Introduction

The analogies started within twenty-four hours. Given one minute to address his colleagues on 12 September 2001, Representative Nick Smith of Michigan invoked the Barbary pirates. Then, just as Congress had done during the era of Thomas Jefferson, he proclaimed, "We must declare war on these new terrorists."[1] In the weeks that followed, radio, television, newspaper, and Internet commentators all seized on the apparent historical parallel between the Republic's first foreign conflict, which occurred from 1801 to 1805 with the polity that became modern Libya, and the battle against Al Qa'ida that now lay before the United States.[2]

To media analysts of various political stripes, the nineteenth-century experience combating sea bandits harbored by the Ottoman regencies of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers and the independent kingdom of Morocco provided a valuable object lesson for fighting Islamic militants in the new millennium, offering a strategic tutorial on the failure of appeasement and showcasing an elemental and enduring clash of civilizations.[3] Ironically, most modern observers credited the French—soon to be shunned for their refusal to join "coalition forces" in Iraq—for striking out alone and obliterating the North African criminals through invasion. Conservative pundit Paul Johnson was notably prescriptive. "It was France that took the logical next step, in 1830, not only of storming Algiers but of conquering the entire country," he wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece titled "21st-Century Piracy." His piece was subtitled "The Answer to Terrorism? Colonialism."[4]

In fact, by the time France's army disembarked on Algerian soil, the mutual practice of Mediterranean abduction had already ended. For three hundred years before, however, just as French privateers had hunted Muslim quarry, North African corsairs of mixed background had preyed on French ships and shores, stealing away tens of thousands

of men (and a few women). Condemned to a long life in servitude if they did not convert to Islam, escape, die early, or purchase their freedom, these seafarers and coastal denizens spent months to decades awaiting deliverance. Starting in the 1550s, they received it in different measure from families, municipalities, two regionally organized Catholic orders, and the government. Between then and 1830, liberating slaves from North Africa changed from an expression of Christian charity to a method of state building and, eventually, a rationale for imperial expansion.

Until the mid-seventeenth century, French monarchs paid relatively little attention to the fates of unlucky subjects from peripheral regions, whose religious and secular institutions were perforce selective in their rescue efforts. After that, royal disinterest gave way to more acute fear about the dangers enslavement by so-called infidels posed to French health, wealth, religious unity, and social stability. Not only did Louis XIV dread the loss of valuable mariners, merchants, and other breadwinners, but he also shared local anxiety about their exposure to North African "contagions," notably plague, sodomy, and Islam. Only in the 1680s and 1690s, however, did the king have the means to protect them effectively. Employing artillery in place of ransom, he repatriated most of the French Catholics and even some of the foreign ones held in Barbary. But during these decades spent purging his realm of Reformed Christianity, he intentionally abandoned France's Protestants in servitude.

Such shifts in royal ability to unshackle countrymen and judgments about whom to release from Muslim bondage had important consequences for ideas of French belonging. No longer was liberty the reward of a chosen few. Instead, from the possibility that all Frenchmen *could* be free flowed the notion that all Frenchmen *should* be. Thereafter, apart from associating French status with freedom, North African slave emancipation became an explicit way of incorporating geographic outsiders, while excluding diseased bodies and deviant souls from France. The crown used it to invite allegiance from natives of annexed territories—and to keep out both Muslim converts and Christian heretics. Bringing slaves back from Barbary thus became a vehicle for establishing that Frenchmen had to be Catholics and determining which Catholics counted as French.

The late seventeenth-century decline in Mediterranean slavery coincided with the growth of Atlantic slavery. Along with a drop in the number of captive Frenchmen in North Africa, therefore, came a surge in the number of sub-Saharan chattel in France's American colonies. This switch in the victims of enslavement was accompanied by new racial assumptions about which people deserved to be slaves. During the Revo-

lution, principles of universal rights and common humanity purported to justify conquest in the guise of liberation. Yet the restoration of skin-color hierarchies and chattel slavery in the Caribbean under Napoleon soon confirmed that French freedom did not extend to blacks. In 1830, the two conflicting ideologies met when the abolition of "white slavery" formed a pretext for France's takeover of Algiers.

This book revises the standard picture of France's emergence as a nation and a colonial power, challenging static interpretations of slavery, binary conceptions of the Inner Sea, and both centrist and domestic portraits of French history. Rather than measuring all forms of servitude against the extreme version established in the New World, the book examines an Old World type, which I argue was initially understood in terms of religion and mischance, not race and destiny. Rather than embracing the usual stereotype of a clear division between Crescent and Cross, it confirms the presence of unstable loyalties in a Mediterranean contact zone and explores the ways French authorities tried to secure them. And rather than recounting the extension of monarchical authority from the perspective of Paris, it demonstrates how the interactions of France's Mediterranean seaports—especially Marseille—with Muslim lands fostered national sentiment. By working to ensure that captives did not succumb to physical or spiritual corruption in North Africa or introduce Barbary pollutants into France, municipal and royal institutions on the coast supported the crown's bid to construct a strong polity of subjects who were fit and faithful to Christ and country.

This book is indebted to several generations of fertile research on the Mediterranean and on comparative slavery, and to an emerging subfield in the study of corsairing and captivity. It is also predicated on a striking historiographical gap. Despite possessing an extensive Mediterranean shoreline that so enchanted Fernand Braudel, the modern scholar most responsible for conceptualizing a pan-Mediterranean world, France does not figure prominently in studies of the sea or the lands that surround it.[5] The country's status as a continental victor and centralized state seems to have precluded it from sharing the "common destiny" of less powerful coastal neighbors, positioning it within a master narrative of European history instead. Furthermore, despite France's eventual role as avenger of North African brigandage, professional historians and popular authors long shied away from the subject.[6] Until quite recently French readers interested in finding out about forebears in captivity had to search through obscure provincial journals and colonial periodicals. For much of the twentieth century, status as an imperial power seems to have fostered selective amnesia about an earlier time when the conquered enslaved their conquerors.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, by contrast, Barbary piracy and slavery were fashionable topics among the former military men and colonial bureaucrats who attempted to legitimate colonization with history. Foreign affairs attaché Eugène Plantet, for example, who compiled several volumes of Franco-Algerian and Franco-Tunisian diplomatic correspondence, portrayed the leaders of both regencies as unwilling or unable to live peacefully—and deserving of their subjugated fate. "Our government . . . tried more than all the others to civilize this evil race," he wrote in 1889, but "in the demonstrated impossibility of punishing [Algiers] effectively, [France] subdued it."[7] To retired admiral Jean Pierre Edmond Jurien de la Gravière, author of an 1887 study, French soldiers were modern crusaders who had battled the descendants of ancient enemies to stake a historical claim to North Africa, which "from the moment she escaped from the Arabs and could no longer belong to the Spanish . . . returned rightfully to France." In a chapter entitled "Gallia victrix" (Gaul Conqueror), he extolled "the immense service we have performed for Europe in establishing ourselves on the African beach."[8]

With one notable exception, it was only once the Algerian War had begun to dislodge France from its North African perch that members of the *Annales* school rediscovered Mediterranean sea roving and slave taking.[9] From the 1950s, these scholars and others offered a corrective to the crude jingoism and colonial triumphalism of their predecessors, finding evidence that Europeans had been agents as well as objects of abduction.[10] Through studies of merchant activity, diplomatic negotiation, and religious conversion, they followed Braudel's example in considering the totality of the region rather than the countries that composed it and in questioning the notion of an eternal, sharp division between warring Christian and Muslim civilizations.[11] Such historians, however, mostly overlooked his assertion that "slavery was a structural feature of Mediterranean society . . . by no means exclusive to the Atlantic and the New World."[12] Rather than embrace this inclusive perspective, they tended to adopt the extreme model of hereditary bondage that in the Caribbean and parts of Latin America and the United States turned people into pure commodities,[13] and to accept the dominant view that the Arab-Islamic world featured a notably benign, racially neutral type of servitude.[14] Accordingly, they tended to distinguish—semantically and substantively—the confinement of Christians and Muslims in Europe from that of sub-Saharan Africans in the Americas, and the experience of "captives" or "prisoners of war" from that of true "slaves."[15]

This study of captivity and redemption in an Old World frontier zone disputes the assumption that the primary reference point for slavery in

the minds of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century was the colonial chattel kind. Without suggesting that the Mediterranean system of seizure and detention for the sake of ransom bears direct comparison to the Atlantic system of brutal transport and violent exploitation to satisfy mass markets, it rejects seemingly universal, static typologies and takes Barbary slaves and their contemporaries at their word.[16] By acknowledging historical definitions and keeping diverse forms of servitude within a single field of vision, it uncovers a shift in French ideas of freedom and unfreedom over time and provides a fresh outlook on the intersection between Mediterranean and Atlantic slaveries. My goal is not to locate additional possible intellectual or technical antecedents to the American plantation complex.[17] Instead, it is to lay clear the ties between saving slaves and making Frenchmen, between destroying slavery and making colonies.

Such a project is by definition interdisciplinary. Besides drawing on multiple historical studies of North African enslavement from other geographical perspectives,[18] it borrows insights about Christian and Muslim encounters from the fields of literature[19] and art history,[20] whose practitioners have been particularly attuned to the specter of religious conversion and other anxieties of empire. My sources are similarly broad. They include the masses of administrative correspondence among French officials in North Africa, Versailles, and in Marseille and other port towns; the voluminous printed output of the friars devoted to redeeming captives; newspaper accounts; philosophical treatises; novels, plays, and paintings; as well as unpublished letters and published narratives by the French slaves themselves. The result is a blend of diplomatic, social, and cultural history that advances new arguments about the fluid nature of slavery, the association between liberation and state building, and imperialism's roots in abolition.

Contemporary France still bears the painful legacy of 1830, which led to more than a century of colonial occupation. Only in recent decades have journalists and historians begun to counter French collective "memory loss" about the Algerian War that ended in 1962, probing the logic behind the violence employed to delay relinquishing a North African region viewed as an integral part of France and exploring the political, social, and cultural repercussions of decolonization.[21] Meanwhile, the basis for France's initial foray into Algiers has remained largely unexamined.[22]

Since 9/11, an earlier American generation's resolve to protect its citizens and assets from Muslim outlaws has been entrenching itself as a foundation myth of the United States.[23] This book seeks to understand how France's ultimate response to a phenomenon that no longer posed a

significant material threat came to form a foundation myth of the French empire. Presenting the Mediterranean as an essential vantage for studying the rise of France, the book reveals how efforts to liberate slaves in North Africa shaped French perceptions, both of the Muslim world and of the parameters of "Frenchness." It links captive redemption to state formation—and in turn to the still vital ideology of liberatory conquest.