

FOX-GENOVESE, Elizabeth, and Eugene D. GENOVESE — *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 828.

During the winter of 1851–1852, Lajos (Louis) Kossuth, the leader of the Hungarian revolution of 1848, toured the United States seeking American intervention in a renewed attempt to win independence from the Austrian Empire. Kossuth's initial reception was extraordinary. He addressed enormous crowds, spoke before state legislatures, and was feted by both the rich and powerful as well as the oppressed and downtrodden. People from all regions hailed him as a republican revolutionary seeking to free his people from the grip of a cruel imperial tyrant — a quest with which Americans, removed only one generation from their own revolution, could well sympathize. But by the time Kossuth reached Natchez, Mississippi, opinion in the South, at least among the slaveholding elite, had turned ambivalent. The governor's invitation to Kossuth was met by widespread opposition. In Louisiana, Alabama, and South Carolina, although many Southerners continued to support him and his cause, elite support for Kossuth faltered. Essentially, arguments over Kossuth and his cause pitted the slaveholders' venerated revolutionary republicanism, commitment to the ideals of liberty and equality, and hatred for tyrants against a newer conservative ideology that justified the slave society they had constructed for themselves (pp. 57–62).

That tension between the ideas of the past and the present reality of Southern slave society dominate *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese's vast and extraordinary survey of antebellum Southern intellectual opinion. In it, the Genoveses demonstrate the depth, diversity, and rigour of antebellum Southern thought from the end of the Revolutionary War to 1865. They examine each of the major subjects that occupied the minds of all educated Americans in the antebellum era: the revolutionary heritage, historiography, the lessons of ancient and mediaeval history, the meaning of the Enlightenment, and biblical exegesis. The result, documented in voluminous detail by the Genoveses, was an impressive production of books, pamphlets, correspondence, lectures, and scholarly articles that puts to rest any doubts about the rich and sophisticated intellectual life of the antebellum South. They demonstrate that Southern intellectual life was not restricted merely to the coastal cities, to the Upper South, to men, or to Protestants. The existence of slavery provided members of the South's "Master Class" — the educated, slaveholding elite that is the focus of the work — with the time and money to pursue education and foster an intellectual life, whether they lived in the South's few true cities or, as many did, in rural isolation (pp. 1–2). Thus voices from throughout the South permeate these 800 pages. Female members of the master class played an active role in the intellectual life of the South and, on the slavery question, were more martial than their men. Every variety of Protestant along with Catholics and Jews had a hand in shaping the intellectual life of the South. Almost invariably,

members of the master class had to contextualize their intellectual pursuits in a South that was increasingly different not only from the rest of America, but from the rest of the West as well.

At the beginning of this period, North and South shared both a revolutionary tradition and a religious and intellectual worldview grounded in 3,000 years of Western history. For the most part, the two regions saw eye-to-eye on the meaning and value of this rich inheritance, but, as time passed, the ground shifted under Southerners' feet — revolutions in politics and economics changed the world around them. Slavery, ancient and globally ubiquitous at the end of the Revolutionary War, became increasingly discredited, discouraged, and rejected by the West. By the 1830s the rural agrarianism, deference to authority, and corporatism that had dominated both regions were being replaced in the North by urban industrial capitalism and a highly exploitive individualized wage labour.

Southerners looked aghast at what was happening in the North. It was bad enough that the North was rejecting the values of an older way of life, but at the same time abolitionists were increasingly condemning the South's slave-based culture and the values and beliefs of the master class that directed and benefited from it. As a result of these differences, Southerners, according to the Genoveses, developed their own unique approach to the meaning of their historical and religious traditions — one that differed from the North. They stress that Southern intellectual activity was not everywhere and at all times placed in service of the slavery question. Slavery, however, made the South unique in the first place, and so little Southern intellectual activity escaped the gravitational pull of the slavery question (p. 1).

By education and intellect, it would seem that Southerners would be more than up to the task of formulating intellectual responses to those who challenged the existence of a slave society in a country undergoing dual political and economic revolutions. Surely the lessons of history and religion afforded more than enough ammunition. For every example, however, those in the North (and some even in the South) could offer a counter-example that not only rebutted Southern defences, but came with its own disturbing implications for the modern slave society Southerners defended.

For example, both the Old and New Testaments were filled with references to slavery. If Jesus, the perfect moral being, had not condemned slavery, then who were Northern abolitionists to judge? Northerners replied that, while it was true that Jesus did not specifically challenge slavery, his fundamental teachings were summed up by the Golden Rule. How could slave owners possibly justify their purchase and sale of other human beings under its directive? Did they really treat their slaves as they themselves would want to be treated? Pro-slavery Southerners responded in a variety of ways. They argued that the Golden Rule merely required them to treat their slaves as they themselves would want to be treated if *they* were slaves. They ridiculed the egalitarian implications of abolitionists' interpretation, demanding to know whether creditors should refuse to collect from debtors and whether executioners should refuse to hang condemned

prisoners. Striking closer to home, a female correspondent writing in *De Bow's Review* in 1854 demanded that Harriet Beecher Stowe preach the Golden Rule to John Jacob Astor and urge capitalists to share their money with their workers (pp. 618–624). Northerners, noting that slavery in ancient Israel was non-racial, demanded to know whether Southerners sanctioned the enslavement of non-Africans. Some Southerners argued that the presumed inferiority of Africans created a special case, tying it to the Noachic curse. Others, rejecting the Noachic curse as well as notions of black racial inferiority, and remaining true to the logic of their argument, admitted that whites, too, could be enslaved and that indeed this was a far more humane and stable arrangement than the cruel free labour regime of the North (pp. 521–526).

These last two arguments, centring as they did on Southern critiques of Northern labour relations, point to a fundamental theme that ran through Southern intellectual efforts, according to the Genoveses. For many Southerners, it was the North, not the South, that had gone radically wrong. The North had traded traditional notions of communal order and labour relations based on mutual responsibilities and obligations for an individualistic society driven by selfishness and the relentless pursuit of monetary gain. The result was exploitation, degeneration, and the development of a raft of radical “isms” — including abolitionism, socialism, and communism along with free love, women’s rights, and other threats to the communal good. Southerners argued that their system was better and that it depended on the existence of slavery, without which it could not survive (pp. 502–504). A lead article in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1857 was explicit: “Upon it [slavery], Southern society is based — into every fibre of which, it has inveterately cast its roots, wide and deep and is so interwoven with it, that one cannot be abolished without the destruction of the other” (pp. 110). Tragically, for the slave, for the South, and for the United States, the author was right.

A searching and respectful inquiry into the thought processes of educated men and women in the slave South is the great gift that the Genoveses provide in this work. *The Mind of the Master Class* demonstrates beyond a doubt that Southern intellectual thought was incredibly rich and diverse; moreover, it provides readers with a tremendous resource for accessing that legacy. Yet the achievement of that goal results in some problems for the reader. The work leans more toward the encyclopaedic than the synthetic. Oftentimes, the authors’ eagerness to catalogue the litany of southern opinions further erodes what is already a minimal narrative framework. The offering up of every possible source and quotation on the subjects treated does battle with the reader’s desire for a better-edited and more streamlined presentation than this massive work provides. Yet, perhaps in their stylistic choices, the Genoveses offer us one more insight into the Southern mind. Try as they might, members of the master class could not craft an intellectually coherent system around the ownership of men by other men in a modern world. The cacophony of voices the Genoveses present to us replicate the contradictory world inhabited by a people who cherished liberty, equality, and God’s love as abstract principles, yet could

not reconcile them with the moral rebuke their slave system provided them at every turn.

Hal Goldman
Carleton University

McKENZIE LEIPER, Jean — *Bar Codes: Women in the Legal Profession*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006. Pp. 242.

Jean McKenzie Leiper's interesting study is based upon interviews, carried out between 1994 and 2002, with 110 women lawyers practising in Ontario. While many of the interviewees were part of the "first wave" of the growing female lawyer cohort born after World War II, others came to the profession somewhat later. The sample pulled up a diverse group: many of them white and middle-class as one might have anticipated, but others only one generation removed from immigrant roots, some from racial minority and ethnic backgrounds, and some lesbian. The lawyers practised in a range of areas in large urban and smaller centres across the province.

Using the metaphor of "Portia" in her robes, McKenzie Leiper begins by exploring the anomaly of women's presence within a masculinist profession and the trappings of outward demeanour and dress. She next considers the interviewees' experiences in law school, the "time crunch" they subsequently suffer as they juggle practice with family responsibilities, and the "gendered aspects of time," marvelling at the complicated choreography that controls the daily routines of these superbly organized female lawyers. She then examines the women's career paths, which she describes as replete with glass ceilings and discriminatory mentoring, income disparity, barriers to entry as partners in private firms, and gender-skewed drop-out rates.

This is a fascinating study, based on two sets of detailed, lengthy interviews with each participant at different stages of their careers. The complexity of the issues canvassed and the richness of the responses provide a wealth of data. Deftly set within the pervasive sociological literature and sophisticated theoretical frameworks, McKenzie Leiper's study brilliantly comes alive when she quotes from the transcripts of her taped interviews. Women lawyers provide remarkably candid, often poignant, and sometimes hilarious comments about their experiences.

In the section on outward demeanour and dress, McKenzie Leiper describes female lawyers who are "expected to retain their femininity but to dress conservatively, hiding any hint of sexuality that would be disruptive in the masculine world of law" (p. 27). She explores the androgynous professional costuming offered by the traditional barrister's robes and recounts the disastrous tale of a very pregnant lawyer, forced by judicial intransigence to wear the barrister's vest under her gown, only to have the buttons burst during argument, baring her pregnant stomach to all. Others describe standing out like a sore thumb in "coloured"