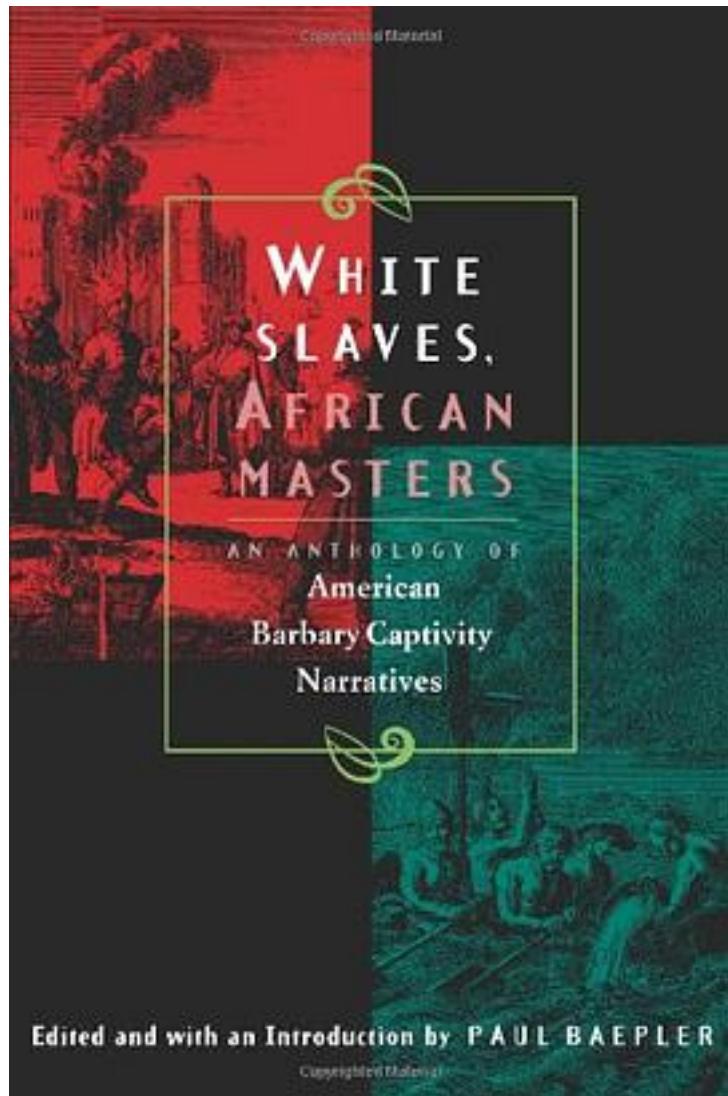


White Slaves, African Masters



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Some of the most popular stories in 19th-century America were sensational tales of whites captured and enslaved in North Africa. This book gathers together a selection of these Barbary captivity narratives, which significantly influenced early American attitudes toward race, slavery, and nationalism. Though Barbary privateers began to seize North American colonists as early as 1625, Barbary captivity narratives did not begin to flourish until after the American Revolution. During these years, stories of Barbary captivity forced the US government to pay humiliating tributes to African rulers, stimulated the drive to create the US Navy and brought on America's first post-revolutionary war. These tales were also used both to justify and to vilify slavery. The accounts collected here range from the 1798 tale of John Foss, who was ransomed by Thomas Jefferson's administration for tribute totalling a sixth of the annual federal budget, to the story of Ion Perdicaris, whose (probably staged) abduction in Tangier in 1904 prompted Theodore Roosevelt to send warships to Morocco and inspired the 1975 film "The Wind and the Lion". Also included is the unusual story of Robert Adams, a light-skinned African American who was abducted by Arabs and used by them to hunt negro slaves; captured by black villagers who presumed he was white; then was sold back to a group of Arabs, from whom he was ransomed by a British diplomat. These tales open a chapter of early American literary history, and shed light on the more familiar genres of Indian captivity narrative and American slave narrative.

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