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Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese: Partners in Life and History

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EUGENE GENOVESE AND ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE:
PARTNERS IN LIFE AND HISTORY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Frances Emily Fleming Chandler
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Accepted by:
Dr. Alan Grubb, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

This study examines both the personal and professional relationships of historians Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Considered by many to be a ‘power couple’ in the historical academy, they were pioneers in the field of southern history and offered a number of contributions toward a Marxist interpretation of the antebellum South. They also wielded a considerable amount of influence within their discipline. Previous studies have focused on the Genoveses’ professional collaboration and scholarship, but have neglected to explore their marriage. This study takes a closer look at their personal lives and marriage and seeks to determine the influence they had on one another as well as the influence their marriage had on their historical scholarship.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, William Chandler. He has encouraged me every step of the way and I do not know that I could have done it without his support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would especially like to thank Billy Hungeling, Sheila O'Connor-Ambrose, and Douglas Ambrose for their kind assistance in my research, especially following Eugene Genovese's death. Billy was gracious enough to answer questions about Gene and Betsey, share stories of his friendship with them, and he even allowed me to see their home. Sheila and Douglas were also very generous. They answered all of my questions regarding their experiences with Gene and Betsey as teachers, mentors, and friends. Together, they provided invaluable information and allowed me to see Gene and Betsey on a more personal level.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1989, historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown asked, “What would antebellum southern history be like without the work of the Genoveses?”¹ Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese were one of the rare power couples within the historical academy. They were erudite, prolific, bold, and controversial. Each made a reputation in southern history by seeking to reinterpret it from a Marxist perspective, and each won national recognition for playing an electrifying role in the culture wars of the 1960s and 1990s. Both had strong personalities and were self-proclaimed agnostics. However, they also worked as a team and influenced each other in a number of ways. They co-taught history courses, co-wrote several influential books, and co-founded the journal *Marxist Perspectives* and The Historical Society. Further, after meeting and marrying Genovese, Fox-Genovese shifted from a specialty in French history to an emphasis on Genovese’s field, the American South. The two shared an interesting trajectory as well. Late in life, they shifted to a more conservative outlook and both joined the Catholic Church.

Up to this point, historians who have written about Genovese and Fox-Genovese have dealt primarily with their historical scholarship. From reviewing their early works and analyzing the merits of their Marxist interpretations of southern history to the slightly grudging acknowledgements of their recent, more conservative histories, historians have credited them with thoughtful and provocative works which have served to advance the study of history. However, outside of a random reference to their ventures into the culture wars, no historian has thoroughly studied either Genovese or Fox-Genovese on a

¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “Matrons and Mammies,” *Reviews in American History* 17 (1989): 219.

personal level. Hence, this study presents a unique inquiry into their personal lives in an effort to discover how their marriage influenced their historical scholarship.

The first chapter is a biography of Genovese and Fox-Genovese. Beginning with their family backgrounds and childhoods, it goes on to describe their marriage, personalities, professional careers and accomplishments, and participation in the culture wars. It also includes their political migrations, religious conversions, increasingly strained relations with the academic community, and the sexual harassment allegations lodged against Fox-Genovese during her tenure at Emory University. Finally, it examines the Genoveses' marriage, what they were like as a couple, and the ways in which they helped one another, influenced one another, worked together, and encouraged one another. In all, it offers a glimpse into the lives and marriage of Genovese and Fox-Genovese and provides a greater understanding of the ways in which their lives and marriage influenced each of them as historians.

The second and third chapters then examine the scholarship of Genovese and Fox-Genovese respectively. They explore the kind of history each has written, how it is written, each author's point of view and perspective, and the sources each has utilized. They also discuss the extent to which the scholarship of each was influenced by his or her personal experiences and review the critical opinion of each author's scholarly work. Finally, the fourth chapter is very similar to the second and third in form and content, but it examines the Genoveses' collaborative work.

Overall, Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese were each remarkable in his or her own right. However, their personal and professional partnership, their academic and domestic union, makes their story even more intriguing.

CHAPTER ONE

“A MARRIAGE MADE IN HISTORY”:

BIOGRAPHY OF EUGENE GENOVESE AND ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE²

Eugene Dominic Genovese, nicknamed Gene, was born in 1930 in the Dyker Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York during the Great Depression.³ Born to Catholic parents of Italian (Sicilian) background, he grew up in a working-class neighborhood and attended Public School 201 and New Utrecht High School.⁴ His father was a dockworker, and he often had trouble finding work, especially during the lean winter months. His mother did not work, but stayed at home and took care of the family.⁵ Through the summer, she stocked up on food hoping that it would last the family through the winter.⁶ Often, the food did not last. Looking back on those hard times, Gene remembered, “The year 1938 was particularly brutal. I was eight years old. I will never forget it.”⁷ Too proud to accept welfare, Gene’s parents went without so their children could eat. “It is not enjoyable to watch your parents stint themselves of food in order for you and your brother to get a proper meal.”⁸ Such images would have a lasting effect on Gene throughout his life. His father was class conscious and knew that he was a worker. Nonetheless, he respected the owner of the company for which he worked because he had

² Carlin Romano, “A Marriage Made in History,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 55 (2009): B4.

³ Eugene D. Genovese, “From Marxism to Christianity,” Calvin College, January 20, 1998, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/99284-1>; Jay Nordlinger, “Up From Leftism: A Visit With the Historian Gene Genovese,” *National Review* 63 (2011): 42.

⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *Miss Betsey: A Memoir of Marriage* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), 1-2, 90.

⁵ Genovese, “From Marxism to Christianity.”

⁶ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 19.

⁷ Nordlinger, “Up From Leftism,” 42.

⁸ Genovese, “From Marxism to Christianity.”

labored to build his company honestly, and he cared about his workers. His son, who inherited the company, did not. He went so far as to ostentatiously throw steaks to his dogs while his workers were unemployed. Meanwhile, Gene saw the stresses that his father's unemployment placed on his family. Feelings of failure to provide led his father to anger over perceived instances of disrespect and sometimes even to domestic violence. Such childhood experiences created in Gene a class hatred. "I hated the people who would not provide work for [my father and] who caused so much misery for us. I hated them with the terrible passion that perhaps only a child can muster. And, sad to say, that hatred proved a good deal stronger than my never very reflective Catholicism."⁹ In 1945, at the age of 15, he left the Catholic Church for the Communist Movement that promised a better life for the masses, officially joining the Party when he turned 17. He remained a Marxist and a Soviet supporter until the collapse of the Soviet Union, believing that the enormous amount of violence and blood-letting was for a greater good, and would eventually lead to the promised world of opportunity for workers. Over time, the violence and corpses would take their toll on his conscience.¹⁰

Following high school, Gene went on to Brooklyn College because the tuition was free and he could live at home.¹¹ He also worked a full-time job in the evenings which paid thirty dollars a week.¹² He later recalled that such an endeavor was easy as long as one could get by on four hours of sleep a night.¹³ Early in his college career,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Eugene D. Genovese, "Hans Rosenberg at Brooklyn College: A Communist Student's Recollections of the Classroom as War Zone," *Central European History* 24 (1991): 51.

¹² Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 26.

¹³ Nordlinger, "Up From Leftism," 42.

Gene had no interest in Marxist theory or intellectual work. He had determined that he would become a Communist Party organizer in the trade union field and, as an activist, he was very anti-intellectual.¹⁴ However, at the age of twenty, he was expelled from the Party for “white chauvinism.”¹⁵ By that time, he had determined that he needed to know more about the intellectual side of Marxism and Communism than he had previously believed. After thinking about pursuing journalism and a brief stint working as a copy boy at a local newspaper, he decided to return to school in order to become a historian.¹⁶ Moreover, disenchanted with the Soviet Party line, he briefly experimented with Maoism and joined the Progressive Labor Party which sided with China in the Communist split. He also served as the editor-in-chief of the *Marxist-Leninist Quarterly* and argued that Mao would effect the predicted world socialist revolution rather than the Soviets.¹⁷

Upon returning to school, Gene was determined and driven. Not wanting to “waste” his opportunity for an education on “baby classes,” he enrolled in many tough classes including some taught by Hans Rosenberg. Reflecting on this time in his life, Gene revealed a tremendous amount of respect for Rosenberg as a teacher not only of history, but also of life and a career in the historical academy. Though Rosenberg regularly impugned Gene’s cherished Marxist ideals, he challenged Gene and his Communist classmates to defend their Marxism, thereby sending them racing to the library after every class in order to gain knowledge and ammunition with which to return

¹⁴ Eugene D. Genovese and Ronald Radosh, “An Interview with Eugene Genovese: The Rise of a Marxist Historian,” *Change* 10 (1978): 34.

¹⁵ Ronald Radosh, “A Historian Taught by History: Eugene D. Genovese, 1930-2012,” *The Weekly Standard* 18 (2012): http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/historian-taught-history_653811.html.

¹⁶ Genovese and Radosh, Interview, 34.

¹⁷ Radosh, “Historian Taught by History.”

Rosenberg's fire during the next class period. Looking back, he was able to see a wise teacher who knew how to goad his students to learn.¹⁸ As Gene was nearing completion of his undergraduate degree, Rosenberg invited him to his home in order to discuss his academic future. Upon learning that he wanted to pursue a graduate degree in history, Rosenberg suggested that he continue with his study of southern slaveholders. Gene was not interested. Rosenberg responded: "Well, I have studied the Junkers, who rose to power more or less at a definite time and went kaput in 1945. Your slaveholders also rose to power more or less at a definite time and went kaput in 1865. Where could you find anything so close to a laboratory in which to study how a ruling class really rules? Why don't you test those crazy Marxist theories of yours?" He did not say, 'Put up or shut up,' but I got the message."¹⁹ Following Brooklyn College, Gene went on to earn master's and doctorate degrees in history from Columbia University.²⁰

Though Genovese was proud of his working-class background, he openly acknowledged that his public education, as good as it was, was not comparable to the elite education that Fox-Genovese received at the select private schools she attended.²¹ Elizabeth Ann Fox had a very different childhood. Nicknamed Betsey, she was born on May 28, 1941 to an affluent family in Boston, Massachusetts.²² Her father, Edward Whiting Fox, attended Harvard University and served there as an assistant dean during World War Two. Later, he was employed by the State Department during the Roosevelt

¹⁸ Genovese, "Hans Rosenberg," 51-54.

¹⁹ Ibid., 56-57.

²⁰ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 2, 93.

²¹ Robert Louis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger, *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 208.

²² Margalit Fox, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Historian, Is Dead at 65," *The New York Times*, January 7, 2007, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9904E3DF1530F934A35752C0A9619C8B63>.

and Truman administrations, briefly serving as the Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Analysis from 1945-1946. From there, he taught at Cornell University as a professor of history specializing in modern Europe until his retirement in 1978.²³ Her mother, Elizabeth Simon Fox, was a member of New York's German Jewish bourgeoisie. She attended Radcliffe University where she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees. She then served as an assistant to Harvard historian William L. Langer.²⁴ Edward Fox's family also held a distinguished pedigree. His middle name was derived from a paternal ancestor who was the first minister in the seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was also descended from the illegitimate line of Charles James Fox, the Whig Prime Minister of Great Britain.²⁵

Despite a long family tradition of religious piety, Betsey's father was an atheist and her mother was agnostic. Regardless, they understood the centrality of the Judeo-Christian tradition in Western Civilization and made sure their children were well-versed in it. Until the age of ten, Betsey's parents sent her and her siblings to Sunday School to gain a knowledge of Biblical teachings and her mother read the Bible to them, also encouraging them to read it themselves. Additionally, the Fox family often attended Sunday evening hymn singings and no one was allowed to play cards on Sunday. However, the central element of faith was excluded. In absence of faithful religious practice, Betsey's parents modeled strict moral and ethical behavior and stressed its

²³ Walter LaFeber and L. Pearce Williams, "Cornell University Faculty Memorial Statement," accessed January 25, 2013, <http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/17813>.

²⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," in *History and Women, Culture and Faith: Selected Writings of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Volume 5*, ed. Rebecca Fox and Robert L. Paquette (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 193; Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 77, 92.

²⁵ Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," 191-192.

importance to a happy and successful life. Betsey also discussed religious and moral issues with her father often throughout her childhood and adolescent years. In these conversations, he stressed that the greatest courage is moral rather than physical and that no intellectual endeavor can succeed without strict intellectual honesty extending all the way to a scholar's honesty with himself. He also encouraged her to view Jesus as a "model of self-consciousness and loving self-sacrifice" and emphasized the necessary role of suffering in human life. Altogether, this created within Betsey not only a secular worldview, but a great value for human life and the necessity of placing others above oneself. It also caused her later to be suspicious of the increasing individualism of the 1960s which superseded individual rights over the needs of society.²⁶

While Betsey's parents did not believe in giving her more money than she needed, an elite education was very important to them. As a result, she attended a number of fine schools including North Country School, Concord Academy, Bryn Mawr College, Le College Cevenol in Le Chambon sur Lignon, and Harvard University. At Bryn Mawr, she double majored in history and French literature while also gaining a wide exposure to medieval church history and theology. At Harvard, she earned her master's and doctorate degrees.²⁷ During this time, Betsey shared a close relationship with her father. He demonstrated a strong interest in her education and guided it throughout her childhood, adolescent years, and even into her early adulthood, encouraging her toward medieval history and philosophy and twentieth-century Catholic thought. They also shared

²⁶ Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," 193-196 (quote on 195).

²⁷ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 89-90; Douglas Ambrose, "Seeking Truth: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's Intellectual Pilgrimage," *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): http://www.christendomreview.com/Volume001Issue002/douglas_ambrose_01.html.

frequent discussions covering a variety of intellectual matters, her current reading, suggestions for future reading, the importance of keeping reading diaries, and analyzing books and ideas within the larger framework of Western Civilization.²⁸ Betsey's diary and personal papers from this time suggest that she was very demanding of herself. She appears to have worried frequently about reading, writing, how much she was eating, her money management skills, and her relationships with her parents and others. She also seems to have desired acceptance from her father and felt a lot of need to please him by being the best.²⁹ The anxiety took its toll and from 1965-1966, she suffered from anorexia. She was about five feet, nine inches tall and, at one point in late February 1966, she weighed just 95.5 pounds. After great effort and counseling, she reached 130 pounds in February 1967. Nonetheless, she continued to worry about her weight for years afterward.³⁰ All in all, Betsey's childhood could not have been more different from Gene's.

Gene and Betsey met in 1968 on a blind date. One of Gene's colleagues, who happened to be a former student of Dr. Fox at Cornell, encouraged him to call Betsey. Currently living in Montreal and teaching at Sir George Williams College, he lied to Betsey saying that he would be in Cambridge on business; they should meet for dinner. He was thirty-eight, and she was twenty-seven. He described their first meeting, saying,

²⁸ Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," 194-195; "Diary Entry of December 7, 1961," Box 44, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers #4851, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²⁹ "Diary Entries of January 23 and 25, 1962," Box 44, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

³⁰ "Diary Entry of March 1 [1966]," Box 44, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers; "Diary Entry of February 22, 1967," Box 44, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

“My life split in two: Before Betsey and Since Betsey.”³¹ Upon hearing of their new relationship, Betsey’s parents were not in favor of it. Surprisingly, Gene did not blame them. Had he been her father, he would have had himself “dealt with.” After all, he was eleven years her senior, was twice divorced, and had a reputation for being a womanizer. He was even hesitant to introduce Betsey to his own family and let them know that the “family’s black sheep was at it again.”³² After they became engaged, Betsey took it upon herself to find out where they lived and make a surprise visit to introduce herself. They had not even heard about her. She cheerfully called Gene when she returned home to tell him what a delightful visit they had. Despite it all, on June 6, 1969, they entered into a marriage that would last for thirty-seven years.³³

It is said that opposites attract. Being of Italian descent, Gene was of medium height and had a somewhat stocky build. Likewise, he inherited a Sicilian temper which caused him to yell and wave his hands when angry. Finally, he was quick to pass summary judgment, usually accompanied by harsh punishment. Hearing of Boris Yeltsin’s criticism of Mikhail Gorbachev, he and Betsey discussed what must have possessed Yeltsin to do such a thing knowing that he was presenting a direct challenge to Gorbachev’s power and position as head of the Soviet Union. Regardless, Gene’s suggested response was easy. In Gorbachev’s position, he would shoot Yeltsin. When Betsey argued that such a response would violate all of Gorbachev’s principles, he responded that she just did not like to shoot people.³⁴

³¹ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 2, 5-6.

³² *Ibid.*, 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14-15, 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16, 38-42.

Gene also possessed a good sense of humor, especially relating to his position within their marriage. In his tribute to Betsey entitled *Miss Betsey: A Memoir of Marriage*, he recalls an early inclination to correct her with light to moderate corporal punishment in order to uphold the tried and true “old patriarchal way.” However, after seeing her pitch a softball game and throw like a male, he “reassessed the theological, theoretical, and existential implications and ramifications and opted for the high ground of principle. [He] concluded that no gentleman would ever resort to wife-beating. It was immoral, revolting, and utterly inappropriate to civilized life.”³⁵ Nonetheless, he meant to secure a prominent place in their marriage as head of the household. He determined that he would listen to Wagner’s operas, which she hated, every time he pleased. When the spirit moved him, he did not care whether she wanted to hear it or not; he would play it. Ironically, the spirit normally moved him when she was out of town.³⁶

Gene could be equally charming, especially with women. As mentioned earlier, he had a reputation for being quite the ladies’ man prior to meeting Betsey and was often seen with different women. Of course, he divulged his secret in *Miss Betsey*: if a young man asks one hundred girls for a date every year and just two percent of them accept the offer, he is still seen with a different girl every six months and is assumed to be good with the ladies. Nonetheless, he successfully won the adoration of Betsey’s mother, “a formidable woman,” and, even in his older age, could be known to charm the female employees at one of his and Betsey’s favorite restaurants in Atlanta, Nino’s.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 21-22.

³⁶ Ibid., 26.

³⁷ Ibid., footnote on 11-12, 14; William J. Hungeling, Interview by author, October 26, 2012, conducted at the home of Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese.

Although very Left politically, Gene was culturally conservative. Beginning early in his life, he believed in neatness, good manners, and upholding societal standards. These ideals were also shared by the Communist Party during his time as a member. In remembering his and his fellow Communists' many intellectual battles with Professor Rosenberg, Gene notes that he and his comrades were always careful to maintain their classroom manners lest they "[embarrass] the Party by outraging [their] fellow students' sense of decency."³⁸ His cultural conservatism also extended into adulthood. Detesting what he considered to be sloppiness, he insisted upon wearing three-piece suits when teaching. Only through clever and indirect methods was Betsey eventually able to persuade him to mix in some slightly less formal jackets.³⁹ He especially disapproved of the counterculture and the crude and seemingly anarchic behavior of many of the student demonstrators during the 1960s. Though he in many ways supported their protests of the Vietnam War and other grievances, he did not support their methods to bring about change.⁴⁰

Gene had a passion for social justice. Growing up during the Great Depression and personally witnessing the abuse of his father and other workers, he turned toward Marxism and Communism which offered a program that promised to correct the ills inherent in a capitalist society. This passion would shape his life and even his scholarship for many years to come. However, it was tempered by Gene's even greater passion for truth. Like Betsey's father, Gene knew that truth was fundamental to any

³⁸ Genovese, "Hans Rosenberg," 53.

³⁹ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 28.

⁴⁰ Nordlinger, "Up From Leftism," 42.

meaningful intellectual endeavor and that no scholarly effort could succeed if it failed to seek the truth regardless of ideological or political consequences.⁴¹

Perhaps due to his Sicilian ancestry and temperament, Gene was both intellectually and politically tough and stood up for his beliefs. Writing of his professional relationship with Gene, Benjamin Schwarz said “I always found Genovese deeply charming and warmly wise, but I knew him to be someone not to cross.” Gene seemed to understand people and realistically assessed his opponents: “In irreconcilable confrontations, as comrade Stalin...clearly understood, it is precisely the most admirable, manly, principled, and, by their own lights, moral opponents who have to be killed; the others can be frightened or bought.”⁴² Fortunately, Gene never had to make such a judgment as his conflicts were generally of a scholarly nature. Nonetheless, he entered into a number of heated debates with colleagues over intellectual differences, but eventually repaired and resumed the friendships. In speaking of his political differences with Gene, a former student noted that he and Gene never clashed: “In Gene’s view I was a wimpy social democrat who watched polls in Democratic Party primaries for Eugene McCarthy, George McGovern, and other fellow wimps. Sufficiently distant from his strongly held political positions – first on the Left and then on the Right – I was never at risk of ideological excommunication. The political never became the personal.”⁴³

⁴¹ Robert P. George, “Eugene Genovese: Truth-Teller,” *Public Discourse* (October 2, 2012): <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/10/6481/>.

⁴² Benjamin Schwarz, “A Tragic Sense of Life: Remembering Two Great Historians,” *The Atlantic* (October 11, 2012): <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/10/a-tragic-sense-of-life-remembering-two-great-historians/263513/>.

⁴³ Leo P. Ribuffo, “Eugene D. Genovese: Recollections of a Former Student,” *U.S. Intellectual History, The Blog of the Society for U.S. Intellectual History*, October 3, 2012, <http://s-usih.org/2012/10/eugene-d-genovese-recollections-of.html>.

Interestingly, Gene admired toughness in his opponents as well. He credited the New Jersey Right for executing a good campaign against him as a result of some politically notorious comments he made during a Rutgers teach-in. Though they did not win, he applauded their willingness to fight for their convictions.⁴⁴

Although Gene was very committed to his intellectual, ideological, and political opinions, he was surprisingly open-minded to opposing ideas and people who held them as long as the ideas were sensible and those who held them could support their positions with good evidence. When counseling a student to consider applying to Emory University, a professor in Texas noted that “[Betsey] and Gene are Marxists, but they are *reasonable* Marxists.”⁴⁵ In 1968, Gene wrote an essay entitled “William Styron Before the People’s Court” which defended novelist Styron from what he believed to be a brutal and venomous attack from “Ten Black Writers” and many of his fellow Leftists. In the article, he “shredded the Ten Black Writers” for their distortions and unnecessarily personal attacks. He also warned that many politically motivated people had “talked themselves into believing many things they have later had to gag on.”⁴⁶ During his brief tenure as the chairman of the history department at the University of Rochester, Gene further displayed his open-mindedness by attempting to recruit conservative Paul Gottfried. Likewise, he wrote a letter to *The New York Review of Books* in which he denounced the exclusion of Rightward-leaning scholars from tenured positions and openly called Alfred Kazin out for destroying the candidacy of southern conservative

⁴⁴ Genovese and Radosh, Interview, 32-33.

⁴⁵ Douglas Ambrose and Sheila O’Connor-Ambrose, “Modeling the Dedicated Life,” in *History and Women, Culture and Faith: Selected Writings of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Volume 5* ed. Rebecca Fox and Robert L. Paquette (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 290.

⁴⁶ Christopher Hitchens, “Radical Pique,” *Vanity Fair* 57 (1994): 32, 34.

M.E. Bradford for chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.⁴⁷ Finally, Gene invited “outstanding right-wing people” to send articles to his journal *Marxist Perspectives* while also writing several pieces for William Buckley’s *National Review*. When asked to explain his actions, he answered that open communication with those of differing points of view represents an opportunity to consider other perspectives and strengthen your own argument by opening it up to criticism.⁴⁸

Betsey was in many ways Gene’s opposite. She was tall and slender, and she walked with a posture that suggested she was in control of herself. Many have characterized her as elegant, sophisticated, and almost regal. She had an attractive personality as well. In describing their first date, Gene suggested he was not initially impressed by her looks. When he arrived at her apartment, she looked like “death warmed over,” but when he left, she was “radiantly beautiful.”⁴⁹ Clearly, her personality must have won him over. Like Gene, Betsey’s temperament was reflective of her family heritage and childhood experience. She was determined, assertive, and confident, but also hospitable and gracious. Unlike Gene, she was not excessively emotional, but calm, reserved, and pragmatic. Instead of reacting hastily to particular situations, she tended to evaluate the possible implications and consequences first.⁵⁰ When she wanted to assert her will, she often employed passive-aggressive techniques. For example, she did needlepoint during academic meetings purposely invoking images of Madame Defarge

⁴⁷ Robert Louis Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese, 1930-2012,” *The New Criterion* 31 (2012): <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Eugene-D--Genovese--1930-2012-7492>.

⁴⁸ Genovese and Radosh, Interview, 35.

⁴⁹ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 6-7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11, 15-16, 38-42, 51.

and her practice of knitting the names of people who would be sent to the guillotine.⁵¹

Betsey also possessed a good sense of humor. When Gene asked her to comment on the generally accepted belief that men are superior to women in mathematic achievement, she held up her thumb. “Well, men might not reach the heights in math either if they had been raised to believe that this is eight inches.”⁵² Enough said.

Betsey had remarkably expansive interests as well. She had a very theoretical and capacious mind which was capable of reading and analyzing a wide array of topics.⁵³ Her knowledge was extraordinary and, during a conversation, she could produce endless facts on completely unrelated topics. But she also had a lot of practicality and common sense which Gene details throughout *Miss Betsey*. In addition to her intellectual interests and abilities, Betsey was a very talented cook capable of making a number of difficult French and Italian dishes. She was a connoisseur of wine and could even distinguish between fine cigars. She kept up with fashion and popular music. She could recite almost any baseball statistic, especially those pertaining to the New York Yankees. She loved machines of all kinds – fax, telephone, television, computers, printers, cellular phones, and her “powerful” coffee machine. Finally, she loved to play matchmaker.

⁵¹ Ibid., 104-105.

⁵² Ibid., 52.

⁵³ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese: First and Lasting Impressions,” *Common Knowledge* 14 (2008): 2; Deborah A. Symonds, “Hugh Blair, Betsey Fox-Genovese, and the Death of the Liberal Arts,” *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): [http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/deborah a symonds 01.html](http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/deborah%20a%20symonds%2001.html); Joseph Bottum, “Bottum: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *On the Square: Daily Columns from First Things’ Top Writers Blog*, January 3, 2007, <http://www.firstthings.com/onthe square/2007/1/bottum-elizabeth-fox-genovese>.

Whether helping a graduating student to find a job or pairing various single friends in romantic relationships, she enjoyed making matches.⁵⁴

On a more serious note, Betsey was strong and courageous. She took difficulties and hard times in stride and refused to think of herself as a victim. While at Harvard, she endured a number of instances of sexual discrimination. On one occasion, a fellow graduate student asked her how in good conscience she was able to pursue a graduate degree and professorship, thereby taking it away from an equally qualified male with a wife and family to support. On another occasion, she was informed that in order to qualify for a teaching fellowship in history, she would have to pass her comprehensive exams early. After buckling down and satisfying the requirement, she was told that the positions were only awarded to males.⁵⁵ But instead of sinking into self-pity, the experience inspired in her a passion for social justice. She found herself attracted to feminism as a means of promoting women to an equal position in American society and ensuring that they had an equal opportunity to rights and jobs traditionally held by men.

Throughout her life, Betsey was driven by the passion for truth instilled in her by her father who taught her that intellectual honesty was the fundamental basis for any good and meaningful scholarship. This passion drove her to produce the corpus of work that was one of the hallmarks of her career and life. Also, given their importance in her life, she took intellectual matters very seriously and would argue them with anyone, even

⁵⁴ Robert Louis Paquette, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 1941-2007," *The New Criterion* 25 (2007): 79; Higginbotham, "First and Lasting Impressions," 2; Symonds, "Hugh Blair"; Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Ambrose and O'Connor-Ambrose, "Modeling," 293; Sheila O'Connor-Ambrose, "'The Promise of an Enduring and Engulfing Bond': Personal Reflections on Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die," *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): <http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001/issue002/sheila.01.html>.

⁵⁵ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 91.

Gene, when she discovered important disagreements. Moreover, she demonstrated the courage to defend the truth of her convictions despite the likelihood that they would not be well received.⁵⁶

This is not to say that Betsey was unwilling to hear and consider opposing arguments. In fact, she continually demonstrated an openness to and respect for differing points of view. For example, though she was a firm philosophical materialist, she maintained a deep respect for Christians, the Christian faith, and its central role in Western Civilization. Likewise, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, a former student at Rochester, attests to Betsey's respect for students like herself who held differing political views.⁵⁷

Both Genovese and Fox-Genovese enjoyed prestigious careers within the historical profession, even outside of their writing. Early in his career, Genovese taught at a number of colleges and universities including Rutgers University in New Jersey and Sir George Williams University in Montreal. However, his most noted position was at the University of Rochester where he served as the Chairman of the Department of History. He acknowledged the position as being a difficult one, citing the fact that he was the sixth department chair to serve in six years. He arrived to find no female or minority professors, underpaid assistant professors, and teaching assistants on strike against alleged dishonest treatment. He blamed an "oligarchic" block of full professors, and set to cleaning house. He was accused of, and acknowledged, having a Stalinist

⁵⁶ Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Mark Bauerlein, "On Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *The Brainstorm Blog*, May 20, 2009, <http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/on-elizabeth-fox-genovese/6894>; Paquette, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," 78.

⁵⁷ Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," 198; Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Higginbotham, "First and Lasting Impressions," 1.

attitude and method of management which is not surprising considering his temperament. His most trying conflict, however, occurred during his second year between him and the “oligarchy.” They offered an ultimatum: either he would resign or they would resign, leaving him and the department with no full professors. He refused to back down and the confrontation eventually subsided. Although he later resigned the chairmanship, he remained at Rochester as a full professor and tension continued between the existing factions to variable degrees for over a decade.⁵⁸ When Fox-Genovese took a job at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia in 1986, Genovese commuted between Atlanta and Rochester for a few semesters and looked for a way to permanently move to Georgia. Finally, in the late 1980s, Emory University, the Georgia Technical Institute, the University of Georgia, and Georgia State University arranged a position for him in which he would teach a variety of classes among them.⁵⁹ He promptly accepted it and joined Betsey in Atlanta.

Genovese’s role as a teacher was very important to him. Looking back to his time at Rochester, he did not think he was very good at teaching freshman seminars and, after trying a couple of times, “beat a retreat to classes for juniors and seniors.”⁶⁰ However, others have remembered him differently. Leo Ribuffo, in particular, recalls being a student in a few of his classes at Rutgers and credits him for his “excellent undergraduate

⁵⁸ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 42-44; Ambrose, Interview; “Letter from N[ancy Wilson], February 11 [1973],” Box 1, Folder 1, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers; “Letter from N[ancy Wilson], Sunday,” Box 1, Folder 1, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers; “Letter from Gene to Betsey, April 29, 1982,” Box 1, Folder 2a, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers; “Letter from Gene to Betsey, May 3, 1982,” Box 1, Folder 2a, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

⁵⁹ Douglas Ambrose, E-mail interview by author, October, 30, 2012.

⁶⁰ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 97.

teaching.”⁶¹ Others have remembered him as being very tough. Robert Paquette writes of receiving his first graded paper back from Genovese: “On mine, he had splashed so much red – his favorite color at the time – I thought he had opened an artery over it. On the very first page above the title he had written in bold red: ‘Too pedantic, too polemical, too passive.’ That was his only line of praise.”⁶² Genovese’s classes were equally challenging. His lectures have been described as “tough” and “brilliant.” From just a few notecards, he could deliver a lecture that was “unbelievably broad and deep.”⁶³ Moreover, Genovese had no favorites. He refused to proselytize in the classroom and was indifferent to his students’ political persuasions. Only good ideas and hard work counted. “When you entered Gene’s classroom, you entered an arena, and the way you survived gladiatorial combat in front of the emperor was with the trident of argument and the net of evidence.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Genovese cared very much about his students and was very supportive of them and their goals. He and Fox-Genovese also frequently invited their students over for dinner to discuss their work and to engage in intellectual discussions. Douglas Ambrose remembers receiving a letter from Genovese shortly before beginning his graduate career at Rochester. In the letter, Genovese invited him to come and stay a weekend with himself and Fox-Genovese while getting to know everyone. As an added incentive, he promised that, in addition to being a “first-class historian,” his wife was a “first-class cook.”⁶⁵ While finishing his doctorate degree at

⁶¹ Ribuffo, “Reflections of a Former Student.”

⁶² Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese.”

⁶³ Ambrose, Interview; Steven Hahn, “From Radical to Right-Wing: The Legacy of Eugene Genovese,” *The New Republic* (October 2, 2012): <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/10/6481/>.

⁶⁴ Hahn, “Radical to Right-Wing”; Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese.”

⁶⁵ Ambrose, “Seeking Truth.”

Rochester, Paquette even lived with the Genoveses. There, he was able to personally witness the lives of two dedicated scholars and the discipline that was required.

Moreover, Fox-Genovese took him to Brooks Brothers and helped him select a suit to wear for a job interview at Hamilton College.⁶⁶

Politically, Genovese was outspoken and somewhat notorious. In April 1965, he addressed students and colleagues at a teach-in at Rutgers University declaring, “I do not fear or regret the impending Vietcong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it.”⁶⁷ In fairness, he prefaced his remarks by acknowledging that the setting was not in any way a classroom or related to a classroom and he identified himself as a Marxist in order to “put [his audience] on guard against my prejudices as [they] should be on guard against everyone’s, especially [their] own.”⁶⁸ Genovese’s statements were first reported in the Rutgers school newspaper and then picked up by the news media. Wayne Dumont, the Republican New Jersey gubernatorial candidate, called for Genovese’s termination from Rutgers. Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Richard Hughes, and the Rutgers Board of Governors cited his tenured position and grudgingly defended his freedom of speech although they publicly separated themselves from his comments.⁶⁹ Following the incident, in an effort to force the administration to unambiguously defend academic freedom, Genovese offered his resignation so that his tenure would not be an issue. The administration assured him that they did not want his resignation. Nonetheless, he

⁶⁶ Paquette, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” 79.

⁶⁷ T. Rees Shapiro, “Eugene Genovese, Eminent Historian, Dies at 82,” *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2008, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-30/local/35494787_1_slaves-and-slaveholders-eugene-d-genovese-slavery.

⁶⁸ Ribuffo, “Reflections of a Former Student.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

resigned the following year in reaction to his new status as a “second-class citizen.”⁷⁰

Remembering the affair in 2009, he wrote: “Let me brag: So far as I know, I remained the only professor in America whom Richard Nixon personally and publicly campaigned to get fired. Thus, I had the fifteen minutes of fame that Andy Warhol assured us every American could have.”⁷¹

Still, Genovese believed that politics should be kept strictly separate from historical scholarship and the academy. Thus, he argued vehemently against the resolution condemning the Vietnam War which was put forward by the radical wing of the American Historical Association (AHA). He said that it was “totalitarian” and did not have a place in scholarly circles as it would certainly restrict academic freedom. Further, amid boos, he called on the AHA to “put [the antiwar activist historians] down hard, once and for all.” One of the radicals later recalled being “horrified and speechless.”⁷²

In addition to his teaching obligations and political activities, Genovese held several honored positions within the historical academy. From 1976-1977, he lived in London and served as the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at Cambridge, and in 1978, he was elected President of the Organization of American Historians. That same year, he launched and served as the editor of a new journal entitled *Marxist Perspectives*.⁷³ Finally, letters between the Genoveses suggest that the couple was politically well-connected and mixing in some very Left circles. In a letter written to

⁷⁰ Genovese and Radosh, Interview, 33.

⁷¹ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 12.

⁷² Radosh, “Historian Taught by History.”

⁷³ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 48,102-103; Genovese and Radosh, Interview, 31,36.

Fox-Genovese in June 1978, Genovese describes attending a party at the Austrian Ambassador's residence. Fellow guests included George McGovern, George Ball, and Emma Rothschild. Later in the letter, he tells her that Ambassador Jankowitsch "expressed disappointment at missing you and expressed hope of seeing us in Paris next year." Further, he notes that Mrs. Jankowitsch works for the United Nations and is "very bright and very Left."⁷⁴

Fox-Genovese began her teaching career in 1973 as an assistant professor at the University of Rochester. She joined the department with a three-year contract and no tenure. In 1980, she left to teach at the State University of New York at Binghamton, and in 1986, she accepted a position at Emory University as the Eléanore Raoul Professor of Humanities. There she taught classes in history, English, and comparative literature. In 1991, she founded and served as director of Emory's Institute of Women's Studies. It offered the first women's studies doctoral program in the United States and, despite considerable pressure, she insisted on keeping it ideologically diverse and open to all students interested in women's studies.⁷⁵

As a teacher, Fox-Genovese was liked and respected by her students. She earned a reputation for being a good lecturer and her classes, especially her women's history courses, were popular and well-attended.⁷⁶ Particularly attractive to students was her openness to previously marginalized groups and theories and her effort to incorporate

⁷⁴ "Letter from Gene to Betsey, June 4, 1978," Box 1, Folder 2a, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

⁷⁵ Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 99; Paquette, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," 78; Ambrose, Interview.

⁷⁶ Ambrose, Interview.

them into the traditional historical context.⁷⁷ Like Genovese, Fox-Genovese cared about her students very much. In addition to inviting her students to their home, she expressed confidence in them and provided support and guidance during their academic careers and even as they entered into the historical profession. As mentioned earlier, Fox-Genovese felt that one of her most important duties as a teacher was to place her students in jobs. Her matchmaking skills were frequently put to work.⁷⁸

Fox-Genovese's achievements, including *Fruits of Merchant Capital* and *Within the Plantation Household*, afforded her a good deal of influence within the historical academy as well as in the related disciplines of Women's Studies and English. Further, she played a leadership role in the historical academy by helping to incorporate women's history into the historical curriculum and she is also considered to be one of the pioneers of women's studies.⁷⁹

However, in the mid-1990s, the Genoveses underwent a major political and religious shift. Previously believing that the United States could have a socialism that was compatible with democracy and liberty, they eventually came to believe that such a proposition was impossible and that "oppression was baked into the socialist cake."⁸⁰ This migration confounded many of their political friends and allies. When Ribuffo pushed Genovese to explain his political move away from socialism and toward conservatism, he answered candidly that "liberals in their optimism were 'wrong about

⁷⁷ Higginbotham, "First and Lasting Impressions," 2.

⁷⁸ Higginbotham, "First and Lasting Impressions," 2, 5; Ambrose, Interview; Hungeling, Interview.

⁷⁹ Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Higginbotham, "First and Lasting Impressions," 5.

⁸⁰ Nordlinger, "Up From Leftism," 44.

human nature.’”⁸¹ In 1994, Genovese officially and publicly severed his relations with the Left in an article entitled “The Question” which he published in the Left-leaning journal *Dissent*. In the article, he essentially employed the Watergate approach – What did you know and when did you know it? He criticized the Left for refusing to openly acknowledge the failure of socialism in the Soviet experiment. Moreover, he called for a scholarly investigation to discover why the failure occurred and to analyze the extent to which many of the tenets of liberalism had proven implausible. Likewise, he took personal responsibility for his support of the Soviet Union and his complicity in the crimes that it perpetuated while calling on fellow supporters to join him in denouncing it and taking steps to ensure that the mistakes were not repeated. In a later interview, he repeated the charges: “We spent three-quarters of a century in building socialisms that cost tens of millions of lives, created hideous political regimes, and could not even deliver a decent standard of living. The essential ingredient in a proper evaluation would have to be a frank assessment of the extent to which the assumptions that underlay the whole Left, social democratic and liberal groups, as well as the Stalinist Left, have proven untenable, not to invoke a harsher word.”⁸² Suffice it to say that he was officially excommunicated from the political Left. However, his new political outlook evolved slowly over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s. Surprisingly, his opinions on fiscal policy were not as strong as one might expect from someone who spent his life studying and analyzing the role of slavery in the southern antebellum economy. Still, he remained concerned for the average American knowing that the poor are often taken advantage of.

⁸¹ Ribuffo, “Reflections of a Former Student.”

⁸² Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 203.

Thus, he did not support a completely free market, but did support some free-market principles because “the alternatives are dreadful.” More importantly, he was very concerned about foreign policy, the protection of Israel, and the defense of the unborn.⁸³

Fox-Genovese’s political migration to the Right primarily resulted from her serious evaluation of women’s issues including abortion and marriage. As a feminist and a leader in the field of women’s studies, she had uncomfortably tolerated a woman’s right to choose an abortion. However, as time went by, her reservations increased and she felt like a woman’s right to choose was increasingly moving from abortion in cases of rape and incest to abortion-on-demand and a woman’s freedom from her sexuality and reproductive abilities. She consequently feared that this movement toward a woman’s freedom from her unborn dependent could easily one day include her aging parents or her disabled children and eventually include the right to choose who lives and who dies. In her testimony “Caught in the Web of Grace,” she writes, “The growing attention to euthanasia, assisted suicide, and partial-birth abortion steadily strengthened my conviction that individual human beings could not be entrusted with decisions about life and death and that a willingness to hold any life cheap or expendable corrupts those who claim the right to make those decisions.”⁸⁴

The institution of marriage was also important to her. In looking around, she was alarmed by the increased attacks on the sanctity of marriage and the declining role of marriage in American culture. Knowing what a central and stabilizing role it played in her own life and its contribution to the health of society as a whole, she began to dedicate

⁸³ Hungeling, Interview; Nordlinger, “Up From Leftism,” 44.

⁸⁴ Fox-Genovese, “Caught in the Web of Grace,” 196.

more time to promoting and defending it.⁸⁵ She even wrote a book entitled *Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die* in which she analyzed the evolving role of marriage in the history of Western civilization and the extent to which it necessarily grounds society. From this point, Fox-Genovese began to move away from radical feminism and adopted a more moderate position on women's issues. Though she acknowledged a fundamental difference between men and women in terms of reproductive capabilities, she advocated equality between men and women in the home and an equal employment opportunity for women in the workplace. Nevertheless, she opposed abortion and any position that she believed threatened the institution of marriage or the family.⁸⁶

Fox-Genovese's search for truth eventually led her to Christianity. One of her favorite quotes came from Dostoevsky: "Without God, is not everything permissible?"⁸⁷ While she was grappling with women's social issues and seeking to determine what she could support and what she considered potentially dangerous, Fox-Genovese became alarmed by the increasing moral relativism in American society and began to view the issues as a struggle not between Left and Right, but between right and wrong. She simultaneously began to question and reconsider her philosophical materialism as well as the possible existence of a creative intelligence. Altogether, a number of factors led to her conversion, but one day, "almost imperceptibly, the balance between doubt and faith shifted," and she just knew.⁸⁸ Speaking of the experience, she said, "There are kinds of

⁸⁵ O'Connor-Ambrose, "The Promise."

⁸⁶ Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," 196.

⁸⁷ Paquette, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," 80.

⁸⁸ Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," 191-197; George, "Truth-Teller"; Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "A Conversion Story," *First Things* 102 (2000): <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/a-conversion-story-4>.

knowing that transcend the play of words and ideas. Of such quiet certainty, but more deeply so, is the knowledge of faith, which steals into the soul.”⁸⁹

Fox-Genovese officially entered the Catholic Church on December 9, 1995 at the age of fifty-three. She received four sacraments, took the name of Teresa, and began a life of devotion to her Lord. From this point, she adhered to and promoted morality on a more religious and universal scale.⁹⁰ Speaking of her faith, Douglas Ambrose said, “In the most important sense, I will continue to learn from the way she lived her faith: with humility and with the quiet but unshakable courage that comes from recognizing that only through Him, through His World and His Church, can we find the strength to withstand and transcend our sufferings here on earth.”⁹¹

Close as they were, the Genoveses never discussed their journeys of faith with one another prior to their conversions. Genovese says that when writing *The Southern Front* in 1995, he was still a committed materialist and atheist, but he had a lot of questions and was “doing a lot of private soul-searching.” Thus, shortly after the book was published, he re-read his essays on the theology of Martin Luther King and Cornell West and asked himself:

“If the Reverend Dr. King or Dr. West challenged me to defend my atheism, could I do so in a manner convincing at least to myself. I found that I could not. I recognized that I had been gagging and had finally started to choke...I found no way to defend my philosophical commitment to atheism, but intellectual conversion is one thing and faith another. Meanwhile, Betsey, a lifelong nonbeliever, converted to Christianity and entered the Catholic Church.

⁸⁹ Fox-Genovese, “Caught in the Web of Grace,” 197.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁹¹ Ambrose, “Seeking Truth.”

I resisted the impulse to follow her, but to no avail. Within a year I made my own decision.”⁹²

Ultimately, he made his decision to return to the Catholic Church on the day that Fox-Genovese officially entered the Church and they were married in the Church.⁹³

The Genoveses’ shift from atheistic Marxists to conservative Christians was precipitated in part by gradual changes in their worldviews and it inspired many others. At the same time, some aspects of their worldviews remained unchanged and were even strengthened by the shift. Equally important, their migration put them at odds with many of their fellow colleagues and students within the academy and spurred a number of personal and professional attacks from those who had once been friends. These too had lasting effects on the Genoveses and took their toll as well.

Professionally speaking, Genovese continued to teach at the consortium of Georgia universities until his retirement in the late 1990s. He also became an outspoken critic of the historical academy. Though he had lodged a number of particular condemnations earlier in his career – Kazin’s destruction of M.E. Bradford’s nomination for the NEH chairmanship and the AHA’s consideration of a resolution against the Vietnam War – he now targeted the entire academy, its professional associations, and the pervading culture of political correctness that had consumed them. He argued that they had become too focused on social and common history at the expense of the traditional historical narrative. Of course, this criticism did not mean that he or Fox-Genovese had turned their backs on the black or women’s studies they had once promoted. They

⁹² Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 209.

⁹³ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 75.

continued to support them as an important step in correcting a historical imbalance in the academy. However, they supported studying them as a part of the traditional narrative, not as a substitute for it.⁹⁴

Genovese also complained that historical scholarship and societies had become politically motivated and driven. A lifetime opponent of mixing ideological and political interests with academic scholarship, he “bristled at cheap moralizing and pounced on those who sought to confuse their political commitments with their professorial obligations.”⁹⁵ He also lamented that the current historical academy was bearing a strange resemblance to McCarthyism, and as a card-carrying Communist in the 1950s, he would know. Historians failing to toe the political and ideological line were denied offices in history departments and professional historical associations.⁹⁶ Moreover, the humanities, particularly history and English, and their related professional associations professed tolerance, but were more totalitarian in practice. They had no respect for academic freedom and standards, and labeled all opposing points of view as sexist, racist, or homophobic without any proof or means of self-defense. The simple charge was as good as a conviction.⁹⁷

Finally, he charged that a “cult of sensitivity” had taken over the historical academy in which students and even professors were made to feel good about themselves

⁹⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, “Restoring Dignity to Thucydides’ Profession,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1998, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.clemson.edu/docview/421399683/fulltext/13D905264D728464516/1?accountid=6167>; Hitchens, “Radical Pique,” 35.

⁹⁵ Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese.”

⁹⁶ Genovese, “Restoring Dignity.”

⁹⁷ Eugene D. Genovese, “Eugene D. Genovese’s Speech at CPAC, February 20, 2010,” The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, <http://www.bradleyfdn.org/library/pdfs/Genovesespeech.pdf>.

regardless of the quality of their scholarship.⁹⁸ But instead of helping students, it was harming them. In his last years of teaching, he “had to begin each course by telling [his] students who John C. Calhoun was and show them where to find South Carolina on a map.”⁹⁹ Replying to assertions that women’s studies as a discipline was valuable because it boosted the self-esteem of its students, Fox-Genovese lamented, “Yes, I’m afraid that self-esteem is all that a college can offer once it has decided that achievement and accomplishment are elitist.”¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, the Genoveses argued that the education system was not working and that it was failing students who deserved an opportunity to learn and be challenged.

In 1998, the Genoveses joined with a group of fellow historians to found The Historical Society. In an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled “Restoring Dignity to Thucydides’ Profession,” Genovese announced that the Society was founded to encourage academic freedom, ideological diversity, and the discussion of larger historical themes. As with his students, he asked that members of the society “lay down plausible premises; reason logically; appeal to evidence, and respect the integrity of all those who do the same.”¹⁰¹ As co-founders, Genovese served as the society’s first president and Fox-Genovese served as the editor of *The Journal of the Historical Society*.

Despite his decades of influence in the historical academy as a self-proclaimed Marxist and leader of the Left, Genovese lost many friends and gained many enemies as a result of his move to the ideological Right. Consequently, his influence within the

⁹⁸ Genovese, “Hans Rosenberg,” 52.

⁹⁹ Genovese, “CPAC.”

¹⁰⁰ Hitchens, “Radical Pique,” 35.

¹⁰¹ Genovese, “Restoring Dignity.”

academy dwindled and he became the focus of much criticism. Former student Steven Hahn summarizes many of the Left's charges and accusations against Genovese in his article "From Radical to Right-Wing: The Legacy of Eugene Genovese." He starts by acknowledging his own political activism, crediting Genovese for his "brilliant" lectures as a professor at Rochester, and discussing the significant influence of Genovese's scholarship within the historical academy. But then he goes on to recount Genovese's Rightward shift and even endeavors to associate him with neo-Confederates. Altogether, he describes the situation as one of "tragic self-marginalization."

"By the mid-1990s he all but evaporated, save for an occasional appearance before a conservative audience or organization. Why? The truth is, for all his brilliance he was also personally demanding, self-referential, and self-destructive. As an awe-struck undergraduate I nonetheless had a sense that it might [be] dangerous to fall into his personal orbit. And when, for personal reasons I briefly did, I learned the hard way that my young sense was correct."¹⁰²

Of course, he declines to give details regarding how he "[fell] into [Genovese's] personal orbit" or why it proved to be "dangerous." He leaves it to the reader's imagination.

When asked about Hahn's characterization of Genovese, Ambrose identified Genovese's move from the mainstream of the historical academy not as an act of "self-marginalization," but as intentional ostracism from the academy as a result of his politically incorrect beliefs and protests against the loss of academic freedom and quality historical scholarship.¹⁰³ In like manner, politically liberal historian David Carlton

¹⁰² Hahn, "Radical to Right-Wing."

¹⁰³ Ambrose, Interview.

addressed attempts to associate Genovese with neo-Confederates and other extreme

Right-wing groups as one-sided:

“Oh jeez. Yes, Gene hobnobbed with neo-Confederates; indeed, those of us who knew him well could come up with more embarrassing examples than these, incidents that occurred in our presence. But Gene hobnobbed with a broad range of people of every ideological stripe; I don’t think there’s an American historian of our time who could manage discourse simultaneously with as many different kinds of people. Gene was an intellectual provocateur in the best sense of the word; to be in conversation with him was to encounter a mind of spacious intellectual horizons, an intrepid explorer of possibilities from which an increasingly narrow profession would shrink...His intellectual odyssey was eccentric, to say the least; but it also displayed a thorny integrity and deep roots in Western intellectual traditions that too many of us ridicule out of sheer ignorance.”¹⁰⁴

As can be seen, Genovese ran afoul of the politically charged historical academy and suffered many attacks as a result. Nevertheless, he also retained many friends who defended him against what they considered to be personal, unfounded, and biased charges. Additionally, his efforts to defend academic freedom and promote quality academic scholarship were rewarded in 2010 with the Jeane Kirkpatrick Award for Academic Freedom.¹⁰⁵

Fox-Genovese was also outspoken, especially in the Culture Wars of the 1990s and 2000s. Though she wrote prolifically about abortion, marriage, and other current social and cultural issues involving women, her most notable appearance was likely her

¹⁰⁴ David Carlton, October 5, 2012 (7:51 p.m.), reply to Edward Sebesta, “Genovese's writings in ‘Southern Partisan’ and ‘Chronicles’ magazine; Eugene Genovese 1930-2012,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Online Discussion Network*, October 5, 2012, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-South&month=1210&week=a&msg=iVSzbwr6rjpSnxQvhThRSg>.

¹⁰⁵ Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese.”

involvement in the legal battles to open the Citadel and the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) to women. While attending Bryn Mawr, which was open only to women, she gained a respect for the quality and nature of single-sex education and felt that men should have the same opportunity at the Citadel and VMI. Therefore, she testified on behalf of the military schools and argued that creating a separate female corps would render the universities sufficiently open to women and give women an equal opportunity. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court struck their proposal and program down in favor of a single, integrated corps of cadets.¹⁰⁶

During this time, Fox-Genovese also continued to teach at Emory University. According to former student Sheila O'Connor-Ambrose, Fox-Genovese's classes were "almost indescribably challenging," but also "genuinely tolerant." She offers as an example Fox-Genovese's feminist theory courses over the academic year of 1991-1992. The students represented an array of disciplines, different stages in their graduate careers, and a variety of political persuasions. Regardless, everyone practiced civil discourse while sharing and evaluating many ideas. Outside the classroom, Fox-Genovese was understanding, but she did not encourage her students to dwell in self-pity. O'Connor-Ambrose recalls that one day she was upset and went to talk to Fox-Genovese. "After my miserable ranting died down, Betsey, with wise words and real affection, booted me back out her door and told me to get back to work. I cannot imagine what would have been a better, more loving and encouraging response than to hold my hand for a minute

¹⁰⁶ "Letters from William G. Broaddus, attorney for the Citadel and Virginia Military Institute, to Fox-Genovese regarding the lawsuits, the women's cadet programs, and Fox-Genovese's role in the defense of the universities, specifically those letters dated June 28, 1994, October 24, 1995, March 22, 1996, and June 26, 1996," Box 24, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers; Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 90-91.

and firmly send me back to do the real work.” Fox-Genovese also encouraged her students to be true to themselves, regardless of what it entailed or whether she approved of it.¹⁰⁷ Finally, she was devoted to her students. Many former students have remembered joining the Genoveses for dinner either to discuss their work or to receive coaching in preparation for an oral exam, a dissertation defense, or a job interview.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, some of Fox-Genovese’s actions as director of the Women’s Studies department at Emory were not popular and sparked a good deal of animosity toward her. First, she admitted a devout, pro-life Catholic to the Women’s Studies doctoral program in 1991. Second, she addressed the Feminists for Life chapter at the University of Rochester. Such actions labeled her as pro-life and intolerant and invoked disdain from many professors and students alike. In his first years at Emory, fellow professor Mark Bauerlein personally witnessed a discomfiting number of contemptuous conversations about Fox-Genovese. “After Betsey’s position against abortion crystallized, a not-so-young graduate student in English informed me, as if she were lecturing an undergraduate, ‘Anybody who’s pro-life has no business in a women’s studies program at all.’...But when a junior professor spent a quarter hour in the faculty lounge one morning detailing in acid caricature how Betsey would knit in department meetings, and did so loud enough for three professors drinking their coffee and reading the paper to hear, something besides disagreement was in play.”¹⁰⁹ Even worse, Bauerlein was dismayed to find that a project he had helped to work on was flatly

¹⁰⁷ Ambrose and O’Connor-Ambrose, “Modeling,” 290, 292-294.

¹⁰⁸ Higginbotham, “First and Lasting Impressions,” 2; O’Connor-Ambrose, “The Promise.”

¹⁰⁹ Mark Bauerlein, “The Best Colleague,” *Common Knowledge* 14 (2008): 11-12.

rejected without any attention to its merit. To add insult to injury, a fellow professor who did not know he was a part of the project told Bauerlein that it was because Fox-Genovese was on the project, even though she only played a minor role.¹¹⁰ In all fairness, she was not the only target of such attitudes. Another professor at Emory announced to a class that a pro-life graduate teacher who had been hired temporarily by Emory “had no place in a women’s studies program” either.¹¹¹ Looking on the bright side, at least they were equal opportunity intolerants.

Meanwhile, other students charged that Fox-Genovese was too academically demanding. Reacting to these complaints, Paquette did not deny that she challenged her students, but observed that many of the graduate students who had completed their degrees under her direction were thankful for her exacting standards because they enabled the graduates to successfully find jobs when such positions were few and far between.¹¹² Nevertheless, unwilling to accede to pressure from students and faculty to make the Emory women’s studies program more ideologically driven, Fox-Genovese chose to resign her position as director in December, 1991.¹¹³ She did, however, continue to teach in a variety of disciplines as well as direct graduate students’ dissertations.

In 1993, Virginia Gould, a former graduate student of Fox-Genovese and Associate Director of the Institute of Women’s Studies was dismissed by the University. She responded by suing both the University and Fox-Genovese, alleging sexual

¹¹⁰ Bauerlein, “Best Colleague,” 12-13.

¹¹¹ Hitchens, “Radical Pique,” 34.

¹¹² Paquette, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” 79.

¹¹³ “Fox-Genovese’s memo announcing her resignation to the Emory Women’s Studies department, December 18, 1991,” Box 40, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers; “Memo from Fox-Genovese to Deans Jones and Bright which essentially details her reasons for resigning, January 10, 1992,” Box 40, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

harassment and discrimination.¹¹⁴ She alleged that she was forced to do a number of menial jobs including hosting parties for Fox-Genovese and picking up her laundry. She also complained that she was forced to accept unsolicited hugs. A number of high-profile individuals including historians and feminists were called to testify and give depositions for the prosecution and defense. While it is by no means intended as a suggestion of innocence or guilt, it is interesting to note that in their depositions, both Fox-Genovese and Katherine Burge-Callaway, Gould's psychologist, testified that Gould never verbally objected to hosting parties nor did she indirectly suggest that she did not want to do it. Instead, she listed the parties and her services relating to them on her curriculum vitae suggesting that "she was proud of them and knew that they were to her advantage in terms of seeking employment and making herself look good externally. And yet those were the same things that she complained about." Further still, she never directly or indirectly suggested to Fox-Genovese that she did not want to be hugged, a major requirement for legitimate sexual harassment charges.¹¹⁵ Be that as it may, Emory settled out of court in 1996 for an undisclosed amount and chose to forego a personal investigation into the matter.¹¹⁶

In his book, *Historians in Trouble*, Jon Wiener reviewed in detail all of the charges against Fox-Genovese as well as the weight of the individuals making the charges. He concluded that Emory had been complicit in a cover-up, and that influential conservative supporters of Fox-Genovese had succeeded in helping her to unfairly escape

¹¹⁴ Fox, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese."

¹¹⁵ "Deposition of Cynthia H. Adams, October 26, 1995 (specifically page 56)," Box 36, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

¹¹⁶ Fox, "Elizabeth Fox-Genovese"; Jon Wiener, *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud, and Politics in the Ivory Tower* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 26-28.

the consequences of her behavior whereas other historians such as Michael Bellesiles had not been so fortunate.¹¹⁷ However, he never reviewed the defense, making his account seem equally biased. In *Miss Betsey*, Genovese refutes many of the charges and rumors that surrounded the lawsuit and settlement. He asserted that the University settled because of a discrepancy involving the date of dismissal, Fox-Genovese had no authority to fire Gould, Fox-Genovese was not named in the final settlement, and she did not pay a dime toward it. According to him, “This is no ‘he said / she said’ matter. Everything at issue can be verified by independent research – something honest historians do.”¹¹⁸

Outside of Emory University, Fox-Genovese’s opposition to abortion put her in the direct line of fire from feminists who would not tolerate a fellow feminist who did not support a woman’s right to choose. Thinking of the toll that the attacks must be taking on Fox-Genovese, Higginbotham wrote, “In so many ways, *Feminism Without Illusions* is a brilliant work; and I say this as a supporter of women’s right to choose. The cool reviews hardened her, I am sure. I can imagine her and Gene in painful discussions as to why there was no place for feminists like herself and Jean Bethke Elshtain at the sisterhood table.”¹¹⁹ It seemed that her efforts to found the first women’s studies doctoral program in the country were quickly forgotten when she shifted to a pro-life position.

Regardless, Fox-Genovese never fought personal attacks with personal attacks. Bauerlein states that, though he witnessed a lot of professional interaction between Fox-Genovese, himself, and many others during the last ten years of her life, he never saw her

¹¹⁷ Wiener, *Historians*, 26-28.

¹¹⁸ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 109-110.

¹¹⁹ Higginbotham, “First and Lasting Impressions,” 6.

descend into disrespect or cheap shots. “She intimidated people, yes, but through the force of her ideas and speech, not the threat of any other power. She argued firmly, but she never bullied. She defended her students with a maternal instinct at the same time that she demanded better work from them. I never saw her use majority numbers to beat down a dissenter.”¹²⁰

Despite numerous struggles, Fox-Genovese achieved a number of successes throughout her career. Overall, she guided about fifty Ph.D. students in history, English, comparative literature, and women’s studies and they have since spread throughout the country, thereby furthering her intellectual theories.¹²¹ She also held a number of honored scholarly positions. She served as the International Affairs Editor for the *Marxist Perspectives* journal and the editor for the Journal of the Historical Society. Likewise, she was appointed by President George W. Bush in 2003 to serve on the Governing Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities. She received many awards as well. In 2003, she was awarded the National Humanities Medal from the White House, and Democrat David Adelman of the Georgia State Senate proposed and helped to pass a special resolution of commendation honoring her for her scholarship. She was also awarded the Cardinal Wright Award from the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. Finally, she received with Genovese the Intercollegiate Studies Institute’s Gerhart Niemeyer Award for Distinguished Contributions to Scholarship in the Liberal

¹²⁰ Bauerlein, “Best Colleague,” 14.

¹²¹ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 97.

Arts.¹²² Thus, it is no surprise that she is considered one of the most influential Catholic public intellectuals of the 1990s and 2000s.

Altogether, Gene and Betsey suffered a considerable backlash as a result of their political and religious shifts. Gene, true to his nature, remained tough. “I never gave a damn what people thought of me. And I still don’t.” Responding to his declaration, Paquette explained that Gene was complicated – “tough on the outside, soft on the inside.” He valued immeasurably the loyalty of friends who remained close to him and he was “fiercely loyal” to them.¹²³ Their opinions did matter to him. Two such friends were Douglas and Sheila Ambrose. After Betsey’s death, Gene attended Sheila’s graduation from Emory. He joked that he was only doing it to protest their granting her a degree, but he affectionately introduced her to the dean as “Betsey’s last student.” Sheila remembered that “it meant the world to [her] to have Gene, who was so much a part of [her] life as a student and friend, to stand in, as it were, for his beloved Miss Betsey.”¹²⁴ Gene also retained his sense of humor. He often maintained, with tongue in cheek, that he wanted to be emperor or that he was going to be the first Catholic canonized before his death.¹²⁵ *Miss Betsey* is full of stories about their marriage and self-deprecating humor.

Gene continued to respect the past and tradition as well. Like John Adams, he understood its importance to contemporary society. Paquette notes that “he sought truth in the past to prudentially guide the living. He did so through meticulous research, by poring over mountains of sources, and by weighing evidence with a brilliant mind,

¹²² Ibid., 45, 86-88.

¹²³ Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese.”

¹²⁴ O’Connor-Ambrose, “The Promise.”

¹²⁵ Hungeling, Interview.

according to the highest standards of the profession, to produce judgment that was both deeply considered and honest.”¹²⁶

Betsey also remained undeterred. She continued in her passion for justice and equality for women; however, she approached it from a new direction. In her testimony, she wrote, “In my mind, dedication to social justice and to the improvement of women’s position should not lead to a war to the death with tradition, authority, or the binding obligations of marriage and family.”¹²⁷ Instead, she looked for ways to improve the position of women while also protecting the rest of society.

Betsey was also very concerned about others and worked tirelessly to help those around her despite the toll and exhaustion it afforded. She personally took care of both her father and her father-in-law in their last days. In the same way, she was very generous and remembered others’ birthdays and special occasions with a phone call, a card, or a gift.¹²⁸ Professionally, she mentored many young colleagues. Bauerlein has written of the hospitality, sympathy, understanding, and direction she provided for him. She also offered good wisdom and advice for him in making his way in the historical profession.¹²⁹ Despite her Multiple Sclerosis and its attendant pain and crippling, she continued to give speeches and promote awareness for the causes she believed in. Somehow, she even made time to work for her church. She attended Adoration at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Atlanta and served as a lector and Eucharistic minister. Amy Estes has described how Betsey helped her with her work at the Church’s

¹²⁶ Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese.”

¹²⁷ Fox-Genovese, “Caught in the Web of Grace,” 196.

¹²⁸ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 115-116; Hungeling, Interview.

¹²⁹ Bauerlein, “Best Colleague,” 14.

pro-life group by reviewing her ideas and providing thoughtful feedback. Further, she acted as Estes' sounding board, offered support, and provided wisdom and advice in her responses. Finally, she spoke at many church events near and far and co-hosted a roundtable for church members which reviewed various political issues and how they related to the Bible and the Church's teachings.¹³⁰ Speaking at her funeral, Father Richard Lopez noted that, "After twenty minutes of conversation and twelve years of friendship what is so clear is that no one, be they a cleaning lady, or a president, a priest or a laborer, was ever made to feel anything but totally adequate, respected, and loved by Dr. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese."¹³¹

Moreover, Gene and Betsey continued to be strong and courageous and bravely fought for what they believed in regardless of whether it would be well-received or would invite attacks. John 8:32 says, "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." Father Lopez keenly observed that, "Given the temper and difficulty of our times, [Betsey] also understood what Flannery O'Connor is said to have added: 'You will know the truth, and the truth will make you odd.' Betsey was not afraid to face the consequences or responsibilities of the truth."¹³² Likewise, in a speech to the Conservative Political Action Committee in February, 2010, Gene encouraged

¹³⁰ Ambrose, "Seeking Truth"; Amy Estes, "An Unexpected Reward," *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): http://www.christendomreview.com/volume_001issue002/amy_estes_01.html; Hungeling, Interview.

¹³¹ Father Richard Lopez, "Funeral Sermon for My Dear Friend, Dr. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): http://www.christendomreview.com/volume_001issue002/msg_richard_lopez_01.html.

¹³² Lopez, "Funeral Sermon."

conservative students and professors to defend themselves against liberal attacks and to fight for their beliefs and principles.¹³³

Most importantly, both Gene and Betsey continued in their passion for truth. According to those who knew him best, the worst thing Gene could call someone was a “faker.” He did not like intellectual or political orthodoxies and he hated political correctness. In particular, he scorned those “who merely [pretend] to intellectual integrity and honest scholarship,” but in reality manipulate historical evidence to reach a predetermined conclusion. Alternately, the best thing Gene could call someone was “brave,” referring to a person who speaks what he believes to be true regardless of whether it conforms to the prevailing wisdom. By the same token, it takes bravery “to contradict what one has previously thought and published, and say, ‘I was wrong about that.’”¹³⁴ Certainly, Betsey personified Gene’s idea of bravery and he respected her immensely for it.

Surprisingly, even after enduring so many attacks from the Left, both Gene and Betsey continued to be open-minded to opposing ideas and people who held them. Gene, in particular, loved to argue about politics. However, he believed it important to “remember that today’s enemies are tomorrow’s allies, and vice versa. You might as well retain civil relations.”¹³⁵ Just as before their intellectual migration, Gene and Betsey would respect any dissenting opinion as long as someone could explain it and could support it with relevant facts. Speaking to their open-mindedness, Ambrose remarked,

¹³³ Genovese, “CPAC.”

¹³⁴ George, “Truth-Teller.”

¹³⁵ Paquette, “Eugene D. Genovese”; Nordlinger, “Up From Leftism,” 43.

“No one I’ve met in academia had greater respect for true diversity of thought, especially regarding scholarship.”¹³⁶ In a memorial to Gene, David Moltke-Hansen agreed:

“By the bye, as a liberal and, worse, a social democrat, I was told, at the same time as Genovese presented me with a copy of the collection of essays he had dedicated to me, that I should and would be shot at the revolution. When I asked which revolution, he said: any worth its salt. Not only did I belong on the dust heap of history and participate knowingly in the flaccidities of liberal culture, but I had the temerity to criticize his synchronic approach to antebellum slaves and elites. These sorts of things were said with great good humor over many visits and years. The humor made the salt savory and reason to give back in kind. So, despite our differences and distances, also our different preference in Italian wines, we became and continued friends, even discussing politics.”¹³⁷

Betsey’s dedication to open-mindedness can be seen in her insistence on keeping the Emory Women’s Studies Program ideologically open. Likewise, she simultaneously directed the dissertations of both the head of Emory Students for Life and the head of Georgians for Choice. Regardless of one’s political or religious beliefs, Betsey insisted on analyzing and assessing her colleagues and students on the merit of their ideas and opinions, but never their ideological opinions.

Throughout all of the difficult times that Gene and Betsey faced during their professional careers, they benefitted from the support of many loyal friends of varying ideological and religious stripes with whom they shared long and enduring friendships. Some were colleagues and others were former students who had almost become like

¹³⁶ Hungeling, Interview; Ambrose, Interview.

¹³⁷ David Moltke-Hansen, October 3, 2012 (12:14 p.m.), response to Leo P. Ribuffo, “Eugene D. Genovese: Recollections of a Former Student,” *U.S. Intellectual History, The Blog of the Society for U.S. Intellectual History*, October 3, 2012, <http://s-usih.org/2012/10/eugene-d-genovese-recollections-of.html>.

children to them. With each, they shared and received support, criticism, suggestions, advice, and more.¹³⁸

Those who knew them best could easily see that Gene and Betsey's marriage was a central part of their lives. Billy Hungeling, a close friend of the Genoveses, said that Gene looked at and spoke of Betsey as though they had only been married for a year or two.¹³⁹ Even after thirty-seven years of marriage, they remained playful with one another. In *Miss Betsey*, Gene describes a number of friendly arguments and competitions regarding who was right and who was wrong. At one point, he claimed that he was embarrassed when they went out to eat and she ordered her steak or hamburger well-done. All sophisticated people, including him, ordered such meats rare. Nonetheless, "after much prayer and reflection, [he] forgave Betsey for disgracing [their] family, and she expressed gratitude for [his] forbearance. At least, that is how [he] interpreted her 'Yes, dear.'" Further, he asserted that, although she said that her omelets were better than his, she was wrong; she overcooked hers, and his were better.¹⁴⁰ The only thing that could possibly break up their marriage was a Major League World Series between the New York Yankees and the San Francisco Giants. The two shared a fanatic enthusiasm for baseball and spent time every day reviewing the scores, standings, and statistics. In a letter to Betsey dated May 6, 1982, Gene writes that he has turned down an invitation for dinner from Nobel Prize winner Hans Bethe and his wife Rose because

¹³⁸ Ambrose, Interview; Paquette, "Eugene D. Genovese"; Ribuffo, "Reflections of a Former Student"; George, "Truth-Teller."

¹³⁹ Hungeling, Interview.

¹⁴⁰ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 18-19.

“the Giants are in NY for the Mets, and it is on TV.”¹⁴¹ Even during the off-season, they monitored trades and other gossip as it occurred. It was the subject of conversation that towered above all others.¹⁴²

As a couple, Gene was more forthright and said whatever he thought; Betsey, though also very tough, was a little more reserved and conciliatory. Throughout their marriage, they loved to entertain and host dinner parties. Many have attested to the amazing quality of these dinners. They were generally served in a European style and consisted of several courses ending with cheese, wine, and liquor. Guests usually included an array of colleagues, graduate students, undergraduate students, and friends. While waiting for dinner to be ready, Gene would “hold court” in the den and direct conversation among the guests. Of course, Betsey was always listening and when she disagreed with something Gene said, she would fly into the den to either challenge him or remind him of an important point that he had not taken into account. Gene also loved to tell stories – one of his favorites was of his and Betsey’s first date.¹⁴³

Gene and Betsey shared a weakness for pets as well. Despite Gene’s refusal of Betsey’s requests to get a puppy, she brought a puppy home one day. Gene was angry until the puppy jumped into his lap while he was watching a baseball game. Seeing an opportunity to make up, Betsey offered to let Gene name the puppy. Not wanting to let Betsey entirely off the hook, he named it Josef Vissarionovich, shortened to Josef. He left it to her to explain such an odd name for a dog to her friends and acquaintances.

¹⁴¹ “Letter from Gene to Betsey, May 6, 1982,” Box 1, Folder 2a, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

¹⁴² Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 57.

¹⁴³ Hungeling, Interview; Higginbotham, “First and Lasting Impressions,” 2.

Through the years, they had a number of dogs and cats and eventually started naming the cats after the southern states. Since they had no children, they referred to their pets as their “species-challenged” children and placed framed pictures of the “children” throughout the house. Also, when Betsey went out of town, Gene frequently wrote letters to her with updates on their well-being in which they conveyed their longing for her return: “Miss Cleopatra is afraid of her shadow again – which means her mamma is away. Tapestry is screaming to get out of the house. Muffin is just bad. But they are doing better than their pappa.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, “the children” often wrote letters to her for Mother’s Day and other special occasions.

During their marriage, Gene and Betsey enjoyed many activities together including cooking (Gene usually served as Betsey’s sous chef), watching baseball, eating at their favorite restaurants, drinking good wine, playing cards, watching some movies and television, shopping, and buying clothes for one another. Of course, they also had separate interests. Gene did not read much in the way of contemporary novels while Betsey read a wide variety of books including mystery novels, contemporary books about Catholicism, and even books about housekeeping.¹⁴⁵ Finally, they never ceased to enjoy one another’s company in part because Betsey never nagged Gene nor did she like to argue with him. “And yet, in numerous ways and without confrontation, she somehow changed [him] as no one ever had or could.” Her method was simple; when she wanted

¹⁴⁴ “Letter from Gene to Betsey, May 3, 1982,” Box 1, Folder 2a, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

¹⁴⁵ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*; Ambrose, Interview; Hungeling, Interview; Cheryl Mendelson, *Home Comforts: The Art and Science of Keeping House* (New York: Scribner Publishing, 1999), Fox-Genovese’s short review on the back cover of the book.

him to do something or not do something, “she quietly placed tempting alternatives in her prey’s sight and let nature take its course.”¹⁴⁶

Early on, their marriage seemed to be a rather fortuitous one for Betsey. She was still a graduate student working on her Ph.D., and her husband was an already accomplished writer who held the department chair at the University of Rochester. It cannot escape one’s notice that that was where she landed her first teaching position. However, Gene came to believe that Betsey was the preeminent half of their professional marriage. Throughout their thirty-seven years, they influenced one another in many ways. After Gene and Betsey married, Betsey migrated from a specialty in French economic history, notably the Physiocrats, to a focus on her husband’s field of interest, southern history, and particularly southern slaveholding women. Of course, the distance of the migration has proven debatable. Higginbotham, a former student who simultaneously took Gene and Betsey’s courses at Rochester, noted that there were a number of similarities in their respective intellectual interests prior to her migration. Both ancient regime France and the antebellum South were primarily agrarian societies. Both had a pre-bourgeois economic system and a hierarchical social system. And both were experiencing and trying to resolve a confrontation between two world views.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, Gene credits Betsey with greatly influencing his understanding of the ‘non-capitalist’ character of southern slave society and helping him to see the full contribution of southern female writers.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, he says that she brought to their

¹⁴⁶ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 28.

¹⁴⁷ Higginbotham, “First and Lasting Impressions,” 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ambrose, Interview.

collaboration a background in intellectual history, literary criticism, and psychoanalytic training. Likewise, when they embarked on their groundbreaking study of southern slaveholders, “she knew much more religious history and theology than [he] did.”¹⁴⁹ Equally important, Betsey utilized her extensive skills in foreign languages and mathematics to translate for Gene when they traveled overseas and to help translate a new book *Time on the Cross* which was full of econometrics. Further, she made use of her pragmatism to advise Gene on how to handle certain situations in which he was inclined to fire off and burn bridges, actions he likely would have regretted at a later date.¹⁵⁰

It is a generally accepted theory that a husband and a wife working together professionally often spells the end of their marriage. Professional disagreements tend to spill over into the domestic sphere and, after a while, divorce seems inevitable. The Genoveses seemed to defy the conventional wisdom and one often wonders how. Like almost all marriages, their professional marriage experienced some growing pains as they grew with time and became accustomed to one another. Writing in her diary on August 4, [1972], Betsey records that Gene is upset with her because, in an interview for an assistant professorship at Rochester, he thinks she has “revealed [her] competitiveness with him.” Angrily, she answers to her diary, “Maybe I have.” She goes on: “There are problems with Gene and me working at the same place. I don’t want to be second. No more do I want to be second around the house.” Though tolerant, Gene says he “can’t deal with...[her] resenting him, being competitive with him.”¹⁵¹ On another occasion,

¹⁴⁹ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 207-208.

¹⁵⁰ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 41-42, 48-52.

¹⁵¹ “Diary Entry of August 4, [1972?],” Box 44, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

Betsey is upset again: “[Gene] informed me the other day that he was thinking of teaching a course in the rise of economic thought – Bastard! At least I had sense enough to laugh – whatever I do he’s going to do too?”¹⁵² Of course, these angry declarations are interspersed among many pages of Betsey describing how wonderful Gene is and how much she loves him. Like in their personal marriage, they eventually became almost a single entity. “We tried to adjust to each other’s strengths, weaknesses, and circumstances.” Also, neither ever resented professional criticism from the other.¹⁵³

At the University of Rochester, Gene and Betsey successfully team taught Western Civilization. According to his recollection, there was never any confusion of authority. One or the other would be in charge of a project and the one who was not in charge deferred to the other’s leadership and decisions. Advice was given only upon request. Writing was a slightly different matter. When writing books together, neither was in charge. Early in their collaboration, one would serve as the primary author and the other would contribute to it; however, as their partnership continued, it became harder to tell who had written what. They both held similar ideological beliefs and outlooks, so they usually read historical evidence the same way.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, “her wrong-headedness and obstinacy occasionally led her to question [his] infallibility.” At that point, if they could not solve their differences with a discussion, they re-read the sources together and discussed their meaning. In the event that they still could not arrive at an agreement, they would exclude the piece from their joint work and possibly include it in a

¹⁵² “Diary Entry of March 27,” Box 44, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese Papers.

¹⁵³ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 56, 93.

¹⁵⁴ Ambrose, Interview; Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 33-35, 37.

later personal publication. Overall, the system appears to have worked as they wrote a number of well-received books and continued to publish, even after her death, pieces that they worked on prior to her decease.¹⁵⁵

Finally, Gene and Betsey encouraged one another. Toward the end of her dissertation, Betsey was tempted to do away with her last chapter in which she refuted a long held belief out of fear of reprisal from some distinguished historians in the field. Knowing that she would later regret it, Gene encouraged her to include the chapter and weather what storms might come. Fortunately, the historians whom she refuted were not angry and actually invited her to Britain to discuss her book.¹⁵⁶ By the same token, when one was under a lot of pressure, the other would help in any way possible. In the event that they were both under a lot of pressure, the one in the least urgent situation would assist the other.¹⁵⁷ Remarking on their marriage, Robert P. George noted that “Betsey was her husband’s peer in devotion to the truth, and no less brave about truth-telling. This shared commitment to the truth and truth-telling, and the courage that Gene and Betsey reinforced in each other, help to explain the extraordinary bond between two people who were, in so many other ways, unlike each other.”¹⁵⁸

Considering Genovese’s stories in his memoir and the numerous accounts of their friends, Gene and Betsey were complimentary and equal partners in their marriage. They were united and truly loved each other “fully, deeply, and unreservedly.”¹⁵⁹ Though each

¹⁵⁵ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 33-35, 37.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁸ George, “Truth-Teller.”

¹⁵⁹ Ambrose, Interview.

would have been remarkable on his or her own, their marriage somehow made them even better.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ O'Connor-Ambrose, "The Promise."

CHAPTER TWO

A MARXIST APPROACH TO THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH:

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF EUGENE GENOVESE

Eugene Genovese specialized in writing about the American South. Between 1955 and 2012, he wrote or co-wrote at least nineteen books and pamphlets, more than one hundred articles and essays, and more than seventy-seven book reviews. Additionally, he edited or co-edited another seven books. His major works include *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (1969) and *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (1965). However, he is most remembered for his book *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974). A ground-breaking study of antebellum slaves and their culture, it was awarded the Bancroft Prize in 1975 and secured for him a reputation as an elite American historian and someone with whom future historians of southern history would have to contend.

Throughout his writings, Genovese seeks to interpret southern antebellum society as being based primarily on class rather than race. Though he readily acknowledges that race played a very large role in the southern social system as a means by which one race controlled another, he does not believe that this fully explains southern slaveholders. Instead, he asserts that whites developed into a master class and that development created in the South a unique society that was economically, politically, and culturally separate from and irreconcilable with the North's. He also criticizes those who suggest that the antebellum South was capitalist in nature. If southern slaveholders were capitalists, he asks, why did they risk their fortunes by plunging themselves into a potentially disastrous

civil war in which they might lose everything rather than slowly phasing slavery out in a way that might be more economically beneficial to them?¹⁶¹ Alternately, he argues that the South had a non-capitalist society and that slaveholders entered into a civil war to protect their way of life and the slave system which enabled them to rule as a master class.

During his career, Genovese distinguished himself within the southern history field by developing a number of insightful interpretations which debunked long-held beliefs and advanced the discipline. He began by reconsidering the historical sources. Many previous historians had ignored and discounted many of the religious sources as unimportant and superstitious. Others had disregarded southern intellectuals and their writings as unintelligent, backward, and without merit. However, despite his own atheism, Genovese developed an appreciation for religion and its influence on the lives and actions of both the slaveholders and the slaves. He also took southern white culture, ideology, and intellectuals more seriously than his predecessors had. As a result, he was able to shed more light on antebellum history as it was experienced by those who lived it. In this way, his work also contributes to a better understanding of the causes and events which led to the American Civil War.¹⁶²

Genovese's first interpretation addresses the seemingly low number of armed slave insurrections during the antebellum period. Given the cruel and oppressive nature of American slavery, one would expect violent rebellion. However, he argues that the

¹⁶¹ Robert Louis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger, *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), x.

¹⁶² Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 2-3.

population ratio, southern terrain, and easily discernible racial difference between slaves and free members of society made attempts at overt resistance suicidal. He asserts that slaves instead used the system of paternalism and Christianity as long-term, indirect, and more effective methods of resistance.¹⁶³ In *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, he seeks to support this theory by examining the recurring themes of duty and burden which frequently appear in the writings of southern slaveholders. Since these masters viewed themselves as patriarchs of extended families, they naturally viewed their slaves as black dependents, thus placing a burden upon masters to provide their slaves with food, shelter, and basic necessities as well as good treatment, direction, and protection.¹⁶⁴ Here, it is important to remember that most historians have agreed that masters used the practice of paternalism to control their slave populations; however, Genovese goes on to demonstrate a number of ways in which slaves were also able to use paternalism to negotiate better positions within the slave system and obtain rights, even if they were not officially recognized as such. Indeed, he argues that they were able to use the system to create their own identities as human beings rather than chattel property.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, Genovese discusses the prominent role of religion in the slaves' lives and culture. Often considered a hegemonic tool of the masters, he suggests that it instead served as an inspiration and promise of a better future for the slaves. These interpretations challenged and largely refuted Stanley Elkins' prevailing thesis that slavery was so cruel and degrading that

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁶⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 71-74, 78-80.

¹⁶⁵ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 7, 146-147.

slaves were essentially broken, exercised no autonomy in creating their identities or senses of themselves, and were merely subservient to their masters' wills.¹⁶⁶

Another interpretation, also appearing in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, is that slaves did not necessarily want to live on smaller farms rather than large plantations. According to Genovese, slaves understood that their own future and those of their families depended on their owner's solvency and that owners of small farms were often less financially secure than large plantation owners.¹⁶⁷ This disputed the popular conception that slaves preferred small farms to large plantations because greater contact between blacks and whites was believed to encourage camaraderie and better living conditions for slaves.¹⁶⁸ He also suggests that there was not a greater occurrence of absentee owners and overseers near the coast than in other regions of the South, but that even large property owners often made efforts to at least visit all of their plantations regularly. Further, he argues that slaves did not necessarily endure long-term bad treatment from overseers because they were encouraged by their masters to tell of unjust treatment by overseers. He then takes this a step further and suggests that slaves sometimes used such encouragement to undermine the authority of the overseers and pit the master against the overseer.¹⁶⁹ This called into question the conventional wisdom that slaves received better treatment on

¹⁶⁶ Arthur Zilversmit, "Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made by Eugene D. Genovese," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976): 161.

¹⁶⁷ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 9-10.

¹⁶⁸ George M. Frederickson, "Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made by Eugene D. Genovese," *The Journal of American History* 62 (1975): 131.

¹⁶⁹ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 10-21.

upcountry farms where they were managed by their master rather than on lowcountry plantations where they were managed by overseers who treated them brutally.¹⁷⁰

Genovese further criticizes Stanley Elkins' assertions that slaveholders were interested only in profitability and consequently ran their plantations like concentration camps. Instead, he argues that slaveholders were simultaneously paternalistic and interested in profitability, suggesting that the two were not mutually exclusive. Plantation profitability required a concern for long-term interests and masters considered slaves to be investments and assets. As such, slaveholders sought to maintain their slaves' welfare if only because of the slave's intrinsic value. Conversely, German concentration camps were designed to kill people and were only secondarily concerned with productivity which proved to be inconsistent at best.¹⁷¹

Uniquely, when examining the southern slave system, Genovese makes an equal effort to include a view of slavery from the slaveholders' perspective. In *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, he tries to relate the precarious position of slaveholders within the slave system. While not excusing any of their actions or responsibility for such actions, he seeks to demonstrate that, "for a complex of reasons of self-interest, common humanity, and Christian sensibility, they could not help contributing to their slaves' creative survival; that many slaveholders even took some pride and pleasure in their slaves' accomplishment; and that they imbibed much of their slaves' culture and sensibility while imparting to their slaves much of their own."¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Frederickson, 131.

¹⁷¹ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 12; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 32-34, 71, 78-79.

¹⁷² Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, xvi.

Genovese also spends a large amount of time examining the slave controversy between the bourgeois North and the slaveholding South. In *The Political Economy of Slavery, The World the Slaveholders Made* and *The Slaveholders' Dilemma*, he focuses on the southern defense of slavery. Fearful of the perceived negative threats inherent in capitalism, slaveholders held that the southern social system based on slavery was morally superior to the northern "free-labor" system. They insisted that, though northern capitalists claimed to promote freedom, many free laborers were in reality slaves to factory owners and their daily wages. As long as demand was up, their jobs were safe and they were presumably able to support themselves. However, many factory owners cared nothing for their workers. When orders stopped coming in, workers were no longer needed and they were cut loose and left to fend for themselves. Slaveholders, on the other hand, were held (to varying degrees) politically, economically, socially, and morally responsible for the well-being of their slaves. Because of their great value, slaveholders were financially obligated to provide for their slaves during busy months when they were in high demand as well as slow months when their labor was less critical. Further, slave owners professed to view their slaves as part of their families and many mistresses cared for their slaves during sickness and childbirth. Overall, Southerners felt they were under siege. While they appreciated the positive aspects of capitalism, they feared the threats that it presented to their way of life and sought to protect themselves by creating a new ideology that reconciled their own love of freedom and capitalistic pursuits (cash crop agriculture) with slavery as a social system. In this, one can see the influence of Genovese's own childhood experience with the abuses of capitalism. He

seems to appreciate the slaveholders' fear of capitalism and their accusations that while workers are free in a capitalist society, they are slaves to poverty and are often unable to feed, clothe, and house themselves properly. At least southern slaveholders provided their slaves with these basic necessities, if only to varying extents.

Overall, much of Genovese's work centers on the master-slave relationship and the ways each sought to manipulate the other to his own advantage. However, Genovese's unique contribution is in his ability to perceive and convey the complexity of this relationship without slighting either the master or the slave. He appreciates the competency and sophistication of each and is able to explicate it for his readers. Moreover, Genovese changed the historical interpretation of slavery from a rigid institution which physically and mentally eviscerated slaves to a somewhat more flexible system which was still cruel, but did afford slaves some ability to shape independent lives for themselves.¹⁷³

In addition, Genovese wrote on contemporary cultural and political issues. His book *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism*, written in 1994 during the midst of his political shift to the Right, examines southern conservatism and its continued influence on the twentieth-century South. It also reveals his growing respect for southern conservatives and conservatism. In the preface, Genovese acknowledges that he has come to identify with the South and acknowledges his "pretensions to being a southerner." However, he is quick to remind

¹⁷³ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, xii, 12.

his readers that he is not a conservative. “This book has been written by an outsider – a sympathetic, respectful, and I hope fair-minded outsider, but an outsider nonetheless.”¹⁷⁴

The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War, written in 1995, is a collection of essays written by Genovese in which he makes a series of observations of both the political Left and Right. On a number of occasions, he criticizes the Left for contradicting itself and failing to carry out the logic of its positions. For example, in his essay, “Marxism, Christianity, and Bias,” he targets the academic Left for routinely condemning Western Civilization for its many faults while failing to point out many of the same faults in other cultures. By doing so, he argues, its members are intentionally propagating lies that could one day lead to future political disasters similar to the Soviet debacle. In other essays, he condemns international big business and credits the collusion of business executives and elite politicians with an agreement to condone and sell whatever vice a person may want in the interest of greed and at the expense of socially-accepted values. In still other essays, he discusses the liberalization of Christian theology and its effects on American culture. Throughout it all, he examines the southern political tradition and the writings and arguments of several southern luminaries as possible guides in navigating and confronting contemporary political and cultural crises.

Overall, Genovese’s writing is clear, concise, and easily understood. When writing of the antebellum South, he utilizes a number of approaches. In the first essay of *The World the Slaveholders Made*, he employs the comparative approach by comparing the antebellum slave regime to other New World slave regimes such as those found in the

¹⁷⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), ix-x.

Caribbean. Likewise, he contrasts the impact of seventeenth-century developments in the world economy on Western Europe to the corresponding impact on Eastern Europe and America. He also utilizes multiple perspectives. In *The Political Economy of Slavery*, he applies a top-down approach in which he examines a number of aspects relating to slavery across the entire southern region. Alternately, in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, he uses a bottom-up approach to study the intricate details of the slaves' lives and culture. In this way, he is able to uncover the various obstacles they faced and overcame as well as the ways in which they maneuvered in a very oppressive system of domination. Further, he is able to discover the nuances inherent in the master-slave relationship and convey them to his reader.

A unique feature of Genovese's writing is his equal treatment of slaves and slaveholders. Rather than assessing slave owners and their actions through the modern, post-slavery, and post-Civil Rights frame of moral judgment, he evaluates them in light of their historical situation and their particular interests. Commenting on Genovese's scholarship, historian Paul Gottfried observes:

Absent from Genovese's work is the tiresome moralizing that now characterizes academic historiography. Even in his most radical phase, he wrote admiringly about the antebellum Southern slave-owners, who believed deeply in their right to rule. This doomed class, which would give way in the Civil War to the dominance of the capitalist bourgeoisie and to the victory of free labor, did not lack for courage or manliness, according to Genovese.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Paul Gottfried, "Eugene D. Genovese, R.I.P.," *The State of the Union Blog*, September 27, 2012, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/eugene-d-genovese-r-i-p/>.

Thus, because of Genovese's willingness to examine the slaveholders on their own terms, he is better able to accurately depict the historical situation and the reasons for its consequences.

Throughout his books, one can also see a number of ways in which Genovese's personality comes through in his writing. In his acknowledgment preceding *The World the Slaveholders Made*, the unconventional element of his nature is on full display:

Tradition requires that I absolve my critics from responsibility for all errors. Although I deeply respect tradition as a matter of principle, I see no reason to absolve them. If I have committed blunders, one or another of these learned men and women should have noticed; if they did not, then let them share the disgrace. As for my interpretation and bias, the usual disclaimer is unnecessary since no one in his right mind is likely to hold them responsible for either.¹⁷⁶

His sense of humor also comes through in his acknowledgment preceding *Roll, Jordan, Roll*:

My wife, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, to whom this book is dedicated, did not type the manuscript, do my research, darn my socks, or do those other wonderful things one reads about in acknowledgments to someone 'without whom this book could not have been written.' Nor did she work so hard on this book that she deserves to be listed as co-author; if she had, she would be listed as co-author. She did, however, take time from writing her doctoral dissertation to criticize each new draft, review painstakingly the materials, help me rewrite awkward sections and rethink awkward formulations, and offer countless suggestions, corrections, and revisions. And while under the pressure that anyone who has written a dissertation will readily appreciate, she made an immeasurable if intangible contribution to the writing of this book by living it with me.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), xii.

¹⁷⁷ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, xxi-xxii.

In both passages, but especially the second, he seems to make fun of other authors' acknowledgements and their cliché nature. However, at the same time, he appreciates Betsey's efforts and contributions to his work. He also gives an example of his earlier assertion that they adjusted to each other's circumstances by her recognizing his more-pressing deadline and taking time away from her dissertation to help him with his book. Finally, one can see the softer side of his personality early in his essay on George Fitzhugh's philosophy on slavery in *The World the Slaveholders Made*:

I do not deny some bias, for, as often happens to a historian who dallies with an attractive historical figure for some years, I have come to think of him as an old friend. As my affection and admiration deepened, the task of rescuing him from detractors became something of a private mission. Fitzhugh has been misunderstood even by his most sympathetic and acute interpreters and stands out as a more important and internally consistent thinker than is generally accepted. One charge, however, I do reject – that of using him as a pawn in a game of *épater les bourgeois*. That Fitzhugh's assault on bourgeois hypocrisy should delight any socialist no one need deny, but it ought to be unnecessary to add that the social order and moral standards for which he stood left and leave something to be desired.¹⁷⁸

Here he acknowledges developing a quasi-friendship with someone that he has never met and who is no longer alive. Further, he acknowledges a feeling of kinship with Fitzhugh based on their shared disapproval of "bourgeois hypocrisy." Nonetheless, he makes clear that he has not been so swept off of his feet as to condone slavery as an acceptable social practice. Of course, these are just a few of the many ways in which Genovese's personality, which was often strong, but sometimes soft, comes through in his writing.

¹⁷⁸ Genovese, *World the Slaveholders Made*, 119.

Until relatively late in his career, Genovese was an avowed Marxist. While at Brooklyn College, he was influenced by a number of Marxist historians, most notably Karl Marx himself. Of particular interest was Marx's theoretical works including *Das Capital*, the *Grundrisse*, and *Theories of Surplus Value*. Similarly, he found Marx's work on "countries he knew well" to be very helpful.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, he determined early in his career that Marx's work on the American South would not be useful. Having never been to the South and instead basing his work on faulty sources, it quickly became clear that Marx was ignorant on the subject and of little help. Of course, other Marxist historians left their mark as well. Antonio Gramsci provided an alternative to Marx's base-superstructure orthodoxy by arguing that the superstructure was further subdivided into a political society and civil society. Although he still agreed that the base entirely informed the values of the superstructure, he legitimized Genovese's own rejection of Marxist orthodoxy. Perhaps more important was Gramsci's suggestion that a ruling class exerts control over lower classes not only by force, but also by establishing cultural values and the dominant worldview.¹⁸⁰ This influence can be seen often in Genovese's scholarship, but particularly in *The World the Slaveholders Made* which examines the worldview of the master class and *Roll, Jordan, Roll* which considers the extent to which black slaves imbibed the values of their white masters. In an interview, Genovese also noted that Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* and Vladimir Lenin's work on Russian agriculture were important to him.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 197.

¹⁸⁰ Richard H. King, "Marxism and the Slave South," *American Quarterly* 29 (1977): 118.

¹⁸¹ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 197, 199.

Outside of the Marxist tradition, many other historians influenced Genovese as well. Early in his collegiate career, Professor Hans Rosenberg introduced him to Max Weber who taught him to see the category of social classes as larger than just economic relations. Weber also helped to shape Genovese's definition of capitalism. In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he defines the modern form of capitalism found in the United States as the continuous, rational pursuit of renewed profit. He goes further to argue that it is unique from other forms of capitalism found throughout history in that it requires the separation of business from the household and the organization of free labor whose interests will inevitably conflict with those of industrial entrepreneurs. These necessary features would later figure prominently in Genovese's declaration that the South was a non-capitalist society.¹⁸² At Columbia University, Frank Tannenbaum taught him much about human relations, especially those relating to superordination and subordination.¹⁸³ Finally, he continued to learn from a number of contemporary southern historians including Lewis P. Simpson, Forrest McDonald, Robert Fogel, and Stanley Engerman. However, one towered above the rest. Speaking to Robert Paquette and Louis Ferleger, Genovese noted: "Since 1970 or so, the most important and direct influence on my understanding of the Old South has been, along with Simpson, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. She came to southern history late, having begun as a historian of eighteenth-century France, but she saw the weaknesses in my interpretation of the Old South right at the start. She compelled me to rethink and

¹⁸² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 17, 22-24.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 198.

reformulate, and our collaboration has been at the center of my work during the last quarter century.”¹⁸⁴

As a Marxist, Genovese sought to apply a Marxist interpretation to antebellum history which was a rather new concept at the time. Most importantly, he contrived to interpret southern slave society as being based primarily on class. In *The World the Slaveholders Made*, he argues that slavery must be understood as a class question, and only secondarily as a race or economic issue.¹⁸⁵ He continues this line further in his book *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History*. Several years later, in *Roll Jordan, Roll*, he acknowledges that race also played a considerable role in the southern social system as a means by which one group controlled another. However, Genovese does not believe that it fully explains southern slaveholders. Instead, he argues that white slaveowners developed into a master class and that transformation created in the antebellum South a unique society that was economically, politically, and culturally separate from the North. This concept, too, benefitted from the influences of Fox-Genovese, Gramsci, and Simpson. Though Genovese rejected Marxist orthodoxy early on, they helped him to see that he had maintained “a much too one-sided understanding of the relation of social relations to culture and politics.”¹⁸⁶ According to Marx, labor relations entirely inform all other elements of society, including ideas, culture, and political institutions, in a one-way relationship. Nevertheless, they helped him to refine his understanding of the cultural

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 199.

¹⁸⁵ Genovese, *World the Slaveholders Made*, 14.

¹⁸⁶ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 202.

consequences of the social relationship in order to see that the masters were using their culture as a means of informing labor relations and further controlling the laboring class of slaves.¹⁸⁷

Over time, Genovese's perspective and approach to historical sources changed in a number of ways. The first was his attitude toward religion. Initially an atheist, he largely discounted and ignored the influence of religion on southern slaves and slaveholders. His bias was especially strong in his early works. Looking back on his approach to *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, Genovese remembers that "[he] brought to [his] work all the biases of an atheist, a materialist, a smart-assed New York intellectual and for good measure, an ex-Catholic who was probably trying to root out every last element of what, if anything, [he] had learned in a not-very-committed Catholic boyhood."¹⁸⁸ Yet, though he held a fair amount of disdain for religion, he held even more scorn for historians whose descriptions of historical figures' religious experiences betrayed their own contempt for religion. At the same time, his continuing research frequently involved confrontations with the influence of religion on both masters and slaves. Thus, he was forced to take it more seriously, study it more closely, and finally appreciate its influence on them and southern history.¹⁸⁹ In *The Southern Front*, he describes his unlikely journey:

The empirical investigations disturbed a historian with the biases of an atheist and a historical materialist who had always assumed, however mindlessly, that religion should be understood as no more than a corrosive ideology at the service of ruling classes. If, at the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 201-202.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 207.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 202, 207-208.

beginning, someone had told me that religion would emerge as a positive force in my book – indeed, as the centerpiece – I would have laughed and referred him to a psychiatrist. In the end, the evidence proved overwhelming, and I had to eat my biases, although not my Marxism. For while much went into the making of the heroic black struggle for survival under extreme adversity nothing loomed so large as the religious faith of the slaves. The very religion that their masters sought to impose on them in the interest of social control carried an extraordinarily powerful message of liberation in this world as well as the next.¹⁹⁰

Because of Genovese’s willingness to “eat [his] biases,” he was able to gain unprecedented understanding into the lives of both the slaves and their masters. For the slaves, he discovered a possible means of survival against the oppressive institution of slavery. For the masters, he shed light on a potential motivation for their decision to enter into civil war: slavery was ordained by God and He would guide them to victory.

During his career, Genovese also gained a respect for southern conservatism. As he researched southern history and became familiar with the worldviews of various southern luminaries, he sensed a southern tradition and began to see the South as different and unique from the rest of the United States. Speaking of his growing admiration for the South, he acknowledged that, in some ways, his views were more similar to those of southern conservatives than liberal or orthodox Marxists. After all, he rejected Marx’s utopianism and tended to adhere to the ideas of original sin and human depravity. Likewise, he and southern conservatives shared a deep fear and distrust of unrestrained, free market capitalism. Indeed, following the failure of the Soviet experiment, he also found himself considering southern conservatives’ observations on

¹⁹⁰ Eugene D. Genovese, *The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 8.

the limits of social engineering.¹⁹¹ Nonetheless, he did not count himself among their ranks. Faced with suggestions that he had become a conservative, he responded, “If somebody wants to disorder the world and give me political power, they’ll find out how conservative I’m not.”¹⁹²

Despite his new appreciation for certain elements of southern conservatism and his repudiation of Communism, Genovese continued to find some merit in the Marxist approach to history. Even late in his career, he focused on class struggles and the concept of slavery in the abstract, a form of slavery which applied to both blacks and whites. Moreover, he examined social relations and the extent to which they shape culture. Finally, he studied the process of capitalist development in the North and South and sought to ascertain the nature of the southern slave society as well as the degree to which it was similar or different from its bourgeois neighbor to the north.¹⁹³ To the end, Genovese applied a Marxist interpretation to the Old South.

In his books, Genovese uses a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources. Overall, his historical method is simple: use whatever you can and whatever it takes to provide the most accurate history of society possible. In addition to traditional historical evidence, he borrowed useful information from a variety of disciplines including econometrics, folklore, economics, psychology, and literature. Yet, “in the end, history remains an art.”¹⁹⁴ Given his predilection for Marxism, it is unsurprising that

¹⁹¹ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 199-200, 205-206.

¹⁹² Douglas Martin, “Eugene D. Genovese, Historian of South, Dies at 82,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/us/eugene-d-genovese-historian-of-south-dies-at-82.html?_r=2&.

¹⁹³ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 206-207.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

he makes particular use of Marxist historians including Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Maurice Dobbs, and Eric Hobsbawm. In the first essay of *The World the Slaveholders Made*, Genovese uses the theoretical work of these historians along with a number of books regarding capitalism, slavery in various areas, western European economic histories, and race relations in slave societies in order to place American slavery in the broader context of the Atlantic world. By the same token, they allow him to compare the various slave societies and the ways in which they were affected by the spread of capitalism. In the second essay, he uses the writings of George Fitzhugh and other antebellum intellectuals as well as critiques of their writings by contemporary southern historians such as C. Vann Woodward in order to get a closer look at slavery in the South and the ideology that southern intellectuals created in order to support it. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, on the other hand, is quite different. While Genovese continues to use a large number of secondary sources, including some Marxists such as Antonio Gramsci and Eric Hobsbawm, his overwhelming evidence is derived from primary sources. These include traveler accounts, personal correspondence, journals, diaries, family papers, plantation books, and slave narratives as well as antebellum journals, newspapers, and books, all of which touch on a variety of topics pertaining to southern culture prior to the Civil War. In the book, it is apparent that he has spent years reading primary sources on a wide range of topics, that he has a good command of his sources, and that he has used the information from these sources to refute many of the popularly held theories mentioned earlier. Moreover, he supports his arguments not with a single source, but with a number of sources from multiple perspectives reflecting a careful evaluation of

sources and weighing them against one another to scrutinize the credibility of each. Overall, his works are well-reasoned, well-researched, and well-supported by commanding evidence.

Genovese is also unique in the way he reads historical evidence. Ever a proponent of academic integrity, he tends to be very honest in his reading and evaluation of sources, seeking to understand what they are saying rather than applying to them what he wants them to say. As seen earlier in the discussion of the importance of religion in antebellum southern culture, he confronts and reconciles evidence on its own terms regardless of his own biases. Later, in *The Southern Tradition*, Genovese demonstrates his strictly literal reading and interpretation of evidence again. Evaluating John C. Calhoun's arguments regarding the Constitution and the powers of the federal government, he states:

On the historical point, with all niceties aside, the Constitution did sanction slave property, as honest anti-slavery constitution authorities like Joseph Story and James Kent sadly admitted. And as they did not admit, the Constitution reserved the larger part of government for the states. If the Constitution had not recognized slavery, the southern states would never have entered the Union. The Constitution, whatever else may be said of it, embraced a tacit agreement to have peaceful coexistence between two social systems based on antagonistic systems of property and attendant moral principles.¹⁹⁵

While politically incorrect and inconvenient, he accepts that facts are facts and relates them as such.

Looking back on his career as a historian, Genovese remembered that his greatest challenge was repressing his childhood hatred of the bourgeoisie and, harder still,

¹⁹⁵ Genovese, *Southern Tradition*, 28.

keeping it from influencing his reading of historical records. Admitting that complete objectivity had been a near impossible goal, he conceded, “I’m sure that it’s taken a toll, but I hope I have kept that toll to a minimum.”¹⁹⁶ After learning of Genovese’s early life and reading his works, it is clear that his writing is both indirectly and directly influenced by his society and personal experiences in a number of ways. The most important indirect influence was his personal witness of economic suffering during his childhood. Growing up in a capitalist society during the Great Depression, he was acutely aware of the cruelty of which capitalism was capable. Though his father was willing to work and even begged for work, he was still unable to provide for his family because no work was available. Thus, when introduced to Communism at the early age of fifteen, Genovese embraced it as a means of correcting many of the problems inherent in capitalism. He was shaped even further by his expulsion from the Communist Party at the age of twenty. While he remained committed to Communism, he began to question the Party’s infallibility. Consequently, he returned to school to learn more about the Marxist theories he had previously taken for granted and these various theories helped to mold his scholarship throughout his career.¹⁹⁷ Genovese’s working-class background was also significant. Most historians hail from middle and upper-class backgrounds, so he must have felt like a fish out of water. This could well account for his lifelong preference for being an outsider, and thinking in new and unconventional ways such as favoring a

¹⁹⁶ Robert P. George, “Eugene Genovese: Truth-Teller,” *Public Discourse* (October 2, 2012): <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/10/6481/>.

¹⁹⁷ Eugene D. Genovese and Ronald Radosh, “An Interview with Eugene Genovese: The Rise of a Marxist Historian,” *Change* 10 (1978): 34.

Marxist interpretation of the antebellum South.¹⁹⁸ Of course, his working-class background served as a very important direct influence as well. Growing up in a working-class environment, he was not tempted to romanticize the history of the slaves. Instead, his childhood provided some insights into the lives of the slaves. “My boyhood experiences gave me at least some sense of the humiliation and impotence felt by people who, through no fault of their own, have to watch their children suffer at the hands of those who presume to run their lives. My father was eaten alive by his bitterness.” He wondered, “What must slaves have felt?”¹⁹⁹ With these insights, Genovese was able to capture and convey the tragic experiences of the slaves without losing sight of the bravery and determination with which they dealt with and overcame them. By the same token, his father’s stories about his foreman on the docks in the port of New York inspired his later description of the driver in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. Like the dock foreman, the slave driver was in a precarious position. As a slave, it was perhaps hard to force his fellow slaves – his brothers and sisters – to work harder or face punishment inflicted by him. At the same time, he was a slave himself and was answerable to his master for getting the job done according to his master’s expectations or face punishment himself. Yet, though his position was a contradictory one, it was still hard for his fellow slaves to forgive his apparent betrayal of his own and he was regarded with contempt. Another direct influence is Genovese’s rejection of Christianity and his philosophical materialism. As has been previously noted, while embracing Communism, Genovese rejected his childhood Catholicism in favor of philosophical materialism. In doing so, he came to

¹⁹⁸ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 200.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

view religion solely as a means of control and he found it difficult to take seriously the apparent role of religion in the lives of slaves and slaveholders. Therefore, the religious aspect is missing from his early works such as *The Political Economy of Slavery* and *The World the Slaveholders Made* and did not appear until *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. Re-evaluating his approach twenty-six years later, Genovese was critical. “My failure to take seriously the religious dimension of the southern experience cost me dearly in my early work – an error that I now find inexcusable.”

Although Genovese’s early life exercised a considerable influence on his historical scholarship, his later life does not appear to have had the same effect. When he began his career, he was an avowed Marxist, a vocal supporter of Communism and the Soviet Union, and a philosophical materialist. However, later in his life, he rejected Communism and began a political migration to the Right. At the same time, he abandoned his atheism and returned to the Catholic Church. Be that as it may, indications of these shifts are absent from his historical work. Notwithstanding *The Southern Tradition* and *The Southern Front*, books reflecting on the modern culture wars which include some personal observations on contemporary political, social, and cultural issues, Genovese’s scholarly methodology remained consistent. He continued to treat his historical subjects equally and to support his arguments with an amazing amount of research and primary sources.

Altogether, the critical opinion of Genovese’s work is approving. However, his early reviews were often not kind. His first major work, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, challenged the prevailing wisdom of the 1960s by returning to the traditional

argument that the South was fundamentally different from the North. Similarly, it sought to advance a Marxist interpretation of antebellum history by arguing that the South was pre-modern and pre-capitalist. Controversial in nature, it met with less than warm reviews. Chief among its criticisms was that Genovese made a series of bold assertions, but failed to support them with historical facts. In his review for the *Journal of Southern History*, Thomas Govan suggests that Genovese's arguments were based more on what he would have liked to be true than empirical research and facts.²⁰⁰ Joe Taylor agrees, but wonders whether his failure may be the result of his use of a Marxist approach.²⁰¹ While also critical, Melvin Drimmer does credit the book with providing some brief, but important explorations into the mind of the master class.²⁰² Conversely, Carl Degler, in his review for *The American Historical Review*, applauds Genovese for his "impressive" knowledge of the primary and secondary sources and his "well-supported argument for seeing ante bellum southern society as enduringly underdeveloped and therefore fundamentally different from that of the North."²⁰³ Even so, he questions Genovese's fundamental conclusion and the crux of his Marxist interpretation: that the southern slaveholders were class conscious and aware of their class interests, even going so far as to fight a war in defense of them.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Thomas P. Govan, "The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy & Society of the Slave South by Eugene D. Genovese," *The Journal of Southern History* 32 (1966): 233-234.

²⁰¹ Joe G. Taylor, "The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South by Eugene D. Genovese," *The Journal of American History* 53 (1966): 120-122.

²⁰² Melvin Drimmer, "The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South by Eugene D. Genovese," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 24 (1967): 162.

²⁰³ Carl N. Degler, "The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South by Eugene D. Genovese," *The American Historical Review* 71 (1966): 1423.

²⁰⁴ Degler, 1423.

Reviews of *The World the Slaveholders Made* were somewhat more approving. Continuing with his Marxist interpretation of the antebellum South, Genovese sought to answer some of the most important criticisms of *The Political Economy of Slavery* by placing the antebellum southern slave society in the context of slave societies of the New World. He then used the writings of George Fitzhugh, a southern intellectual who defended the southern slave institution as a superior alternative to capitalist free labor, as a means of supporting his argument that the American South was unique in that it engendered the emergence of a slave social system ruled by a class-conscious master elite. In general, critics credited the book with presenting a “thought-provoking look” at slavery.²⁰⁵ In his review for the *Journal of Social History*, Franklin Knight calls it “the most intelligent, articulate, and persuasive analysis of the plantation slave society in the Americas.” He also praises Genovese’s “remarkable span,” “brilliant perception,” and “delightfully lucid” prose.²⁰⁶ In *The Journal of Economic History*, Thomas Brewer refers to the book as “a tremendous contribution to the slavery debate as it provokes thought and stirs the imagination.”²⁰⁷ Charles Roland points out that Genovese’s generalizations provide “useful correctives” to the prevailing tendency to attribute to slavery all contemporary problems of race relations. However, he remains unconvinced that Fitzhugh’s writings reflected the mindset of the majority of southern slaveholders.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Harold S. Smith, “*The World the Slaveholders Made* by Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of Negro History* 55 (1970): 157, 159; Thomas B. Brewer, “*The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* by Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of Economic History* 30 (1970): 888.

²⁰⁶ Franklin W. Knight, “*The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* by Eugene D. Genovese,” *Journal of Social History* 4 (1970): 160.

²⁰⁷ Brewer, 890.

²⁰⁸ Charles P. Roland, “*The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* by Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of Southern History* 36 (1970): 279.

Others agree that the book and its arguments are “provocative,” but are somewhat critical of its heavy ideological influence, considering it “one-sided.”²⁰⁹ Kenneth Stamp, in particular, is disapproving. He believes Genovese’s argument lacks sufficient empirical support, especially in terms of contemporary planter accounts. Overall, he believes slavery to be based on race and Genovese’s attempt at a Marxian interpretation to be a failure.²¹⁰

Roll, Jordan, Roll, on the other hand, received far greater acclaim. Winner of the 1975 Bancroft Prize, it presented a well-documented synthesis of slave culture and the ways in which it provided a means of resistance to the degradation of enslavement. To this end, Genovese identified paternalism and the slaves’ hybrid religion as tools which the slaves consciously used as a means of discretely manipulating their masters in order to negotiate some rights and a better position within the slave society. In his review for *The Journal of Southern History*, Bertram Wyatt-Brown calls the book “an inspired repudiation of all the facile moral judgments that have scarred so many works about American racial history and practice. A monument of research and interpretive commitment, this culmination of the author’s numerous southern studies should revive a battered academic industry, providing scholars with new ideas for future elaboration.” Further, he notes the political sensitivity of many of the issues discussed in the book and praises it for “confront[ing] hard questions in a spirit of splendid individuality and

²⁰⁹ David H. Fowler, “*The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* by Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of American History* 57 (1970): 423.

²¹⁰ Kenneth M. Stamp, “Interpreting the Slaveholders’ World: A Review: *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*,” *Agricultural History* 44 (1970): 411-412.

affirm[ing] the humanity of forgotten people.”²¹¹ Likewise, in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Arthur Zilversmit credits the book with presenting a meaningful challenge to the prevailing notion that slavery reduced slaves to servile dependency on their masters. At the same time, he points out that Genovese’s argument is not a defense of slavery or slaveholders, but an appreciation of the efforts and abilities of the slaves. Overall, he describes the book as the “product of an unusually imaginative mind encountering the fruits of years of prodigious research.”²¹² George Frederickson is also very complimentary of the work. While Genovese had toned down his overtly ideological approach, it is still implicit. Nonetheless, “readers are exposed to a vast quantity of testimony” which reinforce his argument. Additionally, he credits Genovese with a “lengthy and wonderfully sensitive” description of slave religion.²¹³

James Anderson, on the other hand, was far less complimentary. In his review for *The Journal of Negro History*, he suggests that *Roll, Jordan, Roll* is nothing more than an example of the aesthetic transformation of Aunt Jemima from the early, crude form to the brighter and shinier version. Despite her new image, Americans still saw her as the faithful Aunt Jemima who prided herself on cooking for her white master and his family. In the same way, Anderson argues that Genovese, under the guise of seeking to understand and appreciate the culture of the slaves, has instead romanticized the paternalistic nature of the antebellum slave society.²¹⁴ In doing so, he underestimated the

²¹¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “*Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* by Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of Southern History* 41 (1975): 240, 242.

²¹² Zilversmit, 161-163.

²¹³ Frederickson, 131.

²¹⁴ James D. Anderson, “‘Aunt Jemima in Dialectics: Genovese on Slave Culture’,” *The Journal of Negro History* 61 (1976): 99.

roles of racism and violence in subverting the paternalistic ideal.²¹⁵ He also accuses Genovese of failing to recognize and appreciate the slaves' mental complexity. Genovese devoted large amounts of time to evaluating the various theories and ideas of southern slaveholders, but made no such effort to examine slaves' ideas and opinions on the oppressive nature of slavery. Further, by rejecting the division of slaves into those who accommodated and those who rebelled and instead asserting that each embodied both to varying extents, Anderson claims that Genovese ignored the rebels and runaways, the slaves that most obviously understood and rejected the oppression they were subjected to within the slave system.²¹⁶ Interestingly, Peter H. Wood disagrees. In his review for *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, he praises Genovese for describing how slaves used the Christian religion of their white masters both for themselves and against their masters. In this discussion, "Genovese repeatedly and ingeniously documents this proposition of complex black participation – inspired, deceptive, subtle, steady – in determining the norms of Afro-American life under legal bondage and after."²¹⁷

In the final analysis, Genovese's historical scholarship was original and offered many contributions to the study of the slave South. By seeking to apply a Marxist, class-based interpretation of the southern slave society, he posed many questions that contributed to new and better understandings of the issues which shaped the master-slave relationship, relations between the slaveholding elite and white yeomanry, and also the

²¹⁵ Anderson, 102, 112.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 109, 113.

²¹⁷ Peter H. Wood, "Phillips Upside Down: Dialectic or Equivocation?," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6 (1975): 295.

tensions between the North and South. However, his work was also controversial. As can be seen in Joe Taylor's review of *The Political Economy of Slavery*, Genovese's Marxist approach was considered suspect and was unwelcome during the 1960s. Prior to the rise of New Left historians and their assertiveness within the historical academy, traditional historians were wary of such an approach. Of course, many of the New Left historians wondered whether he was really a Marxist after all. Genovese weighed in on the debate during an interview in the mid-1990s, remarking: "A well-known ex-Marxist historian, an intellectually first-rate woman who defected to the Right [Fox-Genovese], remarked twenty or so years ago that anyone who knew me well and studied my work carefully had to see that I was a left-wing closet Catholic and not a Marxist at all. A nonbeliever herself, she intended no compliment – quite the contrary – but I was neither pleased nor offended. Rather, I wondered how much truth there might be in her caustic remark. One way or the other, the only thing I have ever cared about is the extent to which my interpretation of the slave society of the Old South will prove as accurate and useful as one can reasonably hope for."²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Paquette and Ferleger, *Slavery*, 210.

CHAPTER THREE
AN UNORTHODOX FEMINIST:
THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE

Unlike Genovese, Fox-Genovese focused and wrote on a number of topics throughout her career. She initially specialized in eighteenth-century France and what began as her doctoral dissertation became her first book, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (1976). In it, she traces the development of economic doctrines which eventually came together to form mature Physiocratic thought. In this way, she suggests that Physiocracy was born out of joint efforts between François Quesnay and the marquis de Mirabeau to find a way to repair the existing economic system of ancien regime France. She also traces the evolution of Quesnay and Mirabeau's independent thoughts prior to their mutual collaboration in order to better understand their influence on one another and their respective contributions to mature Physiocratic thought. In essence, the book makes two important contributions to the study of the Physiocrats and the Enlightenment. First, it suggests that Mirabeau played a greater role in the development of Physiocratic thought than had been previously believed. Second, in a close reading of the "Traité de la monarchie," Fox-Genovese argues that Quesnay and Mirabeau realized that their proposed solutions would actually threaten the principles that supported the monarchy they were trying to protect. For this reason, they abandoned their proposed solutions and sought to distract others by creating the confusing and abstract economic laws which are now identified with Physiocracy.

Perhaps influenced by her new husband, she then moved toward an interest in the history of the antebellum South and the role of women in it. Her major work toward this scholarship, and possibly her most well-known work overall, is *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (1988) in which she focuses on the different roles that white mistresses and black slave women performed in the average plantation household, the complex relationships which developed between them, and their conflicting views of slavery. This work was important because it made a number of important contributions to a better understanding of southern women, how they viewed themselves and their role in society, and the factors which influenced them most. Fox-Genovese begins by centering her analysis on the household as the primary area of production and the point where white and black women intersected. In this way, she is able to clearly challenge the prevailing theory, advanced by Catherine Clinton, that northern and southern women were ideologically similar and that southern women not only opposed slavery, but felt repressed by it and the patriarchal system which governed both them and the slaves.²¹⁹ Conversely, she argues that northern and southern women lived and operated in very different worlds and were subject to different gender relations and conventions. Northern women lived in a society in which the home and workplace were separate; thus, they rarely came into contact with the workplace. Southern women, on the contrary, lived in a society where the home and workplace were the same entity; thence, it follows that they actively participated in production and, at least indirectly, in

²¹⁹ Paul A. Gilje, “*Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 107; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese: First and Lasting Impressions,” *Common Knowledge* 14 (2008): 4; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 401 (note 4).

the world market. Similarly, most northern women lived in far more industrialized areas and imbibed the increasingly radical individualism which accompanied a bourgeois, capitalist society. Accordingly, they tended to identify with the women around them and began to demand political and social equality. Southern women, on the other hand, living on plantations far removed from industrial centers, were not exposed to radical individualism. For this reason, they also remained impervious to northern women's demands for equality. Instead, they tended to identify with their husbands and other members of their race and class. Thus, Fox-Genovese demonstrates that southern women were more complex than previously believed and were shaped by their class and race as well as their gender.

Throughout the book, Fox-Genovese also demonstrates a sensitivity toward the women she discusses. In doing so, she is able to convey the complex issues they faced as well as their feelings about them. Unfortunately, her descriptions of the slave women are not as vivid. In her prologue, she details her dilemma. She wants to write more about the slave women, their thoughts, and their opinions on the political issues addressed in the slaveholding women's writings, but she does not have enough solid sources and evidence to support a clear interpretation. Consequently, not wanting to risk presumption or speculation, she declines to treat them with the same detail as the white mistresses.²²⁰ Nevertheless, *Within the Plantation Household* still served to advance southern and women's history and it represents the pinnacle of Fox-Genovese's independent writing career.

²²⁰ Fox-Genovese, *Within Plantation Household*, 33.

Meanwhile, Fox-Genovese began to write about women's studies and cultural issues such as feminism, family values, and religion as well. Although she wrote numerous articles and lectures on these issues, her major works include *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (1991), "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*": *How Today's Feminist Elite Has Lost Touch With the Real Concerns of Women* (1996) and *Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die* (2008). In these books, she evaluates feminism, the major issues it faces, and how it is viewed by women within and without the feminist movement. She also traces the role of marriage both in the lives of individuals and in strengthening society. Overall, she generally criticizes the rise of unrestrained individualism and its subsequent damage to society, particularly poor women and children who are most vulnerable. With this in mind, she calls for the establishment of reasonable agreements on the relationship and responsibilities of people to one another and to society.

In *Feminism Without Illusions*, Fox-Genovese presents a number of constructive criticisms of feminism. As the founder and director of Emory's Women's Studies department, the first doctoral women's studies program in the country, she was firmly established in the feminist movement and sought to address some of the many fissures in it which began to appear during the early 1990s. She first criticizes the modern feminist movement for being too individualistic and for promoting the individual rights of women over the good of society. In this, she highlights an important contradiction in feminist rhetoric. Since its beginning, feminism had accused men and Western civilization of promoting individualism and the interests of men over those of women, children, and the

good of society. However, she points out that in seeking to advance their particular rights, feminists had become guilty of the same practice. Instead, she suggests that feminists should promote and work toward an overall society that respects the rights of women, promotes equality and justice for all, but also recognizes and respects the physical and social differences between men and women. More importantly, she highlights the need to recognize the responsibilities each sex has to society. For an example, she looks to abortion and a woman's responsibility to her children. Although a supporter of abortion during the first trimester, she has some growing reservations:

It is difficult to shake the impression that the right to choice is increasingly being presented as identical not merely to the right to freedom from all forms of sexual oppression, including incest and rape, but to women's right to liberation from the reproductive consequences of their own sexuality – their right to the male model of individualism.²²¹

To Fox-Genovese, such a thought is alarming. Therefore,

Without some . . . agreement on the definition of life, the right to abortion opens the specter of any individual's right to kill those who depend on her and drain her resources – elderly parents, terminally ill or handicapped children. Without some . . . agreement, the right to abortion – the woman's right to sexual self-determination – can logically lead to the right to murder with impunity.²²²

Such observations were controversial within the feminist movement. Although hers was only one of several critiques of feminism which addressed the emerging conflicts within the movement, it was different in two important ways. First, hers was the only one willing to discuss the subject of abortion. By that time, support for abortion had become

²²¹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 81-82.

²²² Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Without Illusions*, 83-84.

the general litmus test for feminists and they feared that such observations might provide a crack in the dam which their conservative opponents could exploit in order to blow apart the feminist defense of the practice. Even worse, she criticized abortion in intellectual terms:

Abortion challenges feminists to come to terms with the contradictions in their own thought, notably the contradiction between the commitment to community and nurture [feminists' claim that women differ from men in their inclination toward "maternal thinking"] and the commitment to individual rights [a feminist's willingness to place her own desires over the life of her unborn child].²²³

Although difficult for many feminists to hear, Fox-Genovese's observation was legitimate and something the movement would have to confront.

Another key criticism addresses the elitist nature of the feminist leadership and movement. They professed to share a concern for women of every race and socioeconomic status and sought to encourage a bond of sisterhood among women across racial and socioeconomic lines. However, their rhetoric and objectives seemed to be directed toward well-educated, middle and upper-class women and less concerned with uneducated, lower-income women. Pointing to this shortcoming, Fox-Genovese urges her fellow feminists to find ways to reach out to their poorer sisters who desperately needed help.

Five years later, she wrote another, sharper critique of feminism entitled "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life.*" In it, she argues that, although feminism has done much to improve the social, economic, and political equality of women, it has

²²³ Ibid., 83.

become too extreme. For this reason, it has lost touch with women and most women no longer identify themselves with the feminist movement. With this in mind, she seeks to discover the specific ways and reasons feminism has lost touch with the average woman. She first determines that most women no longer trust feminism and its increasingly radical platform. Although they agree with some of the ideas connected with feminism – economic independence, equal work for equal pay, laws against sexual harassment – they believe feminists think of women as “independent agents rather than as members of families.”²²⁴ Further, they are seen as contributing to the breakup of families rather than to the strengthening of them. Finally, feminists seem to force women to choose between being a feminist or being a wife and mother. In most cases, women choose the latter. Similarly, many women oppose certain feminist platforms, such as the right to abortion, and believe that “a vote for a feminist politician means a vote for abortion.”²²⁵

Additionally, Fox-Genovese discusses a variety of issues at stake in the culture wars including the sexual revolution, abortion, pornography, sex education, the economic revolution, pay equity, child care, welfare programs, and tax policies. Likewise, she evaluates the feminist and conservative responses to each of the issues as well as the inconsistencies in each of their arguments. And not least, she analyzes current public policies and the ways in which they support or fall short of the needs of average Americans. In short, she believes that “most women still hope to fit their new gains at work and in the public world into some version of the story of marriage and the family

²²⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *“Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life”*: How Today’s Feminist Elite Has Lost Touch With the Real Concerns of Women (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 28.

²²⁵ Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Is Not Story*, 29.

they have inherited from their mothers.”²²⁶ Accordingly, the feminist movement would do well to address this need and find the much-needed solutions to answer it.

Near the end of her career, Fox-Genovese wrote *Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die*. In the book, she argues that the increasingly radical claims of individualism are weakening the ties of marriage to the extent that it is becoming more and more subject to the momentary desires of the individuals immediately involved. Thus, by tracing the role of marriage throughout history, she endeavors to elucidate the damage being done to marriage, children, the family, and “any social bond that demands sacrifice, restraints, self-denial, and genuine charity.”²²⁷ She further argues that the damage is leaving women and children vulnerable to the harsh realities of the world. All in all, “the results are disastrous for our understanding of the human person and our ability to sustain binding relations with others.”²²⁸

Following her death, David Moltke-Hansen and a group of colleagues joined together to compile a five-volume collection of essays and journal articles published by Fox-Genovese. Represented topics include eighteenth-century European history, southern and women’s history, women’s studies, feminism, literary criticism, family values, abortion, euthanasia, religion, and faith. Though by no means a complete compilation, it exhibits her capacious intellect and scholarly interests.

²²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²²⁷ Sheila O’Connor-Ambrose, “‘The Promise of an Enduring and Engulfing Bond’: Personal Reflections on Elizabeth Fox-Genovese’s *Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die*,” *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/sheila_01.html.

²²⁸ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2008), 152.

Fox-Genovese's writing style varies with the kind of book she is writing and sometimes varies within the same book. She is very capable of writing theoretical arguments which can be seen in *The Origins of Physiocracy* and the first chapter of *Within the Plantation Household*. At other times, she writes historical narratives which give the reader the impression that he is in the story. In the prologue of *Within the Plantation Household*, she employs the narrative to tell the story of Sarah Gayle, a white, slaveholding woman in Alabama, as if she were a friend. Finally, in "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*," her writing style is conversational, as if she is speaking directly to the reader. Overall, her writing is clear, direct, and very readable, even for the general public.

Throughout her writing, and especially in *Within the Plantation Household*, one can sense Fox-Genovese's respect for her historical subjects. While studying in Paris, France, she attended a lecture given by André Amar in which he admonished his students to always respect their historical subjects, regardless of their personal opinions. He then stressed that his warning especially applied to religion.²²⁹ Fox-Genovese took his admonition to heart and, although she was a philosophical materialist at the time she wrote the book, she treated southern women and their devout faith with great care and appreciation.

As with Genovese, it is also possible to see glimpses of Fox-Genovese's personality in her writing. In her acknowledgement preceding *Within the Plantation*

²²⁹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Caught in the Web of Grace," in *History and Women, Culture and Faith: Selected Writings of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Volume 5*, ed. Rebecca Fox and Robert L. Paquette (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 198.

Household, she seems to respond to Gene's acknowledgement of her in *Roll, Jordan*,

Roll:

Gene there is no thanking. No, to paraphrase him, he does not deserve to be coauthor, although this book is an integral part of our joint work on the slaveholders and builds upon his and our previous work. No, he did not darn my socks or type my manuscript, although he did take over the cooking. But without what he did do, I should never have been able to complete this book this summer, and whatever book I eventually completed would have been sorely impoverished. He read every draft, twice and thrice over, catching me on inconsistencies and infelicities, honing my prose, pressing me to say what I wanted to say. He endured and, more important, enjoyed. But the real debts lie elsewhere. He came to appreciate my readings of his beloved southern ladies, even when they did not always conform to his own. He shared his own incomparable knowledge of southern history, never being sure of precisely the uses to which I would put it. Most important, he paved the way. Writing a book that is at once so deeply a part of our work together and so much my own, I have come to appreciate more than ever the force of his vision of southern history and his commitment to encouraging the independent work of others.²³⁰

Not only does she demonstrate a sense of humor by gently mocking his message regarding her in his book, she affirms many of the elements of their marriage which enabled them to work together by saying that he encouraged her, appreciated her readings even when he did not agree with them, and shared with her his knowledge of southern history which he had accumulated over the course of his career. This passage also reveals to some degree the extent of his influence on her and her work.

Early in her career, Fox-Genovese was intrigued by Karl Marx and his philosophical observations. More importantly, she appreciated his approach to history in terms of interactions and tensions between social classes although, like Genovese, she took it a step further to also include social systems. In examining her historical

²³⁰ Fox-Genovese, *Within Plantation Household*, xv.

scholarship, it is possible to see the influence of Marx's approach, especially in *Within the Plantation Household*. By employing such an approach, she is able to analyze the importance of class in southern antebellum society and determine the extent to which it contributed to white slaveholder hegemony. She is also able to highlight specific differences between northern and southern women and to challenge earlier theories which suggested that they were more similar than dissimilar in their worldviews. Rather, Fox-Genovese argues that southern women were more likely to identify with other members of their social class (their family and other slaveholders) than other members of their gender (their sisters north of the Mason-Dixon line). Finally, she centers her study on the plantation household. Such a selection is significant for it represents the primary area of production in southern society and production is a fundamental concern for Marxism as it is considered to be the driving force of relations among the rest of society.

Of course, one could argue that Fox-Genovese was equally influenced by C.B. McPherson and his critique of individualism rooted in seventeenth and eighteenth-century liberalism. In view of his analysis, she believed that individual rights are derived not from nature, but from society. According to Fox-Genovese's former student, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, this influence emerged early in her career and specifically in graduate seminars she taught at the University of Rochester.²³¹ By the same token, it comprised an important theme in her writings. In her books addressing the issues of feminism and marriage, she routinely criticizes the feminist movement for its embrace of radical individualism and denounces the increasing influence of individualism in

²³¹ Higginbotham, "First and Lasting Impressions," 7, 9.

American culture for the damage being done to the institution of marriage and society as a whole.

Despite her feminism and specialty in women's history – two subjects that are not traditionally associated with the Western canon – Fox-Genovese was a strong supporter of the canon and the Western tradition. In *Feminism Without Illusions*, she discusses the debate within academic circles regarding the canon as well as her position within the debate. Privileged to receive a private education at a number of elite schools in New England and Europe, she was thoroughly exposed to the works included in the canon and imbibed many of the values and ideas it contains. Further, she saw considerable value in the common culture and heritage it represents and considered herself to be an heir of the Western tradition which produced it. Recognizing this value to society as a whole, she supported opening it to include previously marginalized voices such as women and non-whites. However, she was careful to caution that some discretion must be exercised in allowing entry, for if everyone were to be included, it would no longer represent a common culture, but an infinite collection of autobiographies. Equally important, she was unambiguous in her support for retaining the traditional works in the canon as well. Though she advocated opening it to include previously marginalized groups, she did not support the abandonment of the traditional narrative of elite, white men.

Being from a somewhat affluent New England family and background, Fox-Genovese's perspective is certainly an elite one. This can be seen in *Within the Plantation Household*, in which she appears somewhat more comfortable in discussing and analyzing the slaveholding women as opposed to the slave women. While her

limited treatment of the slave women may to some extent be the result of a lesser supply of primary sources, it also seems indicative of the fact that she is better able to identify with the affluent and elite nature of the white, slaveholding women. Fox-Genovese's shift to the Right during the 1990s can also be seen in her work, especially in *Feminism Without Illusions* and "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life.*" A member of the feminist movement for most of her life, she begins to identify flaws in the movement in the first book and the second contains an even more scathing critique, reflecting her increasingly conservative views.

A variety of primary and secondary sources appear throughout Fox-Genovese's work. In *Within the Plantation Household*, she uses the diaries, journals, and correspondence of white, slaveholding women in order to reconstruct their lives as they saw them and to convey them to her readers. However, she was confronted with a decision: whether to borrow from a wide variety of the women's writings or to select a representative sample. In the end, she chose to put together a representative sample of four women whose stories represent the core of the book and to use the remaining writings to support those stories. For the slave women, she primarily relied on the Works Progress Administration (WPA)'s narratives of former slaves. Of course, these too required a decision: whether to use the narratives as they were recorded or to edit the text into a cleaner, more readable version. At the risk of appearing racist, she elected to use the former slave women's exact words in order to retain their voices. "For me, slave women's voices emerged most clearly from their children's recollections of their work

and from the records of their resistance.”²³² Still, acknowledging that the sources were very subjective, she compared them with information she gathered about the matters they discussed in order to determine their accuracy. She also evaluated them against one another. Throughout the book, she demonstrates a firm command of the sources and uses them to develop a better understanding of the lives of southern women, the societies in which they lived, and the ways in which they saw themselves compared to reality.

Her work on feminism, on the other hand, uses an entirely different set of sources. *Feminism Without Illusions* includes a wide variety of scholarly books and articles regarding feminism; current issues such as pornography and affirmative action; feminist, economic, and legal history and theory; novels; court cases; and much more. Alternately, “*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*” utilizes formal interviews, casual conversations with women, public opinion polls, statistics from the Census Bureau and Department of Labor, women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Working Woman*, and business magazines such as *Business Week*. Equally important, both books benefit from the use of her personal experiences as a daughter, sister, and wife. Of course, she acknowledges that her experience may not be entirely typical:

I know that my personal history is anything but typical. And by way of confirming the worst so we can get on with it, let me confess that the first movie I saw was Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, that I did not see it until I was eight years old, and that, even then, I had to stay home from school in the afternoon to have a nap since the movie began at 7:00 P.M., by which time I was supposed to be in bed. This was not a background that favored long hours listening to pop records, much less watching television. What nonetheless bound me to the world of women was a web of lore, stories, shopping, and all the things that women across generations do.

²³² Fox-Genovese, *Within Plantation Household*, 33-34.

Normally, we do these things with women of similar backgrounds, which may lead us to forget that women of different backgrounds frequently do the same things with their mothers, sisters, and friends.²³³

Moreover, though she was never able to have children herself, she used her experience with her mother to gain some understanding of how mothering can affect children.²³⁴

Together, she uses these sources to evaluate modern “radical” feminism and the ways in which it has alienated many women who agree with many of the ideas it has created, but do not agree with many of its more recent tenets including a woman’s right to choose and the prioritization of women’s rights at the expense of families. Overall, it is clear that Fox-Genovese has researched her fields extensively and is adept at evaluating her sources and using them to create and support solid, coherent arguments.

In like manner, Fox-Genovese tends to be very honest in her reading of historical sources and seeks to understand what they are saying rather than what she would have them say. Though she acquired a great amount of respect and admiration for the slaveholding women she became acquainted with during her research for *Within the Plantation Household*, she never lost sight of their less admirable qualities:

With some pain I am compelled to express my considered opinion that, in some essential respects, they were more crudely racist than their men. Yet they could deeply mourn the death of a favorite slave, who might have nursed them or their children, or whose children they (less frequently) might have nursed. Life would be easier if we could dismiss them as oppressive tyrants or exonerate them as themselves victims of an oppressive system. We cannot. ... Slaveholding women, like all groups of women, ranged from

²³³ Ibid., 7-8.

²³⁴ Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Is Not Story*, 6.

loving to vicious, from charming to unlovable, with all the ordinary human in-between.²³⁵

Though difficult, her candor reflects her commitment to academic honesty and search for truth above all else.

As is the case for most historians, Fox-Genovese's personal experiences influenced her scholarly interests and writings in several ways. While attending graduate school at Harvard University, she was the victim of sexual discrimination on multiple occasions.²³⁶ This created an interest in women's studies and led her to identify with and support the feminist movement which challenged the discriminatory practices she had experienced first-hand. Her childhood also instilled in her a belief in family values and she witnessed the value of a mother to a child from an early age.²³⁷ Upon his proposal of marriage, Betsey informed Gene that she wanted a lot of children as well as the respective roles she expected them to perform in child-rearing. With this in mind, she was fully prepared to even sacrifice her career in the event that she could not manage it and properly rear her children.²³⁸ It is this view that she defends in "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*" against what she perceives to be a feminist attack on women who want to have careers, but who also want families and are willing to put their families ahead of their careers when need be. Finally, Fox-Genovese was heavily influenced by her conversion to Christianity in the 1990s. This led her to oppose the practice of abortion altogether and speak out against it on a number of occasions and in many articles.

²³⁵ Fox-Genovese, *Within Plantation Household*, 35.

²³⁶ Eugene D. Genovese, *Miss Betsey: A Memoir of Marriage* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), 91.

²³⁷ Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Is Not Story*, 6.

²³⁸ Genovese, *Miss Betsey*, 23.

With some exceptions, opinions of Fox-Genovese's works are positive. For example, her first book, *Origins of Physiocracy*, was warmly received. In her review for *The American Historical Review*, Nelly Hoyt credits Fox-Genovese for providing "a major contribution" to the study of Physiocracy. Moreover, she praises Fox-Genovese's "closely reasoned and clear explanations" of Quesnay's confusing articles published in the *Encyclopédie*.²³⁹ Lenard Berlanstein of The University of Virginia agrees. In particular, he believes her discussion of the *Tableau économique* (economic model which served as the foundation for the Physiocrats' economic theories) to be provocative and applauds her efforts to understand Physiocracy within the context of the Enlightenment.²⁴⁰ Jean Perkins, on the other hand, praises her detailed description of the collaboration of Quesnay and Mirabeau and the development of economic doctrines which eventually became Physiocratic doctrine.²⁴¹ Finally, in his review for *The Journal of Economic History*, Ronald Meek calls it "original and stimulating."²⁴² An "original, penetrating, and well-documented contribution" to the often overlooked study of Physiocracy, her book constitutes "a very substantial achievement."²⁴³ By and large, Fox-Genovese's book addressed an underdeveloped area of historical study and offered some valuable insights while also encouraging further inquiry.

²³⁹ Nelly S. Hoyt, "The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *The American Historical Review* 82 (1977): 367.

²⁴⁰ Lenard R. Berlanstein, "The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (1977): 505-506.

²⁴¹ Jean A. Perkins, "The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10 (1977): 533.

²⁴² Ronald L. Meek, "The Origins of Physiocracy by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *The Journal of Economic History* 37 (1977): 795.

²⁴³ Meek, 796.

Her signature historical work, *Within the Plantation Household*, was widely acclaimed and received a number of awards including the C. Hugh Holman Prize of the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, the Julia Cherry Spruill Prize of the Southern Association of Women Historians, and the Outstanding Book of the Year Award from the Augustus Meyer Foundation for the Study of Human Rights. Reviews for *Within the Plantation Household* were generally positive as well. In *Reviews in American History*, Bertram Wyatt-Brown refers to the book as “the most impressive study of southern plantation womanhood so far to appear.” Most notable is Fox-Genovese’s discussion of slave women, a group often forgotten in previous studies. Likewise, he admires her sensitive portrayal of the southern slaveholding women. Together, they combine to provide readers with a vivid description of life inside the plantation home in the antebellum South.²⁴⁴ Wilson Moses is equally complimentary. He appreciates Fox-Genovese’s observation that house slaves did not always blindly obey their masters; instead, they often resisted and were capable of being very unruly. Further, according to Moses, Fox-Genovese points out the “complexities, contradictions, and uncertainties of human behavior in authoritarian social structures” thereby “forc[ing] a departure from the set of clichés that seem to have developed among Marxists, feminists, [and] Afrocentrists.”²⁴⁵ Lastly, she “reveals the irritatingly unpredictable interplay of race, class and gender relations among masters, mistresses, and the various types of slave communities and subcultures.”²⁴⁶ Additionally, Paul Gilje highlights her

²⁴⁴ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “Matrons and Mammies,” *Reviews in American History* 17 (1989): 219-221.

²⁴⁵ Wilson J. Moses, “*Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10 (1991): 123.

²⁴⁶ Moses, 124.

successful challenge of the prevailing theory which posits a similarity between the ideological views of northern and southern women. In her book, Fox-Genovese argues that southern women did not feel trapped by slavery and identified more with their husbands, families, and other members of their slaveholding class than their bourgeois counterparts in the North.²⁴⁷ In her review for *The Journal of Southern History*, Dorothy Sterling finds the book to be “skillfully written, profusely illustrated, and copiously annotated.”²⁴⁸ Nonetheless, she laments that Fox-Genovese gives unequal treatment between white and black women with whites receiving the lion’s share. Similarly, she regrets the absence of the admittedly few abolitionist women such as the Grimke sisters of Charleston.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, in *The Journal of American History*, Catherine Clinton and Ronald Walters appreciate her endeavor to explore both race and gender in a single book.²⁵⁰ Moreover, they are complimentary of Fox-Genovese’s narratives of the southern women, especially the white mistresses. Nevertheless, they criticize her failure to address sexual matters and suggest that it puts her entire interpretation into the language of the master class. Additionally, they question her analysis of Harriett Jacobs’ writings in the book’s epilogue and the doubt that she casts on Jacobs’ claim that she had resisted her master’s sexual advances.²⁵¹ Of course, notwithstanding the few complaints, the book was considered to be important to the study of southern history and especially that relating to women.

²⁴⁷ Gilje, 107.

²⁴⁸ Dorothy Sterling, “*Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *The Journal of Southern History* 56 (1990): 528.

²⁴⁹ Sterling, 528.

²⁵⁰ Catherine Clinton and Ronald G. Waters, “*Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *The Journal of American History* 76 (1989): 895.

²⁵¹ Clinton and Waters, 896.

Somewhat controversial in nature, *Feminism Without Illusions* met with seemingly hesitant reviews. Written in an effort to acknowledge and address some of the divisions and confictions within the feminist movement, it was naturally critical to a certain extent although all observations were intended to be constructive criticisms from a fellow feminist within the movement. Nonetheless, criticism of any sort can sting. In her review for *The Journal of American History*, Sara Evans describes the book as “illuminating, provocative, and frustrating.” She then goes on to warn that any effort to strike moderate ground as opposed to an extreme position in an academic debate is “admirable,” but will inevitably incite criticism. Even so, she believes Fox-Genovese’s observations to be astute and deserving of serious consideration.²⁵² Linda Colley agrees. Fox-Genovese explores the reasons why most women no longer identify with the feminist movement and her book is valuable in that it “suggests a more realistic program for achieving equality between the sexes.”²⁵³ Thus, she describes the work as “provocative and thoughtful” and believes it “should stimulate and enrage both opponents and supporters of feminism.”²⁵⁴ In *American Studies International*, Dorothy Brown notes that, “writing from the inside at a time when feminism is on the defensive, Fox-Genovese has raised major challenges to some of the most hallowed conventional wisdom and newest theory.” In doing so, Brown believes that “she has posited a feminist argument that cannot be ignored.”²⁵⁵ However, Louise Tilly is a bit more skeptical. She notes a

²⁵² Sara Evans, “*Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *The Journal of American History* 78 (1992): 1532.

²⁵³ Linda Colley and Lewis Namier, “Where Feminism Went Wrong,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 15 (1991): 92.

²⁵⁴ Colley and Namier, 93.

²⁵⁵ Dorothy M. Brown, “*Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *American Studies International* 30 (1992): 139.

couple of the issues on which Fox-Genovese claims the feminist movement has fallen short on delivering, but questions whether it is fair to blame the movement that proposes social improvements for failing to accomplish the said improvements when it cannot independently effect such changes. She also rejects Fox-Genovese's proposal of a community-based politics, arguing that communities are as susceptible to establishing oppressive measures as states.²⁵⁶

Reactions to "*Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*," published five years later, were significantly, and perhaps not surprisingly, more condemnatory. In her article, "Feminist Attacks on Feminisms: Patriarchy's Prodigal Daughters," a joint review of Fox-Genovese's book and three others which are similar in content and nature, Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich criticizes Fox-Genovese and the other authors for their presumption in attacking feminism while claiming to represent the majority of women in their attacks. Specifically, she denounces Fox-Genovese's values and suggestions as too conservative and accuses her of surreptitiously seeking to uphold the patriarchal status quo.²⁵⁷ Further, she argues that Fox-Genovese unfairly characterizes feminist leaders and the movement as a whole as elitist and unconcerned with the real issues facing their poorer sisters. Finally, she determines that Fox-Genovese and the other authors are not really feminists at all. "The authors could have joined in discussions with other feminists instead of trying to discredit, purge, and replace them. They could have done legitimate scholarly research that precluded falsifying the complex history of feminisms." However, "the

²⁵⁶ Louise A. Tilly, "*Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," *The American Historical Review* 97 (1992): 1175-1176.

²⁵⁷ Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, "Feminist Attacks on Feminisms: Patriarchy's Prodigal Daughters," *Feminist Studies* 24 (1998): 163, 166-167.

authors chose to do otherwise.” Thus, “[they] fail to convince that they are friends of feminism; or liberalism; or fair-minded, inclusive, and accurate education and scholarship.”²⁵⁸ In her article for *The Women’s Review of Books* which reviewed Fox-Genovese’s book as well as Wendy Kaminer’s *True Love Waits*, Tricia Rose is equally critical. Overall, she believes Fox-Genovese’s book to be extreme and lacking detail and critical analysis. Moreover, she accuses Fox-Genovese of failing to distinguish between the many strands of feminism and instead portraying it and its leaders as an intimidating monolith which is deaf to the needs of the average woman and instead concerned with its own selfish concerns.²⁵⁹ Joan Mandle, on the other hand, is more judicious in her response. In her article, *Sisterly Critics*, Mandle warns that the summary dismissal of criticisms such as Fox-Genovese’s from women claiming to be fellow members of the feminist movement is ill-advised. Moreover, “because some of their arguments...are sufficiently strong to warrant serious consideration,” she undertakes to examine the merit of some of their criticisms.²⁶⁰ In summary, she concludes that, while she does not necessarily agree with the entirety of many of the critics’ (including Fox-Genovese) claims, some of them are, at least to some extent, accurate. Thus, she encourages feminists to examine themselves and their academic programs critically and address the areas which need improvement.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Minnich, 174-175. Strangely, Minnich fails to mention and account for Fox-Genovese’s earlier work, *Feminism Without Illusions*, which did provide a “legitimate” and “scholarly” analysis of feminism, its history, its theories, and the issues it faced.

²⁵⁹ Tricia Rose, “Feminism and Its Discontents,” *The Women’s Review of Books* 13 (1996): 18.

²⁶⁰ Joan D. Mandle, “Sisterly Critics,” *NWSA Journal* 11 (1999): 98.

²⁶¹ Mandle, 106-107.

Overall, Fox-Genovese was an accomplished and prolific scholar. Possessing a daunting intellect and a diverse range of interests, she made a number of contributions to the studies of history and women's studies. She also worked to advance the use of a Marxist approach in examining historical civilizations and events. For these reasons, she exercised scholarly influence in a number of disciplines including history, women's studies, English, and comparative literature. Similarly, she was a notable figure in the public arena. As the author of a number of books and articles which addressed the American cultural climate, she was frequently called upon to weigh in on current cultural issues being debated on the national stage. Through it all, she was consistent in her criticism of unrestrained individualism. Regardless of whether she was analyzing eighteenth-century France or the antebellum South, modern-day feminism or capitalism, she did not hesitate to identify the excesses and negative consequences of unfettered individualism. Thus, although these criticisms resulted in heavy penalties and a diminished influence in the academic and feminist spheres, she remained true to her commitment to intellectual honesty and integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR

A BRILLIANT PARTNERSHIP: THE JOINT HISTORIOGRAPHY OF EUGENE GENOVESE AND ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE

Together, Genovese and Fox-Genovese wrote about the American South and its slave system. However, they slightly altered their focus and turned their attention entirely to the slaveholders and their ideologies. Their major joint works include *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (1983), *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (2005), *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order* (2008), and *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South* (2011). Their first joint work, *Fruits of Merchant Capital* is comprised of thirteen essays which combine theoretical discussions with narrative history. Overall, they deal primarily with the themes of commerce, capitalism, and slavery and, while the authors examine these themes in a variety of regions and contexts, they relate them especially to the regions in which they specialize – eighteenth-century France and the antebellum South. Throughout, the Genoveses analyze the role of merchant capitalists in the development of modern, bourgeois society and deny that merchant capitalists were the primary catalyst in this transformation. In support of their claim, they remind their readers that merchant capitalists pre-existed the modern capitalist society by centuries without effecting such a change and were very successful. Instead, they argue that the transition from feudal society to a capitalist society resulted from the removal of labor from the land and the consequent formation of a labor market.

Though an important contribution in its own right, this assertion serves an additional purpose as well; it supports Genovese's long-held argument that the antebellum South was a non-capitalist society. Equally important, it answers his critics who claimed that the South was a capitalist, bourgeois society because of the presence of some elements of capitalism including cash crop agriculture and the planters' participation in the global market.

Meanwhile, the authors also include a seemingly unrelated essay consisting of an extended attack on the new social history. In their view, the new social historians practically follow "their favorite victims" around their houses and document their day-to-day lives without any efforts to place them in historical context. Consequently, the Genoveses' believe their historical work to be too narrow in scope, too disconnected from the larger political influences which shape it, and irrelevant.

The Mind of the Master Class was the first volume of a trilogy devoted to understanding the southern master class and its worldview. In this voluminous work of intellectual history, the Genoveses argue that the slaveholders were more educated and had a much more sophisticated worldview than previous historians had credited them with. In particular, they describe the slaveholders' awareness of and responses to revolutions in Europe ranging from the French Revolution to the revolutions of 1848. While slave owners initially supported the revolutionaries in their efforts to do away with the old monarchies, they later became wary of the rebels' increasingly egalitarian rhetoric and began to fear a total destruction of the social hierarchy and order. In like manner, the authors examine southern education, especially political and moral instruction. In

evaluating southern educational curriculums and what slaveholders were reading, the authors determine that southerners used history and the Christian religion for natural and moral truths, general cycles, and examples of human nature and behavior. Likewise, they were heavily influenced by classical works and moral philosophy and sought to incorporate the lessons of each into southern society. Finally, when selecting and evaluating literary works, southerners considered a book's moral content as well as its usefulness to the slaveholders' constantly evolving defense of slavery. Hence, works by authors like Charles Dickens that criticized social injustice and the exploitation of workers were utilized as vindications of the southern society.²⁶² Of course, Dickens, an active opponent of slavery, would likely have been displeased to see his work put to such uses. Regardless, southern ministers also used historical examples such as the Roman Empire to warn their flocks of the dangers of excess and immoral behavior.²⁶³ With this information, the Genoveses go on to demonstrate the ways in which southern slaveholders used history, religion, and elements gleaned from other sources to create a proslavery ideology to defend their slave society in an increasingly modern world that was turning against slavery. They also show how, in forming this ideology, southerners were careful to strike a balance between their enthusiasm for personal freedom (limited to free, white males) and their desire for social order. In like manner, the Genoveses challenge the notion that southerners wanted to, or believed they had, created another medieval society. Southerners defended the medieval era with its serfdom because it

²⁶² Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholder's Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 137-139.

²⁶³ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, 159-161.

seemed to suggest that slavery was a just labor system. Thus, they believed it vindicated their own social system and they saw a kind of continuity between the Middle Ages and their contemporary era. They also incorporated some medieval ideals, such as those of the lady and chivalric knight, into southern culture. Nonetheless, they were under no illusion that they had established a nineteenth-century feudal society.

The second edition of the trilogy, *Slavery in White and Black*, came three years later. It examines the concept of “Slavery in the Abstract,” the idea that “slavery or a kindred system of personal servitude [is] the best possible condition for all labor regardless of race.”²⁶⁴ Based on their familiarity with historic societies and social systems, many southern slaveholders genuinely questioned whether a society could exist long-term without a bonded, laboring class. Consequently, they feared that, in the absence of black slaves, whites would eventually be enslaved. With this in mind, the authors discuss the dissemination of Slavery in the Abstract and seek to discover the extent to which the concept took hold among white southerners prior to the Civil War. In doing so, they suggest that theologians were instrumental in promulgating the idea. Southern theologians largely influenced local ministers who, in turn, comprised a substantial number of the South’s educators whether in colleges, academies, field schools, or Sabbath schools. Thus, they contributed, though indirectly, to increasing awareness of the concept.²⁶⁵ Equally important were politicians. Speaking of their role in diffusing Slavery in the Abstract, the Genoveses note:

²⁶⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

²⁶⁵ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 34.

Common sense suggests that no southern politician in his right mind dared to preach Slavery in the Abstract to enfranchised, notoriously touchy, and well-armed nonslaveholders. So much for common sense. The South's foremost politicians freely expounded it to nonslaveholders and 'middling folks.' Increased interest in Slavery in the Abstract owed much to the influence of local leaders, whom a politically well-informed and engaged citizenry trusted and followed, especially during crises.²⁶⁶

All in all, southerners accepted it for a number of reasons. First, they believed that slaves enjoyed better living and working conditions than the poor, wage laborers in the North and Europe and the agrarian peasants in Europe. Second, it would resolve the seemingly inevitable tensions between capital and labor inherent in capitalist society by uniting them in common interest. Third, they believed that, for as long as black slavery continued in the South, the requirement of a slave population was satisfied and whites were in no danger of being enslaved. Of course, the authors point out that most southerners, including those who supported Slavery in the Abstract, harbored serious reservations about the idea that whites could possibly be enslaved.

Fatal Self-Deception, the final installment of the trilogy and the conclusion of Genovese and Fox-Genovese's professional partnership which lasted more than three decades, was published four years after Fox-Genovese's death. Fittingly, it returns to the theme of paternalism and the master-slave relationship. According to the authors, the concept of paternalism necessarily implies kindness and benevolence, but also duty, responsibility, and the threat of violence if the master's demands are not met. For a master to maintain control of his slaves, his slaves must never doubt his willingness to employ violent measures to enforce his will. However, slaveholders came to refer to

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 58.

their form of slavery as “Christian slavery,” the “most humane, compassionate, and generous of social systems.”²⁶⁷ Recognizing the disparity between the two ideas, the Genoveses seek to examine the statement “our family, white and black” believing that it “bare[s] essential characteristics of a worldview. Although it contain[s] ideological posturing, gaping contradictions, and a dose of hypocrisy, it contain[s] as well a wider vision that [lies] at the core of the slaveholders’ sense of themselves as men and women.”²⁶⁸ With this in mind, they review the slaveholders’ various defenses of slavery and examine each in light of the relevant facts and the masters’ specific writings on the matter. Overall, the authors discover that slaveholders deluded themselves almost entirely with the idea that they and their slaves shared strong, healthy, positive relationships. Moreover, they believed their slaves were appreciative and content with all that their masters did for them, considered their masters their best friends, and were consequently very loyal to their masters. One southern doctor even devised a mental illness called “Drapetomania” to explain why some slaves ran away, never believing that it was due to the oppression they endured from their masters. Equally important, slaveholders also deceived themselves regarding their own behavior. They were convinced that, as masters, they were forbearing, kind, benevolent, always exercising self-discipline and Christian charity, and treated their slaves as their own white children. Likewise, they managed to ignore or forget all instances of abuse, anger, impatience, and striking out at their slaves. Consequently, they were horrified and confused when, during

²⁶⁷ Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

²⁶⁸ Genovese and Fox-Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, 2.

the Civil War, their slaves ran away in droves. Nevertheless, the Genoveses maintain that paternalism did not end with the Civil War, but continued to influence slaveholders' memories of their slaves for generations.

When writing *The Mind of the Master Class*, it is clear that the Genoveses made an effort to step outside of their present frame of moral judgment to see the historical situation from the perspective of the southern slaveholders. Moreover, they encouraged their readers to do the same, explaining that, "In our own time it seems perverse, not to say impossible, to try to separate the horror of slavery from the positive features of an ordered and interdependent social system. To Southerners and not just slaveholders, slavery was a bulwark against the corrosive effects of free labor and the loosening of the social bonds that nurtured humane social relations. A consequence was the formation of a distinct southern people."²⁶⁹

The authors also critically evaluate and make judgments on the validity of the southerners' claims and arguments, as well as those of their opponents, throughout the book. Discussing the Biblical sanction of slavery, they write that, "given the prestige of the proslavery divines and the strength of their interpretation of Scripture, and given the less effective abolitionist replies, it seems unlikely that the antislavery cause could have prevailed in the South even with the full freedom of speech and assembly."²⁷⁰ Similarly, they highlight the disparity between southern slaveholders' perceptions and southern realities. In *The Mind of the Master Class*, they note slaveholders' assertions that their Christian values led them to treat their slaves with kindness and patience. They also

²⁶⁹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, 109.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

chronicle southern claims that a man's treatment of his slaves was monitored by his fellow slaveholders. Thus, any failure to adhere to social standards of conduct could result in social penalties such as a diminished reputation of honor or even social ostracism. Nonetheless, the Genoveses are not convinced and point out the obvious problems with these claims:

What to do about bad masters who doubled as good chaps in the white community – who did not blaspheme, drink heavily, indulge in miscreant sexual behavior, or behave uncivilly toward neighbors? What to do when those acknowledged by peers as ladies and gentlemen committed atrocities and even murdered slaves in moment of high dudgeon? After all, gentlemen who murdered gentlemen usually got off on grounds of self-defense and were forgiven. And what to do about rich and powerful men who, utterly indifferent to the opinion of others, defied the community with impunity? Need anyone be surprised to encounter some masters without conscience?²⁷¹

Accordingly, they acknowledge that “from the perspective of the slaves and to our own cold eye, the protection offered by the slaveholders’ internalization of Christian and chivalric values did not add up to much.”²⁷²

Again, in *Slavery in White and Black*, the authors respond to southern slave owners’ assertions:

Like slaveholders everywhere, southerners claimed that they ranked as the most benevolent and responsible of all slaveholding classes, past and present. The Protestant and Jewish slaveholders of Surinam outdid most others in callousness and brutality, yet they considered themselves the best of masters. Southerners, too, assured themselves that they set the highest possible standards of Christian benevolence and deserved the world’s admiration. They pointed to the reports of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travelers, who found much brutality and deprivation on

²⁷¹ Ibid., 381.

²⁷² Ibid., 382.

southern slave plantations but agreed that the condition of West Indian slaves was worse.²⁷³

Finally, when describing the slaveholders' descriptions of the ideal master, and acknowledging that many slaves would not have seen their masters as ideal, the authors address the reader and his obvious thoughts: "There is no point in laughing. A curious web of notions and emotions remains to be untangled."²⁷⁴ By doing so, they acknowledge that the slaveholders' assertions are ludicrous and they, as the authors, are not persuaded by them either, but urge the reader to be patient because there is more yet to come.

In the prologue of *The Mind of the Master Class*, the Genoveses detail the perspective from which they write the book:

Throughout this book, we do our best to distinguish our attitudes from those of the people we are writing about. We never argue that capitalist societies are inferior to traditional societies, much less to southern slaveholding society. We have scant patience with the romanticization of what Karl Marx derisively called 'rural idiocy.' We have tried to understand the mind-set of people who feared that the advantages of capitalism and individualism were threatening to extract too high a price. Unlike many of the Southerners we write about, we do not believe that capitalism and individualism have been worse than other systems and ideologies; but, like those Southerners, we do believe that they leave much more to be desired than generally admitted.²⁷⁵

Further,

We do not disguise – and never have disguised – our respect for the slaveholders who constituted the hegemonic master class of the Old South. Nor do we disguise our admiration for much in their characters and achievements. We see no point in arguing with those who maintain that any expression of respect and admiration for slaveholders prettifies

²⁷³ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 140-141.

²⁷⁴ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, 366, 373.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

slavery, slighting its cruelties and abominations, and absolves white slaveholders from collective and personal responsibility for their crimes against black people.²⁷⁶

Although they are referring to *The Mind of the Master Class*, the same can fairly be applied to the books that followed it as well. In particular, one notes a considerable shift in the Genoveses' ideology. Avowed Marxists from early ages, they are now suggesting that capitalism is no worse than any other society. One also wonders whether their shift to an interest in the master class reflects in any way their ideological shift to the Right, their more conservative outlook, the influence of their years spent in the South, or simply their close, exhaustive study of the slaveholding class.

At the same time, one can see in the master class trilogy the full effect and benefit of the Genoveses' respect for religion. Starting his career with a contempt for Christianity, Genovese began to respect and appreciate it during his research for *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. Further, he came to see its importance both in the lives of the slaves and slaveholders. However, in *The Mind of the Master Class*, he came to fully appreciate the role of religion in southern culture and politics overall.

I shall say confidently that historians who read the theology of Thornwell, Dabney, Girardeau, and the other luminaries of the southern churches are in for a pleasant surprise. They were learned men with first-rate brains, and what they had to say deeply influenced southern political and social life. After all, they and their fellow divines controlled the educational system and trained the leaders of society. But more than that, any good theologian must face all the great questions of politics, political economy, social relations, and much more, and those men met their responsibilities.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷⁷ Robert Louis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger, *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 208.

Although his new appreciation of religion began to develop as early as 1974, one still wonders whether it was also due in part to his religious conversion and the increasing role of faith in his own life.

Overall, the Genoveses use an incredible number and variety of sources in their books. A number of secondary sources appear regarding the antebellum South, but the most notable feature is the sheer volume of primary sources. Included are contemporary newspaper articles, personal and political correspondence, lectures, antebellum biographies of revolutionary figures, diaries, journals, sermons, addresses to intellectual societies, the writings of southern intellectuals and theologians, and much more. In *Slavery in White and Black*, they even utilize econometric evidence which suggests that northern farmers worked ten percent more hours than southern slaves in the course of one year.²⁷⁸ The authors also use some postbellum sources as long as they are proven to be consistent with their authors' thoughts and views prior to the Civil War.²⁷⁹ Finally, the Genoveses critically test their sources against each other for veracity rather than accepting all of the authors' claims as fact. In response to a number of the slaveholders' assertions that the behavior of would-be cruel slaveholders was kept in check by the fear of certain condemnation and social ostracism by their peers, the authors point to the example of John Magill, a wealthy slaveholder in South Carolina. Known to be a brutal master who half-starved his slaves, he was otherwise a good fellow – vestryman in the Episcopal Church, instrumental in building the Methodist Church, and a member of the

²⁷⁸ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 236.

²⁷⁹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, ix-x.

highest social circles. Was he condemned and ostracized by his neighbors for his terrible treatment of his slaves? The record indicates no.²⁸⁰ Such an example aptly negates the veracity of the earlier assertions while still providing the reader with insight into how the slaveholders attempted to justify their social system to themselves and others. Overall, their books are expert syntheses of an enormous wealth of sources into comprehensive studies of the intellectual quality of antebellum southerners and are testaments to their authors' years of research and skillful writing.

Tremendously successful in each of their independent writing careers, the Genoveses' collaborative work also commanded a large amount of respect. It even garnered considerable approbation from its critics, notwithstanding a few detractors. In reviewing *Fruits of Merchant Capital* for *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Edward Ayers praises the authors for their demonstration of "imagination, erudition, and passion."²⁸¹ Pointing out that the book is based almost entirely on Marxist theory, he suggests that it will inspire much debate. Hence, "as historians wrestle with its arguments and implications, this book will advance our understanding of some of the largest and most important problems of world history."²⁸² Lawrence McDonnell is equally impressed and considers it an example of "the first order of scholarship, with a scope and theoretical compass American history has seldom, if ever, seen."²⁸³ Certain that it will inspire controversies, he is confident that it will "doubtless prove as resilient –

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 377-378.

²⁸¹ Edward L. Ayers, "Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (1984): 114.

²⁸² Ayers, 115.

²⁸³ Lawrence T. McDonnell, "The Janus Face of 'Fruits of Merchant Capital'," *Labour / Le Travail* 15 (1985): 185-186.

for the most part – as their earlier work.”²⁸⁴ In particular, he admires their analysis of the psychology of slavery and wonders whether it is the result of Fox-Genovese’s influence. At the same time, he believes the authors should have addressed the emerging threat posed by the neo-revisionist challenge to their interpretation of southern society. He also notes that, at times, the book seems to sacrifice archival evidence in favor of theory.²⁸⁵ Gavin Wright, in his review for *The Journal of Economic History*, appreciates the value of the Genoveses’ contribution and recommends the book to all economic historians. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of the Genoveses’ argument regarding the role of merchant capitalists in the emergence of capitalism not only to economic history, but also to Genovese’s argument regarding the non-capitalist nature of the antebellum South; “all the evidence of commerce, calculation, financial acumen, and even exploitation will not make the master-slave relationship bourgeois.”²⁸⁶ Richard King agrees that the book has merit. Though he is somewhat ambivalent about the authors’ essays which are designed to contribute to Marxist theoretical and historiographical debates, he believes their essays on Physiocracy, domestic economy, and jurisprudence to be “intellectual history at its best.” Likewise, he considers the Epilogue to be required reading for anyone “who rests secure in the historical and moral superiority of bourgeois society.”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ McDonnell, 186.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

²⁸⁶ Gavin Wright, “*Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of Economic History* 44 (1984): 631-632.

²⁸⁷ Richard King, “*Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of Southern History* 50 (1984): 102.

Reviews of *The Mind of the Master Class* are also favorable, almost to the point of glowing. Michal Jan Rozbicki is especially complementary in his review: “It is a measure of the authors’ caliber that they are able to treat their subjects without undue presentism. Their approach is neither prosecutorial nor celebratory; instead, they meticulously reconstruct contemporary meanings of ideas and show how they were used to make sense of the slaveholders’ world.”²⁸⁸ In particular, he praises the authors’ efforts to relate the individual southern intellectuals they discuss to the overall culture of the South so as not to overinflate the representativeness of any particular thinker. Similarly, they recognize and articulate the role of the southern intellectual in producing southern culture which, once absorbed into society, is taken for granted. However, in this way, Genovese and Fox-Genovese elucidate the origin of many southern ideas. In the *American Historical Review*, Mark Smith credits the authors with being “fair” and “astute” in their arguments, adding that the “book has a fidelity to its subject that only an abiding, patient, and careful attention to a massive amount of primary sources can achieve.”²⁸⁹ In like manner, the Genoveses evaluate the merit of the slaveholders’ claims and do not accept them automatically. As an example, he points to a statement in which they judge the quality of one of the slaveholders’ arguments: “slaveholders ‘used their scripturally weakest suit – Noah’s curse on his son Ham – to maximum political effect.

²⁸⁸ Michal Jan Rozbicki, “*The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese; Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 114 (2006): 498.

²⁸⁹ Mark M. Smith, “*The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *The American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 835.

Properly, the abolitionists condemned it as fraud.”²⁹⁰ Carl Richard is equally complimentary. He praises the authors’ “admirable balance and sound judgment” and notes their refutation of the myth that southerners believed themselves to have recreated a feudal society. Overall, notwithstanding some minor inaccuracies, he proclaims it “one of the most exhaustive studies of antebellum southern thought ever published.”²⁹¹ Steven Hahn is slightly more hesitant in his approbation. He concedes that the book is “learned in an almost relentless way, overflowing with footnotes and commentary...and beset with seemingly endless examples on most every point.” As a result, it comprises a “fascinating and painstakingly detailed account of how Southern intellectuals took on the world of political and religious ideas between 1820 and 1860.”²⁹² Even so, he believes the authors become too involved in their discussion of southern religion and theology. “Rather than treating the Bible as a profound cultural text, in which the integrity of the interpretation is, in good measure, socially and politically contingent, in which biblical narratives provoke a variety of readings and engender great disputations, they construct something of a formal debate in which they are both participants and judges, relishing the opportunity to proclaim the winner.” Furthermore, despite Fox-Genovese’s specialties in women’s history and women’s studies, he suggests that the authors largely excluded women, gender, and slaves from their study.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Smith, 835.

²⁹¹ Carl J. Richard, “*The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13 (2007): 647.

²⁹² Steven Hahn, “Divine Rights,” *The New Republic* 234 (2006): 29.

²⁹³ Hahn, 30.

Somewhat bold in its argument, *Slavery in White and Black* was received with general approval. In the *Journal of Social History*, Michael Woods notes that “Fox-Genovese and Genovese have used [Slavery in the Abstract] to sharpen our understanding of a distinctly southern worldview that was, as they have shown, not merely hypocritical reflex.” Even more, it “remains sensitive to the achievement *and* failures of thinkers who grappled with perennially thorny questions.”²⁹⁴ Likewise, Daniel Kilbride credits the Genoveses with positing a “bold argument” supported with “an overwhelming volume of direct quotations with an amazing diversity of sources.” Even though he does not accept the authors’ argument that both slaveholding and non-slaveholding southerners adopted the concept of Slavery in the Abstract, he nonetheless praises their “depiction of southern culture [which] makes the Confederacy’s defeat truly an event of world-historical significance.”²⁹⁵ In *The Journal of American History*, Christopher Phillips notes that the Genoveses “skillfully...document the pervasiveness of [the] ‘social question’ – an acceptance of slavery as a labor system unmoored from racial constructions – among the social elite.” However, he regrets that they fail to describe to what extent the concept of Slavery in the Abstract was imbibed by the middling and lower classes of whites in the South.²⁹⁶ James Oakes, in contrast, is far more critical. In his review for the *London Review of Books*, he condemns a number of aspects of the

²⁹⁴ Michael E. Woods, “*Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *Journal of Social History* 43 (2010): 1107.

²⁹⁵ Daniel Kilbride, “*Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1456.

²⁹⁶ Christopher Phillips, “*Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *The Journal of American History* 96 (2010): 1183.

book. First, he accuses the Genoveses of failing to adequately define slavery and argues that it becomes amorphous to the point of no longer being usable. Additionally, he believes the authors are too kind in their portrayal of slavery. Finally, he claims that, in trying to prove that southerners believed in “Slavery in the Abstract,” a form of slavery which transcended race, the Genoveses deny the obvious evidence that southerners based their own system of slavery entirely on race.²⁹⁷ However, in this criticism, it appears that Oakes has missed an important element of the Genoveses’ argument which stated that southerners had become convinced of the justifiability of slavery and the necessary element of personal servitude in stable societies. Therefore, they pointed to black slavery as fulfilling the required element of slavery thereby freeing all whites, rich and poor, from the possible threat of enslavement. Of course, they were not so confident about the futures of poor whites in the North and Europe and believed them to be especially susceptible to future enslavement. Nonetheless, Oakes was able to find one advantage of the Genoveses’ focus: by pointing out the historically commonplace nature of slavery and the relative youth of wage labor, the authors highlight the capitalist / slave element of the Civil War.²⁹⁸

Though *Fatal Self-Deception* was slender in comparison to some of the Genoveses’ earlier works, it contributed to an increased understanding of antebellum slavery and was greeted warmly by its critics. According to Drew Swanson, an “immediate strength of *Fatal Self-Deception* is the authors’ obvious mastery of the

²⁹⁷ James Oakes, “Best of All Worlds: *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese,” *London Review of Books* 32 (2010): <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n05/james-oakes/best-of-all-worlds>.

²⁹⁸ Oakes.

available plantation records across the South.”²⁹⁹ In this way, it “offers a view inside the planters’ heads.”³⁰⁰ In the same way, the abundant quotes from various slaveholders give depth to the slaveholders’ well-known defenses of slavery. Further, the authors provide quotes from masters in various regions in order to give multiple perspectives to each defense. Finally, the Genoveses supplement these illustrations with a few exceptions which reflect dissenting opinions. At the same time, he notes that the book lacks the narrative passages that ordinarily contextualize a plethora of quotes. Even so, he believes their argument to be solid and convincing.³⁰¹ In a review for *The Wall Street Journal*, Fergus Bordewich observes that the Genoveses “portray slave owners as honorable, pious and emotionally entangled with their human property to the point of self-delusion.” In so doing, he believes that they are “successful” in explaining how slaveholders were able to own their fellow human beings and thus makes a significant contribution to the understanding of slavery. However, he laments the relative silence of the slaves throughout the book.³⁰² Finally, in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, Staughton Lynd also regrets the absence of slaves and wishes in particular to hear more about runaway slaves. Additionally, he suggests that the authors tend to stray from describing the slaveholders’ ideology to making statements purported to be fact which support the ideology.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Drew A. Swanson, “Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South by Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *The Journal of American Culture* 35 (2012): 277.

³⁰⁰ Swanson, 278.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 277-278.

³⁰² Fergus M. Bordewich, “Delusions of the Master Class,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 17, 2012, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/928470313?accountid=6167>.

³⁰³ Staughton Lynd, “Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South by Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 32 (2012): 733-735.

During the course of their professional partnership, Genovese and Fox-Genovese produced an overwhelming number of books and articles which addressed a variety of aspects of antebellum southern society. Additionally, they made a number of contributions to the study of the American South, presented questions for further examination, and sparked lively and heated debates along the way. For these reasons, they made many friends and enemies throughout the academy. However, one fact remains beyond debate: whether he agrees or disagrees with their sometimes controversial interpretations, any serious historian of the antebellum South will be forced to contend with their bold arguments in order to make his own.

CONCLUSION

On January 2, 2007, Elizabeth Ann Teresa Fox-Genovese succumbed to complications from Multiple Sclerosis. Her funeral mass followed three days later on January 5 at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Atlanta, Georgia and her friend, Father Richard Lopez, delivered the funeral sermon. In the obituaries and memorials that followed, she was remembered in a variety of ways. Major newspapers such as *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* tended to focus on a few common themes. First was her marriage to Genovese. Recognizing him as another prominent figure in the historical academy and a fellow Marxist, the writers emphasized their reputation as “radicalism’s royal couple.”³⁰⁴ Second was her controversial political shift and religious conversion. In *The New York Times*, Margalit Fox described Fox-Genovese as a “noted historian and women’s studies scholar who roiled both disciplines with her transition from Marxist-inclined feminism to conservative public intellectual.”³⁰⁵ Likewise, her involvement as a defendant in Virginia Gould’s sexual harassment lawsuit against Emory University and her reception of the National Humanities Medal were major features as well. At the same time, a number of inaccuracies appeared. In her obituary for the *Los Angeles Times*, Elaine Woo writes that “[Fox-Genovese’s] evolution from Left-leaning feminist to a conservative public intellectual became evident in the 1990s, when she began to voice reservations about such issues as abortion and women in

³⁰⁴ Elaine Woo, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 65; Feminist Turned Conservative,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 2007, <http://articles.latimes.com/print/2007/jan/24/local/me-genovese24>.

³⁰⁵ Margalit Fox, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Historian, Is Dead at 65,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 2007, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9904E3DF1530F934A35752C0A9619C8B63>.

the workplace.”³⁰⁶ While it is true that she became opposed to abortion, she did not suggest that women should not work. Instead, she called on political leaders and society as a whole to address the needs of working mothers, especially in terms of quality, affordable child care. Additionally, she supported and promoted the issue of pay equality for men and women. Of course, Woo also writes that Fox-Genovese was “afraid” to tell Genovese of her decision to convert to Catholicism.³⁰⁷ In Fox-Genovese’s writings, Genovese’s memoir, and the memories of friends and associates close to them, there has been no suggestion that Genovese disapproved of her decision. Indeed, he supported her choice entirely even before he made a decision to return to the Church himself.³⁰⁸

Memorials written for Fox-Genovese by friends and colleagues following her death tended to be more personal and focused on her qualities as a wife, friend, teacher, and colleague.

Sheila O’Connor-Ambrose, a friend and former graduate student, noted that Fox-Genovese was a devoted wife. Although she had many professional responsibilities and obligations, her marriage to Genovese was her most important concern and she prioritized it above all else.³⁰⁹ Father Lopez agreed, and in her funeral sermon, he described a conversation with her in which she informed him that her husband was “the

³⁰⁶ Woo.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Eugene D. Genovese, *Miss Betsey: A Memoir of Marriage* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), 67-68, 74; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “A Conversion Story,” *First Things* 102 (2000): <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/a-conversion-story-4>.

³⁰⁹ Sheila O’Connor-Ambrose, “‘The Promise of an Enduring and Engulfing Bond’: Personal Reflections on Elizabeth Fox-Genovese’s Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die,” *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/sheila_01.html.

most important thing in [her] life.”³¹⁰ Likewise, she was remembered as a wonderful friend who listened patiently, gave good advice, and always had an interesting fact to add. In her memorial “Hugh Blair, Betsey Fox-Genovese, and the Death of the Liberal Arts,” friend Deborah Symonds recalls her many conversations with Fox-Genovese and regrets that there will be no more. Looking at her copy of Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* in which former owner Clara I. Kelsey wrote her name and the date of 1878, Symonds muses: “If Betsey were here, she would tell me something I don’t know about Blair, who was a friend to Adam Smith, and who probably knew something about physiocracy; she might even know who Kelsey was, and whether the women’s colleges offered rhetoric in the 1870s.”³¹¹ As a teacher, former students noted that Fox-Genovese was tough and demanded the best from them. Nevertheless, they never doubted that she cared for them, wanted them to succeed, and would help them in any way possible.³¹² Of course, she challenged herself at the same time. Mark Bauerlein, her colleague at Emory University, observed in his memorial that “she was honest and courageous enough to test her own certainties and to let some of them go. She was her own toughest critic, and her example is one every intellectual should follow.”³¹³

³¹⁰ Father Richard Lopez, “Funeral Sermon for My Dear Friend, Dr. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,” *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): <http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/msgrichardlopez01.html>.

³¹¹ Deborah A. Symonds, “Hugh Blair, Betsey Fox-Genovese, and the Death of the Liberal Arts,” *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): <http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/deborahsymonds01.html>.

³¹² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese: First and Lasting Impressions,” *Common Knowledge* 14 (2008): 5; O’Connor-Ambrose, “The Promise.”; Robert Louis Paquette, “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 1941-2007,” *The New Criterion* 25 (2007): 79.

³¹³ Mark Bauerlein, “The Best Colleague,” *Common Knowledge* 14 (2008): 15.

After thirty-seven years of marriage, Fox-Genovese's death was especially painful for Genovese. Immediately following her passing, he was "devastated and depressed."³¹⁴ However, in due time, he applied himself to the completion of the last two volumes of his and Fox-Genovese's trilogy on the southern slaveholders. Moreover, he assisted with the compilation and publication of five volumes of Fox-Genovese's collected writings covering southern literature and history, European history, women's history, and religion.³¹⁵ Finally, he wrote and published *Miss Betsey: A Memoir of Marriage* in which he reflected on their marriage and professional collaboration. According to his friend Billy Hungeling, these projects were important not only for their scholastic value, but also because they provided Genovese with a reason to rise every morning. Even so, he spoke of Fox-Genovese often and eagerly awaited a later reunion with her.³¹⁶

Eugene Dominic Genovese died on September 26, 2012 following an extended battle with heart disease. According to Mark Bauerlein, he had been "ready [to pass] for months."³¹⁷ Thus, he refused to return to the hospital and chose instead to remain at home.³¹⁸ His funeral mass was held on October 2, 2012 at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Atlanta, Georgia. Following the service, Genovese's ashes were combined with those of Fox-Genovese and they were interred together in New York.³¹⁹ As with Fox-Genovese, Genovese's obituaries in the major newspapers tended to highlight a few well-

³¹⁴ William J. Hungeling, Interview by author, October 26, 2012, conducted at the home of Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese.

³¹⁵ O'Connor-Ambrose, "The Promise."

³¹⁶ Hungeling, Interview.

³¹⁷ Mark Bauerlein, "On Eugene Genovese," *The Conversation Blog*, September 28, 2012, <http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2012/09/28/on-eugene-genovese/>.

³¹⁸ Hungeling, Interview.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

known facts: his marriage to Fox-Genovese, the political controversy he sparked at the Rutgers teach-in, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, his Rightward shift, and his late return to the Catholic Church. Of course, the memorials written by those who knew him tended to be more personal. Many remembered him as a teacher. Former students Robert Paquette and Steven Hahn described Genovese as challenging and demanding, but also intelligent and knowledgeable. Many others discussed his strong personality. While he was tolerant of opposing opinions, he loved to debate and was quick to share his own opinions.³²⁰ In his memorial for *The American Conservative*, long-time friend Paul Gottfried shared his impressions of Genovese:

It would be remiss of me as Gene's friend not to mention what I found to be his most endearing quality, his total openness about those he liked and disliked. Gene never hid behind righteous poses. He had a Latin exuberance, which he probably inherited from his ancestors and which made his letters to me a delight to read. He was always about settling scores and awarding senatorial honors...Never have I known a more animated personality or such a brilliant historian.³²¹

David Gordon also describes his personality, saying: "Genovese's firm and muscular style conveys his enormous intellectual energy and his impatience with nonsense, from whatever source derived. I wish there were more Marxists like him."³²²

Overall, Fox-Genovese and Genovese bore a considerable influence on the academy. As teachers, they trained and mentored numerous graduate students who went

³²⁰ Robert Louis Paquette, "Eugene D. Genovese, 1930-2012," *The New Criterion* 31 (2012): <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Eugene-D--Genovese--1930-2012-7492>; Bauerlein, "On Eugene Genovese."

³²¹ Paul Gottfried, "Eugene D. Genovese, R.I.P.," *The State of the Union Blog*, September 27, 2012, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/eugene-d-genovese-r-i-p/>.

³²² David Gordon, "The Old South Exemplar: *The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War* by Eugene D. Genovese," *The Mises Review* 1 (1995): https://mises.org/misesreview_detail.aspx?control=57.

on to pursue accomplished careers themselves. As scholars, they independently and jointly left enduring marks on the study of history. Together, they introduced a Marxist interpretation of antebellum southern history and shed new light on the intellectual sophistication of southern slaveholders. Independently, Fox-Genovese changed the way people approached women's history by suggesting that antebellum southern women were shaped as much, if not more, by their class and race as by their gender.³²³ In like manner, Genovese emphasized the importance of paternalism and the master-slave relationship in the southern slave society. Moreover, both of them demonstrated a commitment to intellectual honesty. Each remained consistent in his or her scholarship and historical interpretations despite personal political and religious transitions. In a statement intended to describe Genovese, but equally applicable to Fox-Genovese, Robert P. George noted: "One cannot but be impressed by the analytical rigor of his scholarship, his impeccable intellectual honesty, his willingness to assess evidence and draw fair conclusions, however ideologically uncongenial. By example and not merely by precept, Gene taught all of us who read his writings, students or otherwise, to follow the evidence and the arguments wherever they lead, whatever our prior commitments."³²⁴

In conclusion, the Genoveses represent a remarkably rare combination. Coming from completely opposite backgrounds, they defied the odds by not only merging their disparate cultures, but building a marriage that blended both their personal lives as well

³²³ Douglas Ambrose, "Seeking Truth: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's Intellectual Pilgrimage," *The Christendom Review* 1 (2008): http://www.christendomreview.com/volume001issue002/douglas_ambrose_01.html.

³²⁴ Robert P. George, "Eugene Genovese: Truth-Teller," *Public Discourse* (October 2, 2012): <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/10/6481/>.

as their professional lives. Both were distinguished historians and prolific writers who left an indelible mark on the historical profession. However, with their senses of humor, passion for baseball, strong personalities, and wide range of life experiences, they were also two very unique people, and it can be seen in the histories that they wrote.

Reflecting on their marriage, a close friend to both of them observed:

Betsey was her husband's peer in devotion to truth, and no less brave about truth-telling. This shared commitment to truth and truth-telling, and the courage that Gene and Betsey reinforced in each other, help to explain the extraordinary bond between two people who were, in so many other ways, unlike each other. And extraordinary it was. Their marriage was...one of the great love stories of our time. And as in all truly great love stories, their devotion to each other created a kind of force field into which others were drawn. I was blessed to be among them.³²⁵

³²⁵ George, "Truth-Teller."

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