



The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson

Kevin J. Hayes

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Thomas Jefferson was an avid book-collector, a voracious reader, and a gifted writer--a man who prided himself on his knowledge of classical and modern languages and whose marginal annotations include quotations from Euripides, Herodotus, and Milton. And yet there has never been a literary life of our most literary president.

In *The Road to Monticello*, Kevin J. Hayes fills this important gap by offering a lively account of Jefferson's spiritual and intellectual development, focusing on the books and ideas that exerted the most profound influence on him. Moving chronologically through Jefferson's life, Hayes reveals the full range and depth of Jefferson's literary passions, from the popular "small books" sold by traveling chapmen, such as *The History of Tom Thumb*, which enthralled him as a child; to his lifelong love of Aesop's *Fables* and *Robinson Crusoe*; his engagement with Horace, Ovid, Virgil and other writers of classical antiquity; and his deep affinity with the melancholy verse of Ossian, the legendary third-century Gaelic warrior-poet. Drawing on Jefferson's letters, journals, and commonplace books, Hayes offers a wealth of new scholarship on the print culture of colonial America, reveals an intimate portrait of Jefferson's activities beyond the political chamber, and reconstructs the president's investigations in such different fields of knowledge as law, history, philosophy and natural science. Most importantly, Hayes uncovers the ideas and exchanges which informed the thinking of America's first great intellectual and shows how his lifelong pursuit of knowledge culminated in the formation of a public offering, the "academic village" which became UVA, and his more private retreat at Monticello.

Gracefully written and painstakingly researched, *The Road to Monticello* provides an invaluable look at Jefferson's intellectual and literary life, uncovering the roots of some of the most important--and influential--ideas that have informed American history.

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