

*The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744.* By KENNETH A. LOCKRIDGE. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1987. Pp. xiv, 201. \$19.95.)

In the garden at Westover, the tomb of William Byrd II bears an elaborate epitaph that memorializes this Virginia planter as a man possessing "a great elegance of taste and life, the well-bred gentleman and polite companion." The eulogist makes a big point of emphasizing Byrd's formative experiences during his youth in England and gives the distinct impression that early entrée into English polite society was the high point of Byrd's life. Fourteen of twenty-four lines are devoted to a resume of Byrd's educational and social successes in England between the years 1674 and 1696, from birth to age twenty-two:

Being born to one of the amplest fortunes in this country,  
 He was early sent to England for his education,  
 Where under the care and direction of Sir Robert Southwell,  
 And ever favored with his particular instructions,  
 He made a happy proficiency in polite and varied learning.  
 By the means of this same noble friend,  
 He was introduced to the acquaintance of many of the  
     first persons of his age  
 For knowledge, wit, virtue, birth, of high station,  
 And particularly contracted a most intimate and bosom  
     friendship  
 With the learned and illustrious Charles Boyle,  
     Earl of Orrery.  
 He was called to the bar in the Middle Temple,  
 Studied for some time in the Low Countries,  
 Visited the Court of France,  
 And was chosen Fellow of the Royal Society. . . .

By the time Byrd returned to Virginia in 1705 at age thirty-one, he was "eminently fitted for the service and ornament of his country"—to serve as receiver general of the Virginia revenue, as the colony's agent at Whitehall, and as member and eventually president of the Virginia Council. (For the complete text of the epitaph see Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinsling, eds., *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary [1717-1721] and Other Writings* [New York, 1958], 11.)

Modern commentators such as Louis B. Wright and Pierre Marambaud (*William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744* [Charlottesville, Va., 1971]) have echoed these eulogistic sentiments. They present Byrd as the quintessential eighteenth-century gentleman, who in the eulogist's words "wore his learning with grace" (presumably unlike Cotton Mather) and whose Anglo-American urbanity gave him "a mellow splendor." Kenneth A. Lockridge sees things differently—although not entirely differently, be-

cause he agrees with the tombstone epigrapher that Byrd's early experience in England was crucial. But Lockridge views this experience as psychologically disastrous, and he challenges the notion that Byrd's English training endowed him with an authentic gentlemanly style. According to Lockridge, the "central event" in Byrd's life took place in 1681, at age seven, when he was shipped from Virginia by his parents to attend Felsted School in Essex. The shock of being sent to England alone at this tender age caused Byrd to develop a "brittle personality" (p. 12). During his school days in England he received inadequate guidance and nurture from family and friends and was burdened with his father's high expectations. Not finding a mentor to show him how to achieve gentlemanly status, young William tried to learn from prescriptive conduct books such as Henry Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman*. William Byrd I communicated rarely with the boy and saw him only twice again before his own death in 1704. Consequently, young Byrd became extremely insecure and developed deep-seated fears of rejection. His introduction to Sir Robert Southwell and Charles Boyle—which happened in the mid-1690s when he was more than twenty years old—compounded his psychological problems by tempting him to marry an English heiress and settle in London. But when he pursued the ladies with stilted love letters, they scorned him, and neither Southwell nor Boyle chose to launch Byrd on an English career. Thus upon the death of his father the young Byrd was forced to become a colonial planter. The move back to Virginia was traumatic, and he spent many years as "an emotionally handicapped gentleman," trying "to demonstrate that a genteel life was possible in Virginia" (pp. 27, 46).

This portrayal of Byrd as an emotional cripple is derived from Lockridge's reading of the three surviving volumes of Byrd's shorthand diary, spanning the years 1709-1712, 1717-1721, and 1739-1741. (There were presumably about ten other volumes, now lost; Byrd seems to have kept this diary continually from around the time of his return to Virginia until his death.) Byrd's secret diary has baffled most previous commentators. Why is each entry so formulaic, so repetitive? Why did Byrd, who could write in a most engaging manner, adopt a dreary bookkeeper style for his diary? Why, when he expressed strong opinions in his *Secret History of the Line*, did he offer so few personal reflections in this far more private document? Why indeed did he go to the trouble of making extensive daily entries when he had so very little to say? Why did he keep a diary at all?

Lockridge argues that this diary was triply encoded by Byrd: the shorthand code hides a behavioral code that hides an emotional code. And the emotional code is what really matters. Byrd obsessively ordered his daily experiences into a rigid routine because it was only through this ritualistic technique that he was able to master his emotions and gain reassurance. Starting the diary shortly after 1705, when he was a desperately conflicted "would-be gentleman in the wilderness" (p. 43), he adopted shorthand in order to hide his compulsive behavior from his new wife Lucy. Examining the three surviving diary segments sequentially,

Lockridge argues that during 1709-1712 Byrd's daily reviews of his performance bolstered his self-confidence: he learned how to cope with his tempestuous wife and how to endure the death of his son, and he could chalk up a string of social and political successes. But the diary of 1717-1719 "is scarcely bearable to talk about" (p. 84) because Byrd was now a miserable widower in London (Lucy died in 1716) who frequented bordellos and casinos and made a fool of himself by pursuing rich young heiresses above his social station. Returning to Virginia in late 1719, obsessed with fears and dreams, Byrd used his diary in 1720-1721 to help come to terms with his situation. In the closing years of his life he finally achieved a genial maturity, as shown by his two attractive histories of the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina, and also by his final diary segment of 1739-1741, in which he generally closed each entry: "I talked with my people and prayed."

Lockridge's book is characteristically imaginative, provocative, stimulating, and fun to read. His decoding of Byrd's diary is highly ingenious, and his argument that the man gradually changed from mannered youth to relaxed old age is persuasive in many respects. Yet I have problems with Byrd as an "emotionally handicapped gentleman." Comparing him with such other American colonial diarists as Michael Wigglesworth, Samuel Sewall, Cotton Mather, Ebenezer Parkman, Landon Carter, Philip Fithian, and Thomas Thistlewood, one finds that what separates Byrd from all the others (except Thistlewood) is not his insecurity but his complacent sensuality. Nothing in Byrd's three diaries suggests to me that he was ever seriously bothered by this sensualism. In London during 1717-1719 he would spend a typical day composing a high-flown letter of undying love in the morning, exchanging visits with persons of fashion in the afternoon, and fornicating with a prostitute in the evening, after which he would say his prayers (or note that he forgot to do so) and go to sleep. Certainly, there was nothing ungentlemanly about such conduct. The earl of Orrery, Byrd's chief companion during these London years, joined him on some of his brothel tours.

William Byrd I would have been startled to learn that his son suffered deep psychological damage by being sent to boarding school at the age of seven. English parents of the Byrds' status supposed then—as they still do—that boarding school is psychologically beneficial for seven- and eight-year-olds: when removed from the nuclear family and thrown among their peers, they will develop self-reliance and a necessary awareness of social place. And the elder Byrd had an added motive for sending his children away from home in the 1680s, when the Virginia labor force was changing from white servants to black slaves. In 1685 William Byrd I explained that four-year-old Nutty was joining her brother William in England because she "could learne nothing good here, in a great family of Negro's" (Marion Tinling, ed., *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776* [Charlottesville, Va., 1977], I, 32). In the West Indies, where the planters were even more anxious than in Virginia to segregate their offspring from black playmates, Edward Long

estimated that three-quarters of the Jamaican proprietors sent their children to England, consigning them like hogsheads of sugar to anonymous merchants who became perforce their guardians. I suspect that in Byrd's case the racial situation in Virginia was at least as important as schooling in England in determining his personality and his concept of gentlemanly conduct. Although Byrd's diary conveys disappointingly little about his methods of slave management, it is evident, as Michael Zuckerman has pointed out ("William Byrd's Family," *Perspectives in American History*, XII [1979], 253-311), that Byrd defined his "family" to include his slaves. Here he differed both from nonslaveholding colonists farther north and from fellow slaveholders in the West Indies. The Jamaican overseer Thomas Thistlewood, another diarist who frankly describes his sex life, fornicated almost daily with slaves in Jamaica but not at all with prostitutes during an extended stay in London, whereas Byrd in 1717-1721 fornicated with prostitutes almost daily in London and very little if at all with slaves in Virginia. These sexual habits were not accidental. They reflected profound differences in social outlook between these two slave-based provinces of British America.

One final observation, inspired by having spent too many years editing manuscripts. Since a large body of Byrd's private writings has survived, it is easy to forget that something like 90 percent of his papers have disappeared. These losses are important, especially since there is practically no documentation for Byrd's boyhood and youth. Lockridge argues that because Byrd makes no mention of his English relatives in his diaries and correspondence, and only identifies one person as a school fellow from Felsted, he can have had no relationship with a "significant other" while he was a child at school. This may well have been so, but the fact of the matter is that Byrd's first dated surviving letter was written in 1697, long after he had left school. Byrd's tiresome love letters bulk large because he saved them, but examination of the diaries for 1709-1712 and 1717-1721 indicates that he wrote many hundred other letters, very likely more appealing to our taste, that are now lost. We do have four lively and polished epistles to his patron Sir Robert Southwell, written in 1701, which demonstrate Byrd's "happy proficiency in polite and varied learning," as the tombstone epigrapher puts it. In my opinion, our diarist was a self-confident and self-indulgent Anglo-American gentleman from an early age.

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*The Great Journey: The Peopling of Ancient America.* By BRIAN M. FAGAN.  
(New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987. Pp. 288. \$19.95.)

This book is a well-crafted detective story. To be sure, archaeology is detective work, because archaeology always involves the sifting of evidence, followed by the making of deductions, which this book does