

## Thomas Pellow:

- 1716, cabin boy: ship captured (plundered) by 'Barbary corsairs' (meaning Muslim Mediterranean 'pirates')
- he and 52 shipmates sold to Moroccan Sultan
- many of latter killed
- he 'impressed' Sultan Moulay Ismail
- converted to assure safety: became 'slave' to Sultan's son
- spent 23 years in Morocco: at times in disfavor (because he tried to escape), most of the time occupied 'privileged' role
- married, had child
- participated in Sultans battles
- travelled across Sahara to Mauritania with Sultan's commercial caravan
- 'adventures' published shortly after return to England (1740):  
"The history of the long captivity and adventures of Thomas Pellow, South Barbary
- language, caricatures of Sultans, portrait of Moulay Ismail as archetypal 'Oriental Despot', exoticism of Harem, cruelty vis-à-vis slaves...
- clearly contributing to 'Orientalist' paradigm well before Napoleon's famous 1798 conquest

## Excerpts:

### On Arabs of the Sahara:

*"These Laurbs [Arabs] are an awkward sort of people of an olive colour, and wearing the hair of their heads and beards without ever cutting or topping, it runs naturally up into rings or curls, so that their heads look all one at a distance as if they had growing on them large bushes of furze. Their only clothing, is a blue linen shirt, and a pair of drawers reaching a little below their knees, with which they are furnished by the Moors. Their habitations, or tents, are made of the skins of tame and wild beasts. ..."*

### On Sultan Moulay Ismail:

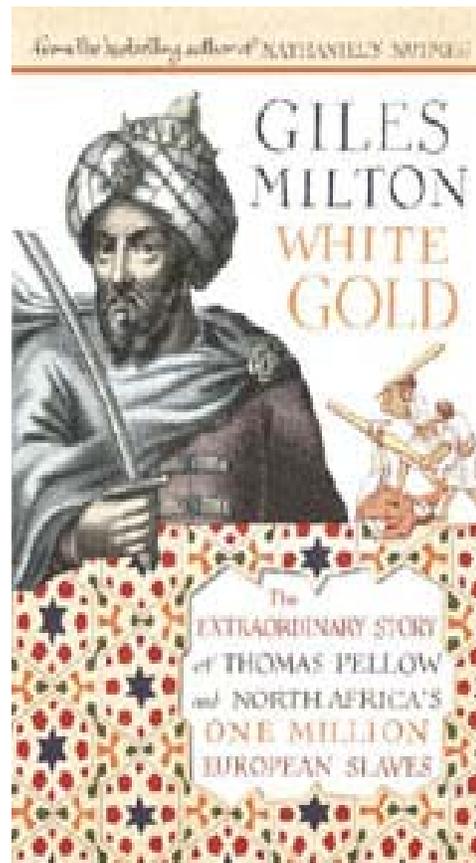
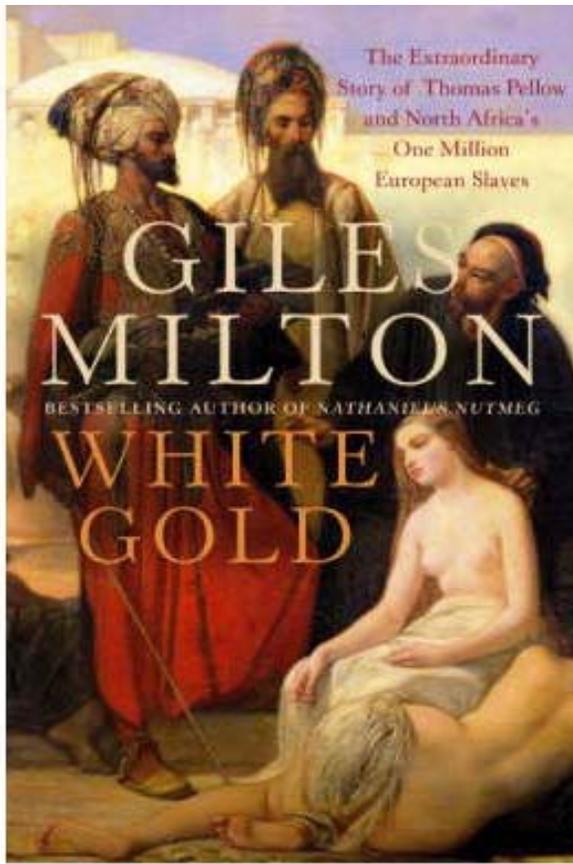
*"An excessive cruelty, a great capacity, and a perfect knowledge of the genius and temper of his people, preserved to this Emperor the throne for so long a space of time as fifty-five years, and death alone took it from him. By strictly observing, even to the nicest particulars, all the ceremonies of the Mahometan religion, he made himself respected by his subjects for his virtues, at the same time he was feared for his cruelty and vices. He always brought his projects to bear, and if he saw there was danger in using violence, he knew how to employ cunning."*

*Voluptuous, covetous, passionate, treacherous, more than a tyrant, he tamed the natural savageness of his subjects, by showing himself still more savage than they. ...*

*“ He was an early riser, whether from his natural disposition, or the horror of the many murders, exactions, and cruelties he had committed on his poor subjects and slaves, I cannot determine ; but those who have been near him when abroad in camps (for in his palace he was waited on by women, young wenches, and eunuchs, who dare not tell tales), report that his sleep was very much disturbed and full of horror, when, starting on a sudden, he has been heard to call upon those he had murdered, and sometimes awake he used to ask for them whom he had killed but the day before ...”*

**On caids – local governors bring Moulay Ismail his ‘due’ tribute):**

*“...for if the Emperor thinks they do not bring him the whole profits thereof, ... they are in danger of being put to some cruel death. Before they go into his presence they pull off their shoes, put on a particular habit they have to denote a slave, and When they approach him fall down and kiss the ground at his horse's feet. ... they bend forward and hold their heads a little on one side in token of offering their life, ... Partly from fear and partly from superstition, for they believe him to be the true branch of the Xeriphian [Sharifian] family, who draw their descent from the prophet Mahomet, and Therefore think he was particularly favoured by Heaven, and could do nothing amiss, but imagined all who died by his hand went to Paradise; in which opinions he confirmed them by a long continuance of tyrannical power, by artifice and by hypocrisy, never doing anything of Consequence without first falling down upon the ground with his face close to the earth for a considerable time, making believe that he then received inspiration and directions from God, or Mahomet ...”*



**Of interest:**

the book has recently been 'republished' as

*White Gold : The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and Islam's One Million White Slaves'*

- note images for different editions

**Publisher's Blurbs:**

*"Pellow and his shipmates were bought by the tyrannical sultan of Morocco, Moulay Ismail, who was constructing an imperial palace of such scale and grandeur that it would surpass every other building in the world, a palace built entirely by Christian slave labor."*

**"In the summer of 1716, a Cornish cabin boy named Thomas Pellow and 52 of his comrades were captured at sea by the Barbary corsairs. *Their captors, fanatical Islamic slave traders, had declared war on the whole of Christendom.* Thousands of Europeans had been snatched from their homes and taken in chains to the great slave markets of Algiers, Tunis and Sale in Morocco to be sold to the highest bidder. White Gold is an extraordinary and shocking story "**

