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## **“Emancipation from that Degrading Yoke”: Thomas Jefferson, William Eaton and “Barbary Piracy” from 1784 to 1805**

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“Emancipation from that Degrading Yoke”: Thomas Jefferson, William Eaton and “Barbary Piracy” from 1784 to 1805

A Thesis

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in partial fulfillment of the  
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in  
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by

Stacy Meyers

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## Abstract

The following essay examines the image of “Barbary piracy” created by two prominent political figures, Thomas Jefferson and William Eaton, and by the American public from 1784 to 1805, and how those images shaped the policy of the American-Barbary War. Eaton’s Orientalist approach to describing piracy and the North African population limited his views of this region, thus reducing the American conflict to the annihilation of animalistic “brutes.” Jefferson’s practical approach to describing piracy and the North African population focused on emancipating the region from the corrupting influence of greed, allowing him the necessary flexibility to solve the conflict by either by military force or with peace treaties, whichever was necessary. I will show the impact that categorizing piracy as either the result of a depraved society or as a corrupting force had on both American perceptions of the North Africa people and on the outcome of the American-Barbary War.

Key Words: Thomas Jefferson, William Eaton, piracy, corsairs, North Africa, Barbary, white slavery, white slaves, pirates, captivity narratives, Barbary War, Tripoli, Algiers, tribute, tributary payments, American Barbary War, Orientalism

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the newly-established United States faced an unexpected enemy: “Barbary piracy,” or, more appropriately, North African corsairs, who had notoriously raided the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>1</sup> Under the sponsorship and flags of North African states, these raiders had for centuries captured European ships, sold their cargos, and ransomed or enslaved their merchant crews. No longer shielded by the British navy, American merchant ships found themselves newly vulnerable as they, too, worked the Mediterranean trade and sea lanes.

With the American public awakening to the exotic new danger, American officials increasingly voiced frustration at the rising toll of “Barbary piracy.” Over a period of twenty years, as American officials came to embrace a muscular new policy, and brought war to North Africa, they believed that the example set by the United States might finally end the practice of paying tribute to the corsairs and would lead European powers, as future President of the United States Thomas Jefferson would put it, “to emancipate themselves from that degrading yoke.”<sup>2</sup>

The political and personal writings of the consul to Tunis, William Eaton, and minister to the France, Thomas Jefferson, from the years 1784 to 1805, chart the emergence of “Barbary piracy” for his readers. For Eaton, this image closely aligned with the popular discourse- created through poems, plays, editorials and captivity narratives- about Mediterranean “pirates” and the rulers of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. In this way, Eaton focused on the supposedly unchangeable characteristics of “race,” religion, and depraved sexuality of North African people. Jefferson, however, decried the “greed” specifically attributable to “pirates” and rulers. As a

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, I will be using the term “North African corsairs” instead of “Barbary pirate.” The latter contains certain social and political connotations that I will explore further in a later part of this work. The term “North African corsair” is a more accurate label for these Mediterranean sea raiders.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Judge Tyler in *Naval Documents Related to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, Vol. 5, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 465.

result, his writings suggest that the repression of piracy itself would redeem North Africa's people and implicitly free them, like Europeans, from that "degrading yoke." Jefferson's more nuanced analysis offered a broader rationale for a war of liberation while allowing the United States greater latitude in dealing with its practical problems in the Mediterranean.

In the following sections, I will begin by surveying the historiography of what is now known as the American-Barbary War. I will briefly examine histories about the American conflict in North Africa, looking at general, military, and popular interpretations of the war that focus on the causes. More broadly, this section will propose that we must examine how the modern, popular historiography, like the texts that come before it, is shaped by the language it uses to describe "piracy" on the "Barbary Coast."

Second, I will pursue this focus on discourse by examining the historical roots of the popular American image of North African "piracy." I will look at a variety of evidence written from 1780 to 1815, including captivity narratives, plays, and poems, to analyze the American portrait of the "Barbary pirate." While I will focus primarily on the common threads running through these texts, I will also note the ways in which they demonstrate how a demand for liberty for "white slaves" in North Africa problematically raises the issue of bondage of black African slaves in the United States.

Third, this essay will examine closely the individual correspondence, both political and personal, of Thomas Jefferson and William Eaton from the years 1784 to 1805. These two men played pivotal political and military roles during the United States' conflict with North Africa. Each man developed his own views and styles when describing the North African rulers, corsairs, and general population. As this essay will demonstrate, Jefferson and Eaton's

influential writings are important lenses for viewing official American discourse about “piracy” in the first overseas conflict.

Since 1651, the British Navigation Acts prevented American merchant vessels from conducting their own business in international ports, but once the United States won its independence in 1776, Americans were free to trade with any country they wished. However, when the American colonies won their independence from England, English protection from the corsairs dissolved. For some Americans, independence from England was bittersweet. In 1784, Barbary pirates from Morocco captured and enslaved the crew from the Philadelphia ship *Betsy*, an act that shocked the new nation. In 1785, Algiers followed Morocco’s example and captured the ships and crews of two American vessels, the *Maria* and the *Dauphin*. Both North African states demanded tribute money and presents to ransom the American captives; the American government had no choice but to pay ransoms because the new nation had no other resources to fight the corsairs and their rulers. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, appointed Ministers to France, became responsible for developing peace treaties between the United States and the North African states.

In 1785, the United States was still operating under the Articles of Confederation in which the states acted in a “firm league of friendship” instead of a cohesive governing body.<sup>3</sup> Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government could not levy direct duties or raise a national navy, two powers necessary for fighting the corsairs.<sup>4</sup> During the Constitutional Convention, the elected state representatives created a stronger federal system of government

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 15.



that allowed for such national powers as taxation, defense, and the conduct diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> General George Washington was elected as the first American president in 1788 and, as North African tensions in the Mediterranean escalated, he presided over the first Congressional debate over the force needed to confront the corsairs. Until Washington became president, the American government decided to pay the ransom and tribute money demanded by the Barbary nations because the United States did not have the naval power nor political clout to confront the corsairs and their rulers.

During the Third Congress, in February 1794, Congress debated whether the United States should continue paying ransom money to the North African rulers or to send warships to fight the corsairs, and how many ships should the country to send if is sent ships at all. Congressman James Madison questioned if “in the public stores of the United States, a sufficient quantity of cedar and live oak for the building the proposed six vessels” existed to build the ships. The Third Congress also debated whether or not it was wise to send warships to the Mediterranean because England could decide to attack these ships in route to North Africa. Some Congressmen expressed their fears of British retaliation, stating “there is infinitely more danger of a British war from the fitting out of ship” to fight the Barbary corsairs. Congressmen Clark felt that even if the Royal Navy was not a threat to Americans, the ships the Congressional committee had recommended for construction “would be too small in point of number to be of any kind of importance amidst the numerous navies of Europe” and that “the distance from any friendly port, where in case of accidents, they might repair, was likewise very great.”<sup>6</sup> A

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<sup>5</sup> See Wood’s chapter “Experiment in Republicanism” for a full account of the Constitutional Convention.

<sup>6</sup> *Annals of the Congress of the United States: Third Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1849), 433-436.

While the Third Congress and President Washington did approve the construction of six frigates to send to the Mediterranean in 1794, if peace was declared with Algiers, then the entire construction project would be scrapped. This did happen, so the approved funds and ships would not really be used until 1801 when Pasha Yusuf

compromise was reached. Congress and Washington passed the Naval Act of 1794, which provided the money and material necessary to build a navy to fight the corsairs. The bill also contained a clause that allowed the President to halt construction if a peace treaty was developed with Algiers. Construction on the navy began in 1794 but was suspended in 1796 after a peace was negotiated with Algiers.<sup>7</sup> A tentative peace existed between the United States and the North African states until 1801 when Pasha Yusuf Karamanli declared war in March 1801.

The growing scholarly literature devoted to the history of pirates has opened new realms of research, primarily through a focus on Atlantic and Caribbean piracy.<sup>8</sup> In works such as Marcus Rediker's *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, David Cordingly's *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates*, and the anthology *Bandits at Sea: A Pirate Reader*, the authors attempt to portray what life was like on a pirate ship.<sup>9</sup> These authors focus on ship hierarchy and organization, gender roles at sea, homosexuality among the ranks of sailors, and the art of warfare and defense. In general, the works argue that while life on board a pirate ship was a dangerous and hard, - unlike life on English or other European naval ships- pirates enjoyed a social position unbound by race, social class and sometimes gender. While these works do explore complex social, economic, and political themes in pirate culture, they focus on piracy in only one region of the world. World

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of Tripoli declared war against the United States and President Thomas Jefferson sent a squadron of war ships to the area. See Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1905), Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), and London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with Barbary Established the U.S. Navy and Built a Nation*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2005) for more background on the naval ship building program.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall Smelser, "The Passage of the Naval Act of 1794," *Military Affairs* 22 (1958): 6-11.

<sup>8</sup> Romanticized images of pirates in Hollywood film go back to as early as 1912 with the release of *Treasure Island* and continue to the present day with the fourth installment of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* saga *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Piracy in the Golden Age*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of Life Among the Pirates*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006); *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*, ed. C.R. Pennell, (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

historians have begun to take interests in piracy outside of Atlantic, and works such as John S. Burnett's *Dangerous Waters: Modern Piracy and Terror on the High Seas* and Phillip De Souza's *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* illustrate the trend of pirate history to move beyond Atlantic Ocean to Indian and Pacific Oceans and forward in time to the present day.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, perhaps as a result of growing interest in parallels between modern terrorism and pirate practices, "Barbary piracy" has been attracting increasing scholarly attention.<sup>11</sup> Not always clear in such literature, however, is the way that "Barbary" piracy of North Africa was fundamentally different from Atlantic piracy: the "Barbary pirates" were principally corsairs or state-sponsored privateers from Morocco and Ottoman-controlled Algeria, Tunis, and Tripoli. These corsairs principally conducted their raids throughout the Mediterranean Sea, but occasionally ventured into the eastern Atlantic, threatening Portugal and worrying the United States that the corsairs would one day cross the ocean and threaten American shores.

Generally, "pirates" are individuals who prey upon and rob others at sea without authority or permission from a government. The qualification "without authority" is the most problematic when used to refer to North African corsairs, who were not lawless in the eyes of their own rulers. The leaders of Morocco and the Ottoman principalities of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli allowed their sea captains to attack foreign merchants whose countries did not have peace

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<sup>10</sup> John S. Burnett, *Dangerous Waters: Modern Piracy and Terror on the High Seas*, (New York: Plume, 2002); Phillip De Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Other world histories on piracy include Adam J. Young, *Contemporary Maritime Piracy in Southeast Asia: History, Causes and Remedies*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007); Harold Cholmley, *Sea Fights and Corsairs of the Indian Ocean: Being the Naval History of Mauritius from 1715 to 1810*, (Port Louis, Mauritius: Government Printer, 1935); Henry A. Ormerod, *Piracy in the Ancient World: An Essay in Mediterranean History* (Baltimore The John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Henry Adams and Stanley Lane-Poole may be the first historian to write about the American war in North Africa, but their work on this subject are included in their larger works *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson*, (New York: Viking Press, 1986) and *The Story of The Barbary Corsairs*, (London: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1894), respectively.

treaties with them; in return for being allowed to attack and capture foreign vessels, these raiders were to hand over a portion of the booty to their rulers. This portion of goods, money, ships, and slaves provided the North African nations with substantial income and as Angus Konstom writes “privateering was a hugely profitable business, and their ports soon became bustling markets for the sale of slaves and plunder.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, these North African sea raiders were not “pirates,” but privateers, or corsairs, who were an integral part of North African economic and political scenes.<sup>13</sup> Konstom and Kola Folayan argue that the corsairs were so important to North African society that the rulers of Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers were usually elected from the ranks of the corsairs. In order to keep their authority secure, these rulers had to permit the continuation of corsair attacks on European and American vessels.<sup>14</sup> Along the North African coast, rulers and privateers mutually benefited from each other’s sources of power; one party could offer legal protection and sponsorship and the other could practice its trade and provide secure, defended bases and additional money for their governments and families.

Such distinctions were often lost in the older historiography about North African piracy.

Gardner W. Allen’s 1905 *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* is one of the earliest general histories of the American conflict with North Africa.<sup>15</sup> Allen’s work gives the American

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<sup>12</sup> Angus Konstom, *Piracy: The Complete History*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 75.

<sup>13</sup> Kola Folayan, *The Reign of Yusuf Pasha Quaramanli*, (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press, 1979), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 1-2; Konstom, 76.

<sup>15</sup> While the scholarly literature on Atlantic piracy covers various interpretations from the technical aspects of piratical warfare to homosexuality among the ranks of seamen, the scholarly literature on “Barbary” piracy is more limited. Works focusing on European-North African relations examine the tension between the Christendom and the Dar al-Islam or the foundation to European conquest of North Africa in the mid-nineteenth centuries. Works focusing on American-North African relations examine the build up to the 1801 war with Tripoli, the 1801 war with Tripoli, and the 1815 war with Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli.

Sources for European relations with North Africa include Godfrey Fisher, *Barbary Legend: War, Trade and Piracy in North Africa, 1415-1830*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960); *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narrative from Early Modern England*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast,*

perspective of the conflict with North Africa and rarely attempts to characterize the North African corsairs, regents, or people as sophisticated actors. Early in his book, he sets the tone for how his readers will view the North Africans: “with its advantages of situation and climate, Barbary should have been a civilized and progressive country. Its Mohammedan population, however, consisting of Moors, Arabs, Berbers, Kabyles, and Turks, decided the character of the civilization.”<sup>16</sup> Allen suggests that the “Mohammedan” population caused the region to be “uncivilized” and “primitive.” Another general history of the American conflict in North Africa is Louis B. Wright and Julia H. Macleod’s 1945 *The First American in North Africa: William Eaton’s Struggle for a Vigorous Policy Against the Barbary Pirates, 1799-1805*. Like Allen’s work, Wright and Macleod’s book views the conflict through an American lens and characterizes the North African population as warmongering and fanatical. The two authors applaud the tenacity with which the Berber culture resisted or adopted the cultures of “three thousand years” of conquerors, but note that with the arrival of Moors in North Africa after 1492, “the further incentive of Moorish vengeance and Mohammedan fanaticism” was added “to the natural desire of the [North African] corsairs for booty.”<sup>17</sup> Like Allen, Wright and Macleod characterize the “Barbary pirate” as inherently violent and greedy.

Unlike the earlier general historians of the American conflict with North Africa, the military and diplomatic histories on this conflict are more neutral in their characterization of the North Africans. Works by A.B.C. Whipple and Joshua London focus on the role of the early

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*and Italy, 1500-1800*, (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2004); Noel Mostert, *The Line upon a Wind: The Great War at Sea, 1793-1815*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008); Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Barbary Corsairs*, (Westport, Connecticut: Negro University Press, 1901).

<sup>16</sup> Gardner W. Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1905), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Louis B. Wright and Julia H. Macleod, *The First American in North Africa: William Eaton’s Struggle for a Vigorous Policy Against the Barbary Pirates, 1799-1805*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1945), 1-3

navy in the war and the development of American-North African relations until 1805. Frederick C. Leiner's focuses on the military history of the United States' trouble with North African corsairs by examining the second war with Algiers in 1815.<sup>18</sup> While these authors depict North African rulers as less than magnanimous towards their American captives, the authors refrain from making generalized comments regarding the entire population's character like Allen, Wright and Macleod.<sup>19</sup>

More recent popular treatments of the "Barbary pirates" often rely on stereotyped images that inhibit our understanding of such actors. Amidst this growing popular literature, some works do stand out, however. For example, Frank Lambert and Richard Zacks provide readers with a general history of the American conflict in North Africa and offer fewer stereotyped generalizations about the North African people.<sup>20</sup> Unlike other authors, Lambert devotes an entire chapter to analyzing the use of the term "pirate" to describe North African corsairs. Lambert examines how these labels influence our understanding of these corsairs and their

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<sup>18</sup> A.B.C. Whipple, *To The Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991); Joshua London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with The Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Established a Nation*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2005); Frederick Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: American's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> For example, Leiner quotes the Dey of Algiers as welcoming a new group of American captives with the following: "now I've got you, you Christian dogs, you shall eat stones." The next morning [...] the captured men began their work as slaves." Leiner, 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005) and Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805*, (New York: Hyperion, 2005). Zacks' work has been largely discredited for his many flaws and poor use of source material. In one review of the book, David Curtis Skaggs writes that "*Pirate Coast* is a lively written, error-filled volume" in which Zacks cannot get the name of some of the key American officials correct (Zacks refers to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering as "Thomas Pickering"). Skaggs, "Review" *The Journal of Military History* 70, (January 2006), 231. While Lambert's book is also a popular history of this conflict, it is well researched and deserving of scholarly attention. Lambert's interpretation of the conflict is based primarily on primary documents, including the *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, various periods of the *Annals of Congress*, contemporary newspapers, and the correspondence of several American politicians and diplomats. Lambert's book offers a readable history of the American-North African conflict that introduces readers to the complicated military, diplomatic, and social dimensions of this period.

rulers, he admits that he continues to refer to the corsairs as “Barbary pirates” because the labels are so engrained in our language, histories and understanding of the conflict.<sup>21</sup>

With their close focus on the American conflict in North Africa, many of these texts ignore the influence that the created image of the “Barbary pirate” had on both the American public and the American policy toward North Africa. Throughout the twenty-year conflict, American writers produced numerous works of art and literature expressing their fears of the corsairs and for the Americans held in captivity in North Africa. These images fall in the tradition that Edward Said has described as Orientalism, the “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’”<sup>22</sup> The “Occident,” Western Europe and the United States, deliberately constructed what the “Orient” was through their own literature, artwork, language, politics, and history created about Africa and Asia. Additionally, Said argues the descriptions that the West creates about the East usually tell us more about those cultures creating the image than the culture being created.<sup>23</sup> As I will show, William Eaton relied extensively on such Orientalist language, frequently characterizing the people of North Africa as “brutes,” “beasts,” and “depraved children.” These descriptions, absent in Thomas Jefferson’s writings, show us that Eaton viewed North Africans as an “other” who had to be completely destroyed in order to rid the region of depravity and restore integrity. Jefferson’s descriptions, however, show us that he viewed “piracy” as almost a disease that, when removed, the entire region would recover from its influence and would be able to join the Mediterranean trade network as equal participants.

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<sup>21</sup> Lambert, 105-122.

<sup>22</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 7, 12.

Orientalist imaging of the North African corsairs, regents, and people in the popular literature began much earlier than the American conflict with North Africa. Indeed, like the Indian captivity narrative, the “Barbary” captivity narrative genre has a rich history that predates the American colonial experience.<sup>24</sup> After the expulsion of the Moors from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, Western European nations ships began trading and raiding along the North African coast. Both sides, Europe and North Africa, traded or raided with each other for goods, specie, and technology. As captured European sailors recorded and published their experiences in North Africa, this unique group provided Europe, and later the Americas, with some of the accounts of the political, social, and religious organization of the North African states.<sup>25</sup> Nabil Matar writes that these accounts were more reliable than early English playwrights’ descriptions of the “Moors” of North Africa. The playwrights’ descriptions used “English modes of fabrication” in the same way that “Renaissance painters depicted Jesus and the Apostles in contemporary Italian dress and manner [...]”<sup>26</sup> The earliest English descriptions of North Africans were not based on eye-witness accounts, but rather “imaginative brilliance [...] without any historical or religious verisimilitude.” Europe would not receive accurate accounts of North Africa until the sixteenth century when captives in Algiers and the other North African states began publishing their memoirs.

Matar and others stress the importance of the information that these captivity narratives provided about North Africa for their home countries. While most of the captivity narratives were not objective in their opinions of the mannerisms and customs of the North African people,

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Baepler, “The Barbary Captivity Narrative in American Culture,” *Early American Literature* 39 (2004): 217.

<sup>25</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 11-13; Nabil Matar, Introduction to *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narrative from Early Modern England*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>26</sup> Matar, 4.



the captives' stories provided the first reliable information on the "cities, distances [between certain locations], crops, military conflicts, religious practices, and social organization and behavior" for the region.<sup>27</sup> Early captivity narrative author Robert Ellyett's "description of the political and social organization of Tunisia" provided the English government with an estimation of "the forces needed to conquer the Kingdom [and] to protect Christendom from the Turks [...]"<sup>28</sup> Finally, these early English captivity narratives challenged preconceived notions that Europeans had about gender relations in North Africa. Matar and Baepler analyze different captivity accounts that indicated, to the surprise of many European and American readers, that North African women had great autonomy and power in their homes and were not the victims of "dominating and controlling" men.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to providing European governments with valuable information about North Africa, the Barbary captivity narratives became popular literature with European and American readers, and continued to be published into the nineteenth century. As Paul Baepler argues, even fictional narratives "helped to shape history" so "we need to view [the fiction and non-fiction] narratives side by side."<sup>30</sup>

G.A. Starr writes that the genre began to transform from the sixteenth and early seventeenth century memoir-based form to a more adventure-tale based form from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Although the evolving captivity genre followed predictable patterns of "capture, enslavement, and escape," Starr writes that the characters had a great diversity of background, which allowed the stories wide variation. Within this framework

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 4-5

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 33 and *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption*, 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> G.A. Starr, "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 29, (1965): 36.

of “capture, enslavement, and escape,” narrative authors explored social and historical themes of bondage, religious piety and possible conversion, sexual exploitation, liberty (the desire for freedom) and redemption (the acceptance back into civil society).

### **“View her wide spread empire throug’d with slaves ”: the Conundrum of White Slavery**

Until American Independence, both the Indian and “Barbary” captivity narratives largely followed the same narrative themes of English captivity narratives. The English model provided the necessary foundation for American captivity narratives after 1787 to explore in-depth the theme of liberty and the redemption of white slaves in North Africa. Intentionally or unintentionally, this new focus on liberty for white slaves gave early abolitionists a new weapon in the fight for the eradication of the black African slave system in the United States. Robert C. Davis writes that although both the North African coast and the United States had slavery, “one element stands out: slavery in the Americas differed at its inception from that of the Maghreb by being above all a matter of business.” Davis continues that American slaves owners “may have experienced contempt, pity, or disgust for their human chattel, but they bought and sold them primarily for the work they could do and it made no more sense to despise these slaves than [...] oxen or horses.”<sup>32</sup>

The continuing echoes of earlier narratives as well as English and American ideas and prejudices about the North African coast can be seen in Maria Martin’s “History and Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin, Who was Six Years a Slave in Algiers,” originally published in 1806. This apparently fictional account illuminates the general fear and concern felt by the American people with regards to the United States’ conflict with North Africa. For

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<sup>32</sup> Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*, (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2004), xxv.

example, Martin writes that upon her capture by the “Barbarian,” her husband’s greatest concern was being separated “never perhaps to see each other again.” Martin is subjected to the humiliation of the slave auction “where were gathered a great number of bidders [...] of my own sex, which gave me fresh hopes for protection, but, alas! This fond hope was of but short duration for [...] they seemed rather to exult my miseries!”<sup>33</sup> Dramatic narratives like Martin’s, both authentic and fictitious, provoked action, prompting some to organize ransom collections for captive Americans. In addition, these narratives raised certain social issues such as class stratification, slavery, and potential sexual abuse among the captured.<sup>34</sup>

Other American captivity narratives developed such themes, while helping to capture another tension within American society: the issue of slavery. Two pieces of late eighteenth century American popular literature capture this tension: Susana Haswell Rowson’s play *Slaves of Algiers or, A Struggle for Freedom*, published in 1794, and the anonymous poem “The American in Algiers, or the Patriot of Seventy-Six,” published in 1797. Rowson’s play highlights several common themes in the popular American discourse about the United States’ problems in North Africa such as greed amongst the Arab and Jewish population, sexuality

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<sup>33</sup> Maria Martin, “History and Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin, Who was Six Years a Slave in Algiers,” *Liberty’s Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic*, ed. Daniel E. Williams, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 116-117. In addition to exposing American readers to some of the horrors that American captives faced in North Africa, these narratives also sometimes underscored national paradoxes, especially in terms of the abhorrence of white slavery. Of course, Martin’s experiences at the “public market” and in captivity would have horrified readers back in the United States and they would cry for such a vile crime to be punished. These descriptions of North Africans in popular literature of the period are not devices used to create a culture with the expressed purpose of controlling that new culture. Instead, they are about vilifying an enemy in order to shed light on critical issues facing Americans: white slavery and endangered American trade.

<sup>34</sup> In several captivity accounts and later official reports, it is noted that officers of ships were generally treated better than common sailors. Paul Baepler writes that after the capture of the American frigate *Philadelphia* the entire crew was taken prisoner by the Trioplitanian government. Jonathan Cowdery, the ship’s doctor, published his captivity account and talks about the preferential treatment he received as an American naval officer. William Ray and Elijah Shaw, sailors on the same ship as the doctor, writes in their own narratives about the hard work there were forced to perform in nearly unbearable conditions. Baepler also notes that narratives often “mention the abduction of handsome boys for the bashaw’s pleasure and outline the penalties for illicit sex between a Christian slave and a Muslim woman.” Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 17-19.

depravity, and barbaric treatment of captives.<sup>35</sup> The theme of slavery recurs throughout the piece. As the American captives in the play put their escape plan into action, the *Dey* finds out and intercepts them before they can reach the safety of a boat heading for Europe. Henry, one of the American men, faces the *Dey* and says: “hold off- we know we must die, and we are prepared to meet our fate, like men: impotent vain boaster, call us not slaves; - you are a slave indeed, to rude ungoverned passion, to pride, to avarice and lawless love; - exhaust your cruelty in finding torture for us” while they “set [their] souls at liberty.”<sup>36</sup> Along similar lines, one character, Rebecca, reiterates the notion of fighting to the death for liberty and alludes to the fact that it is morally wrong to enslave people: “by the Christian law, no man should be a slave; it is a word so abject, that, but to speak it dyes the cheek with crimson. Let us assert our own prerogative, to be free ourselves, but let us not throw on another’s next, the chains we scorn to wear.”<sup>37</sup> These American captives in Barbary abhor slavery, will die in their pursuit of freedom, and fight to ensure that no other American would face such tortures, but what about the thousands of Africans in bondage in the United States?

Most of the writings about slavery produced at this time are critiques about white slavery, but there were a few abolitionists who made the connection between slavery in North African and slavery in the United States; their writings reflect what they view as the hypocrisy of Americans fighting to end slavery in North Africa but maintaining slavery in the United States. On the other end of the spectrum, the poem “The American in Algiers, or the Patriot of Seventy-

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<sup>35</sup> Rowson’s dialogue in her play left her audience with little confusion as to how she felt about the people of North Africa. In one instance, one of the concubines of the Dey of Algiers laments “you [Muley, the Dey of Algiers] bought my person of my parents, who loved gold better than they did their child; but my affections you could not buy. I can’t love you.” Here, Rowson highlights the feelings of disgust that some Americans had for the sexual practices of North Africa as well as the greed that Americans felt characterized North Africans. Susana Haswell Rowson, *Slaves of Algiers or, A Struggle for Freedom*, ed. Jennifer Margulis and Karen M. Poremski, (Action, MA: Copley Publishing Group, 2000), 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

Six,” overtly calls attention to the double-standard of slavery in the United States. In the first section of the poem, the main character recounts his service in the army during the American Revolution. After the war, the character gets married, starts a family, but cannot make ends meet so he must take to sea, where he is captured by North African corsairs. He describes the attack, the subsequent work aboard the corsair ship, and then the character of the Algerian Dey: “the dey/A wretch austere! Whose haughty lookd, denote/A soul more savage than the forest brute.”<sup>38</sup> The character does make it back to the United States where he praises freedom and calls for the end of “Barb’ry” threats: “Unsheathe thy sword, let vengeance be thy theme.”<sup>39</sup>

Although the first half of the poem contains many of the same themes as Rowson’s play, the first canto is set up so that there is a sharp contrast to the second canto’s lament of an African slave in the United States. Within the first stanza of the second canto, the author has made it quite clear that there is something wrong with the American ideal of liberty for all men: “From that piratic coast where slavery reigns/And freedom’s champions wear despotic chains;/ Turn to Columbia- cross the western waves,/And view her wide spread empire throng’d with slaves;/Whose wrongs unmerited, shall blast with shame/ Her boasted rights, and prove them but a name.”<sup>40</sup> The remainder of the poem recounts the experiences of an African slave on an American plantation. The second speaker’s experiences mirror the experiences of the veteran from the first canto and serves to draw the public’s eye to the hypocrisy of the abhorrence of “white slavery.”

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<sup>38</sup> “The American in Algiers, or the Patriot of Seventy-Six,” in J. Michael Guster, *Early American Abolitionists*, (New York: Gilder Lerman Institute of American History, 2005), 259.  
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/scholars/HSPo3.EAA9.Guster.pdf>. Accessed 4 April 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 261.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 262.

Some prominent politicians also contributed to the popular discourse of the “white slavery” hypocrisy inherent in Barbary pirate accounts. In response to a South Carolina senator’s defense of black slavery in the United States, Benjamin Franklin published a “letter” in the *Federal Gazette* in 1790. Franklin’s letter was a fictitious “reprinting” from a late-1600 argument for better treatment of Christian slaves in North Africa. Of Christian slavery in North Africa, “Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim” writes: “if we cease our Cruises against the Christians, how shall we be furnished with the Commodities their Countries produce [...] If we forebear to make Slaves of their People, who in this hot Climate are to cultivate our Lands? Who are to perform the common Labours [*sic*] of our City and in our Families [...]”<sup>41</sup> To contemporary abolitionists and slave owners and to modern historians, these questions “Sidi Mehemet” posed are some of the same questions and arguments American slave owners used to justify the enslavement of black Africans. Franklin’s satirical letter continues to twist the Senator’s argument for slavery in the United States so that Sidi Mehemet’s justification for the continued enslavement of Christians in North Africa is as sound as the Senator’s.

Orientalist American popular literature and discourse about the “Barbary pirate,” then, helps to illustrate the enduring nature of images and themes dating back to at least the sixteenth century. Fictional “adventure” tales allowed the earlier narrative to evolve and remain popular. In addition, the “Barbary pirate” served as a vehicle for discussion of contemporary issues and themes. Most prominent among these themes would be a discussion of American slavery. American officials seeking to sound the alarm regarding the threat of North African sea raiding thus had at their disposal a cache of imagery to rely upon, through the issue of slavery would

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<sup>41</sup> Ben Franklin to the Editor of the Federal Gazette, 23 March 1790, in *Writings*. Ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 1157-1160.

remain potentially fraught. But, not all American officials saw slavery as important or necessary to highlight when discussing North African-American relations.

Thomas Jefferson and William Eaton do not discuss slavery in their writings about the United States problems in North Africa. As mentioned previously, Jefferson himself was conflicted in his opinions of slavery and there is no evidence to suggest that Eaton had personal experience with slavery in the United States. For both men, slavery was not the issue to solve, but rather the threat “piracy” posed to the United States. Jefferson and Eaton were more concerned about ridding the United States of the burden of tribute payments to North Africa, securing the freedom for Americans held in bondage, and eradicating the corsairs from North Africa to free the people of the United States, Europe, and North Africa from the “degrading yoke” of piracy.

The correspondence of Thomas Jefferson and William Eaton represents two of the dominant, competing, and, to a certain extent, intertwined American views of the North African corsairs. Acts of piracy were not new to Americans and in many ways, Eaton and Jefferson’s writings reflect both the Orientalizing influence of the American public discourse and the lasting influence the “Golden Age” of piracy had on the general American public.<sup>42</sup> More broadly,

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<sup>42</sup> For many of the American statesmen working to build a new nation, the end of the “Golden Age” of piracy, a time when such notorious pirates like Black Beard, Bartholomew Roberts, and “Calico Jack” Rackam prowled the waters of the Caribbean Sea and the American Atlantic Seaboard, preying on unsuspecting merchant vessels, was still in their living memories. After the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht ended years of naval warfare between France, Great Britain, and Spain, thousands of privateers once authorized to attack the enemies of their homeland were out now out of work. Some of these former privateers found “legitimate” work in the expanding merchant market, but many other decided to turn their privateering skills to piracy, capitalizing on the increased sea merchant traffic. Most of these pirates confined their activities to the Caribbean Sea and American Atlantic coast where the governments were still disorganized and did not have the necessary means to combat the pirate threat. However, by the 1720s, most of the Caribbean and American colonial governments launched major offensive campaigns to thwart piracy in their waters. By 1730, the last of the major pirate threats had been eradicated from the new world, as historian Angus Konstam writes, the golden “age had passed, and all that remained was the romanticized view of a past era.” Angus Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 152-153. For a full account of the Golden Age of Piracy, see Konstam *Piracy: The Complete History*, chapter 6 and Markus Rediker, *Villain of All Nations: Atlantic Piracy in the Golden Age*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

both men believed that the North African practice of attacking American merchant vessels to steal the valuable cargo and enslave the vessels' crews, then demanding tribute and ransom payments to halt the behavior was highly insulting to American honor. Ultimately, both argued that such affronts should be answered with naval force and not with "humiliating" tribute payments like those paid by their European counterparts. In addition, neither man comments on the theme of slavery in both North Africa and the United States as popular authors have because Jefferson himself was a slave holder with conflicted feelings about the system and because there is no evidence that Eaton discussed the issue in any of his writings, nor that he had any direct experience with slavery in the United States. Beyond these broad areas of agreement, however, Eaton's and Jefferson's depictions of "Barbary piracy" differed greatly. Eaton's correspondence contains derogatory descriptions of North African rulers, peoples, and society. Jefferson's correspondence, emerging from the context of his successful early negotiations with Morocco, focuses more specifically on the "greed" of the remaining North African rulers and raiders, the negative effects of "piracy" upon the general population, and the desire for the United States to provide the example of how to properly deal with the corsairs.

### **Thomas Jefferson: "These barbarians at sea be totally annihilated"**

Thomas Jefferson's experience with the Mediterranean tribute system came firsthand in 1785, soon after he was named Minister Plenipotentiary to France. As Minister, Jefferson worked in conjunction with Benjamin Franklin and John Adams to negotiate treaties with the

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Some American statesmen, like Benjamin Franklin, lived through this period, but other statesmen, like Thomas Jefferson and William Eaton, were born a just a few years after the decline in Atlantic piracy. While these men may not have lived during the Golden Age, they, and their contemporaries, were probably raised with the stories of Black Beard's attacks on South Carolina and Calico Jack's terrorizing the Caribbean. Men like Jefferson and Eaton formed their opinions of piracy from these stories and when American sea merchants faced new threats from sea raiders in the Mediterranean Sea in the 1780s, their opinions these new raiders were already formed from the legends and histories of Atlantic pirates.



four North African states so as to curtail renewed pirate attacks against American vessels. He clearly perceived a serious threat to the economic well-being of the young nation. Two letters written in December of 1784 express Jefferson's fear that the American trade would be "totally ruined"<sup>43</sup> if "immediate measures [were not] taken with the piratical estate... [to] preserve American trade in the Mediterranean."<sup>44</sup> His correspondence between the years thus 1784 and 1801 testifies to his growing conviction of the need to lead Europeans—and, in a certain sense, North Africans—to "emancipate themselves from that degrading yoke" of piracy.<sup>45</sup>

Jefferson clearly saw piracy as an antiquated and corrupt practice. In a revealing joint letter dated November 10, 1784, Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin detailed their opinions of piracy: "the practice of robbing merchants on the high seas, a remnant of the antient [*sic*] piracy, tho' it may be accidentally beneficial to particular persons, is far from being profitable to all engaged in it or to the nation that authorizes it." The letter goes on to describe those who engage in piracy as "losers" that rob their own nation of honest labor and corrupt their homeland by spending their ill-gotten gains "in riot, drunkenness, and debauchery." Jefferson and his co-authors noted that pirates "lose their habits of industry" and are ruined once their career is over; while this might be a "just punishment for wantonly and unfeelingly [ruining] many innocent traders and their families," it was clearly degrading for the North African states as well.<sup>46</sup> Piracy, the authors suggest, was the antithesis to freedom and industry so prized by the officials of the new republic.

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<sup>43</sup> Henry Martin to Thomas Jefferson in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 7 ed. Julian P. Boyd, 556.

<sup>44</sup> American Commissioners to President of the Congress in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 7, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 574. The American Commissioner to France at this time were Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Judge Tyler in *Naval Documents Related to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, Vol. 5, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 465.

<sup>46</sup> American Commissioners to DeThulemlier in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 7, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 492.

Jefferson secured an early victory in negotiation with Morocco. Morocco had been the first country to recognize American independence from Great Britain and was eager to secure a treaty of friendship with the United States. After the United States delayed its acceptance of Moroccan recognition, the Moroccan emperor had corsairs attack and capture the *Betsy* in 1784. Congress appointed John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as Ministers to France; these men were to meet with Benjamin Franklin in Paris to develop a peace treaty with Morocco and the other North African states.<sup>47</sup> Jefferson appointed Thomas Barclay in October 1785 to negotiate with Morocco and by July 1787, both Morocco and the United States ratified a peace treaty. The treaty protected American merchants from corsair attacks and included articles such as: “neither party shall take commissions from an enemy of the other,” “American citizens or good seized by a Moor shall be released,” and “commerce [between the two countries] shall be on the footing of the most favored nation.”<sup>48</sup> Negotiation thus turned a former pirate haven into one of the United States’ most enduring allies and gave Jefferson the necessary proof to believe that if “piracy” could be eradicated, an entire country could be redeemed.

Beyond Morocco, however, the degrading effect of piracy and the tribute system could be seen in the “greed” of other North African pirates and rulers alike, especially the Dey of Algiers, as they captures more and more American crews. In a letter to John Jay in April of 1785, Jefferson writes that the North African “rovers... calculate the worth of the prizes they may expect to take from us”, and “making some allowances for the expense and losses they will incur in these enterprises, they will adjust their demand” of tribute or ransom amounts.<sup>49</sup> Another letter to John Jay in August 1785 reflects Jefferson’s frustration with the Algerian Dey’s continued demands for increased tribute payments; Jefferson reported that the Spanish negotiated

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<sup>47</sup> Allen, 26-28 and Wright and Macleod, 22.

<sup>48</sup> “Treaty of Peace and Friendship, June 28, 1786” in Allen, 311.

<sup>49</sup> American Commissioners to John Jay in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 81

a peace with Algiers as the cost of one million dollars and “a very considerate quantity of things in kind” as a tribute. Jefferson noted that because this negotiation process was going so well for Algiers, there were “rumors [spreading] abroad that they are pointing their preparations at us.”<sup>50</sup> Agreeing with Jefferson, John Adams recognized that “with the people of Algiers [...] treaties of peace are [typically] very unpopular... they say [peace treaties are] taking from them all the opportunities of making profits by prizes for the sake of enriching [*sic*] the Dey by presents.”<sup>51</sup> “Greed” thus passed from the pirates to the rulers, then to the people.

In separate letters to John Jay and to the Treasury Commissioners in 1787, Jefferson wrote of the greedy practice of Algerian “pyrates”<sup>52</sup> of demanding larger ransom amounts when it became known that the victim nation was attempting to rescue its citizens. Jefferson wrote to the Treasury Commissioners that on the advice of the General of the Mathurins<sup>53</sup> that it must not be known of the “public interest [...] in the redemption of these [American] prisoners, as that would induce the Algerians to demand the most extravagant price.”<sup>54</sup> For nearly two years, Jefferson was exasperated by the Algerian practice of increasing ransom demands for the American captives. To Robert Montgomery in September of 1787, Jefferson wrote “I really deplore this situation of our prisoners at Algiers. If they could have been redeemed at the prices formerly paid by the nations of Europe, I think it probable they would have been redeemed.”

While during this period Jefferson primarily struggled to rescue Americans from Algiers, he

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, August 14, 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, ed. Julian P. Boyd 376.

<sup>51</sup> John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 15 February 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 522.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, 19 September 1787, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 12, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 151.

<sup>53</sup> A Christian society whose purpose was to facilitate the release and rescue of captured Christians in North Africa.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Jefferson to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 18 September 1787, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 12, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 149. This notion that the Algerian government will increase the price of ransom demands if it is known that the United States is working hard to secure the freedom of the American captives is repeated in the 19 September 1787 letter to John Jay, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 12, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 151.

realized that the rescue of American citizens would not halt “the Pyratival states [from cruising] in quest of American vessels;” they would still demand ransom and tribute.<sup>55</sup>

As his frustrations grew, Jefferson increasingly advocated for more forceful action. To Francis Eppes in February 1785, Jefferson lamented the “the depredations of the piratical states on our commerce,” noting that they could “only be prevented by war or tribute.”<sup>56</sup> To William Carmichael in August 1785, Jefferson recommended that the United States show how formidable it can be if pushed: “If we wish our commerce to be free and un insulted [*sic*], we must let these nations see that we have energy at which present they disbelieve. The low opinions they entertain of our powers cannot fail to involve us soon in a naval war.”<sup>57</sup> And in May of 1786, Jefferson even suggested a land assault against North Africa to end corsair aggression: “Should [a war] become necessary, we have need of only one resolutions to place us on sure ground. That is to abandon that element where they are strong and we are nothing to decide the contest on terra firma where we have all to gain and can lose nothing.”<sup>58</sup> Jefferson described the United States’ potential enemies as “divided, and jealous of each other,” a “contemptibly weak [...] foe” whose lack of strength on the open sea presents an opportunity to begin a show of naval force.<sup>59</sup>

Jefferson’s sense that military action was forthcoming clearly continued to grow in the ensuing years. In a 1789 personal letter to John Jay, Jefferson wrote: “my favorite project is still to procure a concurrence of the powers at with them [the North African corsairs and rulers,] that

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Robert Montgomery, 10 September 1787, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 12, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 115.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Francis Eppes, 5 February 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 7, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 636.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Jefferson to William Carmichael, 20 August 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 8, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 418

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Jefferson to David Humphrey, 7 May 1786, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 9, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 469.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 6 February 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 7, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 639-640.

that concurrence continue till the strength of those *barbarians at sea be totally annihilated* [...] <sup>60</sup>  
But as this observation suggests, even at this point Jefferson saw the main foe not as the general population, but as the corsairs themselves. Unlike Eaton, Jefferson was able to separate in his mind the sins of the North African “pyrates” and regents from the innocent general population. Jefferson believed that the antiquated practice of piracy corrupted individuals, not that corrupt societies produce pirates. In fact, Jefferson is specific when he suggests that North Africa *sea raiders* should be dealt with in a military fashion so as to save the rest of the population and salvage Americans in the area: to suppress “the *present race of seamen* [until] [...] these nests of banditti might be *reformed*,” a small “but long continued” patrol in the Mediterranean should be launched.<sup>61</sup> In March of 1801, Thomas Jefferson was elected President of the United States, and in this period called upon the new American navy to throw off the “degrading yoke” of tribute payments.<sup>62</sup>

### **William Eaton: “The hero’s pride! Columbia’s honour’d chief”**

William Eaton, American Revolutionary War hero, was well-educated, hard working, opinionated and stubborn. He was born in Woodstock, Connecticut on February 23, 1764 and spent most of his adolescence avoiding manual labor in favor of studying reading, writing, and mathematics. As Eaton was twenty years younger than Jefferson, he had a different relationship to the creation and image of the United States; Jefferson spent his formative years during the height of the Enlightenment period whereas Eaton spent his formative years fighting in the

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, 23 March 1789, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 14, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 688.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 6 February 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 8, ed. Julian P. Boyd, 640. Emphasis my own.

<sup>62</sup> For general histories of the United States’ conflict with Tripoli see Allen, Lambert, and Wright and Macleod.

American Revolution and, as a result, each man developed his own view of how the United States should form its identity. At sixteen, in 1780, Eaton joined the Continental Army and helped fight in the American Revolution. He was discharged in 1783 due to ill health and enrolled in Dartmouth College in 1785. Between his studies, he taught grade school, eventually opening his own school in 1790 while working as a clerk for the Vermont legislature.<sup>63</sup> In 1792, Eaton received a captain's commission in the United States Army. Henry Adams writes that Eaton's "career in the service was varied by insubordination, disobedience to orders, charges, counter-charges, a court-martial, and a sentence of suspension not confirmed by the Secretary of War."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Charles Prentiss, Introduction, *The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton*, ed. Charles Prentiss, (Brookfield: E. Merriam & Co., 1813), 10-16. For most of this section on William Eaton, I will be relying on Prentiss's work. Although this book was published just after William Eaton's death, the majority of the book contains the diary and other writings of William Eaton with little commentary from the Prentiss. Prentiss gives a brief biography of Eaton from his birth to his career just after the American Revolution, then the actual diary and other writings of Eaton continue the story of his life to when he returns to America from his campaign against Tripoli. Because of the extensive use of Eaton's writings, I have chosen to consider this source as a primary one and will use it as such.

Other sources include Meade Minnigerode, *Lives and Times: Four Informal American Biographies*, (New York: The Kinckerbocker Press, 1925), 55-58; Francis Rennell Rodd, *General William Eaton: The Failure of an Idea*, (New York: Milton, Balch, and Company, 1932), 15. There is a third biography of William Eaton: Samuel Edwards' *Barbary General: The Life of William H. Eaton- The Amazing Account of a Flamboyant Hero who was Truly America's "Lawrence of Arabia,"* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968). I will not be using this biography in this paper as Edwards' information is generally wrong or exaggerated when compared to Minnigerode and Rodd. Also, Edwards' work lacks citations, so there is no way to verify the conflicting material between the differing information. For example, Edwards claims that during the march to Derne from Alexandria, Eaton "rented hundreds of camels and purchased supplies worth the better part of \$100,000," (4). Rodd writes that Eaton only had a budget of \$11,000, just over one-tenth of what Edwards claims, (221). Rodd's figures are also corroborated in Joshua London's *Victory in Tripoli: How American's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the US Navy and Built a Nation*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publications, 2005) and Frank Lambert's *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005). In addition to possible fabricating budget figures, Edwards also claims that Eaton spoke "at least four Arab dialects without an accent, and was so fluent that each might have been his native tongue," (5). Again, this claim is a complete contradiction to what other authors write. Rodd and Minnigerode both remark that Eaton was fluent in French, the language primarily used while he was a diplomat in Tripoli, and that he was able to converse with his Arab troops while on his march to Derne, but in none of the other sources did it say that Eaton developed fluency in *four* Arabic dialects.

<sup>64</sup> Henry Adams, *History of the United States during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson*, (The Library of America: New York, 1980), 593.

In 1797, Eaton was appointed American consul to Tunis by President John Adams to order to facilitate “treaties of friendship” between the United States and Tunis so that “peace may be continued [and] commerce be established” between the two countries.<sup>65</sup> During his assignment in Tunis from 1799 to 1803, Eaton kept a detailed journal and copies of many of his letters written to his wife, friends, colleagues, and various government officials. These letters and entries reveal Eaton’s disgust with the rulers of North African states and their corsair proxies, as well as his deep resistance to the tribute system. Thematic analysis of Eaton’s correspondence illustrates how Eaton employed an image on North African rulers as bestial and corrupted by sexual depravity, dismissing the society itself as poisoned by “fanatical” religion.

Eaton’s impressions of North African rulers evidently began early in his posting. Within the first few days of Eaton’s arrival in Algiers, he records his first impression of the Dey: upon entering “the private audience room” American Consuls O’Brien, Cathcart, and Eaton “took off [their] shoes; and entering the cave [...] were shown to a huge shaggy beast, sitting on his rump, upon a low bench, covered with a cushion of embroidered velvet, with his legs gathered up like a taylor [*sic*] or a bear. On our approach to him, he reached out his fore paw as if to receive something to eat. Our guide exclaimed, ‘Kiss the Dey’s hand!’”<sup>66</sup> Eaton continues his image of animalistic Dey of Algiers for several more sentences and ends his entry with a lament: “Can any man believe that this elevated brute has seven kings of Europe, two republics, and a continent,

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<sup>65</sup> John Adams to the Bey of Tunis, July 1797, *The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton*, 58.

<sup>66</sup> William Eaton, diary entry, 22 February 1799, in *The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton*, 59-60. Perhaps inspired by Eaton’s style and description of the Regencies of North Africa, Eaton biographer Meade Minnigerode begins her work with the following description: the “three merry monarchs” of North Africa were “three fat, bearded, rapacious ruffians clunking with jewels, whose xebecs, polacres, galliots and gallasées went darting in and out of their inhospitable harbors [...] swooping down on hapless merchantmen, and dragging their Christian crews away to slavery and the whiplashed rowers’ benches.” Minnigerode, 53. This excerpt from Minnigerode’s biography illustrates the power of Eaton’s descriptions to influence his readers’ perceptions of this group of rulers.

tributary to him [...]” paying hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to trade in the Mediterranean.<sup>67</sup>

His initial meeting with the Bey of Tunis elicited somewhat more mixed reactions, which Eaton revealed in a letter to his wife. Like the Dey of Algiers, the Bey “was seated with his legs under him like a taylor [*sic*], on a sophia [*sic*] covered with a velvet canopy richly embroidered with gold, with a turban about his head, and a very rich kind of surplice flowing loosely about his shoulders.”<sup>68</sup> Hints of decadence implicit in such a description are later spelled out by Eaton when he writes of the sexual “depravity” of the Bey of Tunis in a letter to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering. While Eaton notes several of the Bey’s ostensible qualities, Eaton luridly focuses on an aspect that would “would excite a blush in the countenance of the most depraved of *nature’s* children... however singularly unnatural, his favorite minister (the Sapatapa), a lusty Turk of about thirty-three, is the first object of his passion!”<sup>69</sup>

Bestial, decadent rulers, in Eaton’s correspondence, were corrupt and cruel as well. For example, on February 1, 1895, Eaton recollects meeting an eleven year old boy “melancholy sunk on his countenance.” When Eaton asked the boy what was the matter, the boy told him that “about four months ago the Kerchief cut off [his father’s] head and took away all of [his father’s] property.” Now, the boy and his mother “are without bread.” Moved to pity, Eaton “gave him all the money about me. The child kissed my hand; and wept.” Grateful that he does not have to

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>68</sup> William Eaton to Mrs. Eaton, 6 April 1799, in *The Life of the Late General William Eaton*, 152-153. In addition to describing the corruption and decadence of the Tunisian Bey, this letter also highlights Eaton’s use of the same types of descriptions and wording in his correspondence to both his colleagues and his family. The letter to his wife shows that Eaton does not amend his writing for his audience; Eaton is consistent in his descriptions and opinions of both the North Africans and how the United States should deal with this region. The consistency in Eaton’s writings greatly contrasts with Jefferson’s writing on the same subject matter.

<sup>69</sup> William Eaton to Thomas Pickering, 15 June 1799, *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I: 97-98.



face such difficult and potentially barbaric realities, Eaton closes his journal entry with “God I thank thee that my children are Americans!”<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, Eaton’s Orientalizing description of North African society breaks the people into three groups: “imperious Turks, beggarly Moors, and savage Arabs, distinguished from each other by their dress, or rather undress.”<sup>71</sup> The “Turks,” to Eaton, consisted mostly of the corsairs and ruling classes of North Africa, the Moors made up the larger, poorer classes, and the “savage Arabs” made up the nomadic pastoralists who travelled the deserts and the hinterlands of North Africa. Eaton’s letter goes on to describe the clothing of the people, making snide remarks on the people’s hygiene: “the *ladies* of Barbary [...] suspend like curtains from the head to the ground, roll huge dirty folds of flannel or muslin blankets.” As for the Jewish population: “the daughters of Abraham [...] form a contrast to the Turkish women [...] they appear dirty as brutes and as brazen as impudence.”<sup>72</sup>

Eaton’s stark and stereotyping view of Islam and Muslims can be seen when he describes these segments of society as being not only “abject slaves to the despotism of their government,” but also “humiliated by tyranny, the worst of all tyranny, the despotism of priestcraft. They live in more solemn fear of the frowns of a bigot who has been dead and rotten above a thousand years, than of a living despot whose frown would cost them their lives.”<sup>73</sup> Muslims and Jews alike are treated with broad brush when Eaton writes that the “Jehovah of the Jews would never rendered him [the Jew] respectable among that horde of *Savages*, if he had not thundered from

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<sup>70</sup> William Eaton, 1 February 1805, *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, V: 314.

<sup>71</sup> William Eaton to Stephen Pyncheon, 8 April 1799, in *The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton*, 157.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-158.

<sup>73</sup> William Eaton, 10 August 1799, 123.

Mount Sinai.”<sup>74</sup> Here, Eaton implies that the only reason the Jews are tolerated in a predominantly Muslim region is because the Jews’ god had already demonstrated his power, suggesting that the North African rulers respect and fear only outward displays of force and power.

Piracy, to Eaton, is thus the manifestation of this corrupt government and society. To Eaton, “Barbary’s” “Turks” are “consequently imperious, overbearing, and insolent” and have no regard for “human right and [are] unmoved by human misery.” They are “pirates” who “subsist by plunder of some kind; either indirectly upon the natives of their country” or upon European nations and the United States.<sup>75</sup> Eaton’s descriptions of the “pirates” as a kind of fanatical horde, almost insect-like, can be seen when he describes their swarming technique to overpower their victim’s vessel: the corsair’s “mode of attack is uniformly boarding” and that their vessels are “always crowded with men from all points of [the] rigging; and from all quarters of the decks.” Once they prepare to board, the corsairs have “their sabers grasped between their teeth, and their loaded pistols in their belts,” so that their hands are free to scale “the gunnels or netting of their enemy.” Like the wider society, Eaton suggests, the pirates are subject to religion’s fanaticism: pirates are taught “by *revelation* that war with Christens will guarantee the salvation of their souls,” their “inducements to desperate fighting are very powerful.”<sup>76</sup> In addition, Eaton remarks that the North African rulers view the corsairs as nothing more than expendable tools: “these pirates [...] are suffered in existence for no other purpose but to be thus used. Peace and war with them are articles of commerce; and they may be set on or bought off by the highest

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<sup>74</sup> William Eaton to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, 6 December 1799 in *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I: 354. Emphasis my own.

<sup>75</sup> William Eaton to George Hough, 15 September 1799, *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I:168. Emphasis my own.

<sup>76</sup> William Eaton to Thomas Pickering, 15 June 1799, *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I: 92.

bidder.”<sup>77</sup> In a September 2, 1800 letter, Eaton sums up the North African rulers’ view of European and the United States: “It is the maxim of the Barbary States, that ‘The Christians who would be on good terms with them must *fight well or pay well*” and these rulers use their effective tool of piracy to ensure that the Christians do one or the other.”<sup>78</sup>

To Eaton, the American course was clear: the United States was obliged to declare war against the North African states to rescue American captives and avenge the insult of corsair attacks “if we fail at success you will do us the justice to believe us martyrs to a cause in which we feel the honor and interest of our country deeply involved.” The United States must work to “release our prisoners without ransom, and peace without the disgraceful conditions of tribute.”<sup>79</sup> Eaton calls for naval action against North Africa that will provide an example to the “effeminate” nations of Europe and rid North Africa of its pirates and ruling “beasts.” Early in his commission, Eaton wrote to William Smith, American Minister to Portugal, questioning the wisdom of the United States following the European example of paying tribute for safe passage in the Mediterranean, noting that “humility,” paying bribes and tributes, “invites insult” and

the greater our concession the more accumulated will be the demands upon us. Nothing can be more absurd than to expect by presents to satisfy the demands of these marauding and beggarly courts who have no sense of gratitude, no sentiments of honor, no respect for justice, no restraint from fear, and whose avarice is as insatiable as death.

This letter continues to point out American folly for believing “the friendly mediation of Algiers to obtain peace with Tunis.” Eaton complains “we have really been stupid” to engage Algiers in such matters, that this will only place money “in the hands of one highwayman to keep it out of the hands of his companion, and taking one horsejockey [*sic*] to guarantee the word and honor of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>78</sup> William Eaton to General Marshall, 2 September 1800, Ibid, 185.

<sup>79</sup> William Eaton to Isaac Hull, 8 January 1805 in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, New Series, Vol. XXI*, ed Clarence Saunders Brigham (Worcester, MA, American Antiquarian Society, 1911), 123.

another.” Eaton finally closes this long letter to Smith with a blunt suggestion as to what the United States should do in treating with the North African states: “America must shew [*sic*] a force in this sea. National interest, honor, safety demand it. The appearance of a few frigates would produce what the whole revenue of a country would not. They would produce impression of *terror and respect*. Without force, we are neither safe nor respectable here.”<sup>80</sup>

Eaton’s June 23, 1800 letter to Pickering continues this idea that the United States should not consent to being “tributaries” to North Africa. He laments that the United States has lost its intolerance for such treatment, writing “nobody here [at the Tunisian court] acquainted with our concessions, could be persuaded that we are the same Americans who, twenty years ago, braved the resentment of Great Britain, if that fact were not recorded.”<sup>81</sup> To keep from following in the steps of those “*effeminate* Christian powers of the Mediterranean,”<sup>82</sup> America “must either send a show of force to the Tunis [*sic*] or [become] a Slave!”<sup>83</sup>

By the time of Eaton’s July 1802 letter to two American merchants from Philadelphia, Thomas Jefferson had declared war against Tripoli. In spite of the declaration, Eaton continued urging stronger shows of force by the American navy against the North African states. Eaton used descriptions of the plight of captured Americans to help win support for his belief that only American naval attacks will save American captives. Eaton writes: “our citizens [were] dragged to Slavery and goaded to a lingering death under the bastinado of *merciless robbers*.” Here, Eaton’s choice to use the word “bastinado” in describing the “merciless robbers” further characterizes the corsairs as depraved and cruel people; “bastinado” was a common form of

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<sup>80</sup> William Eaton to William Short, 18 July 1799, in *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I:328-329. Emphasis my own.

<sup>81</sup> William Eaton to Timothy Pickering, 23 June 1800, *Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I: 358.

<sup>82</sup> William Eaton to George Hough, 15 September 1799, in *The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton*, 168. Emphasis my own.

<sup>83</sup> William Eaton to Timothy Pickering, 23 June 1800, *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, I: 358.

torture that subjected people to long and continued beatings on the soles of their feet. For Eaton to use this term, he further reinforced the idea that the corsairs are brutal, cruel, and sadistic to American captives.

Eaton's account continued with a complaint of how the United States would be forced to pay ransom of their citizens: "what is still more humiliating, after all this, we shall be compelled to purchase peace on the terms of an *unprincipled, overbearing Bashaw of a wretched dog-kennel*, without at all remedying the evil." Eaton predicted that the United States could not "yield to this, and look the world in the face without a blush." He continued in this fashion, warning "the moment we subscribe to the demands of Tripoli, we shall have Tunis and Algiers, in a more imperious tone, demanding more substantial proofs of the veritable friendship of the President of the United States." If that should happen, "let [America] blot the stars from her escutcheon and view with sack-cloth the sun of her former glory."<sup>84</sup>

### **"That these nests of banditti might be reformed": War with Tripoli**

During their respective terms as Minister Plenipotentiary and Consul, Jefferson and Eaton spent their energies attempting to convince other lawmakers and political leaders of the best way to solve the United States' tributary problem with North Africa. Until 1801, both men played advisory roles in the conflict, but upon Jefferson's election to the Presidency, he was suddenly in charge of the entire conflict in which he and Eaton would take active roles. When Tripoli declared war on the United States in 1801, Jefferson finally had the required justification to use military force against the corsairs. However, Jefferson's correspondence during the 1801 to

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<sup>84</sup> William Eaton to Summert and Brown, Merchants, 9 July 1802, in *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, II: 196-197. Emphasis my own.

1805 war reflects a struggle with using all available force against North Africa while ensuring that the war did not bankrupt the American treasury.

Throughout his first term, Jefferson's letters were more formal and direct than his letters as Minister. As President, Jefferson had to be more flexible in how he handled national problems. For example, in an August 1802, Jefferson asked Albert Gallatin, the Treasury Secretary, for his opinion as to the number of ships that should be sent to the Mediterranean since Morocco has declared war on the United States: "We expect the *Boston* to return shortly: there will then remain there the *Chesapeake*, *Constellation*, and the *Adams*, of which we had thought of recalling one, as two were deemed sufficient for Tripoli. It is now a question whether we should not leave the three there, and whether we should send another?"<sup>85</sup> Jefferson was interested in Gallatin's opinion of how the naval budget would impact the rest of American finances.

Instead of campaigning for a fight against the corsairs, during this period, President Jefferson debated on how best to win the war and end the conflict in the Mediterranean. In another letter to Gallatin, Jefferson appears to welcome a method of peace that is completely contradictory to all of his correspondence as Minister to France and as Secretary of State: Gallatin writes on March 21, 1803 that "peace [with Tripoli] might have been obtained for five thousand dollars," but due to the delay of American representatives in complying with Tripoli's wishes "a peace cannot be attained but upon very extravagant terms."<sup>86</sup> In response, Jefferson writes: "I am in all cases for a liberal conduct towards other nations, believing that the practice of the same friendly feelings and generous dispositions which attach individuals in private lie attach

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<sup>85</sup> Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 9 August 1802, in *The Writings of Albert Gallatin, Vol. I*, ed. Henry Adams, (New York: Antiquarian Press Ltd, 1960), 83-84.

<sup>86</sup> Albert Gallatin to Jefferson, 21 March 1803, *Ibid*, 118.

societies on the large scale, which are composed of individuals.”<sup>87</sup> This letter shows that Jefferson is willing to entertain the idea of buying peace with Tripoli, an idea that he openly scoffed at and argued against for nearly fifteen years previously. This switch in tactics illustrates that as President, Jefferson had to consider the entire picture of the war in the Mediterranean.

Jefferson was able to be this flexible because he did not view the people of North Africa as a corrupt group that needed extermination. Instead, he saw *piracy* as the main culprit and, as in the case of Morocco in 1785, if Jefferson could weaken or eliminate the threat of the pirates, then Triopolitanian and the other North African peoples could be redeemed and emancipated from the “degrading yoke.”

Eaton’s Orientalist demonization of the people of North Africa served as his own downfall. Because he viewed the North African rulers and people as animalistic “brutes” that turned to piracy to support their depraved lifestyles, Eaton argued the only way to rid the United States of the piratical threat was to attack the entire population. Unlike Jefferson, Eaton remained inflexible to suggestions or new ways of thinking about the people of North Africa and how to best solve the American conflict in that region.

Eaton’s solution for ending the United States’ problems in North Africa was to launch a land campaign against the capitol city of Tripoli in 1804. Eaton thought that his land campaign could be one half of a two-part bombardment of Tripoli, that his land forces would complement a full naval assault on the city. This strong military attack would take Pasha Yusuf, ruler of Tripoli, by surprise and force him to end the war against the United States. If successful, the United States would then be able to negotiate a peace treaty completely on American terms and end all North African aggression against the United States. After finally convincing President Jefferson that his land campaign could be effective, Eaton was given permission to lead ten

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<sup>87</sup> Jefferson to Gallatin, 28 March 1803, Ibid, 119.

American Marines, thirty Greek mercenary soldiers, and around 300 Arab volunteers on a march from Cairo, Egypt to Derne, Tripoli. Once in Derne, Eaton planned to engage the Tripolitanian army stationed there then march on to Tripoli.<sup>88</sup> On April 26, 1805, after two days of battle with the Tripolitanian troops, Eaton sent a note to Governor Mustafa of Derne, demanding his surrender. With characteristic brashness, Eaton wrote “give us passage through your city [...] let no differences of religion induce us to shed the blood of harmless men who *think little and know nothing*. If you are a man of liberal mind you will not balance the propositions I offer [...] I shall see you to morrow [*sic*] in a way of your choice.”<sup>89</sup> After another bloody battle, Eaton finally defeated the troops and prepared to continue his march on Tripoli. However, Eaton was recalled by Commodore Roberts and was forced to retreat back to American naval ships; Jefferson had put a halt to Eaton’s plan to march to Tripoli and engage the rest of the Tripolitanian army in favor of ending with war with a peace treaty. Commodore Roberts arrived in Derne on June 11, 1805 with orders dated June 5, 1805 for Eaton to cease his fight and to evacuate Derne. Unknown to Eaton, in June 1804, Jefferson ordered Colonel Tobias Lear to conduct peace negotiations with Pasha Yusuf Karamanli, giving Lear the full authority to terminate the war and forcing Eaton to abandon his plan of a coup. In 1805, Lear worked out a treaty with Yusuf that named the United States the victor, required a small payment for the return of all American prisoners of war, and guaranteed the halt of Tripolitanian corsair attacks against American ships.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> For full accounts of Eaton’s march on Derne, see Meade Minnigerode, *Lives and Times: Four Informal American Biographies*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1925), 71-9; Charles Prentiss, *The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton*, (Brookfield: E. Merriam and Co., 1813), 285-364; Francis Rennell-Rodd, *General William Eaton: The Failure of an Idea*, (New York: Minton, Blach and Company, 1932), 189-245.

<sup>89</sup> William Eaton to the Governor of Derne, 26 April 1805, in *Documents Relating to the U.S. Wars with the Barbary Power*, V: 542.

<sup>90</sup> Allen, 244-246.



Disgusted and disgraced, Eaton returned to the United States believing he had not completed his mission. Treated as a political liability and shunned by politicians for his idea of an American-sponsored coup, Eaton was hailed a hero by the general public.<sup>91</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier committed William Eaton's actions in Tripoli to verse in his 1850 poem called "Derne." Orientalist imagery runs through this work as well: "The dusty Bornou caravan/ lies heaped in slumber, beast and man;/ The Shiek [*sic*] is dreaming in his tent/ His noisy Arab tongue o'erspent;" and "Like some bad dream, the Jew/ Creeps stealthily his quarter through,/ Or counts with fear his golden heaps,/ The City of the Corsair sleeps!" Like Rowson's play, this poem highlights Whittier's opinion of not only the North African corsairs but North Africa's Jewish population as well.<sup>92</sup> The image of the greedy Jew and exotic Arab are themes repeated in several other popular works. This poem and other literary works<sup>93</sup> produced after the end of the 1801 war with Tripoli show that although William Eaton may have disgraced himself in the eyes of American politicians, to the American public and to Federalists, he was a hero of a war that embodied the ideals of liberty. To the public, Eaton was remembered as: "the hero's pride! Colombia's honour'd chief; the learn'd, the wise, and the eminently brave [...] a man, whose mighty shoulder on daring acts is bent."<sup>94</sup>

Jefferson's and Eaton's different approaches to characterizing both piracy and the people of North Africa dictated how each approached solving the United States' problem with the North African corsairs and their rulers. Eaton's Orientalist approach to describing both piracy and the people led him to want to fight the "brutes" to the bitter end, risking his life, the lives of his men,

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<sup>91</sup> Minnigerode, 89-96 and

<sup>92</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, "Derne" in Rodd, *General William Eaton, the Failure of an Idea*, 299-303.

<sup>93</sup> For other works praising William Eaton's contributions to the American war with Tripoli, see Joseph Hanson, *The Mussulemen Humbled, or A Heroic Poem in Celebration of the Bravery Displayed by the American Tars in the Contest with Tripoli*, (New York: Southwick and Hardcastle Printers, 1806),

<sup>94</sup> Hanson, 24.

and eventually ruining his political career. Jefferson's practical approach to seeing piracy as not the product of a depraved society but rather as a conventional crime that must be removed to save the society allowed him the flexibility to do whatever necessary to defeat the pirates, even if the situation called for him to compromise on nearly fifteen years of advocating military force in favor of a developing peace treaty with Tripoli.

The writings of Jefferson and Eaton examined for this essay share one major commonality: they emphasize the restoration of "honor" instead of "liberty" like in the popular discourse. By emphasizing honor instead of liberty, both men skirt the issue of slavery that is present in some of the popular works. Some could say that these men missed an opportunity to engage in the public dialogue on such a controversial issue, but for Jefferson and Eaton, America's war in North Africa was not about slavery, but about the eradication of the threat of piracy to the United States. The continued practice of "piracy" and privateering in North Africa posed a major threat to not only American and European vessels trading in the Mediterranean Sea but also to those living in North Africa who were subjected to the corruption and greed of their rulers and of the corsair population. For Jefferson and Eaton, America's war in North Africa was a war to restore honor to the United States and Europe by ending the practice of humiliating tributary payments and, for Jefferson, to restore the honor of a repressed population burdened by the "degrading yoke" of piracy.

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