

The Letters of C. Vann Woodward

This page intentionally left blank



THE LETTERS OF
C. Vann Woodward

EDITED BY
Michael O'Brien

Yale
UNIVERSITY PRESS

New Haven & London

Published with assistance from the Kingsley Trust Association Publication Fund established by the Scroll and Key Society of Yale College; and from the foundation established in memory of James Wesley Cooper of the Class of 1865, Yale College.

Copyright © 2013 by Michael O'Brien.

Letters by C. Vann Woodward copyright © 2013 by Yale University.

All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Yale University Press books may be purchased in quantity for educational, business, or promotional use. For information, please e-mail sales.press@yale.edu (U.S. office) or sales@yaleup.co.uk (U.K. office).

Designed by James J. Johnson.

Set in Bulmer type by Integrated Publishing Solutions, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Woodward, C. Vann (Comer Vann), 1908–1999.

[Correspondence]

The letters of C. Vann Woodward / edited by Michael O'Brien.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-300-18534-8 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Woodward, C. Vann (Comer Vann), 1908–1999—Correspondence. 2. Historians—United States—Biography. 3. Southern States—Historiography. I. O'Brien, Michael, 1948 April 13— II. Title.

E175.5.W66A4 2013

975'.007202—dc23

2013011897

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48–1992 (Permanence of Paper).

For Steven Stowe
in friendship

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Introduction
ix

Editorial Note
xlv

1. Early Years, 1926–45
1

2. Johns Hopkins, 1946–62
114

3. Yale, 1962–77
233

4. Last Years, 1977–99
340

Acknowledgments
409

Index
411

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

The rationale for publishing letters varies. There are a few whose letters justify publication because their author had a remarkable gift for the form, but perhaps little else. Madame de Sévigné would occasion scant interest for her quiet routines (reading, visiting a salon, listening to a nightingale) as a lesser French aristocrat of the late seventeenth century. But her letters were exquisitely good at describing her world, which contained those—the Bourbon royal family, Madame de la Fayette, La Rochefoucauld—who then cut a greater figure in the world than the widow bereft of her child, but who now seem lesser than the woman who but scribbled. There are then those who are regarded as immensely important, for sundry reasons—ruling an empire, writing an opera, or examining strange animals on the Galapagos—and who happened to write letters, not especially well, but they have been published nonetheless because every scrap of Lincoln, Mozart, and Darwin is felt to be indispensable. Next, there is a handful of those who are “truly great,” as Stephen Spender would fantastically have it, in both life and letters, but these are very, very few.¹ Cicero and Voltaire certainly, Jefferson perhaps. Lastly, there are those who are significant enough that the world cares about them, whether or not they wrote an engaging epistle. If they did not, the letters stay in archives and are used only by the specialized scholar. If they did, the letters get published. This last is C. Vann Woodward’s case.

1. Stephen Spender, “I think continually of those who were truly great” (1931); Stephen Spender, *Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), 45–46.

Of his significance as an American historian, there can be no doubt. There have now been several generations of scholars who have described, criticized, and contributed to fashioning the significance of Woodward. He himself was not the least of these fashioners. That significance was not a closely guarded secret. In his lifetime, there were prizes (Bancroft, Pulitzer), presidencies of scholarly organizations, and a wardrobe of honorary degrees from home and abroad. From early middle age, he taught in the best universities and wrote for the best editors, and the intellectual world noticed when he spoke. While still in his sixties, he was designated a master of his craft and, a few decades later and in his lifetime, there was an intellectual biography of him and a volume of criticism. Another such critical volume appeared posthumously to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his most important book.² There is a lecture series named for him, a prize, a professorial chair, and, fleetingly, a gossipy blog about academia whose witty author dubbed himself “C. Vann Winchell” and presumed that C. Vann would be as recognizable as Walter.³ To be sure, the bubble of reputation can burst after death. This has not happened to Woodward, though his *nachleben* is yet young.

Taken all around, if one were to play the game of ranking the greatest American historians since the birth of the republic, it is probable that many cognoscenti would put him, probably not in the top ten, but perhaps in the top twenty, somewhere below Henry Adams, above Vernon Parrington, and around about Frederick Jackson Turner. If one were to play the more circumscribed game of ranking the greatest historians of the American South since the birth of the South, he would probably win hands down, at least if the voters knew what they were about.⁴

2. David M. Potter, “C. Vann Woodward,” in *Pastmasters: Some Essays on American Historians*, ed. Marcus Cunliffe and Robin Winks (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 375–407; John Herbert Roper, *C. Vann Woodward, Southerner* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); John Herbert Roper, ed., *C. Vann Woodward: A Southern Historian and His Critics* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); John B. Boles and Bethany L. Johnson, eds., *Origins of the New South Fifty Years Later: The Continuing Influence of a Historical Classic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

3. The C. Vann Woodward Lectures in Southern History and Literature at Henderson State University; the C. Vann Woodward Dissertation Prize of the Southern Historical Association; the Peter V. and C. Vann Woodward professorship at Yale; the blog can be found at <http://historygossip.blogspot.com/>.

4. When the *Oxford American* recently asked a panel of experts to vote for the best Southern “nonfiction of all time,” Woodward had three entries in the top fifteen. Apart from Flan-

Before settling to this introduction's primary task of considering Woodward's letters—appraising the cogency of his historical interpretations is only a tangential concern here and has been well done elsewhere—it will be helpful to begin with a bare summary of his life, some of whose facts will need to be elaborated later. Comer Vann Woodward was born in the tiny village of Vanndale, northeastern Arkansas, on November 13, 1908; he was the son of a school superintendent. In 1911 or 1912, his father moved to a similar job in Arkadelphia and then, two years later, to Morrilton (both in central Arkansas), where the younger Woodward grew up and attended the local high school, over which his father presided. In 1926, he went to study at Henderson-Brown College in Arkadelphia, but in 1928, when his father became dean of Emory Junior College in Oxford, Georgia, he transferred to Emory University in Atlanta, from which he graduated with a Ph.B. in 1930. Then, for a year he taught freshman English at the Georgia Institute of Technology, before (1931–32) completing an M.A. in political science at Columbia University. He returned to teach at Georgia Tech until laid off in 1933, then was mostly unemployed for a year or so, during which time he began to write a biography of Tom Watson, the Georgia Populist. In 1934, he secured a fellowship to pursue a doctorate in history at the University of North Carolina, from which he graduated in 1937. He then taught at the University of Florida (1937–39), the University of Virginia (1939–40) as a visiting professor, and Scripps College in southern California (1940–43) as an associate professor, before taking a commission in the U.S. Navy. In 1946 he went to Johns Hopkins University as an associate professor, becoming a full professor a year later, and he stayed in Baltimore until he moved to Yale in 1962 as Sterling Professor of History, a position from which he retired in 1977, though without leaving Connecticut, where he was to remain for the rest of his life, which ended on December 17, 1999. In December 1937 he married Glenn Boyd MacLeod (1910–1982), and in 1943 they had their only child, Peter Vincent, who predeceased his parents in 1969.

Along the way, C. Vann Woodward published nine books as sole author and edited a further six, as well as producing a small number of scholarly articles and hundreds of book reviews, all of which, cumula-

nery O'Connor (with two), he was the only author to have more than one entry: see <http://www.oxfordamerican.org/articles/2009/aug/31/best-southern-nonfiction-all-time/> (accessed 5 January 2012).

tively, transformed how the history of the American South, especially after the Civil War, was viewed. It will be useful, briefly, to describe the implication of this scholarship. Before Woodward came along, the history of the American South had been preoccupied with the colonial period, especially that history of Virginia which might explain the American Revolution and celebrate Founding Fathers, and with the era of the Civil War, understood as a regrettable catastrophe, the more catastrophic because of the sequel of Radical Reconstruction. To the events of the mid-nineteenth century, the fact of slavery was guardedly thought to be relevant, though in the hands of its most erudite historian, Ulrich B. Phillips, the institution was viewed as the defensible means by which uncivilized Africans had been made serviceable as workers for a modern America. The history of the post-Reconstruction South was little written and, when it was, understood as the worthy, if mildly frustrating, venture of a “New South”—that is, the remaking of the South in the image of Massachusetts, if with better manners and a wiser racial system. The prejudice of the historiography was that the upper and middle classes had done a good job in containing ominously unruly elements (blacks, poor whites, misguided radicals, ill-informed Northerners) and, if left in charge, would gradually improve matters. Industry would prosper, education would improve, and farmers would make a better living, and the region would serenely reassume its rightful place in the American order of things, a place that its self-evident gifts merited. This New South was “marked by a spirit of hopefulness, a belief in the future, and a desire to take a fuller part in the life of the nation.”⁵ Hence the extant historical literature was, for the most part, an affidavit for the established order.

Woodward turned all this on its head. To the contrary, his books suggested, Radical Reconstruction had been a worthwhile experiment in egalitarian politics, and its failure was to be regretted. The Compromise of 1877 was a squalid deal between white Northerners, anxious to retain national political power and willing to abandon inconvenient black allies, and white Southerners, keen to regain local political power and accept a federal economic patronage that confirmed the South’s new status as a colonial economy. The region, black and white, after 1877 was not pulling together but was riven by savage class, racial, and economic tensions,

5. Holland Thompson, *The New South: A Chronicle of Social and Industrial Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921), 8.

which eventually led to the system of Jim Crow for blacks and systematic disfranchisement for blacks and poorer whites alike. These tensions occasioned the Populist revolt, a splendid challenge to the established order that failed and, in time, occasioned a bittersweet reaction, as even the tribunes of the disadvantaged—chief among them Tom Watson of Georgia—turned to the vicious mendacities of racism, anti-Semitism, and demagoguery. Progressivism did little to alter this situation but merely tinkered: a few better schools for whites, some paved roads, a less violent and disorderly enforcement of the new racial order, and many pious and complacent sentiments. So Woodward's was a bleak history, redeemed by two things. Firstly, poverty, military defeat, and insistent tragedy had taught Southerners a kind of wisdom about the intractability of the human condition, which Northerners, intoxicated with success, had not acquired. Secondly, the bastards, though they had mostly prevailed, had not gone unchallenged. There had been "forgotten alternatives," dissident thinkers, discontinuities, moments that occasioned encouragement.⁶ Southern history was not stable but always shifting, contingent, and so promising, for those who wished for a more humane social order that might fulfill "the political aspirations and deeper needs of the mass of the people."⁷

Understanding this accomplishment has, of necessity, so far proceeded by critics reading Woodward's writings. Reading his private papers is another route, now available. But these papers have a form, mostly shaped by Woodward himself, which alternately facilitates and constrains what it is possible to understand.

Woodward liked to write letters and was a magpie about papers. There are many thousands of documents, mostly in the collection of his papers held by the Manuscripts and Archives division of the Yale University Library, which had invited him to donate them soon after his retirement.⁸ The bulk was transferred across the street from his small and fairly gloomy office in the Hall of Graduate Studies in the mid-1980s,

6. "Forgotten Alternatives" is the title of the first chapter of CVW, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

7. CVW, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 395.

8. Lawrence Dowler to CVW, 8 March 1978, C. Vann Woodward Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. All manuscripts hereinafter cited can be assumed to be in this collection, unless otherwise specified.

with another batch in the mid-1990s. After his death, the last items were added and, in 2004, the collection, having been catalogued, was opened for the use of scholars. In all, there are ninety-six boxes, which makes his one of the largest manuscript collections of any modern American historian.⁹ To a great extent, the papers seem to replicate how he kept his own files during his lifetime. There are, firstly, boxes (Series I) which contain letters to and from individuals and organizations; these are organized, first, alphabetically, and then chronologically. Series II collects his writings, arranged in groups (shorter writings, books, reviews, unpublished works, and lectures); these boxes mingle manuscripts and his correspondence with editors and friends asked to read drafts. Series III concerns “subjects” and is eclectic, while Series IV is designated “research” and is, again, eclectic (note cards, applications for research grants, correspondence with archives, copies of historical documents). Series V collects papers relevant to his time at Yale (departmental matters, letters with administrative officials, the record of his terms of employment). Series VI is dubbed “personal,” by which is mostly meant family documents (including some from the nineteenth century), but also diaries, material to do with students, some job offers, photographs, and clippings.

This arrangement is somewhat unusual. It is more common for personal papers to be segregated into incoming and outgoing correspondence, arranged either alphabetically by correspondent or chronologically. At Yale, rather, the researcher comes to the evidence differently. Woodward writes and somebody replies, or he gets a letter and responds, but alphabetical quirkiness means one can jump immediately from a 1934 letter to one in 1988, from a friend in South Carolina to an organization in South Africa. This randomness is compounded because a correspondence with a given individual, or documents concerning him or her, can show up in many places. Woodward’s friend and collaborator Richard Hofstadter, for example, is scattered through the papers—in Series I in the “H” folders under “Hofstadter,” but also in the “O” folders, in a subset of the folders containing Woodward’s correspondence with Oxford University Press about the *Oxford History of the United States*, which he coedited with Hofstadter in the 1960s. He is also in the “A” folders of Series I, under

9. Of other Yale historians whose papers are held in the Sterling Library, those of George W. Pierson come to 37 boxes, Ralph Gabriel 23, Samuel Flagg Bemis 68, and Charles M. Andrews 68. The Richard Hofstadter Papers at Columbia are in 47 boxes, the Eric McKittrick Papers in 51.

“American Historical Association.” In Series II, he appears in the folders that concern Woodward’s *The Burden of Southern History*, because they corresponded about the manuscript. In Series III, there is a folder that concerns Hofstadter’s death, including the text of Woodward’s memorial address for his friend. The upshot is that the researcher gets a large sequence of mini-correspondences and topics, a sequence which has the advantage of focusing attention on how Woodward, in a given context, dealt with individuals and organizations. The disadvantage is that development over time is obscured, as is the nature of a relationship with any given individual, when that person (less so, organizations) appears in many contexts in Woodward’s life, as many of his friends, students, and colleagues necessarily did.

These are hindrances to understanding that can be readily overcome, of course. Making sure that a narrative does not duplicate an archive’s arrangement of evidence is habitually one of any historian’s tasks. Another problem inherent in the Woodward papers is, however, more or less insuperable. Woodward was a reserved man who disliked exposing himself to the public gaze. “I do not like to write about myself,” he said to those who pried and elsewhere added, “Autobiography . . . is not a branch of literature which I have ever cultivated.”¹⁰ In principle, he thought that a historian’s private life was fair game for the historian. In 1984 he said to John Herbert Roper, after reading the latter’s study of Ulrich Phillips, “I was glad to see you break new ground in biography by endowing a historian with a marriage and an emotional life.”¹¹ Woodward had, after all, begun his scholarly life as a biographer, not uninterested in the personal. Still, when it came to his own life, he preferred reticence, once published memoirs notable for their silence about himself, and purged his own papers of anything too intimate.¹² When the friend of a colleague once asked his advice on how to dispose of personal papers, exchanged between herself and the colleague, he wrote back that they ought to be destroyed. “If you can’t quite bring yourself to burn them, I would suggest that you seal them and leave instructions for your attorney in your will to destroy them unopened.” He added that this was his own policy about “certain correspondence of my own—things of deep personal meaning

10. CVW to Perry Curtis, 3 January 1967; CVW to Mary M. Heslin, 8 January 1965.

11. CVW to John Herbert Roper, 27 July 1984.

12. CVW, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

but strictly off the record.” He explained that this was not a conflict for a historian, this destruction of the evidence of the past. “As for the ‘historical record,’ I have managed over the years to enjoy a comfortable relation with Clio upon the understanding with her that I tell the whole truth as I understand it regarding such history as I write. But that is with the understanding that my muse agrees that some things are not for the record, and therefore not within her province or my obligation.” This was necessary because the world was full of those with few scruples, “scandal mongers” who liked repeating tittle-tattle.¹³

One cannot know reliably whether this purge arose because he had intriguing matters to conceal, or because he felt that what was private, intriguing or not, should remain private. Probably the latter. Either way, reticence could not be perfectly achieved, because he could not control what might appear in the papers of others nor could he control the fact that, when you write so many letters over so many years, you are likely to offer occasional hostages to posterity’s fortune, because the boundaries between the personal and professional are necessarily porous. As he aged, he was more willing to reminisce and a few interesting documents, intentionally or not, slipped through—some of his and his wife’s medical records, for example. Still, the fact remains that this volume is obliged to be a study, not of the full emotional and intellectual experience of C. Vann Woodward, but of the professional life of a historian in the mid-twentieth century and, perhaps, none the worse for that. We do not lack self-revelations from those of Woodward’s era, but documents that help us understand the working life of a historian are in shorter supply.

So what is the overall shape of his epistolary oeuvre? Unsurprisingly, there is a sharp distinction between his early and later correspondence. In time Woodward would become an establishment figure par excellence and inhabit the center of American intellectual culture, insofar as it had a center. Since he became very willing to belong to and serve organizations, later there is a tremendous amount of correspondence that might be regarded as administrative. Reports on grants and manuscripts, letters suggesting nominees for prizes and honors, references for students and colleagues, and the like. Much of this was routine and of small interest, but some is very significant and each of these genres—the graduate

13. CVW to Katherine Verdery, undated (but the letter mentions the approach of Yale’s tercentennial, so presumably was written in the 1990s).

student reference and the reader's report, after all, are as much genres as the haiku and the short story—deserves representation in a volume such as this. In addition, and to surprising degree, he got letters from his reading public, to whom he courteously replied, sometimes cursorily, but sometimes fully. That he was able to generate so many thousands of documents is a measure not only of his assiduity and conscientiousness, but also of his standing, as at Hopkins and Yale he had access to a secretary, to whom he dictated letters or gave handwritten drafts; he also used a Dictaphone. He sometimes typed his own letters (especially when working from home), and in both cases carbons were habitually kept. Now and again, especially for brief letters, he wrote in longhand.

The earlier correspondence is different. Though he used a typewriter at least from 1930, he composed more handwritten letters (and postcards) and, significantly, did not make carbons until the late 1930s. So the survival of this early correspondence depends more on whether the recipient kept the letter and whether, in time, it found its way to an archive. It is likely that he wrote far fewer letters, since the demands on him were fewer, and of those, few survive. As importantly, until he went to Johns Hopkins in 1946 he was fairly unimportant, as the self-important world reckons importance. Almost all his early correspondence, therefore, was with friends, overwhelmingly fellow Southerners, and never with the grandees of the Ivy League, and only a little with New York editors. Woodward had not been the son of privilege and had not attended the best universities as an undergraduate, and, though he attended Columbia University and lived in New York for a year, he did not stay on but went back to the South's familiarities and would stay there until he took a job in California in 1940. His reading was worldly, but he himself was little so, though he jauntily effected a style that impersonated worldliness.

It would be conventional to say that he was finding his way, but, in this instance, the truism is sharply relevant. As a young man, he was much at odds with his family and culture. He was, as he later put it, “a rebellious stripling” or, as he put it at the time, “perverse and rebellious.”¹⁴ His family was Methodist, seriously so. His grandfather had been a Methodist circuit rider, his uncle was a Methodist minister, and his father

14. CVW, “Morrilton Memoir,” 3; CVW to Antonina Jones Hansell, 7 April 1935, Antonina Hansell Looker Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (hereinafter AHL).

was dean of a Methodist junior college in a town—Oxford, Georgia—where even other sorts of Protestants were an exoticism. (“I was eight years old before I even knowingly saw a Baptist, and it was the shock of my life,” one resident later remembered.)¹⁵ These were sober people who did not dance, did not drink, did not play cards, went to Sunday school, and said their prayers at meals. These pieties were not confined to religion, but to the South’s customary beliefs. Woodward’s mother, for instance, belonged actively to the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Arkansas.¹⁶ But Woodward not only came to prize the cocktail before dinner but was, from as early as there are records, an atheist who would later scarcely bother to fathom the role of religion in Southern history and who, at the end, expressed a strong desire for a secular memorial service. He was also a dissident from his region’s racism and sympathetic to labor unions, socialism, and communism, even to the extent that he was complacent about Stalin’s ruthlessness and, when visiting Moscow in 1932, gave thought to remaining. In these impulses as a young Southerner of his generation he was fairly idiosyncratic, though he did not lack for companions in this dissidence, for his Atlanta circle in the late 1920s and early 1930s consisted of other awkward and ironical young men who wrote modernist poetry for little magazines, might be gay, and wanted to transform their suffocating world of Coca-Cola magnates, peremptory bishops, and white ambulance drivers who would leave an injured African-American to die in the street.

Most important, one difference between the young and the mature Woodward is that, while the latter built his life around the tasks of the professional historian, the former did not. At least as late as 1938, he displayed no vocation for historical scholarship and the academy. For a while, as he himself admitted, he had a “lack of direction.”¹⁷ He majored in philosophy in college, briefly studied sociology and then switched to political science for his master’s degree, taught freshman English, dabbled in journalism, planned to teach English in Germany, considered writing a “panoramic picture of the Negro in America since the Civil War,” tried to get a Rhodes scholarship, worked briefly for a New Deal agency, and

15. Polly Stone Buck, *The Blessed Town: Oxford, Georgia, at the Turn of the Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1986), 94.

16. CVW to James Loewen, 11 January 1999.

17. CVW to Glenn W. Rainey, 19 February 1931, Glenn Weddington Rainey Papers, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University (hereinafter GWR).

nowhere articulated a burning ambition to be a historian.¹⁸ As he often remarked later, because he got interested in Southern demagogues in general, and Tom Watson in particular, and started to write about these topics—though more as a biographer than a historian—and could not make enough money to sustain the endeavor, he reluctantly agreed to undertake a doctorate in history, because it came with a scholarship. Part of the deal was getting a Ph.D., which he acquired with distaste, and the degree qualified him for an academic job—in the 1930s, jobs were not to be lightly disdained—which he duly took, but even when teaching at the University of Florida he did not teach much history but rather general courses in the social sciences and humanities (such as “Man and the Social World”), and found academic life so little to his taste that he toyed with giving it up.¹⁹ But he did not, because, as he put it in 1939, “I know damned well that it is from teaching and not writing that I am going to have to make my living.”²⁰ That is, as a young man, it was tolerably clear that he wanted to write, but he did not know what genre would suit him, what topics would hold his attention, let alone whether a professional career was possible or desirable.²¹ He was not even sure whether he wished to be a Southerner. One of the more striking passages in his letters is where, writing to Daniel Boorstin in 1953, he said: “I was surprised to learn that we grew up as close together as Oklahoma and Arkansas. I do not know whether you ever shook off the Southern heritage. I set out deliberately to do so in several attempts, but I never really did. I will have to work it out some day in order to live with it.”²²

If Woodward had ended up as a novelist or poet, one would have no difficulty in understanding his trajectory, for the South—and the rest of the United States, for that matter—was full of young college graduates who started with miscellaneous writing, began to settle on a genre or

18. CVW to Glenn W. Rainey, 11 May 1931, GWR.

19. On his teaching, see Adrian H. Daane to CVW, 18 February 1991; on his discontent, see CVW to Hannah Josephson, 19 April 1954, in which he remembers that Matthew Josephson had advised CVW in 1938 not to give up academic life: “I had expressed some impatience with the academic routine and confessed a temptation to kick over the traces.”

20. CVW to Glenn W. Rainey, 26 March 1939, GWR.

21. CVW to Glenn W. Rainey, 20 October 1931, GWR: “I have about decided that unless I hit upon a field that really challenges my interest, something that I can be happy in studying that I shall turn to something else besides teaching—anything.”

22. CVW to Daniel J. Boorstin, 17 May 1953.

two, tried to make freelancing work but failed, and ended up taking an academic post. This was what happened to Allen Tate. Some historians have suggested that this was the trajectory of American intellectual life during the twentieth century, that the so-called public intellectuals, as well as novelists and poets, drifted into universities, for good or ill. (Good for the universities, ill for the writers and the public, some think.) It is not usual to see Woodward in this light, because most see the real Woodward as the later Woodward, so evidently rooted in the academy, and know little about the uncertain young man of the 1930s. But this perspective is helpful, because it may help to explain not only the young man but the older one, who—after a phase of careful scholarship—did act as a public intellectual, who used the university as a base.

So what do we have from these early years? Preeminent is the sustained and warm exchange of letters with Glenn Weddington Rainey. He and Woodward had become friends when undergraduates at Emory in the late 1920s, when they had belonged to a small coterie, of which the senior member had been Ernest Hartsock, poet, homosexual, little magazine editor, and musician, and the junior member “Pete” Ficklen. These were young men who read James Joyce, copied Mencken’s satirical mannerisms, admired wit, and wanted to make a difference, not just aesthetically but socially. It did not work out for most of them: Hartsock died young, Ficklen ran up careless debts, and Rainey, though he married happily and became a valued English professor at Georgia Tech, never finished his doctorate and, apart from the odd piece (including poetry), published little. In time, as Woodward soared away from Atlanta and the world of freshman English, he and Rainey would drift apart, while remaining fondly reminiscent about what they had once had. But in the 1930s, if the letters are a guide, no relationship was more important to Woodward, who wrote often, needily, discursively, and brightly. Fortunately for us, they were usually apart, Rainey in Evanston working on his Northwestern doctorate and Woodward in Atlanta, or Woodward at Columbia or Chapel Hill and Rainey in Atlanta, or both in Georgia, but Woodward in Oxford and Rainey in Atlanta. So the letters buzzed backwards and forwards—about the books they were reading, the movies and people and places they saw, the girls they met, the politicians they disliked, the uncertainties they had, the plans that worked out or went astray.

Less central, but valuable, are the letters Woodward wrote to a South-

ern divorcée called Antonina Jones Hansell, known as “Nina.” They had become lovers in 1933, when they were both living in Georgia. Later, when separated, they would write. Apart from a few letters from the late 1930s, when she had moved to New York, her side of the correspondence has disappeared from Woodward’s papers, but his letters are in her papers at the Southern Historical Collection. She was ten years older and interested in psychology and he seems to have used her as a young man might be expected to use an older woman and sexual partner, as a counselor, less on his intellectual career, more on his emotional life. Then, at least, he was conscious of being too repressed and she seems to have released some of these repressions, so these letters are among the few that show a glimpse of Woodward’s inner feelings and self-appraisal. They also show him coming to know and marrying his wife Glenn, whom he candidly described to Hansell, even a little after the marriage.

These two, Rainey and Hansell, occasioned most of Woodward’s significant and surviving correspondence up until 1937, when his life changed and began to diversify. He was now a college professor and, in Gainesville, acquired two friends who would remain important to him. There was the political scientist-cum-historian Manning J. Dauer, whose intellectual pertinence to Woodward was mostly early but who remained a personal friend, one who used to send Woodward (a migrant in the cold wastelands of the North) regular consignments of Florida oranges and whom, thirty years later, Woodward would meet regularly for vacations in Ocean City, Maryland, where they would go deep-sea fishing. Over the long haul, more important intellectually was William G. Carleton, political scientist, charismatic lecturer, and ebullient letter writer, who commented shrewdly on Woodward’s writings and career down the years (though also public affairs) and acted as a blunt adviser who would remind Woodward, in the midst of triumphs, that he was mortal. Typical is a Carleton letter of 1961, when Woodward was about to move to Yale: “Do not get too immersed in your career, your reputation, the activities of being eminent, the opinions of the Establishment. Having to keep up a reputation—or more precisely the feeling of having to keep it up, to augment it . . . can become a terrible slavery and you will pay a price. Up to now you have escaped this. But I see signs.”²³

In the late 1930s, too, because Woodward had published a success-

23. William G. Carleton to CVW, 18 December 1961.

ful first book, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (1938), he came to undertake more correspondence with editors and became known to a wider public, including other Southern intellectuals, historians, and even a few politicians.²⁴ (For most of his life, however, though he usually supported liberal Democrats, by comparison with someone like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Woodward kept his distance from politicians and was never in danger of ending up in a corner office of the West Wing.) Not least, he attracted the notice of the editors of the History of the South series, who, with much misgiving for they were conservative and staid gentlemen, invited the young dissident to write what would eventually become *Origins of the New South*.²⁵ Woodward also moved to places—Charlottesville and Claremont—remote from most of his friends and so there was the business of keeping up. Further, with events moving quickly, more now needed to be said about the world's politics. Woodward himself, like many of his immediate friends, was an isolationist who mistrusted Britain and capitalism's combats and, upon his own account, was made “physically as well as emotionally sick” when Pearl Harbor turned the prospect of war into a reality.²⁶ He did not rush into uniform, did not join the U.S. Naval Reserve until 1943, saw no combat, only briefly went beyond the boundaries of the United States, and served out a scholar's war in the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, DC, where he was charged with writing accounts of naval battles, one of which became his second book, *The Battle for Leyte Gulf* (1947).²⁷ Though there are a number of letters from wartime California, in part concerned with struggles at Scripps College to defend German faculty members, after his conscription there is, with few exceptions, a silence in his correspondence about the war itself, a silence little broken afterwards.²⁸ He was not one of those historians who liked to talk about his war, and the little that we can know—apart from a few military documents in the Yale papers—comes from the reminiscences of others who speak of Washington lunches and the “handsome naval lieutenant whose bright blue eyes took in everything that was going on.”²⁹

24. CVW, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

25. CVW, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913*.

26. CVW to David Riesman, 15 June 1981.

27. CVW, *The Battle for Leyte Gulf* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

28. Woodward, *Thinking Back*, 45–47, which briefly mentions the war, is not informative about his wartime experience, just about the value of writing naval history.

29. John Morton Blum, *A Life with History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 69.

Joining the faculty at Johns Hopkins in 1946 changed much. It is, in fact, obscure how the appointment came about. It may be that, because he had spent much time in the Washington area both during the war and before, when working at the Library of Congress he had come to know Hopkins people from nearby Baltimore. Of course, *Tom Watson* had been a critical success and Hopkins had a long tradition of recruiting talented young Southerners to a university that was part Ivy league, part Southern, part Washington political. Still, it was a long step up from Scripps College, which instructed genteel young ladies amid Spanish groves, to Hopkins, whose seminars were notorious for male competitiveness, and there is evidence that the move was transformative.

As a practical matter, because the teaching load was small, he was able to make progress with *Origins of the New South*, some chapters of which he had drafted before the war, but which had been, understandably, stalled. For the first time he had graduate students, which was Hopkins's specialty and became his, and he would there begin to lose the knack, if he ever had it, of teaching undergraduates. (Though there are some early letters which speak of his pleasure in the endeavor and some later letters from ex-students which suggest that he had not been as ineffective as later legend would have it.)³⁰ The value of Hopkins was that it was culturally poised. It enabled him to keep and even diversify his Southern links. He became, for example, much engaged by the Southern Historical Association, whose program committee he chaired in 1949 and whose president he became in 1952, and he spent much time in encouraging and discoursing with the region's postwar intellectuals, to whom he gradually became a sort of tribune, especially after the miraculous years of 1951–55, when in swift succession he brought out *Origins of the New South* (1951), *Reunion and Reaction* (1951), and *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955).³¹ Equally, he acquired a whole new range of connections beyond the South, for Hopkins was a place through which the academic world passed, and was conveniently at the farthest end of the northeastern corridor. (Indeed, it is not implausible to see Woodward as a fellow traveler of the New York

30. For example, CVW to Glenn W. Rainey, 28 October 1941, GWR: "I have been pleasantly surprised at my feelings about this place [Scripps] and my work since return. . . . The main thing, I expect, has been my teaching which I feel much happier about than I did last year. I am really having a lot of fun, especially with the History of Am. Political Ideas."

31. CVW, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951).

intellectuals, for some of his characteristic themes, usually explained as Southern in origin, are also explicable as Manhattan in origin, for New York was a place where, after 1945, he spent more time than he ever did in the South below the Potomac.) So new people appeared among his correspondents, social scientists like David Riesman, historians (not of the South) like Richard Hofstadter. He even became international, because in 1954–55 he served as the visiting Harmsworth Professor at the University of Oxford, an experience out of which he acquired no small connection with those who wrote American history in Britain and, though far less so, continental Europe. In 1953 he had also spent a semester in Tokyo, and he tried hard in the late 1950s, though unsuccessfully, to work out a similar stint in India, a place he had briefly visited as a naval courier during the war. These experiences never made him a cosmopolitan, a species he mistrusted, they just indulged his liking for travel. (This fondness was fortunate, for this was a man who spent a lot of his adult life on the road, at the end of which was a lecture to give, a conference to attend, a committee to chair, a hotel bar, and a room at the Hilton.) These foreign experiences, however, did accelerate an interest in comparative history, which was an influence upon his two seminal articles of the 1950s, “The Irony of Southern History” and “The Search for Southern Identity”—each, in its own way, a meditation on what it meant no longer to be fully immersed in Southern culture—and would, though only eventually, lead him to edit *The Comparative Approach to American History* (1968).³² Lastly, Hopkins, because of its proximity to Washington, often led its faculty into advisory roles for the federal government. This did not work out for him, because his radical past led to his failing to get a security clearance for service (suggested by Samuel Eliot Morison) as a historical adviser to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Instead he ended up advising those who sought to pressure the federal government, notably the NAACP, when it was devising a Supreme Court brief for *Brown v. Board of Education*.

All things considered, Woodward survived the world of Joe McCarthy more easily than might have been predicted for a man who had vis-

32. He seems to have been interested in comparative matters as early as 1950: see CVW to Jerome Blum, 14 December 1950, which asks for advice on Russian history, which he might use for his upcoming Fleming lectures. See CVW, “The Irony of Southern History,” *Journal of Southern History* 19 (February 1953): 3–19; CVW, “The Search for Southern Identity,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 34 (Summer 1958): 321–38; CVW, ed., *The Comparative Approach to American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

ited the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, helped union organizers, and been friends with Communists who had saluted him as “brother.”³³ When Owen Lattimore, his Hopkins colleague, fell foul of the junior senator from Wisconsin, Woodward was among his defenders and helped Lattimore keep his job.³⁴ No doubt this was done in part because Woodward had a fierce commitment to freedom of speech, which went as far back as his Gainesville membership of the American Association of University Professors—then working to defend faculty against egregious politicians and administrators—and would last to the end of his life, with consequences for him that would prove disquietingly complicated. But it was also done, one feels, because Woodward understood that Lattimore’s fate might have been his own, although Woodward had a greater gift for discretion than Lattimore and, even in the 1930s, used to caution friends about speaking too freely of his dissident opinions. (“I shall ask you to use your discretion about communicating my Soviet enthusiasm.”)³⁵ This gift did not go so far as avoiding the Cold War’s pariahs, not least in 1959 when he came to know Alger Hiss and spent a fascinating evening in Manhattan when Hiss was peppered with questions about his trial, Whittaker Chambers, and pumpkins.

The 1950s is when Woodward became an organization man. The number of his organizations is, in retrospect, dazzlingly numerous. There is a 1963 letter in which he responded to a request that he join the board of the AAUP by regretfully declining, because he was already committed to “twenty-one out-of-town meetings of committees, councils, or boards during the academic year. . . . And this after recently resigning from a couple so as to take on the board of the ACLS [American Council of Learned Societies], which meets five times a year.”³⁶ Still, he usually said yes. There were the historical organizations—the Southern Historical Association, American Historical Association, Mississippi Valley Historical Association (which became the Organization of American Historians), in all of which he rose through the ranks to become president, and all of which had their plethora of committees, as well as journals which

33. Robert F. Hall to “Brother Woodward,” 23 July 1938; Hall was secretary of the 17th District of the Communist Party, which was headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama.

34. For a valuable account of this affair, see Lionel S. Lewis, *The Cold War and Academic Governance: The Lattimore Case at Johns Hopkins* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

35. CVW to Glenn W. Rainey, 11 August [1932], GWR.

36. CVW to William S. Fidler, 30 May 1963.

needed sustaining. (He stayed clear of the American Studies Association.) He also had some commitment to the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. There were scholarly academies: the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (to which he was elected in 1958), the American Philosophical Society (1959), the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1970), and the Society of American Historians (first turned away, then accepted in 1964). There were assorted pressure groups; the AAUP, the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and several other civil rights organizations. There were grant-giving bodies: the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation. There were editorial boards in abundance and some prize-giving committees (notably the Pulitzer). All this, of course, was on top of his responsibilities to the universities that employed him, although it seems that he was selective about what he was willing to do. He never served, for example, as a department chair.

This immersion in institutions was the fate of many scholars in his time, which, for these purposes, is still our time. As the American academy grew rapidly after the Second World War, both universities and disciplines proliferated institutions and needed warm and, preferably, intelligent bodies to administer them. Universities looked kindly upon such occupations, politely and sometimes sincerely known as “service to the profession.” To be sure, not everyone warmed to the idea and some declined to participate. Among Woodward’s peers, the most notable recusant was Richard Hofstadter, who seldom went to conventions, joined few organizations, disliked the idea of a historical profession, and instead preferred to stay in Manhattan and write his books.³⁷ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., too, preferred a Democratic nominating convention to the conference hotels where historians sat in thinly attended rooms and listened to desultory papers. He once wrote in his journal: “I have always felt uncomfortable, even alienated, in academic life . . . I [have] tried . . . to define my feelings about pure academics—what is it?—the sense they give of collective unreality? collective complacency? collective pomposity? collective futility? And their jokes are so bad! . . . Why does the academic

37. His biographer speaks of “a certain autonomy from the academy”: David S. Brown, *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 144.

environment, as distinct from the academic discipline, seem to bring out the worst in otherwise decent individuals?”³⁸ Woodward, for his part, was a more conscientious and civic-minded man—Schlesinger called him “a kinder, gentler, and nobler figure”—but it seems hard to resist the conclusion that there was a neediness in all this joining, in part arising from a liking for companionship, but also a desire for affirmation.³⁹

After all, Woodward was an interloper and, as such, part of a trend. By 1960, the citadels of academic power were still mostly administered by Ivy League gentlemen who were not keen on Jews, blacks, and women. But there were no longer enough gentlemen to go around and it was becoming ominously clear that gentlemen, though they might be snappy dressers, were not necessarily the smartest people available.⁴⁰ So interlopers were selectively being allowed in. Of these, Jews—mostly those who had studied at the Ivy League as undergraduates (preferably) or graduates (if necessary) like John Morton Blum and Oscar Handlin—and white Southerners, even when not Ivy League, were most admissible.⁴¹ Blacks, with the pioneering exception of John Hope Franklin who had a Harvard doctorate, and women had to wait another decade and more. This was how Yale’s George W. Pierson, than whom no one was more traditionally Ivy league and patrician, appraised the situation when he hired Blum the Jew and Woodward the Arkansan, whom a Northerner might mistake for a Southern gentleman (because he had good manners), though no blueblood Charlestonian would (because he had no oil paintings of resonant ancestors to hang above his dining table). Nor, for that matter, would a black Alabamian. Albert Murray once described Wood-

38. Entry for 4 April 1981, in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Journals, 1952–2000* (2007; London: Atlantic Books, 2008), 516.

39. Entry for 20 July 1991, in Schlesinger, *Journals, 1952–2000*, 712.

40. On these matters, see William Palmer, *Engagement with the Past: The Lives and Works of the World War II Generation of Historians* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

41. There had been a tradition of white Southerners at Ivy League universities, but usually, after a first degree at a Southern university, they had taken their doctorates in the North; this was the case with Woodrow Wilson (who studied first at Davidson College and Princeton, took his doctorate at Hopkins, and later taught at Princeton), Ulrich B. Phillips (University of Georgia, Columbia, Yale), and David Potter (Emory, Yale, Yale). Woodward’s different experience may have had the consequence that he came of age in a Southern academy, where he felt confident of himself if not always at ease, but did not experience the alienation often suffered by outsiders who studied in the Ivy League.

ward as “the spitting image of the old Life and Casualty insurance man,” which is not how you describe a Southern gentleman.⁴²

Serving this world of organizations had an effect. One of the features of Woodward’s career is that, after the publication of *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* in 1955, he never again published a sustained piece of historical narrative and interpretation. As Stephen Whitfield was to observe in 1987, when reviewing Woodward’s *Thinking Back*, “Woodward essentially abandoned historical writing other than essays, introductions, and reviews more than three decades ago.”⁴³ There are several ways to explain this shift, but one, certainly, is that he committed so much time to serving organizations. As he exclaimed, when turning down the AAUP in 1963, “How is a man to get on with his book?”⁴⁴ Such a busy way of life, that is, was better adapted to short-term projects, because his time was so broken up. But this was not the only reason, which his correspondence makes clear.

One is tempted to say—this will seem odd to say about a historian best known and rightly celebrated for a sustained narrative—that he was never very reconciled to what is required for the writing of long, carefully researched books: the need for focus, the long research trips, the obsessiveness, the loneliness.⁴⁵ He had, of course, to do some of this for his first book, because doctoral dissertations have to do that. And, then, while he was thinking about other projects, he was suddenly asked to write a volume for the History of the South series. He was young, he was flattered, he knew it was (what Howard Beale called) “a grand opportunity, but a whale of a job,” and he agreed.⁴⁶ His careful research in widely scattered archives—obligatory because there was no adequate secondary literature to feed off—produced not only *Origins of the New South*, but *Reunion and Reaction*, essentially a more detailed explication of a shorter narrative in the former book about how the Compromise of 1877 was negotiated. In the same way, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* grew from *Origins*. So these

42. Albert Murray, *South to a Very Old Place* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 16.

43. Stephen J. Whitfield, “Understanding Backward,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 63 (Spring 1987): 352.

44. CVW to William S. Fidler, 30 May 1963.

45. It might be objected that his edition of Mary Chesnut’s involved much archival work, but he did little of this himself; instead, he presided over a small army of research assistants, marshaled by Elisabeth Muhlenfeld.

46. Howard K. Beale to CVW, 2 February 1939.

three books formed a triptych. Indeed it is arguable that, because *Origins* elaborated a standpoint articulated in *Tom Watson*, Woodward had created a tetraptych. Yet completing this artistic masterpiece posed a problem. What next? In 1955, he was forty-seven, which is still young for a historian.

It is unclear that he ever found an answer to this question. His papers show restlessness, projects begun and abandoned, contracts signed and cancelled, both before and after 1955. That in the late 1930s his first project, a biography of Eugene Debs, was put aside was not his fault, because the family would not grant him access to Debs's papers.⁴⁷ But there were other ventures. In 1941, he signed up with Little, Brown for a book to be called *Henry Grady and the Makers of the New South*, but in 1948 he cancelled the contract and his \$500 advance was rolled over to a second project, as yet undetermined.⁴⁸ In April 1951, he gave the Fleming Lectures at Louisiana State University on "Southern Dissenters in Exile" and, as is usual with these lectures, was supposed to deliver a manuscript to Louisiana State University Press, but never did. In 1956, for Houghton Mifflin, he agreed to write a textbook on the history of the South, for which Clement Eaton would write the antebellum chapters, Woodward the postbellum. A contract was signed, but in 1959 Woodward backed out because he had taken on other obligations.⁴⁹ Most significantly, in 1958 he signed a contract with Little, Brown for a major book on Reconstruction, which he described as "a companion volume to my ORIGINS OF THE NEW SOUTH . . . of comparable scope, but being free of obligations to a series . . . a better book." (In the same letter, he spoke of another book, in which Little, Brown was more interested, on "the century from Emancipation to Desegregation," but ventured the opinion that, though he wished to do it, it would need to wait.)⁵⁰ So his ambition for this work on Reconstruction was not modest—he thought it might be as long as 200,000 words—and he worked on it seriously during the 1960s. His publishers stumped up a \$2,500 advance, later raised to \$7,500 when Norton tried to lure him away, and, with this contract in hand, he applied for and received grants, was

47. Woodward, *Thinking Back*, 43–44.

48. Stanley Salmen to CVW, 26 March 1948.

49. See, especially, William D. MacDonald to CVW, 31 December 1956; CVW to William D. MacDonald, 24 March 1959.

50. CVW to Arthur N. Thornhill Jr., 27 September 1958.

given extended periods of leave, and undertook a three-month research swing through the archives of the lower South in early 1962. The book was never done, but it seems to have been thought still possible as late as 1969, at least by others.⁵¹ However, the venture did spill over into various lectures, essays, and reviews, some of them of importance to guiding the contemporary understanding of Reconstruction. His extant manuscripts do not make clear what happened. There is no letter in which he says, “I did not finish the book because . . .” It is possible that the interpretative backbone of the proposed book—that there was a parallel between Reconstruction and the civil rights movement, between what he called the “first Reconstruction” and “second Reconstruction”—became less tenable in the late 1960s, when, to his sharp dissatisfaction, the rise of the black power movement splintered the existing racial reform movement.

There are other explanations. Woodward had always seen himself as politically and socially engaged. Even before he settled on being a historian, he had offered himself as a cultural critic in Atlanta newspapers. His later scholarly accomplishments, which included the felicity of his style, made him attractive to editors in search of “freelance ‘high journalism.’”⁵² By 1939, he was reviewing books for the *New Republic*, but this scale of national visibility was then rare, and throughout the 1940s most of his reviews were for scholarly journals or literary periodicals associated with universities, such as the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. In 1951, however, he started to write often for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, in 1954 for the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* and the *New York Times Book Review*, in 1955 for the *Nation*, in 1956 for *Commentary*, and in 1964 for the *New York Review of Books*, which became his habitual bully pulpit for the rest of his life. So this role expanded over the years and generated much correspondence with editors, as well as with readers (sometimes appreciative, sometimes indignant). Given a choice, he preferred to accept the journalistic assignment and to postpone the trip to an archive. Considering how well he performed in his bully pulpit, it is hard to quarrel with his choice, the more so since he spent so much time helping others. These assignments, of course, turned into books, just different sorts of books.

51. See Eugene Genovese to CVW, 12 May 1969, which speaks, though a little hopefully, of the project as still alive.

52. The phrase comes from Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), xv.

The Burden of Southern History (1960) was, for the most part, a collection of scholarly articles and essays, first published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the *Journal of Southern History*, and the *American Scholar*. *American Counterpoint* (1971) and *The Future of the Past* (1989), by comparison, drew more on the *New York Review of Books*, though he never abandoned the scholarly essay as abruptly as he gave up the scholarly article.⁵³

One other explanation needs to be offered, because it is relevant to the nature of Woodward's correspondence. Sporadically before the early 1950s and systematically thereafter, he acquired the role of literary midwife. The role is less recognized as one for a historian than, say, an editor like Maxwell Perkins or a poet like Ezra Pound, but it palpably exists. At its most modest level, it is the function of a doctoral adviser, who must help to design a dissertation and then critique its accomplishment. At Johns Hopkins and Yale, Woodward performed this function for what proved to be some very gifted historians who would rise to prominence. Since adviser and student were often separated—in those days, it was possible to get a job before a dissertation was completed—letters were a medium of criticism, though Woodward, who wrote much better than he talked, often preferred to transmit his views by letter, even if the student was on campus. But his role as midwife expanded beyond Baltimore. He became known as a shrewd critic. Historians, young and old, began to beat a path to his mailbox. Some of these manuscripts came to him in the normal manner, that is, the editor of a journal or press solicited a report from him, or he was himself serving as an editor, as he did for the *Oxford History of the United States*. But a great deal came informally, and the number of important books not written by his students, whose manuscripts passed beneath his scrutiny, is deeply impressive: almost all of Richard Hofstadter's works, from *The Age of Reform* (1955) onward, Stanley Elkins's *Slavery* (1959), James Silver's *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (1964), Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan, Roll* (1974), and Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman's *Time on the Cross* (1974), to name only some. In addition, the occasional novelist and poet sought him out: Robert Penn Warren, above all, but also William Styron, who asked Woodward to read the manuscript of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967).

53. CVW, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960); CVW, *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); CVW, *The Future of the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

These letters of criticism are among the chefs d'oeuvre of his correspondence, and anyone wishing to know how this delicate task should be done would do well to study them. Those written as anonymous reader's reports were somewhat different, because he was freer to be savage, if he was in the mood. But, in those written for friends and colleagues, usually he started with words of praise, which identified the value of a book, which was not necessarily the value discerned by the author, and he often characterized style. He then moved on to his dissents, politely but trenchantly stated: these might be interpretative or theoretical, or concern problems of evidence. He advanced to suggestions about revision, which might encompass concrete details of needed extra reading or research, a redesign of a manuscript's structure, or changes in aesthetic tone. Lastly, there might be a list of errata. He would often end with praise, because he knew that authors tend to be neurotic and need reassurance, especially when being told that not all is well with their words.

This service immensely enriched the life of the American historical mind, though it could occasion complications, discerned more by others than by Woodward himself. For he operated at several levels: as the informal reader of a manuscript, the formal writer of reader's reports for editors, and a book reviewer. Very often he did two of these things for the same manuscript, even for his own students. As late as the mid-1960s, it was not thought very improper for an adviser to write a reader's report on the work of his own former student, and Woodward never ceased to review the published works of his students.⁵⁴ Naturally, some came to think of him as the impresario of a cabal, sometimes thought to be in competition with other cabals.⁵⁵ Stephen Whitfield, perhaps the

54. For examples of CVW submitting reader's reports on his own students, see CVW to John H. Kyle (of the Johns Hopkins Press), 12 September 1958, and CVW to Henry R. Winkler (of the *American Historical Review*), 31 December 1966. As for reviewing in print those manuscripts he had read for friends, he was a little inconsistent. In 1972, he declined to review Carl Degler's *Neither Black nor White* (1971) for the *New York Review of Books*, because "I [have] had so much correspondence with him about that I would find it awkward to take issue with it in public, as I would be obliged to do should I review it": CVW to Robert B. Silvers, 22 May 1972. Yet he did review Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, which he had also seen in manuscript and corresponded about. The distinction is, perhaps, that he thought better of Genovese's book than Degler's.

55. It was widely assumed that Woodward and David Donald were competitors; there is no evidence for this, at least up to the mid-1960s, though thereafter their connection did become more distant.

most critical of those willing to air their discontent in print, bluntly said in 1987 that Woodward's practice of benignly reviewing his own doctoral students, past and present, was "a dubious reviewing practice which, if it can be justified at all, ought to require that an interest be declared (which Woodward has not done)."⁵⁶

By comparison to ours, Woodward's world had different ethics, was more informal, and was run by senior professors who believed they had earned the right to these prerogatives. The default presumption was that they could be trusted. (Not a popular idea of late, when there has been a decline of trust.)⁵⁷ Academic jobs for a student, for example, might be secured by Woodward picking up a telephone, calling the chair of a department, and saying the right word in the right ear, with no bother about search committees, affirmative action, and whether graduate students approved of a candidate. His correspondence is full of letters from chairmen—then, invariably, men—who would say, "We are looking for a young married man in the field of American History with a secondary field in the Far East or Western Civilization," and promptly hire whomever Woodward suggested.⁵⁸ Or someone from a Southern university in the late 1960s would ask if he knew of a presentable young Negro, who might cause no trouble, "a man who is level-headed, objective, and who, hopefully, could disregard somewhat the matter of race, as his colleagues are trying to do. . . . [someone who would] not allow himself to be 'captured' by extremists of any color."⁵⁹ Equally, a word from Woodward might secure a grant, an assignment from an editor, a book contract, or a review in a prominent place. To a remarkable degree, he exercised this patronage with discrimination, fairness, and wisdom. Still, inevitably, there were those he favored and those he did not. Naturally and rightly he favored his own students, although he was capable of calibrating his endorsements, according to his estimate of their gifts. Of those not his students and now dead—mentioning the living here would be a different matter, though the letters that follow cannot avoid them—he greatly assisted the rise of David Donald, Eric McKittrick, George Fredrickson, John Hope Franklin, and Lee Benson (for a while). He was of little help,

56. Whitfield, "Understanding Backward," 352.

57. On this, see Onora O'Neill, *A Question of Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

58. Flint Kellogg to CVW, 20 December 1966.

59. Robert H. Woody to CVW, 17 January 1969.

no help, or was hostile to Staughton Lynd, George Tindall, T. Harry Williams, and Herbert Aptheker.

The name of Aptheker, the Marxist scholar of African-American history and Communist Party member, raises an issue which darkened Woodward's last years at Yale.⁶⁰ The issue was a 1975 proposal by Davenport College to appoint Aptheker as a visiting scholar for a semester, during which he would teach a seminar on W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of whose papers Aptheker then was. This was part of an ongoing program which had brought to campus many, some scholars, some not. Under the program, a college would decide whom it wished to invite, secure the person's consent, procure the sponsorship of a Yale academic department, and subsequently apply to have the formal appointment sanctioned by the Joint Board of Permanent Officers (the full professors of the Graduate School and Yale College). Along the way, it was necessary for relevant Yale departments to be consulted. Woodward was asked to chair an ad hoc committee of the Department of History, of which the other members were John Morton Blum and John Blassingame, the latter a young African-American historian who had been Woodward's doctoral student. The committee recommended that Aptheker not be appointed, because "the candidate did not measure up to the standard of scholarship we try to maintain for Yale teachers," his scholarship was "second rate," and his edition of Du Bois was so "poor" that Woodward had been obliged to resign from the edition's board of advisers. The letter concluded, "The committee's feeling was that if we could not trust him to edit Du Bois' papers—a matter of public record—we were even less able to feel confident of his teaching, of which there would be no public record."⁶¹ What followed was cacophonous: student protests, campus meetings, petitions, controversy in the national press, and a formal investigation jointly administered by the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association. It took some two years to run its course, during which time Woodward had to write many letters, defending and explaining himself. The experience was—the adjective may not be too

60. Aptheker served on the National Committee of the Communist Party USA (1957–91).

61. CVW to John W. Hall, 14 October 1975. Formally, the veto came, not from the Department of History—the appointment was sponsored by Political Science and five departments were consulted—but by the Joint Board, whose meeting Woodward and others from History persuaded to a negative vote, by some margin (7 agreeing to the appointment, 25 against, 2 abstentions): see the minutes of the Board's meeting.

strong—embittering, as a 1981 letter to Eugene Genovese makes clear, and those at the time discerned. Woodward himself preferred to speak of exasperation.⁶²

The “Ap-Flap,” as he came to call it, seems to have had two chief contexts. The first is that Woodward, like many of his generation, was greatly troubled by the student protests of the late 1960s, mostly because he disliked anything that interfered with free speech on the campus. The experience made him alert about challenges to the university’s commitment to dispassionate intellectual accomplishment. He became interested to put down markers that might signal where standards were being maintained, where weakened.⁶³ Earlier in 1975, he had put down a very significant marker when he chaired a Yale committee that formulated a policy on freedom of speech on the campus. The “Woodward report” was a great success, then and now, for its clarity of thought and unequivocal commitment to the value of freedom of expression, which Woodward asserted to be essential to a university’s purpose.⁶⁴ The flip side of allowing everyone to speak, even if offensively, however, was that universities also had the obligation to evaluate speech and subject it to rigorous criticism. If that obligation was to be taken seriously, or so Woodward thought, Herbert Aptheker ought not to teach at Yale. For Woodward always regarded the Aptheker appointment as he might regard the ad-

62. CVW to Eugene Genovese, 6 April 1981; Peter Eggenberger to CVW, 4 March 1976, which remarks: “The tone of your last letter seems embittered to me”; and CVW to Peter Eggenberger, 15 March 1976, which denies embitterment but admits exasperation. See also CVW to Eugene Genovese, 16 April 1976: “I am misrepresented, misquoted, and lied about daily, here and elsewhere.”

63. A subtheme was his concern about a “double standard,” a matter he explained to Gettleman: “The fact is that our faculty is divided on this matter. It is not divided on the subject of the seminar. In fact, a number of our own department has given such a seminar before. Nor is there any division on the qualifications of Mr. Aptheker. I think there is general agreement that he is second rate at best. The division is over the issue of a double standard: first for the student-initiated college seminar instructors, and second a double standard for instructors of black students. On the latter issue my colleague John Blessingame has fought a courageous battle against the double standard for blacks or courses for them, and I have supported his struggle to the hilt, and continue to do so. . . . The History Department believes in a single standard and thinks a double standard a betrayal not only of the rules but of our students.” See CVW to Marvin E. Gettleman, 15 March 1976.

64. The text is available online: http://yalecollege.yale.edu/sites/default/files/woodward_report.pdf (accessed 29 February 2012).

mission of a student, appointment of a junior faculty member, or tenure case.⁶⁵ He made this point repeatedly at the time, that universities had to have intellectual standards, enforced by those who, by virtue of their senior position in the university, were presumed qualified to judge, and—this was the sticking point for many—confidential and so not available to be challenged. The reluctance to allow such decisions to be scrutinized was, for the most part, a practical issue. Academic life would descend into chaos if every such decision needed elaborate justification and be only provisional. Many younger people, however, felt there was an element of “father knows best” and this was but to defend an old boys network, as Blum admitted his world was.⁶⁶

A more immediate context was Woodward’s long-standing relationship to Aptheker, which had been sometimes friendly and not consistently hostile, but which had worsened significantly in the decade before 1975. Their early contacts—the first was in 1954—were friendly and business-like.⁶⁷ In the 1960s, the evidence for how far Woodward then regarded Aptheker’s work as satisfactory or not is equivocal. In 1965, when discussing possible editors for an edition of Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* for the John Harvard Library reprint series, he suggested Aptheker’s name and observed, “I know the obvious objections, but I suspect he would do a scrupulous and creditable job.” However, a few days later, he changed his mind: “On second thought I am afraid I should retract my suggestion of Aptheker for the Du bois [*sic*] book. Instead I think I will propose August Meier.”⁶⁸ In 1966, Woodward commented in a session of the Socialist Scholars Conference in which Aptheker and Genovese gave papers on the “legacy of slavery and roots of black nationalism,” and, on the whole, Woodward seems to have been amused and pleased to see

65. The point is made, especially, in CVW to the *Yale Daily News*, 31 January 1976, a document one younger scholar called “the single most inflammatory document that has been circulated”: see Marvin E. Gettleman to CVW, 4 March 1976. Part of the difficulty in CVW’s defense, as several pointed out, was that Aptheker had not applied for the position but had been invited, though for a position that required formal ratification.

66. For the critical standpoint of a younger radical, see Jesse Lemisch, “History at Yale in the Dark Ages, 1953–76,” *History News Network*, 6 January 2007, online at <http://hnn.us/articles/33300.html> (accessed 29 February 2012). Blum, *Life with History*, 157.

67. Herbert Aptheker to CVW, 6 May 1954; CVW to Herbert Aptheker, 21 April, 16 December 1964; Herbert Aptheker to CVW, 28 April, 12 December 1964.

68. CVW to Bernard Bailyn, 14, 21 December 1965.

Genovese rough Aptheker up.⁶⁹ However, in 1967, Aptheker's *Negro Slave Revolts* was on Woodward's list of recommended—though not required—reading for his graduate students.⁷⁰ A year later, Woodward was encouraging Harvard University Press to publish Aptheker's proposed edition of the Du Bois papers.⁷¹ In the winter of 1969–70 they had an amiable exchange about Woodward's critique of W. J. Cash, whose *The Mind of the South* Aptheker had reviewed for the *New Masses* in 1941.⁷²

Then matters got more complicated, in ways that partly arose from Woodward having a finger in many pies simultaneously. In 1970 the National Endowment for the Humanities asked Woodward to evaluate Aptheker's grant application for his Du Bois edition. In reply, Woodward was skeptical and advised the NEH to consult with Harvard University Press, whose willingness to publish the edition had foundered when, after Harvard had insisted that arrangements be made to deposit the papers in a reputable archive and that a successor to Aptheker as executor be established, Aptheker had withdrawn from the venture. If these legitimate concerns could now be addressed, it might be possible to go forward; if not, not.⁷³ The grant was denied, but two years later Aptheker applied again and Woodward was again consulted and was again “negative.”⁷⁴ There was no grant. At the same time, in the spring of 1973, Woodward was approached by the University of Massachusetts Press, which had agreed to publish Aptheker's edition, to ask if he would serve on an advisory board for the edition.⁷⁵ He agreed, after noting John Hope Franklin's concurrent willingness to serve, a consent which had laid down certain preconditions, chief of which were that the board should be able to give advice that would be heeded, and that—a continuing theme—the

69. CVW to Robert Penn Warren, 22 September 1966; CVW to Virginius Dabney, [December 1966].

70. CVW to Jack Lynch (of the Yale Co-op), 25 July 1967; see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

71. CVW to Ann Orlov, 10 September 1968.

72. Herbert Aptheker to CVW, 15 December 1969, 5 January 1970; CVW to Herbert Aptheker, 14 January 1970.

73. CVW to William R. Emerson, 7 August 1970.

74. William R. Emerson to CVW, 30 June 1972, 31 July 1973; CVW to William R. Emerson, 11 July 1972, 21 August 1973; William R. Emerson to Herbert Aptheker, 31 July 1973. In fact, as CVW to NEH, 26 February 1976, makes clear, CVW wrote a negative report on Aptheker's renewed application, even after the Yale affair had broken.

75. Malcolm L. Call to CVW, 12 March 1973; CVW to Malcolm L. Call, 29 March 1973.

papers needed to be deposited in an archive, so that scholars might have free access.⁷⁶ The other members of the board included Louis Harlan, Woodward's former student and the editor of the Booker T. Washington papers. Then the press was confident that the issue of access was on the way to being solved, since Du Bois's widow had agreed to sell the papers to the University of Massachusetts.⁷⁷ When the deal was sealed, Woodward was pleased, because he planned to look at the papers himself and had students eager to use them, though he was less pleased to be told that early access was unlikely, since the papers would need to be catalogued and money raised to accomplish this.⁷⁸

In 1974, when the first volume of Du Bois's correspondence was published and Woodward judged it to be deeply inadequate, however, he resigned from the advisory board, as did Harlan.⁷⁹ At the same time, Blassingame wrote to express his own distress about the edition. His criticisms were: there was no explanation of editorial procedures, the introduction was woefully brief, a single volume was deemed sufficient to cover fifty-seven years of Du Bois's life, the editing was antiquated and Victorian, and Aptheker had failed to scour other archives to find papers that had not remained in Du Bois's possession and so passed to Aptheker.⁸⁰ Many of these criticisms Woodward immediately reiterated to Aptheker himself.⁸¹

This was the immediate context of Woodward's role in denying Aptheker the Yale visiting appointment. There is no evidence, at least in Woodward's correspondence, to support the accusation that this was a politically motivated decision, that it was Aptheker's Marxism and Communism that was decisive and so this was "genteel McCarthyism."⁸² As Woodward often said, he had a high opinion of many Marxists (Geno-

76. John Hope Franklin to Malcolm L. Call, 13 March 1973.

77. Malcolm L. Call to CVW, 1 April, 3, 20 August 1973; CVW to Malcolm L. Call, 27 August 1973.

78. CVW to Malcolm L. Call, 15 August 1973.

79. Leone Stein to CVW, 19 April 1974; CVW to Leone Stein, 24 April 1974; see Herbert Aptheker, ed., *The Correspondence of W. E. B. DuBois: 1: Selections, 1877-1934* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973).

80. John W. Blassingame to CVW, 25 February 1974.

81. CVW to Herbert Aptheker, 27 February 1974.

82. See "If Howard Cosell Can Teach at Yale, Why Can't Herbert Aptheker?" a flyer by the Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians Organization, John Jay College of Justice.

vese, E. P. Thompson) and no desire to silence opinions contrary to his own.⁸³ (Others who wrote to Woodward in support were less innocent of this charge.)⁸⁴ It was just that he thought Yale should appoint good scholars only, and Aptheker was, in his opinion, not a good scholar, indeed someone who was impeding the advance of good scholarship. To complicate matters, he also thought it ought to be unnecessary for him to justify his decision, at least not elaborately, and that everyone should accept that a competent body of Yale scholars had considered Aptheker's qualifications and found them wanting. (Marvin Gettleman called this "the Yale-is-above-public-scrutiny syndrome that seems to played such an important psychological role . . . in bringing about the Aptheker affair in the first place.")⁸⁵ Here, no doubt, was a crux of the controversy. Many younger than Woodward mistrusted the authority of pipe-smoking older men in tweeds and needed to be persuaded into trust. Woodward, whose reticence and eminence could be alarming to the young, was not in the business of earning trust. Though they both came from Arkansas, he did not inhabit Bill Clinton's disorderly world, which had, a few years earlier, unfolded elsewhere on the New Haven campus, and was not someone who sat around late into the night, ate pizza, shot the breeze, talked about himself, and expected to be involved. There were barriers. As Blum later remarked, when remembering a controversial tenure decision in the late 1960s: "Some of the graduate students in history believed I should have consulted them about [Staughton] Lynd. The thought of doing so never entered my mind."⁸⁶

Woodward's letters clarify that something shifted in his relationship to the American scene in the last three decades of his life, and it is plau-

83. CVW to James Green (then visiting the University of Warwick), 15 March 1976: "I hope your year has been a profitable one and that you have come to know and appreciate Hobsbawm and Thompson. If you can persuade either of them, as we have not been able to, of the advantages of teaching at Yale, I hope you will. But no second-raters, please. We believe some Marxists are more equal than others."

84. See, for example, John H. Fawcett Jr. to CVW, 1 July 1976: "I find it difficult to believe that an avowed Marxist such as Aptheker will form and profess opinions free of communist ideology. The discipline of the party will not permit him to do so. This then puts Yale University in the position of providing a forum for a propagandist rather than a teacher, and reflects unfavorably upon Yale and higher education in general."

85. Marvin E. Gettleman to CVW, 7 April 1976.

86. Blum, *Life with History*, 185.

sible to see the Aptheker affair as one symptom of this shift. In his earlier days, he had shared many concerns with those who wished to change the United States: economic improvement for ordinary people, the curbing of capitalism's excesses, and racial equality and integration chief among them. On other matters, he was less in step, because he was skeptical of the New Deal (as too moderate), an isolationist, uncommitted to Cold War liberalism, and sympathetic to populism. Nonetheless, he shared enough to feel that he belonged and was relevant, and this was especially so from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, in the heyday of the civil rights movement. But the world moved on to places he found less congenial. He became greatly troubled by the rise of the black power movement, disliked affirmative action, never came to grips with feminism, mistrusted what came to be called "theory," and became a strong opponent of multiculturalism and "political correctness." That is, he came to be at odds with many of the causes and preoccupations of significant portions of the American left, especially as it acted in the academy, in the late twentieth century. Some have seen this as evidence that he had become a conservative, others that he was habitually a dissident.⁸⁷ My own sense is that, if anything, he became more of a liberal, one most concerned about individual freedom, at the moment liberalism drifted out of fashion and was being harassed from both left and right.⁸⁸ (This may support the notion that he was a dissident or, at least, that he liked being out of step.) As late as 1972, he was asserting that, except for the fleeting moment of the civil rights movement, he had never been a liberal.⁸⁹ By 1988, he was the cosponsor of a manifesto, published in the *New York Times*, that reaffirmed "America's liberal tradition."⁹⁰ In part, this change arose because his old allegiance to populism, still available in the late 1950s, had become less and less available as the century aged. In part, it was his dissatisfaction with the rise of American conservatism, with which he may have shared

87. Trevor Burnard, "America the Good, America the Brave, America the Free: Reviewing the Oxford History of the United States," *Journal of American Studies* 45 (August 2011): 410; Sheldon Hackney, "C. Vann Woodward, Dissenter," *Historically Speaking* 10 (July 2009): 31–34.

88. On this fundamental commitment to individualism, see Blum, *Life with History*, 173; "By nature a pessimist, he resisted my instinctive optimism. By nature a pragmatist, I resisted his absolutism about the causes he nurtured. He believed fervently in the rights of individuals; I believed those rights had at times to yield to the needs of community."

89. CVW to Michael O'Brien, 19 May 1972 (private collection).

90. "A Reaffirmation of Principles" *New York Times* (26 October 1988): A21.

some themes, but with whose overall thrust he remained deeply unsympathetic. In 1989, for example, he received an invitation from George H. W. Bush, then president, to join the “Republican Senatorial Inner Circle”—they were after his money—and, on the document, Woodward affixed a rubber stamp, which read, “PISS OFF!”⁹¹ Still, this was an intricate business. As he observed, in some despair in 1998, “No sooner have we placed ourselves as left-of-center than center turns out to be where right was the day before yesterday.”⁹² There were rifts, notably in 1991 when he sympathetically reviewed Dinesh D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, which catalogued the sins of political correctness, and offended many, including John Hope Franklin.⁹³ Woodward’s acceptance of an award from the National Association of Scholars, too, occasioned disquiet.

But it would wrong to read his last years as merely alienated, even though he had to endure much sadness and some loneliness, feelings occasioned by the deaths by cancer of his son, wife, and three close friends (Richard Hofstadter, David Potter, and Alexander Bickel), and, in the ordinary ways of mortality, Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks. After the death of his wife, Woodward spoke to a friend, also widowed, of their shared “private war with the world,” which was “gaining on us.”⁹⁴ In 1987, he added, “So declines my little world of the past. . . . the world seems to shrink with [the] years.”⁹⁵ He himself had a brush with colon cancer in the early 1980s and had sundry ailments (hypertension, atrial fibrillation, cataracts, a prostate nodule, bronchitis, stasis dermatitis), which required many pills.⁹⁶ But he was tough and resilient, coped with a plethora of critics by a subtle mix of cogent reproof and wary charm, and, taken all around, had a retirement after 1977 that was marked by no little satisfaction, even moments of serenity, in the midst of the controversies that he sometimes enjoyed. Strictly speaking, he never retired, but

91. George Bush to CVW, 17 August 1989.

92. CVW to Cushing Strout, 19 January 1998.

93. See John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 325–28.

94. Quoted in Sally Kelley to CVW, 27 July 1982: none of his letters to Kelley are preserved, at least in the Woodward papers.

95. CVW to Michael O’Brien, 8 March 1987 (private collection).

96. Lawrence S. Cohen, M.D., to Charles A. DiSabatino, M.D., 11 November 1992; Charles A. DiSabatino Jr., M.D., to CVW, 20 July 1995.

just stopped teaching in classrooms. He still wrote his reviews and essays, gave his lectures in distant places, and kept his office at Yale. His edition of Mary Chesnut's journals even won a Pulitzer prize in 1982, the one major award that had, up to then, eluded him.⁹⁷ He remained very close to his daughter-in-law, Susan Woodward. And there were his many ex-students who formed a sort of family, greatly protective and supportive.

It remains, finally, to discuss the style of his letters, which often differed from the style of his published works. The latter, though they had earlier used the occasional violent adjective and uncompromising verb, came to be notable for restraint, quiet irony, and diplomatic subtlety. His readers noticed this "elegant economy," the undercurrent of emotion controlled by form, a gift for "lucidity and conciseness and [the] apt turn."⁹⁸ William Carleton discerned in Woodward an aversion to rhetorical excess—once the bane of Southern writing, many thought, including Woodward himself—and a preference for what was "softer, more subtle."⁹⁹ This subtlety could sometimes arise from an unwillingness to be direct, a desire to participate but a disinclination to belong. He was, in his own words, "prone to keep a good deal concealed."¹⁰⁰ As an admiring Arkansas friend once said, with some exasperation, "You stand too far off. Come in closer, bud, and have a look if you dare."¹⁰¹ Another old acquaintance from his childhood in Vanndale, who had lost touch and then reestablished it in the late 1970s, observed: "When I saw you through your books through the years, I always had the impression of a tall, aloof, irreproachable and unapproachable writer."¹⁰² It turned out that he was very willing to be approached, but it is true that, in his prose, he preferred to be self-contained, a stranger to loose ends, irreconcilable thoughts, and vulnerability.

This is not the voice of his letters. Or, rather, ironic subtlety was only one of his voices, for he had the gift of noticing to whom he was writing, adjusting his tone accordingly, and conducting a conversation. ("Like to talk to you about it" was one of his characteristic sentences, as was "What

97. C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

98. Willie Lee Rose to CVW, 11 December 1967; Haver C. Currie to CVW, 17 March 1969.

99. William G. Carleton to CVW, 5 December 1964.

100. CVW to Antonina Jones Hansell, 16 October 1937, AHL.

101. Martha England to CVW, 5 August 1958.

102. Sally Kelley to CVW, 2 April 1979.

is your opinion?") This courtesy and sensitivity could sometimes lead to his saying one thing to one person and a contradictory thing to another, though it is doubtful he did this more than most of us. Naturally enough, the better Woodward knew and trusted his correspondent, the more he abandoned indirection and would be blunt and indiscreet, so unsurprisingly his candid opinions are more reliably discerned in letters to close friends. In such letters, a good many historians, living and dead, were thereby skewered, though others praised, for Woodward saw letters as a medium of observation and criticism. So, if Woodward's critical identity was, in print, often seen through a mist of irony and indirection, in his letters that identity appears with great sharpness.

It is not clear that he wrote with an eye on posterity, or only occasionally. Now and again he would compose letters, self-consciously constructed and artful. A letter of 1958, in which he described his long night with C. K. Ogden in Bloomsbury, is probably the best example of this and is a reminder that Woodward the letter writer could also embody Woodward the gifted maker of historical narratives. But mostly he wrote with spontaneity, verve, and even colloquial freedom. He liked to be allusive, and there are echoes of Shakespeare, Thoreau, Lewis Carroll, and other authors scattered through his rapid sentences, which did not always bother with the tidy sequences of subject, verb, and object, and even have very mild profanity and exclamation marks. (In print, he was not a man for the exclamation mark.) He was not above gossiping, though usually his gossip concerned what he himself had experienced, not what others had told him about third parties. He was not a storyteller in the classic Southern sense, certainly not a teller of tales with a moral, though he was a narrator of incidents. (The 1970 letter to his daughter-in-law about his presiding over a turbulent business meeting of the American Historical Association is a case in point.) Almost above all, he had a gift for comedy, a gift which he drastically constrained in his published works. Some of this comedy was at the expense of the foolishness of others, but occasionally it was at his own expense although his self-deprecation was often a double-bluff. Mostly his comedy arose from a conviction that much in life was absurd. Hence many of his letters occasion a smile, and a few prompt laughter. I would especially single out his 1975 letter to Eric McKittrick and Stanley Elkins, in which he explained why their proposal for a multivolume history of the Federalist era, as their contribution to the *Oxford History of the United States*, was a mistake.

It is hazardous to make comparisons, not least because publication of the letters written by those in Woodward's generation of historians has scarcely commenced. (And may little do so, since this is a neglected genre.)¹⁰³ But examples from many of them appear in Woodward's own papers and it is hard to see that any but a few match the aesthetic, political, intellectual, and cultural range of Woodward's own letters. (Eugene Genovese and, somewhat unexpectedly, Eric McKittrick come to mind, however.) As for other generations of historians, at least after that elusive moment in the nineteenth century when the writing of letters ceased to be a self-conscious art, Woodward's letters seem more complex and subtle than those of Herbert Baxter Adams in the late nineteenth century or Carl Becker in the early twentieth. No doubt Henry Adams, as Woodward would have been the first to admit, is in a class of his own.¹⁰⁴ But, otherwise, it is doubtful that a reader can find Woodward's peer among those historians, in his time, who took the writing of letters to be a serious venture.

103. It seems to flourish more in Europe and, especially, at the University of Oxford; see, for example, Isaiah Berlin, *Flourishing: Letters 1928–1946*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004); H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006); Gerhard A. Ritter, ed., *German Refugee Historians and Friedrich Meinecke: Letters and Documents, 1910–1977*, trans. Alex Skinner (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Johan Huizinga, *Briefwisseling*, ed. Léon Hanssen, W. E. Krul, and Anton van der Lem, 3 vols. (Veen: Tjeenk Willink, 1989–91); Benedetto Croce and Franco Venturi, *Carteggio*, ed. Silva Berti (Bologna: Il mulino, 2008); Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, *The Birth of Annales History: The Letters of Lucien Febvre and March Bloch to Henri Pirenne* (Brussels: Academie royale de Belgique, Commission royale d'histoire, 1991); Élie Halévy, *Correspondance (1891–1937)*, ed. Henriette Guy-Loë (Paris: De Fallois, 1996).

104. See W. Stull Holt, *Historical Scholarship in the United States, 1876–1901: As Revealed in the Correspondence of Herbert B. Adams* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938); Michael Kammen, ed., "What Is the Good of History?" *Selected Letters of Carl L. Becker, 1900–1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973); J. C. Levenson et al., *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Belknap, 1982–88).

Editorial Note

This volume's editorial principles are few and straightforward. Whenever possible, I have provided the full text of the letters, with the exceptions that I have removed salutations and subscriptions (unless they seem unusually meaningful) and standardized the dates and places of composition. However, in the cases of letters written during the years when Woodward was at Johns Hopkins and Yale, I have omitted the place and the reader can presume it is Baltimore or New Haven, respectively, unless otherwise specified. At the end of each letter, I have noted in which archive the letter can be found and whether it is typed, a carbon, longhand, signed, or unsigned. For letters in Yale's Woodward Papers, as well as a few other collections, I have added the box and folder numbers, since they might otherwise be too difficult to locate. (So, "35/415" means box 35, folder 415.) I have silently corrected minor errors, occasioned by bad typing, but left grammatical errors, misspellings, misuse of foreign words, or whimsies which seem to be Woodward's own or, at least, eluded his copyediting. From some letters, I have removed a few paragraphs, and these are signaled by the designation "[deletion]." This was done very reluctantly, but the text became too long—Woodward wrote too many good letters—and I was forced to choose between excising whole letters, well worth retaining, or removing inessential paragraphs, almost always those in which he courteously greeted or bade farewell to his correspondent, or in which he dealt with minor administrative matters.

I have included one document that is not a letter. The memorandum that Woodward composed a few days after spending an evening in the company of Alger Hiss seemed too interesting to omit, even though for-

mally it does not fall within the remit of this volume, except in the sense that it can be regarded as a letter to posterity.

It is very difficult to estimate the number of documents in the Woodward Papers at Yale. I took away about 20,000 photographic images of individual pages (including letters he received), of which only 294 of his own letters have made it into this volume. I doubt that I photographed as much as a third of the collection, so I would tentatively estimate that perhaps 2 percent of his letters are being made available here; in fact, the percentage is lower, since I also examined a great many other manuscripts at Yale, the Southern Historical Collection, and Emory, many of which collections furnished little that was usable. There is doubtless more material that a comprehensive search for Woodward letters might yield, but I did not issue a published call for individuals to send me letters, in part because I had more than enough to work with, in part because his habit of keeping carbons would have meant my being sent, perhaps, many thousands of pages which I had already seen.

The following abbreviations have been used.

- | | |
|------|--|
| AHL | Antonina Hansell Looker Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill |
| ALS | Autograph letter signed |
| ALU | Autograph letter unsigned |
| CVW | C. Vann Woodward |
| CVWP | C. Vann Woodward Papers (MS 1436), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library |
| GWR | Glenn Weddington Rainey Papers, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University |
| JHR | John Herbert Roper Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill |
| LDR | Louis D. Rubin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill |
| RH | Richard Hofstadter Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University |
| RPW | Robert Penn Warren Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University |

- TCLS Typed carbon letter signed
- TCLU Typed carbon letter unsigned
- TCMU Typed Carbon Memorandum Unsigned
- TLS Typed letter signed
- TLU Typed letter unsigned
- VFD Virginia Foster Durr Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library,
Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

This page intentionally left blank