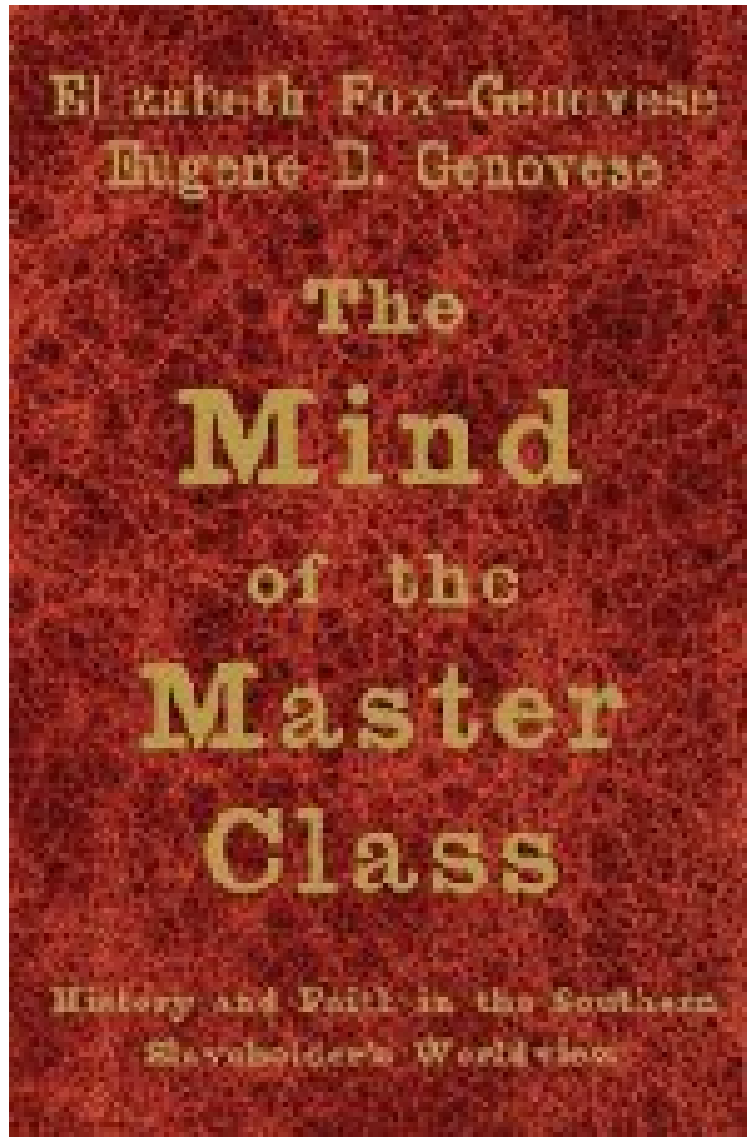


The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Eugene D. Genovese
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Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Eugene D. Genovese : The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Understanding over polemicizingBy James A. SullivanThe Mind of

the Master Class is a tour de force, a kind of Wagnerian opus that brings the Southern elites into focus. We learn what they thought about; Scripture, the French Revolution, the classics and yes, their own slave owning. Instead of viewing them as merely a plague in history, we follow their opinions in such detail that they are humanized despite the current mood to simply dismiss them as a countersign on our road to progress. The erudition in this work is overwhelming and it is certainly the case that anyone involved in the historical discussion about slavery should consult this book. While many diehards will lament an analysis of the slaveowners in such detail, the authors make no brief for slavery. Rather they contextualize the lives of the master class in such a way that we, the reader, get to slough off our own provincialism in the interest of a wider understanding.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Wealth of Detail, Fascinating insights By Darrell J. Hartwick For a scholarly work, this is quite interesting. It will be of great interest to those with a passion for Southern history and culture, as well as those like me who are bewildered by the idea of decent, civilized people defending and profiting from such a brutal institution as slavery. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is, in no way, an apologist for slavery or any other form of human oppression, but she does fairly treat this neglected side of the 19th c. debate. I was particularly fascinated by the thought that many slaveowners compared the condition of their slaves to those of masses of workers in Northern factories, manufacturing cotton goods under conditions that seemed to them even worse than the conditions of those who picked the cotton.

4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. What they didn't teach you in school about the ante-bellum South. By W. F. Rucker I enjoyed this book immensely. It greatly added to my knowledge and understanding of the ante-bellum South and why secession and the Civil War occurred. Most of the history of this era I have read was written from a Northern point of view and showed little understanding of the Southern attitudes portrayed in this book. This book helped me to understand how fundamental the differences between North and South were. The volume of research cited in the book is imposing. The footnotes comprise one-third of the 718 pages of text. After the text are 80 pages of supplementary references on topics from Addison and Cato to Women and the Classics. The research notes provided a wealth of primary sources documenting the very active intellectual life of the South. The intellectual life in the South centered around the fact that it was a slave holding, agrarian, republican society. Much of Southern intellectual life was an attempt to justify slavery and define how to administer their duties as slave masters in accordance with historical and Christian standards. There is a discussion of Abrahamic slavery, slavery as practiced by Abraham. The South saw itself as a different and better place and some Southern writers recommended slavery for the workers of the North. The authors' last book *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order* developed that theme further. The section on religion in Southern intellectual life is approximately one-third of the book. The South was a country of small towns and villages and the church was the primary social activity. The Southerners made great use of the Bible to justify slavery. They often cited the fact that Jews and other peoples in the Bible owned slaves and there was no criticism of slavery in the Bible. Southerners tried to justify African slavery with the curse of Noah and referred to Africans as "The sons of Ham". Southern theologians strongly criticized the Northern Transcendentalists and Unitarians. The authors make the statement that the Southerners showed they were correct and the Northern theologians wrong on this question. That is a strong statement but the authors also referred to the Civil War as the War of Northern Aggression. The chapter on John Brown's raid on the Harper's Ferry armory showed the importance of that event in the development of the sectional hatreds that led to the Civil War. John Brown, contrary to his public statements, intended to start a slave uprising when he took over the armory. After he was arrested the fact that he was financed by Northern abolitionists became public knowledge. In the North John Brown became a hero and was compared to Jesus. The Southerners saw this incident as proof that Northern abolitionists intended to promote slave uprisings that would lead to the slaughter of white Southerners. The authors write that for many Southerners Harper's Ferry and its aftermath put them in the frame of mind to reject Lincoln's election more firmly than they might have done. The North and the South during this time were two societies who didn't know each other and increasingly didn't like each other. At the time of Lincoln's election the North and the South were two countries sharing one government. After secession Abraham Lincoln and other Northerners thought that Union sentiment in the South would lead to reconciliation before any conflict. Reading this book made it clear that peaceful reunion was never a real possibility.

Presenting many slaveholders as intelligent, honorable and pious men and women, this study asks how people who were admirable in so many ways could have presided over a social system that inflicted gross abuse on slaves. The South had formidable proslavery intellectuals who participated fully in transatlantic debates and boldly challenged an ascendant capitalist ("free-labor") society. Blending classical and Christian traditions, they forged a moral and political philosophy designed to sustain conservative principles in history, political economy, social theory, and theology, while translating them into political action.

"In exploring their terrible and complex subject with honesty and sympathy, the authors have grappled heroically with the ambiguity at the heart of history and in the heart of man." -*The Atlantic Monthly* "Extraordinarily erudite. What is most impressive is the authors' ability to tell us precisely what was meant by the innumerable literary and cultural

references found in the writings of the slaveholding intellectuals. They seem to have read all the books that their subjects read and talked about and are thus able to get inside their minds to a remarkable degree." -New York of Books
"This book is one that libraries of colleges offering courses in American history ought to acquire." -Catholic Library World
"Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, focusing as they should on religion and political thought, have turned their immense learning and acuity to presenting the strongest case possible about the slaveholders intellectual and moral virtues, as well as their enormous failings and tragedies. Historians, including those who do not share the Genoveses's Old South sympathies, will find *The Mind of the Master Class* a commanding and illuminating book." -Sean Wilentz, Princeton University
"The strength of the book lies in the Genoveses' depth of research and command of the primary sources. *The Mind of the Master Class* is an important contribution to southern intellectual history and undoubtedly will be read and debated for years to come." -Adam L. Tate, Clayton State University, *Journal of Social History*
"...the Genoveses offer us one more insight into the Southern mind." -Hal Goldman, *Historie sociale*
About the Author
Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is Eléonore Raoul Professor of the Humanities at Emory University, where she was founding director of Women's Studies. She is Editor of *The Journal of The Historical Society* and serves on the Governing Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities (2002-2008). In 2003 President George Bush honored her with a National Humanities Medal, and the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars honored her with its Cardinal Wright Award. Among her books and published lectures are: *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France*; *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*; and *Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*.
Eugene D. Genovese, a retired professor of history, served as first president of The Historical Society. Among his books are *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*; *The Slaveholders' Dilemma: Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860*; and *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South*.
Fox-Genovese and Genovese serve on the editorial boards of a number of scholarly journals and are co-authors of *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism*. In 2004 The Intercollegiate Studies Institute presented them jointly with its Gerhard Niemeyer Award for Distinguished Contributions to Scholarship in the Liberal Arts.