

destruction of dams and the restoration of free-flowing rivers; the establishment of huge tracts of wilderness and roadless areas; and the practice of an idealized politics that admits of no compromise. Much of *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* is an extended political pamphlet elaborating on these points.

In ten years' time, Dave Foreman's brand of radical environmentalism has served both to polarize the ecological movement and to push the rank and file toward greater activism. His program has as many detractors as it does followers, but few people within or without the environmentalist camp can simply shrug it off, and any serious ecological debate must somehow take Foreman's positions, as elaborated in his book, into account.

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Partial Attraction by Ellen Wilson Fielding

**Feminism Without Illusions:
A Critique of Individualism**
by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press; 347 pp., \$24.95

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's career seems dedicated to the principle that radicals can be reasonable. The encouraging title of her latest book suggests that they may even be realistic. Although the author challenges the grounds on which most feminists argue their rights, she is admittedly and regretably a feminist herself, and her book is primarily a contribution to a family quarrel.

What teases is the suggestion, here and there, of a susceptibility to ideological conversion. In this Ms. Fox-Genovese's book reminds me of Germaine Greer's offering of a few years ago. It contained just enough openness to the allurements of traditionalism to arouse in some a missionary impulse. But whatever the peregrinations of a Germaine Greer or an Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, neither seems likely to loose a floodgate of feminist converts to conservatism by means of their arguments,

objections, or misgivings.

Fox-Genovese argues that the vocabulary and philosophy of individual rights on which feminists (and almost everybody else in modern times) have based their claims are illegitimate and finally unsatisfactory inheritances of capitalist, paternalistic, bourgeois society. Feminists should recognize the extent to which the language of individual rights derives from an intellectual history that is market-driven and paternalistic and hence an uncomfortable bedfellow of feminists. A more communitarian philosophy of rights, taking a leaf from pre-Enlightenment models, would help offset the gravitational pull of the modern state and the increasingly atomized condition of its citizens.

She has a point, and she also has a point when she alludes to inconsistencies in many conservative attempts to balance the claims of the individual against those of the community or its subgroups. Having said that, however, I have said almost all the positive things I can say about this book.

Ms. Fox-Genovese is better at raising problems and contradictions and summarizing the depressingly wrongheaded schools of feminist thought and doling out dollops of praise and criticism for each than she is at letting us know how she would reconcile the demands of feminism with human needs, human rights—and human weakness. It is often hard to pin down the degrees to which she agrees or disagrees with a given school of feminist thought: her book is too full of the diffuse “understanding” that characterizes conversations in which someone is trying to gerrymander a consensus. Like other practitioners of ecumenism, she seems to dodge straight yeas and nays.

Most damningly, she left me uncertain as to whether her proposed new model of feminist thinking was meant to be closer to the Truth of things or merely more efficacious in realizing feminist goals. If she were inquiring into Truth, wouldn't she define her terms better, or at all? What does it mean to say (as she does) that pre-modern societies identified society as prior to the individual and understood the individual's rights as devolving upon him as a member of a group? “Prior to the individual” could and did mean different things at different times to different people. Pre-Christian societies viewed

the individual differently than did Christian ones, and religious societies view him differently than, say, communist societies do. It matters, a bit, what kind of bundle of collectivities, acknowledging what kind of moral and religious checks, one is thinking of when one attempts to ameliorate existential *angst*. Yet Ms. Fox-Genovese's formulations repeatedly sidestep the underlying philosophical problems. Here is one of many examples.

Since the beginnings of human history, men and women have demonstrated a propensity to congregate in communities. The propensity runs so deep as to *look very much like* a fundamental aspect of human nature. *Whatever the intentions of nature*, the development of human history has offered communities differing degrees of legal and political protection, until in our own time—with the noteworthy exception of corporations—they receive very little at all. (My italics.)

This philosophical murkiness increases in direct proportion to the specificity of the issue. I've read Fox-Genovese's chapter on pornography, so I know that she's opposed to it, and thinks that feminist arguments against it should naturally emphasize pornography's violation of groups (women, society) rather than of individuals. But when it comes to causes or cures, Ms. Fox-Genovese does what she always does—she asserts that the traditional way in which people have lived and related to one another is unsalvageable: “We are not likely to restore decency by returning women, and violence against women, to the bedroom and the kitchen”; “Throughout the twentieth century, the irreversible intrusion of the market into the so-called private sphere has steadily eroded marriage as a career”; “Since men cannot be held accountable for supporting women, as, for example, through alimony, women must be able to support themselves and often also their children”; “The hard truth is that our society is not prepared to provide adequately for children, and those who oppose abortion are, in general, those least in favor of expanding social and family services.”

The device of acknowledging the pull of another point of view but consigning it, a tad regretfully, to the dustbin of history, supports the author through an astonishing amount of conservative reading. And her interpretations of what she reads are often faulty and reductionist; consider, for instance, this doubly erroneous summary:

Western Christianity has always had a tendency, well exemplified in Saint Augustine, to believe that sins should be eradicated and judged at the root—in the imagination. But it has also had another, best exemplified in the Jesuits, that the sinner should be judged not by the intention (which is intrinsic to the inherently sinful human condition) but by the act.

I am impressed—and a bit bewildered—by her effort. She does not read to excoriate. Her description of *The Politics of Human Nature*, written by the editor of this magazine, demonstrates enough good will, and some emotion I might almost call nostalgia, to suggest a genuine difference between the author and those feminists who shudder at novels written in the bad old days of blatant female oppression. She has even read Richard Weaver on rhetoric, and values him. “If only we were all dead or better,” as the narrator in *Pictures From an Institution* says.

Ms. Fox-Genovese tackles at great length the hot topic of what may be called the Stanford question: should we radically alter or abolish the canon of Western literature? Though she favors its revision, she also damns it with more faint praise than many of her colleagues would accord it: “In one way or another, women or the representation of gender figured centrally in the thought of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume. . . . Contemporary feminists reject their answers but recognize that they sketched the contours of the problem. Even those who, like Karl Marx, did not especially concern himself with women, invite scrutiny for their silences.”

She avoids the onerous work of proving or disproving the superiority or the timelessness of the great works of Western literature by reducing them to a kind of personality profile of the

Western world itself. She most clearly tips her hand when she comes closest to praising great thinkers of the past: “Nor need we reject in toto the conservatives’ argument that the truly great writers conveyed transcendent, timeless, and universal values. Even those who reject such absolutes ought to be able to recognize the world-historical power and continued relevance of the ideas of a Plato or Aristotle or Shakespeare.”

“Even those who reject such absolutes.” . . . But an awful lot hinges on whether or not you reject such absolutes. Ms. Fox-Genovese’s reading of the conservative tradition and her partial attraction toward pre-modern communities is no more than romantic nostalgia if she persists in accepting, as enduring and necessary accompaniments of Progress, every alteration in traditional cultural values and family relationships.

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The Dethronement of Reason

by Tom Bethell

The Long Pretense: Soviet Treaty Diplomacy from Lenin to Gorbachev

by Arnold Beichman
New Brunswick: Transaction Books;
303 pp., \$32.95

The other day, according to a *New York Times* editorial, Gorbachev and Yeltsin were trying to put together a “reform coalition that offers new hope for Soviet politics and policy.” Such a coalition might counter “the threat of a hard-line dictatorship,” the paper added. Arnold Beichman probably read it, too, and I can imagine how he reacted: “Offers new hope for Soviet politics? You mean there was hope in the past?! There’s no such thing as Soviet politics!!!”

The nice thing about Arnold is that, at the age of 78, he has not lost the

capacity for indignation. No doubt that’s what keeps him so spry. Beichman is the author of *Nine Lies About America* and a regular columnist for the *Washington Times*. He grew up on New York’s Lower East Side, went to Columbia University, and worked as city editor of the New York daily paper *PM* during World War II. He seems to have been one of the few people of his generation and background who was at no point a socialist sympathizer—not even during the Spanish Civil War.

Now he has written a book about the history of U.S.-Soviet treaty-making over the years—a most useful and readable compendium. As he shows, that history is one of absurdity from beginning to end. Beichman’s thesis is that nothing fundamental has changed in the Soviet Union, and that nothing *can* change as long as it adheres to Marxist-Leninist dogma. A Leninist state, he writes, is not reformable unless it abandons its police power, political monopoly, economic control, and “sense of world mission,” none of which Soviet rulers have done.

Beichman copiously faults Western intellectuals in general (and the *New York Times* in particular) for accepting President Gorbachev’s “virtuous profession” at face value. Simultaneously, he points out, German unification was treated as something that we should be very cautious about. He asks: if skepticism about a Western democracy “which has no continuity with its short-lived (twelve-year) Nazi past is regarded as prudential, why isn’t it prudential to be all the more skeptical about Russia, a tottering totalitarian dictatorship with unrepudiated ties to its bloody Stalinist past?”

As they say, future historians will certainly marvel. They will marvel that the United States just went on negotiating treaties with the Soviets, signing them, seeing the Soviets violate them, and then planning the next round of talks. Kenneth Adelman, Reagan’s arms control director, said in 1988: “We never really found anything much to do about Soviet cheating. That’s the sad truth. Those outside government may well wonder why, year after year, we reported a pattern of Soviet violations and did nothing about it. . . . We tried—oh! how we tried—to come up with effective countermeasures, but there didn’t seem to be any.” Congress