia planter: the first was a surveyor, an athlete, and a heroic soldier; the second a lawyer, diplomat, and would-be “renaissance man” with a gift for literary eloquence. Both were attentive to their self-presentations, adapting, in dress, gestures, and words, to the publics they addressed. Washington was known for gallantry, and both had reputations for romantic attachments and sexual liaisons. They gave the impression of being men of action. Madison, by contrast, was
small and bookish, shy in large gatherings, always garbed in the same black clerical style and prone to debilitating ailments. His speaking voice was weak, and his literary style impressed highly educated readers chiefly by its evidence of copious study. Aside from his role as a farm manager his sole occupation was as politician. Before he successfully courted, at the age of 43, the widow Dolley Payne, his only certain romantic attachment had ended in its 15-year-old object rejecting him in favor of a younger man.

There has been no scholarly attempt to determine how Madison's psychological development may have shaped his personality and political performance. What follows is the barest preliminary effort to indicate some points to explore.

Madison's influence, until he became secretary of state, was almost entirely confined to his writings and behind-the-scenes roles. Called a "cabinet statesman … better as a thinker than as an actor" (Gay, 1884, p. v), an editor has remarked that in his short autobiography "the books he read thus appear as events in themselves" (Madison, 1945, p. 195).

James Madison Jr. was born on March 16, 1751, the first of 12 children that his 18-year-old mother would bear. Among other white women figuring in the Madison household were his two grandmothers. His mother's mother seems to have been particularly close to her daughter's firstborn. She died when James was nine and bequeathed him the same share of her fortune that she left to her son by a second marriage. James' paternal grandmother lived at Montpelier, the family plantation, until her death when James Jr. was 11. She is said to have been responsible for schooling him until he was sent to a neighborhood schoolmaster.

By the time Madison left home for college, at the age of 18, he had six living younger siblings. Later correspondence shows that he continued relations with all of them into adulthood, except for the sibling whose birth immediately succeeded his. What may have caused a breach with this brother is not known. Nor are there further direct clues to his youthful experience except a few scraps of a very diligent schoolboy's notebook.

Until his arrival at college, Madison led an insulated life. Now finding himself disadvantaged by his provincial literary preparation, he applied himself to his studies with a powerful will, "determined to learn twice as much each day" as the others (Meade, 1857, Vol. 2, p. 100). He made no trips home during his Princeton stay. Meanwhile, unmentioned in his correspondence, his mother, who had given birth to a daughter in 1768, was delivered of a stillborn child in the summer of 1770.

By doubling his course load in the second year, Madison managed to graduate in September 1771, one year earlier than normal. Shortly afterward he received news that his mother had given birth to still another new baby brother. He applied to his father for permission to postpone his expected return home, asking to remain in college until the spring, "from a desire to learn Hebrew and … other studies" (Meade, 1857, Vol. 2, p. 100).
It was at this time that Madison (1945) experienced an emotional collapse, described by him as “suspending the intellectual functions” (p. 197). It was later said by a relative to be “of the nature of epilepsy,” or, as Ketcham (1990) thinks, “epileptoid hysteria.” These symptoms reappeared periodically throughout his life, according to this biographer, “at times of strain and tension” (pp. 51-52).

One may speculate that the news from home helped trigger Madison's sudden breakdown. The coincidence between his mother's delivery of a new baby brother and the culmination of his arduous cerebral efforts may suddenly have allowed to rise to consciousness the libidinal and/or aggressive components of his scholarly activities that had until then been intellectualized. Relevant is the case of a four-year-old boy who, “under the impact of … anxiety … attempted to bind energy to ideas” in order to diminish the danger of “retaliation for discharge” (Wieder, 1966, pp. 294-323).

From the beginning of Madison's correspondence, his letters to his father continually expressed concern for his mother's health. There are points of parallel between these indirect exchanges concerning Nelly Madison's complaints and her son's. Both regarded their health as fragile and their survival as precarious throughout their long lives. One may surmise that the sudden culmination, by graduation, of his intellectual labors, together with the news of an addition to the family, disrupted the intellectuality that had served as a defense against the dangers of his unconscious identification with his mother.

A mark of this feminine identification, evident to many in his apparently sweet and docile disposition and fragile physique, was his unusually eager, prolonged submission to his father. A case reported by Fenichel (1945) of a girl whose sibling was born as she reached her own puberty “at a time when she wished intensely to have a baby by her father” seems relevant (p. 339). In such a fantasy, for a boy, “anal fixation determines the subsequent development. … Following the identification with the mother … the father becomes the object of love, and the individual strives to submit himself to him, as the mother does, in a passive-receptive manner” (Fenichel, 1945, p. 333). According to this clinician, “Sexualization of the function of thinking always has special anal connotations” (Fenichel, 1945, p. 181).

Such connotations are evident in verses Madison (1962-1991) composed as a member of the college Whig Society. Called “Against the Tories,” a rival club, the poem concludes, “Come noble whigs, disdain these sons … Until this tribe of dunces find / The baseness of their grovelling mind / And skulk within their dens together / Where each one's stench will kill his brother” (Vol. 1, pp. 65-66).

A still more scatological fantasy is this verse in which he imagines the enemies as castrated by their muse: “Euterpe then a disclout brought / With grease & boiling water fraught /And well [beswitched?] my sides & back /Which lost its hide at every whack / Urania threw a chamber pot / Which from beneath her bed she brought / And struck my eyes & ears & nose / Repeating it with lusty blows.”
/In such a pickle then I stood / Trickling on every side with blood / When
Clio, ever grateful muse / Sprinkled my head with healing dews / Then took
me to her private room / And straight an Eunuch out I come / My voice to
render more melodious / Arecompence for sufferings odious” (Vol. 1, p. 63).

Among those contemporaries who discussed Madison's personality
sympathetically, his “sweetness” and mildness were generally emphasized.
“Small … sensitive, reserved, in address simple and pleasing … rather
thoughtful and benevolent than strong” is Henry Adams's (1986) description
(Vol. 1, p. 129). But as McCoy (1989) notes, earlier in his career “Madison
had been prone to impute harsh motives to others, indulging his own measure
of partisan passion” (p. 24).

An early, ardent advocate of American independence, Madison was quick
to condemn what he suspected to be wavering among certain Virginians.
When he returned home from Princeton, political figures in the national eye
became his targets. His youthful letters often derogate prominent public men,
including such national heroes as Benjamin Franklin. He included even
George Washington among those who he thought had shown “pusillanimity”
was a touch of Robespierre in this young revolutionary, … an authoritarian
rebelliousness” (pp. 14-15). John Adams was a particular target of
Madison's, especially detested as vain and pompous—qualities that may have
evoked the senior James Madison. Even after Madison became George
Washington's close collaborator in the first years of the republic, he continued
to criticize the older man privately.

Some of Madison's political positions belied his supposed passivity. As
an architect of the Constitution, he proposed giving the national legislature an
absolute veto over conflicting state legislation, deemed a radically
authoritarian measure. As secretary of state, he encouraged Jefferson to
declare a complete embargo on foreign trade, one of the most arbitrary
coercive measures in American history. As president, Madison persisted in
believing that with greater force the prohibition could yet succeed. He never
relinquished his conception of England as the corrupt and repressive enemy of
America, and he nursed predatory ambitions toward Canada.

The very inhibitions that won Madison a reputation for submissiveness
permitted him to gratify some of his aggressive aims. Thus others were
blamed for what was his willing, though protracted, decision for the
avoidable war of 1812 (Stagg, 1983).

Madison's reputation as author and interpreter of the fundamental law of
the United States is scarcely more important as an historical legacy than the
long collaboration with the more colorful Thomas Jefferson that has shaped
the politics of the nation to this day. A Madison biographer observes that the
two men “were so closely bound together that there was a certain artifice in
dealing with one without the other” (Koch, 1966, p. ix).
Madison's nonabrasive, seemingly mild, and docile character made him “such a man as Jefferson, who so much disliked contentious and self-asserting manners, loved to keep by his side,” wrote Henry Adams (1986, Vol. 1, p. 129). Rather than demonstrating weakness, however, Madison' letters to Jefferson often confirmed, rather than softened, the latter's expressions of hostility toward opponents. Madison could be tough enough to restrain Jefferson's generous impulses when politically advisable, contributing to Jefferson's favorable self-image while releasing him from the demand for sacrifice. Madison was adept in casting the older man's aggressivity in a moral light that suited his own needs as well as Jefferson's ideal self-conception (Marvick, 1997a).

Supporting the relationship were worldly benefits that Jefferson would dangle before Madison's eyes. These ranged from material treasures of the Old World that Jefferson dispatched to Virginia in copious quantities throughout his stay abroad to suggesting that Madison was in line for the presidency well before Jefferson himself was ready to try for the job.

Political opponents took the view that the older partner had “seduced” the younger from his earlier support of Federalist policies, drawing around him “the magic circle of his compelling charm and won [him] entirely to the extreme Republican cause” (Beveridge, 1916, Vol. 2, p. 9).

For the psychodynamic basis of this “charm,” we may turn to Fritz Redl's typology of leadership that evokes group-binding emotions (Redl, 1942). One is “the seducer” who wins the loyalty of followers by “committing the initiatory act” that serves the latent drives of the others and allows them to be manifested openly. For the young Madison, Jefferson's eloquence in defying authority, declaring independence, and boldly swearing eternal enmity to tyranny over the mind may have struck notes that helped free Madison from his own ambivalence, allowing him to follow the directions in which his ego pointed. Jefferson was the initiator, and led Madison “through the ‘infectiousness of the unconflicted personality constellation over the conflicted one’ in the service of drive satisfaction” (Redl, 1942, p. 583).

Jefferson's personality did not evoke Madison's father. The few surviving letters from James Madison Sr. sometimes show scant respect for his eldest son's opinions (Madison, 1962-1991, Vol. 14, pp. 20-21, 10-11). Jefferson, on the other hand, deferred fulsomely to the younger man's intellect and learning. The elder Madison's record as a churchman also show him to have been at odds with his son on the latter's most passionate stand—opposition to any restriction on religious beliefs and practices—a position on which he had Jefferson's full support (Meade, 1857, Vol. 2, p. 87; Madison, 1962-1991, Vol. 1, pp. 112-113; Wills, 2002, p. 17).

Madison probably also enjoyed vicarious participation in Jefferson's self-indulgences and sexual exploits. Early in the older man's presidency, a journalistic attack exposed his attempts to seduce the wife of a good friend and accused him.
of using a female house slave as a concubine, siring several children by her. Madison became the “middleman” in the affair, negotiating with the accuser on a possible buy-off, and when it proved unfeasible, probably advising Jefferson to use the “stonewalling” strategy that he adopted (Callender, 1802).

As for his own sexual life, Madison claimed that his 40-year marriage brought him “every happiness … which female merit could impart” (Madison, 1945). His bride, a 26-year-old widow, was the daughter of Virginian Quakers who had expatriated themselves because of opposition to slavery. This radical religious affiliation may have added to her attraction for Madison. Before her wedding Dolley Todd Payne intimated that she “admired” but did not love her prospective husband (Madison, 1962-1991, Vol. 15, p. 357).

A month after the marriage, one Madison relative reported that Dolley's three-year-old son had insisted on sleeping with the newlyweds every night since the ceremony (Moore, 1979, p. 20). James's friends were not surprised that the marriage proved childless. Two years after the wedding, one of them wrote, “Madison still childless, and I fear like to continue so” (Ketcham, 1990, p. 387). Probably these contemporaries viewed “little Jemmy” as lacking virility.

Dolley Madison proved to be a lively, strong-willed woman whose style and skill as a hostess came to dominate social Washington and allowed her to influence powerful political opponents of the Madison administration. Her opinions, “even upon public affairs, had great weight with her husband” (Cutts, 1886, p. 148). A recent study finds her “the member of the founding generation most like present-day politicians” (Allgor, 2000, p. 83). Such a marital relationship had no counterpart in the domestic life of either Jefferson or Washington.

Like Washington and Jefferson, Madison frequently conceded, in private, that human bondage was inconsistent with the rights of man. Unlike Washington, he took no steps to end his own status as a slaveowner, nor did he, like Jefferson, attempt to defend it. Although he recognized that slavery was the basis for most of the friction between North and South, he did not confront the basic constitutional question of whether the Union could endure “half-slave.” To do so, thinks Rakove (1990), was incompatible with Madison's “quizzical intelligence that preferred careful distinctions to simple formulations” (p. 178). This characteristic intellectual defense may have been particularly necessary against an issue that threatened a Union that he felt to be the laborious creation of his own mind.

In comparing the personal histories of these three early Virginian presidents, it seems possible that Madison, the most renowned for mildness, is the one whose personality most closely follows the model of the angry revolutionary striving to overcome his passivity toward the father and replace him with his own righteous authority. Washington's leadership embodied the persona of an idealized father who allows autonomy and dignity to all his children and administers equal justice.
under firm restrictions of the law. Jefferson presented himself as the enlightened facilitator of a virtuous citizenry's aspirations for perfection, freed from the coercive powers of earlier generations. Madison's impulses seem to have been at the same time more ferocious and more firmly subjected to control, sublimated in intellectual activity that disguised their possible destructive consequences from himself as well as from the public of his time, and from the many historians to come.

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