



Paul Barba. *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands*. Borderlands and Transcultural Studies Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021. Maps, tables. 474 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4962-0835-4.

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Published on H-Nationalism (August, 2022)

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Many books have taken on the topic of slavery and captivity in the borderlands across the past two decades. In the wake of Cynthia Radding's work and James Brook's seminal *Captives and Cousins* (2002), Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, Juliana Barr, Benjamin Madley, Pekka Hämäläinen, and others have written on the topic. In so doing, they have demonstrated that the history of captivity and Native American enslavement in the borderlands enormously complicates our understanding of chattel slavery in the United States. And yet, Paul Barba's *Country of the Cursed and Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands* demonstrates that we have much more to learn about forms of unfreedom. Barba's work is unique in at least three ways. First, his focus on a specific region—modern Texas and the far Mexican Northeast—grounds his monograph geographically in a way that some of the more sprawling histories of borderlands captivity do not. Second, Barba blurs the distinction between chattel and kin-based slaveries. Many histories of Native American enslavement throw the differences between adoptive kinship and chattel slavery into sharp relief and define one system against the other. Barba sees no such clear distinction between the two. Finally, Barba foregrounds the long arc of enslavement

and captivity in the Texas borderlands in a racism specifically directed against Black people dating back to at least the seventeenth century. Borderlands historians and scholars of enslavement will want to consult Barba's new and important work—although (as we will see below) a couple of his conclusions could use a bit more development.

Early Texas's zones of contact were enormously complicated. Enslavement is just one facet of borderlands cultures' trade, war, and diplomacy that Barba must discuss to develop his setting; and, given the ethnic and cultural complexity of early Texas, there are parts of the book where discussion of enslavement falls into the background. Enslavement practices among Native Americans and Hispanics in the borderlands cannot be entirely separated from other activities with violent and/or economic dimensions. As such, raiding and trading make up just as much a part Barba's examination as slaving does—even if the title of the book somewhat obscures that fact. This is especially true in the final chapter. Nevertheless, the main topic always returns for further discussion, and Barba summarizes his findings about borderlands slavery in the conclusion of each chapter. Barba ably demonstrates that kin-based bondage

and other forms of captivity shaped a sort of nexus of servility in the Texas-Mexico borderlands long before the arrival of Anglo Americans.

Worth noting as well, Barba has visited an impressive number of archives and found a great number of supporting documents that have so far escaped scholarly examination. He draws on a deep well of source material to describe enslavement, captivity, and fictive kinship practices in the Texas borderlands. He thoroughly investigates municipal and other archives and even ancient baptismal files. Many are the unknown and fascinating stories that flit across the pages of *Country of the Cursed and Driven*. Particularly memorable are some of the scenes in Barba's book that unfolded in borderlands slave markets and sites of rescue. The seamless integration of these sources into a flowing narrative reveals Barba's superb historical craftsmanship.

Barba's book is also exceedingly well organized. Divided into three parts and seven chapters, his narrative stretches across about 150 years. The first chapter relays the earliest history of "Hispanic" (Barba's preferred term) colonization of Texas and explains the precedents in central Mexico for enslavement and captivity. The second chapter chronicles the rise of Spanish power in the Texas borderlands, and the third chapter complicates this narrative through an account of the Comanches' burgeoning might just to the north. Part 2 begins with chapter 4, which details a strange alliance between the Comanches and Hispanics against the Ndé (the Apaches). Chapter 5, meanwhile, adds the well-trodden story of Anglo colonization in Texas into this history of captivity, enslavement, and fictive kinship. Chapters 6 and 7, which comprise the third and final part of the book, concentrate on the rise of America's "second slavery" (to use Barba's precise terminology) in Texas. The final chapter is revealing as it concentrates on the history of Comanche raiding, trading, and slaving—juxtaposing this story against the increasing domination of the borderlands by Anglo

American slaveholders. Barba argues that "Comanche slaving violence helped to sustain their [the Comanches'] regional power amid the rise of the anti-Black slaver-colonial order" (p. 271). As the Comanche "empire" (to borrow Hämäläinen's somewhat controversial term) found itself threatened by American colonialism, slaving and captive-taking formed a ground of negotiation and maneuverability between the two peoples thrown into contact with one another.

The first few chapters of Barba's book are especially strong. Barba ably teases out the many ways that warfare, trade, and slavery impacted and complicated the relationship between *Namán* (Comanches), Ndé (Apaches), Caddos, and Wichitas (to a lesser extent) in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Texas borderlands. The confluence of at least three unique forms of servitude in the borderlands, just as they became increasingly dominated by the Comanches, makes for fascinating reading. Further, his detailed probing of Hispanic rescue markets might make us seriously rethink what we know about these events.

By chapter 3, Barba has broken new ground. His significant finding here involves the relationship between Hispanics and Comanches in Texas. Alliances between Hispanics and Comanches against Apache people represented a convergence of interests; overlaps in slaving, captivity, and warfare practices among Hispanics and Comanches comprised the shared ground of "collaborative violence" (p. 131). Ndé (Apaches) were unwilling participants in a trade that provided both Comanches and Hispanics with a supply of enslaved bodies. At one point, colonial San Antonio's population was comprised of nearly 10 percent enslaved people. Over time, however, de-ethnized indigenous people were incorporated as debt peons through *compradazgo* practices in Hispanic households. Barba hardly describes this as a better fate than enslavement, however. Fictive kinship between servants and masters allowed for

a tremendous latitude on the part of the master. Assumed kinship also made it easy to disinherit illegitimate children. Barba notes the significance of reproductive labor as an especially onerous familial obligation of fictive kin in both Hispanic and Nʉmʉnʉ household. Adopted family, in Barba's telling, was an original category of coercion. This is an important contribution that Barba makes to the historiography, as historians tend to suggest that the arc from captivity to kinship is somehow less onerous than that of chattel enslavement. Unfortunately, Barba does not dedicate as much time to the discussion of captives' lives among the Nʉmʉnʉ as he does to captivity in Christian Hispanic households. Due to a dearth of documentation, he can only give this history in broad strokes.

The final three chapters of the book return to the well-known historical ground of the 1830s and beyond. But the chapters that precede these put the familiar history of Anglo-driven anti-Black slavery in a new context. This is because the earlier chapters so greatly deepen our understanding of the various forms of fictive kinship, captivity, and enslavement that preceded the arrival of Anglos in Texas. Indeed, Barba breaks new ground by arguing that in Texas precedents for anti-Black slavery existed. Chattel enslavement of Black people was predicated upon a form of racism that preceded Anglos by more than a century in Texas; anti-Blackness was crucial to shaping Hispanics' understandings of captivity and chattel enslavement in the earliest times. By foregrounding the early history of captivity and racism in the borderlands, Barba demonstrates that when Anglo slaveholders arrived in Texas they entered a place where many different cultures had been meeting and enslaving one another for centuries. The most novel attribute that Anglos brought to this war-torn territory was their capacity for genocide and the utter annihilation of their enemies.

Ultimately, the book takes on a big topic, and it raises interesting questions—many of which have

to do with the Comanches since they were such important players in early Texas. Why, for instance, did the Comanches seem to target certain ethnic groups and not others for enslavement? By chapter 7 of the book, Comanches seem to have turned their considerable fury on Mexicans exclusively. And yet Hispanics were the Comanches' erstwhile allies. Brian DeLay has broached this topic in his *War of a Thousand Deserts* (2009), but Comanche ideas of ethnicity and even "race" remain unknown. Barba also has some fascinating insights into Comanche ideas of territoriality that remain underdeveloped (pp. 282-283). Finally, Barba's book calls for more work on anti-Black racism among the inhabitants of Texas who preceded the Austin colony. The reader may not be entirely convinced that anti-Black slavery (again, to borrow Barba's turn of phrase) existed among colonial-era Spanish settlers to the degree that Barba postulates. Attitudes about racial slavery likely transformed as new migrants arrived in Texas from Mexico as well. Nevertheless, the idea that slavery was predicated upon racial attitudes against Native Americans and Black people even before the arrival of Anglos is a stimulating one. Barba argues that Black bodies were especially fungible, marketable, and adaptable to various forms of captivity among Hispanics and Anglos alike. Ultimately, Barba ably demonstrates that kin-based bondage and other forms of captivity shaped servility in the Texas-Mexico borderlands long before the arrival of white people. He argues, a little less convincingly, that anti-Black slavery represented a continuum across multiple centuries of human enslavement and captive adoption in Texas. These are significant points. Thus, this book is recommended to all historians of slavery.

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Citation: James Nichols. Review of Barba, Paul, *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands*. H-Nationalism, H-Net Reviews. August, 2022.

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