



Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made

By Eugene D. Genovese

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This landmark history of slavery in the South—a winner of the Bancroft Prize—challenged conventional views of slaves by illuminating the many forms of resistance to dehumanization that developed in slave society.

Rather than emphasizing the cruelty and degradation of slavery, historian Eugene Genovese investigates the ways that slaves forced their owners to acknowledge their humanity through culture, music, and religion. Not merely passive victims, the slaves in this account actively engaged with the paternalism of slaveholding culture in ways that supported their self-respect and aspirations for freedom. *Roll, Jordan, Roll* covers a vast range of subjects, from slave weddings and funerals, to the language, food, clothing, and labor of slaves, and places particular emphasis on religion as both a major battleground for psychological control and a paradoxical source of spiritual strength. Displaying keen insight into the minds of both slaves and slaveholders, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* is a testament to the power of the human spirit under conditions of extreme oppression.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

This weighty book intends to "tell the story of slave life as carefully and accurately as possible." Less given over to theoretical and topical polemic than Genovese's earlier works on Southern slavery, it is by no means a catalogue. It amplifies Genovese's stress on the humanity slaves were able to preserve through de facto accommodations on the part of both slave and master, through the reciprocal play of "elementary human reactions" across class and color lines, and through the slaves' "strong sense of stewardship" for one another. This is a necessary transcendence of many other historians' dehumanizing view of both slaves and slaveholders, and to it Genovese brings his intellectual expansiveness and depth of feeling as he further documents key points featured in *The World the Slaveholders Made* (1969) and *The Red and the Black* (1972): the resourcefulness and egalitarianism of many house servants, the protective, responsible character of many black drivers, the prevalence of family stability and the nourishment Christianity afforded against degradation. Some critics will argue persuasively that Genovese has not done justice to southern slavery's deprivation, brutality and murder. As a matter of page-by-page arithmetic, Genovese certainly places more weight on young folks' play by the cabin door than on "evidence of widespread dirt-eating." The question - raised very differently by Fogel and Engerman in *Time on the Cross* (KR, p. 220), whose econometric inferences crosshatch Genovese's view - is one of method and concept in shaping the evidence. The subject will be pursued in debates, and anyone concerned with human development should read Genovese's book to knowledgeably participate. (Kirkus Reviews)

From the Inside Flap

A reevaluation of the master-slave relationship in American history.

From the Back Cover

'The most profound, learned and detailed analysis of Negro slavery to appear since World War II.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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