

outmoded but wrong, that it is the abiding bigotry of our age. Here we find the logical, lethal conclusion to which we are led if we believe all peoples are equivalent. If we really are no different from Algerians or Zulus, they, too, are part of our extended family and have equal call on the loyalties we feel for men of our own stock. If we are compelled to believe this, the most obvious steps we must take to survive as a people, the most elementary distinctions we must make all become immoral and indefen-

sible.

It is, instead, this campaign against racial and national loyalty that is the great bigotry of our age. It is like telling parents their children should be no more precious to them than anyone else's children, that it is immoral to play favorites. It is as monstrous to tell a man to turn his back on the people who share his heritage, his culture, his ancestry, and his destiny as it is to tell him to turn his back on his children.

This twisted imperative is a recent

invention of the West, and has currency only in the West. Let us hope it dies as quickly as it has grown, for unless we are able to rekindle what our ancestors took for granted—a sense of the larger biological connectedness to nation and culture—then just as surely as demography is destiny, our destiny will be oblivion. **Ω**

Adapted from a speech delivered at a conference hosted by RightNow! magazine in London on May 28, 2005.

The Untold Story of White Slavery

Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 246 pp., \$35.00.

Whites have forgotten what blacks take pains to remember.

reviewed by Thomas Jackson

As Robert C. Davis notes in this eye-opening account of Barbary Coast slavery, American historians have studied every aspect of enslavement of Africans by whites but have largely ignored enslavement of whites by North Africans. *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters* is a carefully researched, clearly written account of what Prof. Davis calls "the other slavery," which flourished during approximately the same period as the trans-Atlantic trade, and which devastated hundreds of European coastal communities. Slavery plays nothing like the central role in the thinking of today's whites that it does for blacks, but not because it was fleeting or trivial matter. The record of Mediterranean slavery is, indeed, as black as the most tendentious portrayals of American slavery. Prof. Davis, who teaches Italian social history at Ohio State University, casts a piercing light into this fascinating but neglected corner of history.

A Wholesale Business

The Barbary Coast, which extends from Morocco through modern Libya,

was home to a thriving man-catching industry from about 1500 to 1800. The great slaving capitals were Salé in Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli, and for most of this period European navies were too weak to put up more than token resistance.

across the Mediterranean than west across the Atlantic. Some were ransomed back to their families, some were put to hard labor in north Africa, and the unluckiest worked themselves to death as galley slaves.

What is most striking about Barbary

slaving raids is their scale and reach. Pirates took most of their slaves from ships, but they also organized huge, amphibious assaults that practically depopulated parts of the Italian coast. Italy was the most popular target, partly because Sicily is only 125 miles from Tunis, but also because it did not have strong central rulers who could resist invasion.

Large raiding parties might be es-

entially unopposed. When pirates sacked Vieste in southern Italy in 1554, for example, they took an astonishing 6,000 captives. Algerians took 7,000 slaves in the Bay of Naples in 1544, in a raid that drove the price of slaves so low it was said you could "swap a Christian for an onion." Spain, too, suffered large-scale attacks. After a raid on Granada in 1566 netted 4,000 men, women, and children, it was said to be "raining Christians in Algiers." For every large-scale raid of this kind there would have been dozens of smaller ones.



The trans-Atlantic trade in blacks was strictly commercial, but for Arabs, memories of the Crusades and fury over expulsion from Spain in 1492 seem to have fueled an almost jihad-like Christian-stealing campaign. "It may have been this spur of vengeance, as opposed to the bland workings of the marketplace, that made the Islamic slavers so much more aggressive and initially (one might say) successful in their work than their Christian counterparts," writes Prof. Davis. During the 16th and 17th centuries more slaves were taken south

The appearance of a large fleet could send the entire population inland, emptying coastal areas. In 1566, a party of 6,000 Turks and Corsairs sailed up the Adriatic and landed at Fracaville. The authorities could do nothing, and urged complete evacuation, leaving the Turks in control of over 500 square miles of abandoned villages all the way to Serracapriola.

When pirates appeared, people often fled the coast to the nearest town, but Prof. Davis explains why this was not always good strategy:

“More than one middle-sized town, swollen with refugees, was unable to withstand a frontal assault by several hundred corsairs, and the *re’is* [corsair captain], who might otherwise have had to seek slaves a few dozen at a time along the beaches and up into the hills, could find a thousand or more captives all conveniently gathered in one place for the taking.”

Pirates returned time and again to pillage the same territory. In addition to a far larger number of smaller raids, the Calabrian coast suffered the following increasingly large-scale depredations in less than a 10-year period: 700 captured in a single raid in 1636, 1,000 in 1639 and 4,000 in 1644. During the 16th and 17th centuries, pirates set up semi-permanent bases on the islands of Ischia and Procida, practically within the mouth of the Bay of Naples, from which they took their pick of commercial traffic.

When they came ashore, Muslim corsairs made a point of desecrating churches. They often stole church bells, not just because the metal was valuable but also to silence the distinctive voice of Christianity.

In the more frequent smaller raiding parties, just a few ships would operate by stealth, falling upon coastal settlements in the middle of the night so as to catch people “peaceful and still naked in their beds.” This practice gave rise to the modern-day Sicilian expression, *pigliato dai turchi*, or “taken by the Turks,” which means to be caught by surprise while asleep or distracted.

Constant predation took a terrible toll. Women were easier to catch than men, and coastal areas could quickly lose their entire child-bearing population. Fishermen were afraid to go out, or would sail only in convoys. Eventually, Italians gave up much of their coast. As Prof. Davis explains, by the end of the 17th century, “the Italian peninsula had by

then been prey to the Barbary corsairs for two centuries or more, and its coastal populations had largely withdrawn into walled, hilltop villages or the larger towns like Rimini, abandoning miles of once populous shoreline to vagabonds and freebooters.”



A Barbary pirate galley.

Only by 1700 or so, were Italians able to prevent spectacular land raids, though piracy on the seas continued unchecked. Prof. Davis believes piracy caused Spain and especially Italy to turn away from the sea and lose their traditions of trade and navigation—with devastating effect: “[A]t least for Iberia and Italy, the seventeenth century represented a dark period out of which Spanish and Italian societies emerged as mere shadows of what they had been in the earlier, golden ages.”

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Some Arab pirates were skilled blue-water sailors, and terrorized Christians 1,000 miles away. One spectacular raid all the way to Iceland in 1627 took nearly 400 captives. We think of Britain as a redoubtable sea power ever since the time of Drake, but throughout the 17th century, Arab pirates operated freely in British waters, even sailing up the Thames estuary to pick off prizes and raid coastal towns. In just three years, from 1606 to 1609, the British navy admitted losing no fewer than 466 British and Scottish merchant ships to Algerian corsairs. By the mid-1600s the British were running a brisk trans-Atlantic trade

in blacks, but many British crewmen themselves became the property of Arab raiders.

Life Under the Lash

Land attacks could be hugely successful, but they were riskier than taking prizes at sea. Ships were therefore the primary source of white slaves. Unlike their victims, corsair vessels had two means of propulsion: galley slaves as well as sails. This meant they could row up to any becalmed sailing ship and attack at will. They carried many different flags, so when they were under sail they could run up whatever ensign was most likely to gull a target.

A good-sized merchantman might yield 20 or so sailors healthy enough to last a few years in the galleys, and passengers were usually good for a ransom. Noblemen and rich merchants were attractive prizes, as were Jews, who could usually scrape up a substantial ransom from co-religionists. High clerics were also valuable because the Vatican would usually pay any price to keep them out of the hands of infidels.

At the approach of pirates, passengers often tore off their fine clothes and tried to dress as poorly as possible in the hope their captors would send to their families for more modest ransoms. This effort would be wasted if the pirates tortured the captain for information about passengers. It was also common to strip men naked, both to examine their clothes for sewn-in valuables and to see if any circumcised Jews were masquerading as gentiles.

If the pirates were short on galley slaves, they might put some of their captives to work immediately, but prisoners usually went below hatches for the journey home. They were packed in, barely able to move in the filth, stench, and vermin, and many died before they reached port.

Once in North Africa, it was tradition to parade newly-captured Christians through the streets, so people could jeer at them, and children could pelt them with refuse. At the slave market, men were made to jump about to prove they were not lame, and buyers often wanted them stripped naked again to see if they were healthy. This was also to evaluate the sexual value of both men and women; white concubines had a high value, and all the slave capitals had a flourishing homosexual underground.

Buyers who hoped to make a quick profit on a fat ransom examined earlobes for signs of piercing, which was an indication of wealth. It was also common to check a captive's teeth to see if he was likely to survive on a tough slave diet.

The pasha or ruler of the area got a certain percentage of the slave take as a form of income tax. These were almost always men, and became government rather than private property. Unlike private slaves, who usually boarded with their masters, they lived in the *bagnos* or "baths," as the pasha's slave warehouses came to be called. It was common to shave the heads and beards of public slaves as an added humiliation,



Bastinado: a common punishment.

in a period when head and facial hair were an important part of a man's identity.

Most of these public slaves spent the rest of their lives as galley slaves, and it is hard to imagine a more miserable existence. Men were chained three, four, or five to an oar, with their ankles chained together as well. Rowers never left their oars, and to the extent that they slept at all, they slept at their benches. Slaves could push past each other to relieve themselves at an opening in the hull, but they were often too exhausted or dispirited to move, and fouled themselves where they sat. They had no protection against the burning Mediterranean sun, and their masters flayed their already-raw backs with the slave driver's favorite tool of encouragement, a stretched bull's penis or "bull's pizzle." There was practically no hope of escape or rescue; a galley slave's job was to work himself to death—mainly in raids to capture more wretches like himself—and his master pitched him overboard at the first sign of serious illness.

When the pirate fleet was in port, galley slaves lived in the *bagno* and did whatever filthy, dangerous, or exhausting work the pasha set them to. This was usually stone-cutting and hauling, har-

bor-dredging, or heavy construction. The slaves in the Turkish sultan's fleet did not even have this variety. They were often at sea for months on end, and stayed chained to their oars even in port. Their ships were life-long prisons.

Other slaves on the Barbary Coast had more varied jobs. Often they did household or agricultural work of the kind we associate with American slavery, but those who had skills were often rented out by their owners. Some masters simply turned slaves loose during the day with orders to return with a certain amount of money by evening or be severely beaten. Masters seem to have expected about a 20 percent return on the purchase price. Whatever they did, in Tunis and Tripoli, slaves usually wore an iron ring around an ankle, and were hobbled with a chain that weighed 25 or 30 pounds.

Some masters put their white slaves to work on farms deep in the interior, where they faced yet another peril: capture and reenslavement by raiding Berbers. These unfortunates would probably never see another European for the rest of their short lives.

Prof. Davis points out that there was no check of any kind on cruelty: "There was no countervailing force to protect the slave from his master's violence: no local anti-cruelty laws, no benign public opinion, and rarely any effective pressure from foreign states." Slaves were not just property, they were infidels, and deserved whatever suffering a master meted out. Prof. Davis notes that "all slaves who lived in the *bagnos* and survived to write of their experiences stressed the endemic cruelty and violence practiced there." The favorite punishment was the *bastinado*, in which a man was put on his back, and his ankles clamped together and held waist high for a sustained beating on the soles of the feet. A slave might get as many as 150 or 200 blows, which could leave him crippled. Systematic violence turned many men into automatons. Slaves were often so plentiful and so inexpensive, there was no point in caring for them; many owners worked them to death and bought replacements.

The slavery system was not, however, entirely without humanity. Slaves usually got Fridays off. Likewise, when *bagno* men were in port, they had an hour or two of free time every day between the end of work and before the *bagno* doors were locked at night. Dur-

ing this time, slaves could work for pay, but they could not keep all the money they made. Even *bagno* slaves were assessed a fee for their filthy lodgings and rancid food.

Public slaves also contributed to a fund to support *bagno* priests. This was a strongly religious era, and even under the most horrible conditions, men wanted a chance to say confession and—most important—receive extreme unction. There was almost always a captive priest or two in the *bagno*, but in order to keep him available for religious duties, other slaves had to chip in and buy his time from the pasha. Some galley slaves thus had nothing left over to spend on food or clothing, though in some periods, free Europeans living in the cities of Barbary contributed to the upkeep of *bagno* priests.

For a few, slavery became more than bearable. Some trades—particularly that of shipwright—were so valuable that an owner might reward his slave with a private villa and mistresses. Even a few *bagno* residents managed to exploit the hypocrisy of Islamic society and improve their condition. The law strictly forbade Muslims to trade in alcohol, but was more lenient with Muslims who only consumed it. Enterprising slaves established taverns in the *bagnos* and some made a good living catering to Muslim drinkers.

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One way to lessen the burdens of slavery was to "take the turban" and convert to Islam. This exempted a man from service in the galleys, heavy construction, and a few other indignities unworthy of a son of the Prophet, but did not release him from slavery itself. One of the jobs of *bagno* priests was to keep desperate men from converting, but most slaves appear not to have needed religious counsel. Christians believed that conversion imperiled their souls, and it also meant the unpleasant ritual of adult circumcision. Many slaves appear to have endured the horrors of slavery by

seeing it as punishment for their sins and as a test of their faith. Masters discouraged conversion because it limited the scope of mistreatment and lowered a slave's resale value.

Ransom and Redemption

For slaves, escape was impossible. They were too far from home, were often shackled, and could be immediately identified by their European features. The only hope was ransom.

Sometimes, the opportunity came quickly. If a slaving party had already snatched so many men it had no more room below deck, it might raid a town and then reappear a few days later to sell captives back to their families. This was usually at a considerable discount from the cost of ransoming someone from North Africa, but it was still far more than peasants could afford. Farmers usually had no ready money, and no property other than house and land. A merchant was usually willing to take these off their hands at distress prices, but it meant that a captured man or woman came back to a family that was completely impoverished.

Most slaves bought their way home only after they had gone through the ordeal of passage to Barbary and sale to a speculator. Wealthy captives could usually arrange a sufficient ransom, but most slaves could not. Illiterate peasants could not write home and even if they did, there was no cash for a ransom.

The majority of slaves therefore depended on the charitable work of the Trinitarians (founded in Italy in 1193) and the Mercedarians (founded in Spain in 1203). These were religious orders established to free Crusaders held by Muslims, but they soon shifted their work to redemption of Barbary slaves, raising money specifically for this purpose. Often they maintained lockboxes outside churches marked "For the Recovery of the Poor Slaves," and clerics urged wealthy Christians to leave money in their wills for redemption. The two orders became skilled negotiators, and usually managed to buy back slaves at better prices than did less experienced liberators. Still, there was never enough money to free many captives, and Prof. Davis estimates that no more than three or four percent of slaves were ever ransomed in a single year. This meant that most left their bones in the unmarked Christian graveyards outside the city

walls.

The religious orders kept careful records of their successes. Spanish Trinitarians, for example, went on 72 redemption expeditions in the 1600s, averaging 220 releases each. It was common to bring the freed slaves home and march them through city streets in big celebrations. These parades became one



Stephen Decatur fighting Tripoli pirates in 1804. He is on his back but will shoot his attacker with a small pistol in his right hand.

of the most characteristic urban spectacles of the period, and had a strong religious orientation. Sometimes the slaves marched in their old slave rags to emphasize the torments they had suffered; sometimes they wore special white costumes to symbolize rebirth. According to contemporary records, many freed slaves were never quite right after their ordeals, especially if they had spent many years in captivity.

How many slaves?

Prof. Davis points out that enormous research has gone into tracking down as accurately as possible the number of blacks taken across the Atlantic, but there has been nothing like the same effort to learn the extent of Mediterranean slavery. It is not easy to get a reliable count—the Arabs themselves kept essentially no records—but in the course of ten years of research Prof. Davis developed a method of estimation.

For example, records suggest that from 1580 to 1680 there was an average of some 35,000 slaves in Barbary. There was a steady loss through death and redemption, so if the population stayed level, the rate at which raiders captured new slaves must have equaled the rate of attrition. There are good bases for estimating death rates. For example, it is known that of the nearly 400 Iceland-

ers caught in 1627, there were only 70 survivors eight years later. In addition to malnutrition, overcrowding, overwork, and brutal punishment, slaves faced epidemics of plague, which usually wiped out 20 to 30 percent of the white slaves.

From a number of sources, therefore, Prof. Davis estimates that the death rate was about 20 percent per year. Slaves had no access to women, so replacement was exclusively through capture. His conclusion: "[B]etween 1530 and 1780 there were almost certainly a million and quite possibly as many as a million and a quarter white, European Christians enslaved by the Muslims of the Barbary Coast." This considerably exceeds the figure of 800,000 Africans generally accepted as having been transported to the North American colonies and, later, to the United States.

The European powers were unable to stop this traffic. Prof. Davis reports that in the late 1700s, they had a better record of controlling the trade, but there was an upturn of white slavery during the chaos of the Napoleonic wars.

American shipping was not exempt from predation either. Only in 1815, after two wars against them, were American sailors free of the Barbary pirates. These wars were significant operations for the young republic; one campaign is remembered in the words "to the shores of Tripoli" in the Marine hymn. When the French took over Algiers in 1830, there were still 120 whites slaves in the *bagno*.

Why is there so little interest in Mediterranean slavery while scholarship and reflection on black slavery never ends? As Prof. Davis explains, white slaves with non-white masters simply do no fit "the master narrative of European imperialism." The victimization schemes so dear to academics require white wickedness, not white suffering.

Prof. Davis also points out that the widespread European experience of slavery gives the lie to another favorite leftist hobby horse: that the enslavement of blacks was a crucial step in establishing European notions of race and racial hierarchy. Not so; for centuries, Europeans lived in fear of the lash themselves, and a great many watched redemption parades of freed slaves, all of whom were white. Slavery was a fate more easily imagined for themselves than for distant Africans.

With enough effort, it is possible to imagine Europeans as preoccupied with slavery as blacks. If Europeans nursed grievances about galley slaves the way blacks do about field hands, European

politics would certainly be different. There would be no groveling apologies for the Crusades, little Muslim immigration to Europe, minarets would not be going up all over Europe, and Turkey

would not be dreaming of joining the European Union. The past cannot be undone, and brooding can be taken to excess, but those who forget also pay a high price. **Ω**

Free Spirits

James Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*, Broadway, 2004, 384 pp., \$25.95.

The “rednecks” who conquered a continent.

reviewed by Alex Greer

Who are the Scots-Irish, what sort of people are they, and what was their role in building the United States? James Webb, a retired Marine, Vietnam veteran, novelist and former Navy Secretary, has given us a best-selling portrait of this people in *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*. Of Scots-Irish descent himself, he describes his people as America’s “invisible ethnic group.” Why “invisible?” Because they were among the first unhyphenated Americans. They considered themselves the norm, and never organized to promote their own interests.

Born Fighting is carefully researched but written engagingly for the layman. Mr. Webb’s story begins with the Scots at the time of Hadrian’s Wall, and continues right down to the American Scots-Irish of the present. Mr. Webb weaves his own family history and varied personal experience into this history, which ends with the “good ol’ boys”—often slurred as “red necks” and “white trash”—who gave us country music and NASCAR racing. Perhaps Mr. Webb’s major contribution is his portrait of the Scots-Irish character and values. Through the mists of time they are consistently individualistic and war-like.

The Scots-Irish hail from the Scottish Lowlands, and in particular from the English border regions. In the early 1600s, many Lowlanders moved to Ireland, some because powerful Scottish lairds planted them there as a check on the Catholics, others because they wanted land. This dual geographic origin accounts for the name “Scots-Irish.” Although a few early adventurers settled in New England, the first large boatloads of Scots-Irish families arrived in Penn-

sylvania in the 1720s and 1730s, when the largely Quaker colony recruited them as a buffer against Indians. The pacifist Quakers did not see eye-to-eye with just-war Calvinists, but it was said that the former could sleep better with the latter on guard. Again, hunger for land seems



Probably Scots-Irish.

to have driven the newcomers across the water, as well as repressive religious laws in Ireland.

As the Scots-Irish gained a reputation as Indian fighters, Governor Gooch of Virginia invited a new generation to settle the river valleys of Appalachia and the Shenandoah Valley in the 1750s. The plain-spoken Scots-Irish did not always get along with the Cavalier aristocrats who dominated the coastal South, but pampered gentlemen lived in greater security because of them. The Scots-Irish had large families of “youngins,” and wanderlust pushed them toward the far-

ther ranges of the continent: Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Ohio Valley in the 1790s, and then on to Texas in the 1820s, and California and Oregon in the 1830s.

Why were the Scots-Irish more willing than others to venture into unknown and dangerous Indian country? The English and the Germans gave the Scots-Irish the tools for frontier work—New Englanders like Colt and Marlin manufactured firearms, and the Pennsylvania *Deutsch* made Conestoga wagons—but tended to stay home.

Mr. Webb focuses on martial prowess. As the title of his book suggests, the Scots-Irish have been at war at least since the time the Romans built Hadrian’s Wall to keep them out. The Scots later fought the English in a long series of border wars, and in the 1600s the Lowland Scot settlers in Northern Ireland found themselves at war with the Catholic Irish. If they were not fighting external enemies, the Scots fought each other in clan feuds. They brought feuding with them to the Appalachians, and the fighting between the Hatfields and the McCoys is only the most famous. Moving to the wilderness and taking on Indians was just another chapter in a long history of warfare. The Scots and Scots-Irish have played a very disproportionate role in fighting wars for both Britain and America. These people were bred to conquer a frontier.

All this fighting made the Scots-Irish unruly, and they had a strong distrust of distant, top-down authority. They have been very anti-aristocratic, and would accept leadership only conditionally. They have been strong populists and adherents to Andrew Jackson’s ideas of democracy. They have been fervently Protestant, but on the frontier many Scots-Irish left the Presbyterian Church for the less structured Baptist and Methodist churches.

Mr. Webb writes that the Scots-Irish were imbued with “free-spirited individualism,” and valued initiative, self-reliance, independence, and personal