

INTRODUCTION

In 1665, Thomas Le Gendre, a wealthy trader from Rouen, wrote a memoir of the years 1618–25, which he had spent in Morocco. His text was published anonymously in 1670, probably at the behest of merchants interested in founding a trading society in Morocco who needed information about the region. Among other events, the memoir recorded a remarkable occurrence: the time the Sa'dī Sultan Mūlay Zaydān (d. 1627) received emissaries sent to his court by the government of the Dutch Republic:

In the year 1622, an ambassador of the Gentlemen of the States,¹ a squire of the Prince of Orange, and a disciple of Erpenius, professor of oriental and foreign languages in Leiden, came to Marrakesh, both with presents that were very pleasing to King Zaydān, but mostly the one from Erpenius, which was an atlas and a New Testament in Arabic; and the eunuchs told us that the king would not stop reading the New Testament. As the ambassador was annoyed not to have been authorized to leave, he was advised to present the king with a petition or request, which was written by this disciple of Erpenius, whose name is Golius, in the Arabic language, and in a Christian style. The king was very much stunned by the beauty of the request, by the writing and the language as well as by the style that was extraordinary in that land. He called immediately for his *talips* or secretaries, and showed them the request, which they admired. He asked for the ambassador and asked him who wrote it. He answered that it was Golius, a student sent by Erpenius. The king asked to meet him and spoke with him in Arabic. The student answered in Spanish that he understood very well all that His Majesty was telling him, but that he could not answer him in the same language, because his throat would not help him, since one speaks with the throat as well as with the tongue; and the king, who understood Spanish well, liked his answer. He responded favorably to the request and gave the ambassador the authorization to return. And today, this Golius is in Leiden, professor of oriental and foreign languages in the stead of Erpenius, who is now dead.²

As recounted by Le Gendre, this anecdote stages an encounter between Islam and Christendom, and between East and West, that doubles as a meeting between knowledge and power and that features three protagonists. The first is Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624), professor of oriental languages at Leiden University since 1613; the second is his student Jacob Golius (1596–1667), who accompanied the Dutch embassy in Morocco from 1622 to 1624, and who would succeed his mentor as the chair of oriental languages;³ the third and final protagonist is the Sultan Mūlay Zaydān (d. 1627), portrayed as an admiring spectator of Golius’s accomplishments as a translator and as a wit. Curiously absent from the account of Le Gendre, however, is a fourth character, intimately connected to the other three, who played an instrumental role during the early modern period in the circulation of knowledge between Arab countries and Europe, the transnational Muslim polyglot Ahmad ibn Qāsīm al-Hajarī.⁴ Born in Spain, Hajarī was a prolific mediator between Europe and North Africa, translating diplomatic, religious, and scientific texts between Arabic and Spanish, and a remarkable writer in his own right, authoring lengthy autobiographical texts. In Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Europe, he maintained contact with famed and influential scholars, like Erpenius, whom he met in Paris in 1611 and to whom he taught Arabic, and his student Golius, who, on Erpenius’s advice, contacted Hajarī. Hajarī’s biography testifies to a dense system of networks in which knowledge and information were circulating between regions in both directions. He was an important figure in this nuanced and multidirectional phenomenon that included the European study of Islamic and West Asian culture and languages known as Orientalism. Authors such as Thomas Le Gendre too often kept silent about the networks of scholars outside Europe that made this study possible. *Beyond Orientalism* corrects the record by exploring these webs without limiting itself to the European Orientalists, and focuses on the life and career of Hajarī.

EUROPEAN ORIENTALISM: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

Le Gendre likely encountered Hajarī during the years he spent in Marrakesh, and he might even have counted him among the secretaries to whom the sultan showed Golius’s Arabic letter. The trader from Rouen, however, when he was writing about his time in Morocco, did not feel that his readers would

be interested in knowing about Hajarī and other local scholars. Instead, he painted Orientalism as a purely European enterprise, severed from the practices and networks that made it possible. Le Gendre knew that, in the years following his Moroccan mission, Golius had become a distinguished scholar, famous among learned Europeans as a specialist in oriental languages. The prestige of Orientalism as a field of knowledge was sufficiently high, even among trading communities, for Le Gendre to include in his memoir the story recounted at the beginning of this introduction. Traveling beyond these circles, this anecdote would be recorded in the annals of European scholarship. Through a citation by an erudite librarian in 1675,⁵ it was incorporated in new editions of widely read encyclopedias, such as the *Grand dictionnaire* by Louis Moréri and the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* by Pierre Bayle, in entries devoted to Golius. This widespread circulation suggests that the story, and its representation of an encounter between a European scholar and a Moroccan sultan, resonated with contemporary readers.

This rich account provides interesting information about the perception of Orientalist knowledge by Europeans in the second half of the seventeenth century, including how it is inflected by the erasure of Hajarī. Remarkably, of all the members of the Dutch mission, Le Gendre named only Golius. Even the ambassador Albert Ruyl remained anonymous, as well as Pieter van Neste (1567–1625), the squire of Maurits of Nassau, prince of Orange, and stathouder of the Dutch Provinces. In contrast, Erpenius, who was not part of the delegation, is mentioned by name. For Le Gendre, clearly, two encounters occurred at the same time: the anonymous Ruyl and van Neste represented the Dutch state, but their exchange with the sultan paled in comparison to the other meeting. The audience of Golius in the court of Mūlay Zaydān is at the center of the account, and Golius was presented not as a mere adjunct to the ambassador, but as an envoy himself, sent by his mentor Erpenius. On behalf of the latter, he offered the sultan two books, including the Arabic New Testament that Erpenius had published in Leiden in 1616. Le Gendre paints Erpenius as the holder of a kind of authority that enabled him to address a monarch as an equal, like the Gentlemen of the States. The main encounter was not the one occurring between two political entities (the Sa'dī kingdom and the Netherlands), but the one happening between the sultan and a very different type of power, not political but intellectual: the European Republic of Letters, as the early modern networks of European writers and thinkers were called, whose correspondence advanced scholarship and transcended national and even religious boundaries. In this encounter, Europe,

through the learned Golius, was able to demonstrate that it had acquired a command of a foreign culture. His Arabic epistle provoked the surprise and the admiration of the sultan and his entourage of professional scribes and secretaries, and, when Golius was received in court, he even turned his lack of speaking proficiency to his advantage when he found a clever way to excuse this shortcoming. No wonder other citizens of the Republic of Letters were taken by that story. It promoted a flattering image of their own eminence as intellectuals, and as Europeans who could master other cultures. In such a picture, the role of Hajarī or of any local scholar in the construction of Orientalist knowledge was better left unmentioned.

In broad outline, Thomas Le Gendre's account is an affirmation of Edward Said's celebrated notion of Orientalism.⁶ It reveals how Europeans sought mastery of the oriental "other," while the political work of the Orientalist is concealed behind the dream, or ideological fantasy, of a Republic of Letters that transcended politics. The portrayal of the Moroccans as passive admirers of Golius's achievement is a striking feature of Le Gendre's account, situating it in a genealogy that has not yet ended, a "trap that still besets many historians of early modern encounters: attributing all the initiative in matters of bridge-building to European agents alone."⁷ *Beyond Orientalism* argues that this trap has hindered our understanding of early modern European Orientalism. It proposes a broader view, and considers that Europeans were not the sole agents in the construction of this field of knowledge. Many subjects of Muslim polities played a crucial part in its development, and taking their contribution into account opens the door to a deeper understanding of the field, and, more broadly, of the history of the cultural, scholarly, and technological interactions between Europe and its Islamic neighbors. The story of Hajarī, in terms of his writings, his work at court, and his political and intellectual contacts, illustrates precisely how the flow of knowledge, power, and diplomacy, which included Orientalism, circulated at cross-currents.

His undermining of the relevance of the location in which the anecdote took place significantly frames the meaning of European Orientalism in Le Gendre's account. For him, Morocco is merely the stage on which the European scholar deploys his learning and displays his knowledge of Arabic, rather than the site where he acquires the tools and information needed to perfect his understanding of a foreign culture. This view ignores the fact that during his time in Morocco, Golius was busy expanding his knowledge of Arab culture and language, and seeking out manuscripts to complete his collection, which would become very well known among European scholars.

It also dissimulates that in practice the Dutch scholar needed the active contribution of local scholars, including Hajarī. Most importantly, their collaboration was fruitful not only for Golius, but also for Hajarī's own intellectual pursuits. Documents reveal complex exchanges between them, in which Hajarī was the collaborator and informant of Golius, and Golius could in turn be the collaborator and informant of Hajarī.

Another of Thomas Le Gendre's silences is just as noteworthy. Officially, Golius participated in the Dutch embassy not as an interpreter, but as an engineer; his work as an Arabist (as when he translated Ruyl's request addressed to Mūlay Zaydān) was secondary. Although he undoubtedly sought this appointment as a member of the Dutch embassy at least partly in order to further his Arabic studies, the official reason for his participation was unconnected to this academic pursuit. The mission in Morocco was about the sultan's ill-fated plan to build a port on the Atlantic coast of his country, for which he enlisted the help and expertise of his Dutch allies. Golius was such an important character in this project that in the Hague on July 24, 1624, he authored the final report detailing why Mūlay Zaydān's venture was unfeasible.⁸ The reader of Thomas Le Gendre's account would not know any of this. Philology and science were closely connected in the career of Golius, who would become professor of mathematics at Leiden University in 1629 (after taking the chair of oriental languages in 1625). His interest in Arabic stemmed originally from his mathematical research, as he wanted to read some Greek texts that survived only in Arabic translation, and to study the contributions of scholars writing in Arabic. His case exemplifies that the strict distinction between science and philology that the nineteenth century has made familiar was much more porous in the early modern period.⁹ In sum, Le Gendre's account is silent about Golius's connection with local scholars, and about the intermingling of the humanities and the sciences in Golius's career. The two erasures intersect. Hajarī was himself much involved in science and technology, not only out of personal interest, but also as translator for Mūlay Zaydān. His engagement in this field outlasted his career in Morocco, and, in his later years, he produced an important work, an Arabic translation of a Spanish-language treatise on gunnery written by another exile from Spain, Ibrāhīm Ghānim, who was in charge of the defense of the port of Tunis.

The study and understanding of Orientalism in the centuries that followed have prolonged to a great extent the silences of Le Gendre's account. This field is still understood mostly as a humanistic discipline, mainly comprised of

literary representations and of philological studies, and deprived of its scientific and technological dimensions. As to the many subjects of North African and Middle Eastern countries who contributed to the field, they are reduced to the role of shadowy informants. Approaching Orientalism this way precludes a full retracing of the practices through which it developed. Mapping these practices is necessary for a full understanding of this subject.

A MEDITERRANEAN INTERCESSOR, IN
ORIENTALISM AND BEYOND

By uncovering what is erased in an account such as Le Gendre's, *Beyond Orientalism* seeks to modify our understanding of the early modern cultural connections between Europe and its Islamic neighbors. Its analyses engage with scholars who reexamine the relations between Islam and Christendom in the early modern period, and reimagine those interactions in a context of sustained connections, despite the political and confessional antagonisms that often fueled hostility or violence. The study of the Mediterranean has changed considerably in recent decades.¹⁰ The contest between, on the one hand, a bifurcated model based on the binaries of East versus West, and Islam versus Christendom, and, on the other hand, a more unitary representation highlighting commonalities and interactions, has been going on for a long time. Recently, a more nuanced approach has privileged the study of networks, and of patterns of connection, promoting an integrated reading of the Mediterranean through close attention to the practices and modalities of the contacts between the different regions, and seeking, without denying diversity, to explore forms of commonality. This paradigm has been particularly advanced by the greater awareness of the large presence in early modern Europe of "Muslim slaves, mercenaries, merchants, diplomats, travellers and scholars."¹¹

The present study belongs in this trend, taking at its starting point the cultural formation called Orientalism. Before going further, some clarification is warranted about the terms *Orientalism* and *Orientalist*. This book will use them in a precise sense, what Edward Said described as "the most readily accepted designation for Orientalism," an "academic one . . . Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient . . . is an orientalist."¹² Although "readily accepted" when Said first published his book in 1978, this designation has now been mostly superseded by his own newer definitions.¹³ In the present

book, Orientalism will be understood in the sense that the word had before Said's analyses changed its import. One caveat, however, is in order, since the words *Orientalism* and *Orientalist*, in these meanings, were not in use in the English nor the French language before the very end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth (although the phrase "oriental languages" did exist). Since this book will concern itself mostly with cultural history up to the mid- to late-seventeenth century, the practices or people to which it will refer to as Orientalism or Orientalists would not have been thought of in those terms by contemporaries. These words will nevertheless be used for the sake of convenience. Furthermore, this premodern Orientalism, or oriental studies, can also be thought of as "predisciplinary," marked by "the independent and idiosyncratic efforts of individual scholars in particular lines of inquiry."¹⁴ Arabic and other oriental languages were beginning to be taught in a few European universities, and publication programs were undertaken, often as an aid to biblical studies or to missionary efforts. Much of the work in the field, however, was still taking place in a less structured way. It largely developed through encounters, fortuitous or willed, between Europeans and people from Arab and Ottoman lands. The exchange between Golius and Hajarī is but one example of such encounters. Far from being unique, it takes place in a wider horizon of the dynamics and mediations that made possible the production of Orientalist learning.

As for the many people hailing from Eastern cultures, long deleted for the most part from the history of the European Orientalism, beginning with accounts such as Le Gendre's, some are now better known. More work is still needed, however, to understand and analyze their contribution, and to map out how their role should alter the way the field itself should be understood. The central protagonist in this book, Ahmad al-Hajarī, is an ideal actor and guide for examining the networks of cultural and scholarly exchange in the early modern Mediterranean world. Through a close examination of his life, career and works, this study will retrace the ways in which he, like many other scholars from North Africa and the Middle East, influenced his Europeans counterparts and helped shape the development of early modern Orientalism. Even more importantly, the book examines this collaborative experience not only inside, but also beyond the confines of the European Republic of Letters. His substantial body of work was produced mostly in North Africa (or the Maghrib) and was thus situated in the Maghribi culture of his time, following some of its forms and modalities. Hajarī's work was also inflected by multiple personal and intellectual experiences with Europe,

in Spain where he was born, as a traveler and envoy of the sultan in France and Holland, and as an interlocutor to European Orientalists. By looking at both these contexts, the European and the Maghribi, this study will show that, when it comes to Hajarī's connections with Erpenius, Golius, and other Orientalists, these networks do not arbitrarily stop at the frontiers of Europe. The intellectual interactions between Europeans and subjects of Muslim countries, which helped shape Orientalism, also affected the societies and cultures of Arab countries, in ways that have not yet been considered in all their dimensions.

Focusing on matters of intellectual history, *Beyond Orientalism* analyzes Hajarī's career and his cultural production, and portrays him as much more than a mere intermediary between two supposedly stable and discrete ensembles (whether they are called the West and the East, or Christendom and Islam), but as an actor and a contributor in a global intellectual history. Using the experience of Hajarī as a kind of case study, this book reveals that early modern Orientalism was not simply an intellectual discipline derived from knowledge constructed by Europeans about their Islamic neighbors. Orientalism was instead a cultural formation born of the circulation and exchange between two interrelated civilizational ensembles. Thanks to a series of networks and knowledge practices situated in Europe, and in Arab and Ottoman lands, it connected the forms of learning that prevailed in Europe and in the Islamic countries, and their respective webs of scholarship or "Republics of Letters."

PLAN FOR THE BOOK

Beyond Orientalism tells the story of Ahmad al-Hajarī in three parts. Part 1, "A Connected Republic of Letters," looks at ways in which early modern Europe related with its Islamic neighbors, and how their spheres of learning, or Republics of Letters, interacted. Chapter 1, "Ahmad al-Hajarī: Trajectories of Exile," takes the figure of Hajarī as an exemplar of these connections, and sketches what we know of his eventful life story, focusing on his intellectual and political activities from Spain to Morocco, from France to the Netherlands, from Egypt to Tunisia. It highlights his many journeys, as well as his successful career as a translator and as a mediator between cultural, political, and legal systems. Working with Orientalists, including Erpenius, Golius and others, was only one aspect of his manifold experience as cultural broker. To underscore that Hajarī's work in Orientalism was not unique in

his time, but was inscribed in a larger pattern of intellectual exchange, chapter 2, “Networks of Orientalism: Out of the Shadows,” offers an overview of the many people from Islamic countries who played important roles in the field in its first formative period, from the sixteenth through the mid- to late seventeenth centuries. It proposes ways of categorizing these contributors who taught European scholars the languages and cultures of their neighbors, helped them build the first oriental libraries in Europe, and provided them with some understanding of the institutions and practices of knowledge of the Muslim lands. These people brought about an encounter between European and Arabic Republics of Letters, albeit often overdetermined by the prevalence of religious controversy. The chapter explores how the connection between European and the Arabic (or more largely Islamic) Republics of Letters in the early modern period helped European scholars to begin producing a body of Orientalist knowledge about the different Islamic cultures. This sketch of a larger context of sustained contributions of men hailing from Islamic cultures, and this reflection on the modalities and import of this continuous exchange, sets the stage for a closer engagement with Hajarī’s work, in Part 2, “Ahmad al-Hajarī: Becoming an Arab Writer.” Chapter 3, “Hajarī: A Morisco Writer in the Arabic Republic of Letters,” examines the literary and social approaches that he adopted in order to carve a place for himself in the knowledge webs of the Arabic-speaking and writing world. He was born and raised as a secret Muslim in the peripheral site of the vanishing Islamic Spain, and was a member of a vulnerable minority, now dispersed across Mediterranean lands, and to the defense of which he remained dedicated his whole life. He thus needed specific modes to be included in these elaborate scholarly networks. His strategies, which include translation, connections with established scholars, and autobiographical writing, will be shown to be that of a minor author, albeit in the complex sense of “a marginalized, minority people re-appropriating a major language” outlined by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.¹⁵ Chapter 4, “Hajarī in the World,” then turns to the ways in which he combined, connected, and considered his eclectic experiences, as a traveling polemicist, a student of European cosmography, a skilled translator of scientific texts, an official in charge of the Sa’dī relations with Christian powers, and a thinker reflecting on the place of Islam and Arabic in the world.

Part 3, “Technology in the Contact Zone,” focuses on an early seventeenth-century shared technological culture between the Maghrib and Europe, a culture in which Hajarī was both a witness and an actor. Participating in the